THE PREACHER'S COMMENTARY

ON

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

THE

Preacher's Complete Homiletical

COMMENTARY

ON THE

NEW TESTAMENT

(ON AN ORIGINAL PLAN)

With Critical and Explanatory Notes, Indices, &c., &c.

BY

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A

HOMILETICAL COMMENTARY

ON THE

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

BY

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INTRODUCTION.

WHILE the present volume does not aim at furnishing an elaborate and exhaustive discussion of such topics as are usually included in the department of Introduction, on the following points, as likely to be useful to the student, a few observations may be offered—the title and contents; the integrity and credibility; the author and date; the sources and aim of the Acts.

§ I. TITLE AND CONTENTS.

1. *The Title.*—Like the name "Gospel," εὐαγγέλιον, prefixed to the first four Books of the New Testament, that of "The Acts of the Apostles," πράξεις τῶν ἀποστολῶν, Acta or Actus Apostolorum—in some MSS. "Acts," "Acts of all the Apostles," and "Acts of the Holy Apostles"—though of long standing, is not original, but was added by a later hand. Neither can it be pronounced remarkably appropriate, since the volume to which it is prefixed is mainly occupied with the words and deeds of the two principal apostles, Peter and Paul, and does little more than mention the others—the eleven once (i. 13), Judas (i. 16, 25), and Matthias the twelfth (i. 23, 26) twice, and John five times (iii. 1, 11, iv. 13, viii. 14, xii. 2)—while it introduces a variety of persons who were not of apostolic rank, such as Stephen and Philip, Barnabas and Mark, Silas and Timothy. If for the author himself the work had a title, that was probably "The Second Treatise" as distinguished from "The First," or the Gospel of Luke, which claims to have proceeded from the same pen, and to have been addressed to the same patron, the most excellent Theophilus (i. 1; Luke i. 3).

2. *The Contents.*—These, as just indicated, concern chiefly the apostolic and missionary activity of Peter and of Paul—of the former in planting and

establishing the Christian Church within the bounds of the Holy Land, of the latter in carrying the Gospel into regions beyond. Beginning with what might be styled "The Acts of Peter" (i.—xii.), after a brief account of the appearances of our Lord to the eleven during the forty days which intervened between His resurrection and ascension (i. 1-11), the writing treats in succession of (1) the election of a twelfth apostle, at Peter's instigation, to supply the place left vacant by Judas (i. 12-26); (2) the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, with Peter's sermon explanatory of the wonderful phenomena that followed thereupon (ii.); (3) the growing acceptance of the New Faith among the inhabitants of Jerusalem consequent upon Peter's healing of a lame man (iii.); (4) the first symptoms of Jewish Opposition against the Church, shown in the imprisonment of Peter and John (iv.); (5) the first signs of corruption inside the Church, with the strong measures used by Peter for its suppression (v.); (6) the first murmurs of division in the ranks of the disciples, with the means adopted by the Twelve for its removal (vi. 1-6); and (7) the first actual persecution that assailed the Church, which arose in connection with Stephen (vi. 8—viii. 3); after which (8) it traces the forward movement and outward spread of Christianity from Jerusalem as a centre, till first the Gospel is planted in Samaria (viii. 4-24), carried north to Damascus (ix.), preached in Cæsarea (viii. 40, x.—xi. 18), and finally established in Antioch (xi. 19—xii.). Then continuing in what with equal fitness may be termed "The Acts of Paul," it reports how, through the missionary enterprise of that illustrious servant of Jesus Christ whose conversion has been related in the preceding part (ix.), the Gospel finds its way now from Antioch as a centre, first through Asia Minor, in Paul's first missionary journey with Barnabas (xiii.—xv.); next to the shores of Europe, in a second journey with Silas and a third with Timothy (xvi.—xxi.); and ultimately, through Paul's imprisonment, reaches Rome, the capital of the world (xxviii.).

Though the continuously flowing narrative contains no indications of divisions properly so called, yet various attempts have been made to arrange its material into appropriate sections. Zeller, for example, distributes it into three groups of passages, of which the first (i.—v., xii.) "treats" of the original apostles and the Jerusalem Church, while the second (vi.—xi., with the exception of ix. 1-30) deals with the two Hellenist deacons, Stephen and Philip, and the third (ix. 1-30, xiii.—xxviii.) narrates the history of Paul. As this, however, is rather a rearrangement of the contents of the work for study than a natural division of these into sections, a different method of partition is usually adopted. The threefold division, corresponding roughly to the three centres of activity, Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome, has found pretty general acceptance, only the dividing lines between the sections are not always drawn by different writers in the same places, Weiss inserting them at viii. 4 and xv. 33, Schulze at vi. 7 and xix. 20, and Baumgarten at viii. 4 and xii. 25. The Rev. J. O. F. Murray, M.A., in the *Cambridge Companion to the Bible*, p. 71, following our Lord's words in i. 8, arranges the contents of the Book thus: I. The witness in Jerusalem (i.—v.). II. The witness in Judæa and Samaria (vi.—ix. 31) in

three stages: (1) the dispersion caused by Stephen's martyrdom (vi. 8—viii. 3); (2) the work of Philip (viii. 4-40); and (3) the conversion and early preaching of Saul of Tarsus (ix. 1-31). III. The witness unto the uttermost parts of the earth (ix. 32—xxviii. 31) again in three sub-divisions: (1) the opening of the door for world-wide extension of the gospel by the baptism of Cornelius (x. 1—xi. 26), (2) the activity of the Church at Antioch through its accredited representatives, Barnabas and Saul (xi. 27—xiv.); and (3) the independent missionary activity of Paul (xv.—xxviii.). Perhaps, however, the simplest distribution of the material is that already indicated, which divides it into two parts, of which the first (i.—xii.) reports the development of the Church under the leadership of Peter and within the Holy Land, from Jerusalem as a centre, till it reaches Antioch, and the second (xiii.—xxviii.) rehearses the story of its progress, through the missionary activity of Paul, outside those limits in Asia Minor and on the shores of Europe, or in other words from Antioch to Rome.

§ 2. Integrity and Credibility.

1. *The Integrity.*—That the Book of Acts is no mere patchwork or mosaic of literary fragments left by a variety of writers and put together by a late editor who flourished at some considerable distance of time from the incidents narrated, but a homogeneous composition, proceeding from one hand, may be said to admit of almost unchallengeable demonstration. In its second part, indeed, occur portions (the "we" passages as they are commonly styled, xvi. 10-17, xx. 5-15, xxi. 1-18, xxvii. 1—xxviii. 16) which excite suspicion of diverse authorship; but as the result of investigations conducted by Gersdorf, Credner, and Zeller, it may now be confidently maintained that both portions of the Book—the first in which the writer preserves the third person throughout, and the second in which he occasionally speaks in the first person—have emanated from one mind and been set down by one pen. The actual composer may have utilised pre-existing documents, or such other helps as were available for his purpose; he may even have modified and combined these according to the plan and aim he had in view in the construction of his narrative; but there can be no ground for charging him with having simply set these documents side by side without regard to any particular design. What is signified by asserting the unity and integrity of the work is that such documents as may have been possessed by the author were not inserted unchanged in his pages without respect to any connection between them and the main thread of his history, but were employed by him as sources of information from which to draw materials for his work, so that the work itself could in no sense be regarded as a collection of fragments, but constituted a homogeneous whole. Those who care to understand how completely this character has been vindicated for the Acts will find a thoroughgoing discussion of the question in the *Apostelgeschichte* of Zeller (pp. 387 *ff.*), who has conclusively shown not only that the two portions of the Book possess points of resemblance in respect of diction and style, doctrinal contents and method of composition, as well as of forward and backward reference of passages in the different parts to one another, but that the citations commonly adduced as

presenting traces of different authorship are totally insufficient to support the thesis for which they are produced. So satisfactorily has the unity of Acts been established that no one now thinks of assailing it on this point. The Acts of the Apostles is admittedly the work of one composer.

2. *The Credibility.*—(1) The grounds upon which this has been challenged, though varied, may be reduced to six: (α) the miracles reported in its narrative, which, after the manner of rationalising critics, are ascribed to the mythical tendency of a later age to embellish the historical facts of an earlier generation; (β) the speeches it contains, which, objectors allege, were never delivered as set down, but can only be regarded as having been manufactured by the author; (γ) the artificial structure of its narrative, which shows itself in the parallelisms apparent in the histories of Peter and of Paul; (δ) its author's defective understanding of the antagonisms of the apostolic age; (ε) the supposed conflict between its statements and those of Paul's epistles; and (ζ) its remarkable silence about the differences between Paul and the other apostles.

With regard to (α), the miracles reported in the Acts, unless criticism is to start with the presupposition that anything approaching the supernatural in a writing is sufficient to discredit it, these must be held to be, abstractly considered, neither impossible nor incredible; while their authenticity, in each particular instance, must be determined by the marks of truthfulness or its opposite which appear in the document reporting them. But apart from the dogma that "miracles are incredible, if not impossible," it has never been proved either that the supernatural phenomena incorporated in the Acts are susceptible of natural explanation, or that the parts of Acts which record these phenomena are intrinsically contradictory or untrustworthy; while in almost every instance marks of verisimilitude can be pointed out which justify the reader in accepting both the record and the fact recorded as true.

Concerning (β), the speeches which it is alleged the speakers never spoke, but the author manufactured, it may suffice to answer, that while on the one hand it is not denied that the author may have set down not the *ipsissima verba* which were uttered, but the substance of what was spoken, and may have frequently done so with more or less of touching up from his own pen, on the other hand it cannot be demonstrated either that he ever drew upon his imagination instead of deriving his information from written documents or reliable oral communications (see below on the sources of the Acts), or that he ever deviated by so much as a hair's breadth from the truth, so as to convey to his readers an impression different from what they would have received had they listened with their own ears to the speech.

In support of the third charge (γ), the artificial structure of the narrative, it is customary to affirm that there is no sort of act or experience ascribed to Peter in the first division of the Acts that has not its counterpart in the second division which relates the history of Paul. "Both epistles begin their miraculous healings with the restoration of a lame-born man (iii. 2, xiv. 8). Peter works miracles through his own shadow (v. 15); Paul through his aprons and napkins (xix. 12). Peter's name is feared by demons (v. 16, viii. 7); as afterwards is

that of Paul (xvi. 18, xix. 11, 15, xxviii. 9). If Peter overcomes Simon Magus (viii. 18), so does Paul overthrow Elymas (xiii. 6) and the Ephesian wizards (xix. 13). Miracles of punishment are performed in the above-cited cases by Paul as well as by Peter (v. 1). To awaken the dead is just as possible to the one as to the other (ix. 36, xx. 9). To Tabitha corresponds Eutychus, as to Æneas (ix. 33), Publius's father (xxviii. 8). Does Cornelius fall down and worship Peter (x. 25)? So is Paul deemed worthy of divine honour at Lystra (xiv. 11) and Malta (xxviii. 6), which he refuses in almost the same words as Peter. . . . Is Paul imprisoned and placed before the judgment-seat? The same thing happens first to Peter and John, and afterwards to all the apostles. Has Paul been beaten at Philippi before the two Duumviri? So were the first apostles before the Sanhedrim. Was Paul stoned at Lystra? So was Stephen in Jerusalem. Has an angel delivered Peter from his prison? An earthquake does the same thing for Paul" (Holtzmann, *Einleitung*, pp. 410, 411). The correspondences are undoubted, but after all they exist in only a few instances, and seldom in any instance in more than a few particulars. Anything like a complete parallel between the histories of Peter and Paul such as the Tübingen critics suggested cannot be made out. "Where," for instance, "are the parallels to the Pentecostal wonder, to the choice of the Seven, to the sea voyage of Paul, or to his four years' imprisonment in Cæsarea and Rome?" And "Why," more particularly, "did the composer forget to set the crown upon his whole presentation [of history] by bringing Peter to Rome and making both apostles die as martyrs in the same persecution?" (Holtzmann, *Einleitung*, p. 415.) The truth is, as the writer just cited remarks, the parallel is almost always accidental (which proves it to have been undesigned), and always breaks down in its most crucial point, as, for example, when attempted to be established between the stoning of Paul at Lystra and the stoning of Stephen in Jerusalem. If the writer wished to make the two correspond, why did he allow Paul to rise up and walk away unhurt after lapidation, when he knew that Stephen lost his life in passing through a similar experience? In short, whatever resemblances exist between the two histories are "not more than might be expected in any age from simple parity of situation and condition" (Sanday, *Inspiration*, p. 327), and all the rest is, on the part of critics, baseless imagination.

The charge (δ) of not understanding the antagonisms of the apostolic age, which some have pressed against the author of the Acts, is entirely a matter of opinion; and concerning this the judgment of so competent a scholar as Professor Sanday will probably have as much weight as the contrary allegation. "Looking at the matter with such a measure of intelligence as I can command for myself," writes he, "I should say that the Acts showed, on the whole, a very good understanding of the different opposing forces which brought the history to the point at which the author left it" (*Inspiration*, p. 321). With this verdict the majority of candid readers will agree. The first conflict which arose within the Church out of the supposed or real neglect of the widows of Hellenistic Jews in favour of those of native-born Palestinians is introduced and explained in a

manner which shows the writer to have been in possession of authentic information about the whole dispute; while it is sheer assertion to maintain that the author of the Acts failed to comprehend the controversy which inevitably sprung up and for some time fiercely raged around the question of what terms of communion should be imposed upon Gentile converts. Nor is there ground for contending that the author inadequately grasped Paul's theological teaching, of which the central doctrine, that of Justification by Faith, is reported by him in the Apostle's speech at Antioch (xiii. 38 *ff.*), and that of the Atonement in the address to the elders at Miletus (xx. 28), though even could it be established that he did not thoroughly comprehend the Pauline theology in all its details, that would not prove him to have been incapable of writing authentic history.

As to (ε), the pretended conflict between the statements in Acts and certain other statements in Paul's Epistles, more is made of this than the actual facts of the case will warrant. When it is urged, for example, that because Paul's epistles never refer to his second visit to Jerusalem in company with Barnabas (xi. 30), or to the apostolic decrees (xv.), these cannot have been historical; or that the chronicles in Acts cannot be trustworthy because of not mentioning either Paul's bodily weakness (1 Cor. iv. 9 *ff.*; 2 Cor. i. 8, 9; Gal. iv. 13, 14), or the stake in the flesh (2 Cor. xii. 7) under which he suffered, or the "deaths oft," "prisons more abundant," "three shipwrecks," and "eight bodily punishments" of which he speaks (2 Cor. vi. 5, xi. 23-25), or the journey he made to Arabia (Gal. i. 17), or the dispute he had at Antioch with Peter (Gal. ii. 11); any one can perceive that such reasoning is not conclusive, unless it can be shown that a writer is always bound to mention everything he knows; while as for the so-called contradictions between the Acts and Epistles which critics so confidently parade as evidence of the unreliable character of the former, these mostly exist in the imaginations of the critics. The intellect which can discern irreconcilable antagonisms between such statements as that Paul went up to Jerusalem as the messenger of the Church at Antioch (xv. 2), and likewise in obedience to divine revelation (Gal. ii. 2); that he laid his own personal views about the gospel before a private meeting of the apostles (Gal. ii. 2), and afterwards the public question concerning the terms of communion for Gentile converts before a general assembly of the apostles and elders (xv. 6, 12, 23, 25); that he refused to circumcise Titus because of the false brethren who wanted to enforce this rite upon all Christians (Gal. ii. 3), and afterwards in Lystra circumcised Timothy, whose mother was a Jewess (xvi. 3), in order (it is believed) to make his ministry more acceptable to the Jews; that when Paul reached Rome the Jews spoke as if Christianity had scarcely been heard of in that city (xxviii. 21, 22), whereas the Apostle had years before written that the faith of the Roman Church was spread abroad throughout the whole world (Rom. i. 8); the intellect that can see in these propositions irreconcilable antagonisms deserves to be pronounced incapable of reasonable criticism.

The last objection (ζ) the silence of Acts concerning the differences between Paul and the other Apostles, and in particular Peter, is no real difficulty unless, as already explained, on the assumption that a writer is always bound,

on pain of losing his reputation for truthfulness, to communicate all he knows. Besides, by the time the Acts was penned, the supposed friction between the two Apostles, if it ever reached the severity suggested by this objection, which there is no reason to believe it did, must have been considerably allayed, so that no good purpose could have been served by recalling it to the remembrance of Christian readers, or even by disturbing the flow of his narrative through the introduction of personalities, which probably both good men regretted, the more especially as the story had already been told to the Church in the Epistle to the Galatians.

(2) The positive evidence in support of the trustworthy character of the Acts is extremely satisfactory.

(α) A considerable portion of the Book—the "we" passages already more than once alluded to—consists of reports from an eyewitness, who, even on the supposition of a late authorship for the whole work, must have been a fellow-traveller of the Apostle in those districts to which his reports refer; while, if the writer of the "we" passages was the actual author of the whole, a presumption arises from his having been a contemporary of Paul's, that he had access to reliable sources of information for what he wrote. (See below on the sources of the Acts.)

(β) The undesigned coincidences which have been detected between statements in the Acts on the one hand, and statements in the Epistles of Paul on the other, furnish a second testimony to the accuracy of the author of the Acts. For these Paley's *Horæ Paulinæ*, Blunt's *Undesigned Coincidences*, and Birks's *Horæ Apostolicæ*, should be consulted, though the following instances may be studied as illustrations of the sort of evidence that is meant :—

ACTS.		EPISTLES.
viii. 3, ix. 1-10	Paul's conversion	1 Tim. i. 13-16.
ix. 23-25	Paul's escape from Damascus	2 Cor. xi. 32, 33.
ix. 28, xv. 2, xx. 16, xxiv. 17	Paul's visits to Jerusalem	Gal. i. 17, 18, ii. 1; Rom. xv. 25, 26.
xiv. 19	Paul's stoning at Lystra	2 Cor. xi. 25.
xvi. 16-22	Paul's sufferings at Philippi	Phil. i. 29, 30, ii. 1, 2; 1 Thess. ii. 2, iii. 4.
xvii. 5-9	Paul's sufferings at Thessalonica	1 Thess. iii. 4.
xvii. 16	Paul left alone at Athens	1 Thess. ii. 18, iii. 1, 6, 7.
xviii. 1, xx. 2	Paul's two visits to Corinth	1 Cor. ii. 1, iv. 19, xvi. 5.
xviii. 24-28	Work of Apollos at Corinth	1 Cor. i. 12, iii. 6.
xix. 20, 26	The "effectual door" opened at Ephesus	1 Cor. xvi. 9.
xix. 29, 30	"Fighting with wild beasts" at Ephesus	1 Cor. xv. 32.
xix. 33	Alexander the silversmith	2 Tim. iv. 14.
xx. 2	Gospel preached in Illyricum	Rom. xv. 9.
xx. 4	Tychicus known to the Ephesians	Eph. vi. 21.
xx. 4	Trophimus left at Miletus	2 Tim. iv. 20.
xxviii. 16-20	Paul a prisoner	Eph. vi. 19, 20.

(γ) The speeches in the Acts which purport to have been delivered by Peter, Paul, and James, when compared with the Epistles left by these writers, are found to exhibit an agreement with them which could hardly have existed had the speeches been fictitious. Of the correctness of this assertion one may quickly convince himself by means of a concordance. Nor does it accord with fact, as is

sometimes asserted, that the characteristics of Luke run through the discourses of Peter and Paul, but on the contrary, by "the general type of their teaching and minute peculiarities of style," these are most carefully distinguished from Luke's compositions (Ebrard, *The Gospel History*, p. 501, E. T.).

(δ) The knowledge now possessed of the countries and age to which Acts refers enables the correctness of its statements to be placed beyond dispute. Not only does the writer show himself accurately informed about the titles of Roman magistrates in the first century, calling Sergius Paulus (xiii. 7) and Gallio (xviii. 12) proconsuls and governors of senatorial provinces, ἀνθύπατοι, the magistrates of Thessalonica (xvii. 6) politarchs, πολιτάρχαι, those of Philippi (xvi. 21), prætors, στρατηγοί, and the governor of Melita merely head man, πρῶτος (xxviii. 7), but he can tell that in Asia Minor (xiii. 50), and indeed throughout the Roman empire (xvii. 4, 12), during the first century women exercised great social influence, that Iconium, though from B.C. 100 to A.D. 100 regarded by the Romans as included in the district of Lycaonia, was by the native population distinguished as belonging to Phrygia (xiv. 6), and that until towards the close of the first century Christians were never persecuted by the Roman State for being Christians, but only for being disturbers of the peace and (supposed) enemies of social order (xvi. 7, xxiv. 5, 6). (See Ramsay's *The Church in the Roman Empire*, pp. 37, 38, 67, 68, 194, 195.) Recent archæological discovery also has set its seal on the historical character of such narratives as those of Paul's three years' residence in Ephesus (*Ibid.*, 143), and of Paul's voyage to Rome. In short, notwithstanding the minutest criticism to which this work has been subjected, it may be fairly said that no single instance can be produced in which the writer has erred in a geographical, political, or social allusion. Indeed it has been well said, "A man who could have been so wondrously accurate in his forgeries concerning countries so widely separated, as the writer of the Acts must have been, would have been a greater miracle than the greatest miracle which his pen records" (George T. Stokes, D.D., *Recent Discoveries and the Christian Faith; Sunday at Home*, August 1889, p. 552).

§ 3. Author and Date.

1. *The Author.*—The following line of thought may aid in arriving at a just conclusion with respect to the personality of the writer from whom Acts emanated.

(1) The writing claims to have proceeded from the pen which composed the Gospel of Luke (i. 1; Luke i. 3); and an examination of the two treatises abundantly confirms this claim. Not only do the two bear a close resemblance to one another in diction, in the use of words and phrases either peculiar to themselves or more frequently occurring in them than in other writings, but the Acts in several instances refers to incidents which are mentioned elsewhere only in Luke—as, *e.g.*, the command not to depart from Jerusalem (Luke xxiv. 29), and the return of the eleven to the city after the Ascension (Luke xxiv. 52), while its catalogue of the Apostles (i. 13) agrees with that of Luke (vi. 14-16),

rather than with that of Matthew or with that of Mark, in calling Simon the Zealot rather than the Canaanean (Matt. x. 4; Mark iii. 18), and in substituting for Thaddeus (Matt. x. 3; Mark iii. 18) Judas the son of James. It has also been observed that Stephen's prayer (vii. 59) echoes words of our Lord which have been preserved by the third evangelist alone (Luke xxiii. 34). Hence whatever arguments go to establish Luke's authorship of the Third Gospel (upon which it is not proposed to enter here) may be reasonably claimed as making for Luke's authorship of the Acts.

(2) The writing has so manifestly emanated from one composer (see above on the integrity), that, if the author of one portion of it can be agreed upon, that person must be forthwith pronounced responsible for the whole. Now the "we" passages leave no uncertainty upon the mind as to their authorship. They must have proceeded from a travelling companion of the Apostle, who joined him at Troas (xvi. 10), left him at Philippi (xvi. 40), was again picked up by him in that city some years after (xx. 5, 6), and journeyed with him to Jerusalem (xxi. 17), Cæsarea (xxvii. 1), and Rome (xxviii. 16). Of course the hypothesis is far from being impossible, that a late writer—say about the end of the first or beginning of the second century—having obtained access to these "we" documents, incorporated them in his own narrative without alteration, only it does not appear why so skilful a composer as the author of Acts should not have changed the "we" into "they," unless it was that he desired his readers to understand that he himself was included in the "we." In other words, it is hard to resist the inference that the hand which recorded the "we" passages wrote the whole book.

(3) As to who the author of the "we" passages actually was, the best existing evidence points to Luke, the beloved physician who was with Paul in Rome (Col. iv. 14). Claims have been advanced for Timothy, Titus, and Silas, but the considerations favourable to any one of these are outweighed by those which speak for Luke. The way in which the first "we" passage (xvi. 10) is introduced excludes the supposition that Timothy composed it, while xvi. 19 does the same for Silas. Again, when "we" reappears (xx. 6), Silas is not among Paul's companions, though Timothy, already excluded, is. As for Titus, who certainly accompanied Paul to the Jerusalem council (Gal. ii. 1), no reason exists for believing that he attended Paul and Silas on the second missionary journey, or was ever with Paul in Philippi. So that Luke alone remains as a possible author of the passages in question. It only needs to be added that this conclusion harmonises with the almost unanimous verdict of ecclesiastical tradition.

2. *The Date.*—The authorship of Luke established, the contention of those who relegate the Acts to the second century will need no refutation. Internal evidence reveals that the work belongs to the first century; and the sole question calling for solution is at what point of time in Luke's own life it was issued. That it presupposed the existence of Luke's Gospel is apparent. As, according to some critics, that Gospel could not have been composed till after the destruction of Jerusalem, then the date of the Acts must be looked for after A.D. 70. As, however, no plausible reason for assigning the Gospel to this late date can be

found, except the dogmatic assumption that Luke xix. 43 could not have been written till after the event, those who still regard prediction in the strict sense of the term as neither impossible, nor incredible may be excused if they demand stronger evidence for setting aside the widely accepted belief that Acts was composed in the lifetime and during the imprisonment (Döllinger, Langen, Michaelis, Kuinoel, Tholuck, Ebrard, Godet, etc.) of Paul, and therefore about A.D. 62. Had Paul been dead when Luke wrote, it is at least likely that some hint would have been dropped that the great missionary had finished his course.

§ 4. Sources and Aim.

1. *The Sources.*—(1) It is obvious that for the "we" passages Luke would require simply to draw upon his own recollection or notes of the scenes and incidents of which he had been an eyewitness.

(2) Of those portions of Paul's missionary journeys of which he had not been an eyewitness his information would most likely be derived from the Apostle himself. Whether Paul had prepared such a travel document as Ramsay contends for (*The Church in the Roman Empire*, p. 6) may be uncertain, though highly probable. It is undeniable that Luke, through long companionship with Paul at Cæsarea and at Rome—two years in each—had ample opportunity for hearing the story over and over again from the Apostle's lips, while "it is hard to believe that Paul's letters were unknown to Luke" (Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller, and the Roman Citizen*, p. 16).

(3) Nor could he have experienced much difficulty in becoming acquainted with the facts recorded in the earlier chapters of his Book, as, while Paul could have told him all about the martyrdom of Stephen, Philip the Evangelist, whom he met at Cæsarea (xxi. 8), could as readily have informed him about the conversion of Cornelius of Cæsarea (x.), of which he must have often heard, of the conversion of the Eunuch, which was brought about through his own instrumentality (viii. 26), and of the preaching in Samaria, which also had been carried on by himself (viii. 1-24). About the Pentecostal wonder and the commencement of the Church in Jerusalem, as Luke accompanied Paul to the Jewish metropolis, and without doubt (xxi. 18) was introduced to James and the elders, it is easy to perceive that he stood in immediate connection with those to whom the history of the first days was perfectly familiar. If amongst these written documents already existed, beyond question Luke would not be denied access to them; if written documents did not exist, Luke would have had no difficulty in preparing them from the oral accounts to which he listened.

Note.—With the explanation above given corresponds in some measure that put forth by Friedrich Spitta (*Die Apostelgeschichte, ihre Quellen und deren geschichtlicher Wert*, 1891), who detects in the Acts "two separate documents—one, A, probably composed by Luke, beginning with the report of the Ascension, in Luke xxiv. 50-53, containing the 'we' passages, and concluding with the narrative of Paul's voyage to Rome; another, B, commencing with the Ascension story in the Acts, and ending with Paul's discussion with the Jews in Rome; and both put together by an editor, R, who worked still in the first

century." The different characteristics of these documents are thus indicated: "In A the history is authentic, while that in B, which relates the miracles, is manufactured. From A the editor extracted the speeches, but from B the narratives about the miracles. In A the question chiefly is about Paul's relation to the Jews, whilst his relation to the Gentiles retreats into the background; in B, on the other hand, Paul's relation to the Gentiles steps to the front, whilst his relation to the Jews retires into the shade. Hence it is in B that signs first appear of the separation of the Jewish Christians from the Law-free Gentile Christians. For R the question is the combination of these two sources. Neither A nor B concluded with the two years' imprisonment of Paul at Rome, where R stops. This writer had in view the composition of a third essay, a τρίτος λόγος, though he appears never to have carried it out" (*A. Hilgenfeld im Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie* (1895), 1, pp. 67, 68). Though a good deal of this is fanciful and arbitrary, yet its main idea of "separate documents" may be harmonised with what has been stated above by supposing that A was a record written by Luke of what he had seen and heard, while B consisted in large part of narratives prepared by Paul and others, and that Luke himself was R. (Compare Ramsay's *The Church in the Roman Empire*, pp. 6-8, 148-168; and *St. Paul, the Traveller, etc.*, pp. 10 *ff.*).

2. *The Aim.*—(1) That Luke's aim in composing this work was neither, as Grotius imagined, to write a biography of the two principal apostles, nor, as Credner suggested, to prepare a Pauline Church history, may be regarded as self-evident. To neither of these conceptions does the treatise answer.

(2) Still less can the view of Schneckenburger, Zeller, Baur, and their followers be entertained—that it was written for the purpose of conciliating the opposing parties in the early Christian Church (the Petrine or Jewish and the Pauline or Gentile), by showing that, while on the one hand Paul was an orthodox Jew, on the other hand Peter was in full sympathy with Paul's universalism. In support of this theory, besides pointing to the parallelism (designed, as this theory requires it to have been) between the acts and experiences of Peter and of Paul, it is usual to call attention to the facts that the first Gentile mission was undertaken by Peter, who opened the door of the Church to Cornelius (x.), and that Paul, by his constant practice of offering the gospel first to the Jews (xiii. 16, xiv. 1, xvii. 2, xviii. 4), by his frequent journeyings to Jerusalem to keep the feasts (xviii. 21, xx. 16), by his circumcision of Timothy (xvi. 3), and by his Nazarite vow (xxi. 24), showed himself to be deeply and heartily attached to the old Hebrew faith. But while all this is true, it is pure imagination to assert either that such antagonism as is ordinarily depicted by the Tübingen critics raged between the Petrine and Pauline parties among the early Christians—if, indeed, the existence of such parties at all is not a fiction of the critical mind—or that the reconciliation of such parties formed any part of Luke's object in writing his treatise. If it was, he assuredly took a most unfortunate way to do so, by calling attention so repeatedly and emphatically as he does to the unbelief of the Jews, and by accentuating at the very crises in Paul's history (xxi. 20) the jealousy which was felt towards him by his

countrymen. Besides, as Weiss pertinently asks, what hope could there have been of gaining over the Paulines by setting up a criterion of the apostolate (i. 21, x. 41) which, in view of the Judaists, would have excluded Paul from it? (*A Manual of Introduction to the New Testament*, ii., pp. 330, 331.) And "How," inquires Holtzmann, "does it agree with the conciliatory character of the work that exactly that tangible token of brotherly love, the collection, which Paul brought to Jerusalem from his third journey, is scarcely mentioned?" (*Einleitung*, p. 416.) In short, so inadequately can this theory be made out, that not a few advanced critics are becoming disposed to give it up, like Schenkel, who says: "Having never been able to convince myself of the sheer opposition between Petrinism and Paulinism, it has also never been possible for me to get a credible conception of a reconciliation effected by means of a literature sailing between the contending parties under false colours" (*Das Christusbild der Apostel*, etc., Preface).

(3) A third object with which the writer of the Acts is credited is that of preparing an apology which should make Christianity acceptable to the Roman or Gentile public by representing its distinguished champion as a Roman citizen, who, in the tumult raised against him by the Jews as he passed from city to city preaching Christ, constantly found protection against their violence at the hands of Roman magistrates, and who, ultimately conveyed to Rome by a Roman centurion, carried on in the metropolis the duties of his apostleship under the protection of Roman laws (Schwegler, Schneckenburger, Overbeck). "Everywhere," says Haweis, "there is a wide sympathy with the Gentiles. The future of the Church is felt to be with them. Luke's respect for the Roman officials and the Roman government is quite Pauline. Gallio, the Corinthian magistrate, the Ephesian town-clerk, the Roman soldiers, the Roman governors, even Felix and Agrippa, appear to advantage. The Roman police are kind to Paul; the judges are indulgent and conciliatory. One hears him gladly; another wishes to set him at liberty; a third only wants a little bribe, but means no harm to Paul" (*The Story of the Four*, p. 132). Those who embrace this view of the aim contemplated by the author do not hold the just-recited details of Paul's history to be historical occurrences, but look upon them as pure invention. This opinion, however, may in just retort be characterised as "vain imagination," as no ground whatever can be found for challenging either the Roman citizenship of the Apostle or the authenticity of his reported appeal to the Roman tribunal; while, if he enjoyed the protection of Roman officials, this harmonised exactly with the attitude of the Empire to Christianity during the first century (see Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire*, p. 194).

4. The only tenable account of Luke's aim is that which is indirectly given by himself (i. 8)—that he wished to show how the apostles, in carrying out their commission to be "witnesses for Christ in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth," had borne the glad tidings of salvation through a crucified and risen Christ first through the Holy Land as far as to Antioch, and then from Antioch to Rome, the metropolis of the world.

PART I.

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN PALESTINE; OR. ITS PROGRESS FROM JERUSALEM TO ANTIOCH.—THE ACTS OF PETER.

CHAPTERS I.—XII.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY—PREPARATIONS FOR THE FOUNDING OF THE CHURCH.

§ 1. The Two Treatises; or, the connection between the Acts of the Apostles and the Gospel of Luke (vers. 1, 2).
§ 2. The Forty Days; or, the Interval between the Resurrection and the Ascension of Christ (vers. 3-5).
§ 3. The Taking Up of Jesus; or, the Exaltation of the Church's Head (vers. 6-11).
§ 4. The Ten Days before Pentecost; or, Waiting for the Promise (vers. 12-14).
§ 5. Completing the Apostleship; or, the Election of Matthias (vers. 15-26).

CRITICAL REMARKS.

Ver. 1. **The former treatise have I made.**—Better, *the first* (πρῶτος for πρότερος, as in John i. 15-30, unless πρῶτος was intended to point to a τρίτος: Ramsay) *treatise* (λόγος in ancient written speech meaning the separate book rolls in a connected work—Holtzmann) *I made.* That the first treatise was the Gospel of Luke the name of its recipient (Luke i. 3) declares.

Ver. 2. **Through the Holy Ghost.**—Should be connected with "given commandments"—see John xx. 22 (Meyer, Weiss, Overbeck, Spitta, and others), rather than with either "chosen" (De Wette, Wendt, Holtzmann, Zöckler, and others)—though see xx. 28—or "taken up," the Ascension never being in Scripture ascribed to the Spirit, but commonly represented as the work of the Father (ii. 33; Eph. i. 20; Phil. ii. 9), though sometimes depicted as the free act of Christ Himself (John xx. 17; Eph. iv. 10; Heb. i. 3).

Ver. 3. **Being seen of them**, or showing Himself to them, not in a subjective vision, but objectively and really, during (διά with gen. as in v. 19; xvi. 9) **forty days**—*i.e.*, not continuously, but at intervals. Compare the forty days of Moses on Mount Sinai (Exod. xxiv. 18), of Elias's journey (1 Kings xix. 8), and of Christ's fasting in the wilderness (Matt. iv. 2; Mark i. 13; Luke iv. 2). Holtzmann regards the forty days, for which the Valentinians, according to Irenæus, had eighteen months, as a kind of *propylæon* or "porch" for the following historical narration; while Weizsäcker consigns them to the domain of legend on the ground that they indicate "a desire" on the part of the narrator "to gain time for a more advanced instruction of the apostles in the life of Jesus, and consequently for their preparation to receive the spirit."

Ver. 4. **Being assembled**, or *eating* **together with them** (compare x. 41; Luke xxiv. 30, 41-43), not assembling them, though the verb, which occurs only here in N.T., has this meaning in Josephus (*Wars*, III. ix. 4).

Ver. 5. **With water**, ὕδατι, the element by which the outward rite of baptism was performed. **With**, rather *in* (ἐν) **the Holy Ghost**, the element in which the spiritual baptism should take place.

Ver. 6. **When they were come together.**—(The Sinaitic codex omits *together*.) This was not the meeting referred to in ver. 4, but the last interview recorded in Luke xxiv. 36-53, which began in Jerusalem and ended near Bethany. **Wilt**, rather *dost* **Thou?** εἰ introducing a direct question, "which is contrary to classical usage, though not uncommon in the N.T. and the LXX." (Hackett). **The kingdom to Israel** shows that as yet the expectations of the apostles had not passed beyond the bounds of their own nation.

Ver. 7. **Put**, *set*, fixed, or appointed **in His own power**—*i.e.*, in the sovereign exercise of it. Compare Matt. xxiv. 36, and 1 Thess. v. 1.

Ver. 8. **After that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.**—Literally, *the Holy Ghost having come upon you.* This should be the source of their power. "Before the Ascension the disciples were led through the Spirit as a transcendent power standing over them; first with the Pentecostal event does He become an immanent principle" (Holtzmann). **Witnesses unto Me** should be *My witnesses*, the reading μου being preferable to μοι. Compare Luke xxiv. 48. **In Jerusalem**, etc., gives a hint about the plan of the book.

Ver. 9. **When He had spoken**, rather *saying* **these things**, and **while they beheld**, or *they behold*, **He was taken**, or *was raised* **up** into the air, but not yet into heaven, ἐπήρθη being different from ἀνελήφθη (ver. 2) and ὑπέλαβεν, received up from under.

Ver. 10. The **two men** who **stood** or *were standing* **by them in white apparel** or *garments* were angels, as in Mark xvi. 5; Luke xxiv. 4; John xx. 12.

Ver. 11. **In like manner** signified that Christ's return would be in the air and visible. Compare Mark xiv. 62; Luke xxi. 27; Rev. i. 7.

Ver. 12. **A Sabbath day's journey**—according to Josephus six (*Ant.*, XX. viii. 6) or five (*Wars*, V. ii. 3) furlongs—marked the distance of the Mount of Olives from Jerusalem, not of Bethany, which was fifteen furlongs from the city (John xi. 18). Luke (xxiv. 50) does not say the Ascension took place at, but over against (πρός) Bethany. Nor does Acts affirm that it occurred at the sixth furlong from the city, but merely that Olivet, the scene of the Ascension, was distant a Sabbath day's journey from Jerusalem. The two statements do not collide. From the latter statement it has been inferred that the Ascension happened on a Sabbath; but ver. 3 rather points to a Thursday, the exact date being 28th April, A.D. 29, shortly before midday (Holtzmann).

Ver. 13. **Come in.**—"To the city probably, not the house" (Hackett); though Holtzmann considers it was the temple they entered (compare ii. 46; Luke xxiv. 53). Not **an** but *the* **upper chamber** should be read, meaning "of the private house" where they were abiding—most likely that mentioned in Mark xiv. 15; Luke xxii. 12.

Ver. 14. **With one accord**, or with one mind. Omit "supplication" and "the" before women. Last mention in Scripture of **Mary, the mother of Jesus**, whose reappearance after the crucifixion (John xix. 27) is noteworthy. **His brethren** were most probably Mary's children, though the idea that they were only His kinsmen or relatives is not excluded by the term.

Ver. 15. **Those days** lay between the Ascension and Pentecost. For **disciples**, μαθητῶν, the R.V. reads *brethren*, ἀδελφῶν, as in Matt. xxv. 40; Acts ix. 30, xi. 29; 1 Cor. v. 11. **Names** = persons, as in Rev. iii. 4, xi. 13. Unclassical. **Together**, ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό, has always a local signification. (See iii. 1; Luke xvii. 35.)

Ver. 16. **Scripture . . . which the Holy Ghost spake.**—A testimony to the Inspiration of the Old Testament. Compare 2 Peter i. 21. **By the mouth of David** seems to guarantee that David was the author of some parts of the Psalter—in particular of Psalm lxix., and perhaps also of Psalm xli. **Who was** (or *became*) **guide.** Originally a disciple, Judas turned to be a traitor, and acted as a leader to the Roman cohort which apprehended Christ (Matt. xxvi. 47; John xviii. 3).

Ver. 17. **For**, ὅτι, indicates that Judas supplied the conditions that were requisite to enable him to fulfil the Scripture. The figurative expression **lot**, κλῆρος, used in its literal sense in ver. 26, is here employed, as in viii. 21, xxvi. 18, to denote anything obtained by lot, and hence generally any portion, share, or office without regard to the mode of its attainment. The term "clergy" is derived from κλῆρος, the order of the ministry being viewed as divinely appointed.

Ver. 18. **Purchased.**—Obtained (R.V.), got possession of (Plumptre), or caused to be purchased (Hackett); what was bought with Judas's money being considered as bought by himself. *Qui facit per alium facit per se.* **Falling headlong.**—Having probably first hanged himself, and afterwards, through the breaking of the rope, fallen to the ground, which would cause him to burst asunder in the midst. Matthew's account (xxvii. 5) suggests this. "The traitor may have struck in his fall upon some pointed rock, which entered the body and caused his bowels to gush out" (Hackett). Papias was acquainted with a version of this story, which reported that Judas died of a loathsome disease.

Ver. 19. **Aceldama**, Ἀκελδαμά, formed from the Syro-Chaldaic חֲקַל דְּמָא, and signifying "field of blood"—*i.e.*, either purchased by the blood money paid to Judas and returned by him (Matthew), or sprinkled with the traitor's blood when he fell (Luke). Perhaps both reasons contributed to the fixing of the name subsequently borne by the potter's field, which became a burial place for strangers. According to tradition Aceldama lay on the south side of Mount Zion.

Vers. 18 and 19 are commonly regarded as no part of Peter's speech, but an interposition by Luke (Calvin and others); yet οὖν (ver. 18) renders this doubtful (Holtzmann).

Ver. 20. **In the Book of Psalms.**—The two citations (Psalm lxix. 25, cix. 8), given with slight modifications from the LXX. recite the doom of the enemies of David and his kingdom, and therefore of the enemies of Christ and His kingdom, of which the former were types; consequently also of Judas, "as the first and most notable of these" (Alford).

Ver. 21. **Went in and out among us.**—"An exact construction of the Greek would have placed 'unto us,' ἐφ' ἡμᾶς, after 'went in' or 'came in,' and inserted 'from us,' ἀφ' ἡμῶν, after 'went out'" (Hackett). Compare ix. 28; John x. 9.

Ver. 22. **The baptism of John** signified not John's baptism of Christ, but John's baptism generally as a well-known date.

Ver. 23. **They**, *i.e.*, the congregation and the apostles, **appointed**, or *put* before God, or before themselves for selection.

Ver. 24. **Thou Lord.**—Whether addressed to God or Christ is disputed. For the former opinion (Meyer, Plumptre, Holtzmann) appeal is taken to xv. 7, 8, in which God is called Καρδιογνώστης, and Peter represents himself as being chosen by God. For the latter (Olshausen, Alford, Hackett, Spence) it is argued (1) that in the N.T. generally Christ is usually styled Lord; (2) that Christ is stated in ver. 2 to have selected the other apostles; (3) that the first Christians were in the habit of praying to Him (vii. 59, ix. 14); and (4) that Peter in the Gospel (John xxi. 17) ascribes to Christ the knowledge of all things, which certainly include the hearts of all men.

Ver. 25. **Fell.**—Went aside by transgression. **His own place.**—His own proper destiny, Gehenna, or the place of punishment, from which he (Judas) was kept back so long as he was in the apostleship.

Ver. 26. **Lots.**—These were either tablets or slips of parchment with the names of the candidates written upon them, which were cast into a vase or other vessel, which was then shaken, when the first tablet or slip thrown out indicated the candidate elected.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 1—2.

The Two Treatises; or, The Connection between the Acts of the Apostles and the Gospel of Luke.

I. **Their names.**—1. Of the former treatise, *the Gospel of Luke.* Recognised by being addressed like the Acts to Theophilus. 2. Of the latter, *the Acts of the Apostles.* In some MSS. "Acts of all the Apostles, "Acts of the Holy Apostles," or some other such variation. Neither title originated with the author of the writing, but was afterwards appended when the writing found a place in the Canon.

II. **Their contents.**—1. Of the former, *the earthly, or pre-ascension ministry of Christ.* Not everything Christ said and did (see John xxi. 25), but as many of His deeds and words as were needful to furnish an adequate picture of Him as a teacher and worker. 2. Of the latter, *the post-ascension or heavenly ministry of Jesus.* The word "began" suggests that Christ's activity did not terminate with His taking up, but continued after. Hence the Acts, which records that activity, is neither a full series of apostolical biographies, the actions and utterances of Peter and Paul only being narrated at any length, while of the other apostles, the sons of Zebedee alone are incidentally mentioned; nor a complete Church history, since it leaves untold much that happened, and carries the story of the Church no further than the time when Paul reaches Rome; but an account of Christ's doing and teaching since His Ascension through the instrumentality of the two above-named Apostles, their colleagues, and assistants (Stephen, Philip, James the Brother of the Lord, Barnabas, Mark, Silas, Timothy, Titus, Apollos, and others), first, in founding and developing the

Church at Jerusalem and within the Holy Land, and, secondly, in extending and establishing it among the Gentiles in Asia Minor and in Europe.

III. **Their author.**—The writer of the "we" passages in the Acts (xvi. 10, 11, xx. 5, 6). 1. *Not Timothy*, whom the writer of the Acts distinguishes from himself (Acts xvi. 10). 2. *Still less Silas*, an opinion having no better support than the resemblance ingeniously detected between Silvanus (from *silva*, a wood) and Lucanus (from *lucus*, a grove). 3. *But Luke*, a physician by profession (Col. iv. 14), who joined Paul as a companion in travel at Troas (xvi. 10), and was with him as a fellow-worker at Rome (2 Tim. iv. 11; Phil. 24). See Introduction.

IV. **Their recipient.**—*Theophilus.* Possibly his baptismal name (Ramsay). Most likely a Gentile Christian, probably a member of the Roman Church; manifestly a patron of learning and an inquirer after truth. That his social rank was high may be inferred from the epithet "most excellent" given him by Luke (i. 3)—a title of honour used by Paul in addressing Felix (xxiii. 26) and Festus (xxvi. 25).

Lessons.—1. The inter-connection of the various books of Scripture. 2. The purely natural way in which the existing Scriptures arose. 3. The value of Scripture independent of a knowledge of the authorship of its several parts. 4. The excellence of grace in persons of high station.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 1. *The Earthly Ministry of Christ*; or, the work and wisdom (the doing and doctrine) of Jesus.

I. **The Work of Jesus.**—1. *Personal.* — He fulfilled all righteousness (Matt. iii. 15). 2. *Philanthropical.*— He healed all manner of sickness and disease among the people (Matt. iv. 23; Acts x. 38). 3. *Legal.*—He made atonement for the sins of men (John i. 29). 4. *Social.*—He founded a kingdom of heaven upon earth (Matt. v. 1-20; John xviii. 36).

II. **The Wisdom of Jesus.**—1. He revealed the *nature* (the Trinity) and *character* (love) of God (John iii. 16). 2. He taught the *necessity* and *nature* of the New Birth for man (John iii. 3). 3. He promulgated *the way of salvation* — through faith in His name (John vi. 47). 4. He disclosed *the certainty of a future life* of blessedness for believers (John xiv. 1, 2). 5. He announced *the terms of citizenship* in the kingdom of God (Matt. v. 1-8).

Conclusion.—Christ's pre-eminence in both departments. The noblest worker and the loftiest teacher the world has ever seen.

The Heavenly Worker.

I. **His name.** — Jesus, signifying Saviour, of whom Luke had already written in the Gospel (ii. 21).

II. **His sphere.**—On earth and among men, as distinguished from His pre-existent and post-resurrection theatres of activity.

III. **His character.**—As a worker. 1. Faithful. 2. Loving. 3. Unwearied. 4. Effective. 5. Disinterested.

IV. **His continuance.**—1. Until the day of His Ascension. 2. Until now (John v. 18).

The Incomparable Teacher.

I. **His person.**—Jesus, who spoke of Himself as the Truth (John xiv. 6), and whom men recognised as a Teacher (John iii. 2, xi. 28).

II. **His doctrine.**—1. *What it concerned.*—(1) God, whom He revealed (John i. 18). (2) Man, whom He unveiled as to His nature, character, responsibility, destiny (Luke vi. 8; John ii. 24, v. 42, xvi. 30). (3) Salvation, as to its essence and conditions (John iii. 16). (4) The future life, as to its rarity, and the means of attaining thereunto (John xiv. 1-6). 2. *Whence it came.*—Not of Himself or from men, but from above (John v. 20; vii. 16).

III. **His method.**—1. Simple (Mark xii. 37). 2. Gracious (Luke iv. 22).

3. Authoritative (Matt. vii. 29).
4. Original (John vii. 46).

The Name of Jesus.

I. A **historic** name. — Borne by Joshua, the successor of Moses (vii. 45; Heb. iv. 8).

II. A **personal** name.—As distinguished from that of Christ (Luke ii. 21), or Messiah, an official name.

III. A **symbolic** name.—Signifying Saviour and foreshadowing its possessor's work (Matt. i. 21).

IV. An **exalted** name.—Glorified above every other name in heaven or on earth (Phil. ii. 9).

V. A **powerful** name.—1. The ground of salvation (iv. 12). 2. The plea of prayer (John xiv. 13). 3. The potent instrument of working miracles (Mark xvi. 17).

A Momentous Beginning—that of the ministry of Jesus. In relation to—

I. **Jesus Himself.**—In respect of—1. His ability to finish what He had begun (Luke xiv. 28). And 2. The consequences it would entail upon Himself if carried out and finished (John xii. 27).

II. **The Old Testament Dispensation.**—Of which the work of Jesus was —1. The fulfilment (Matt. v. 17), and 2. The setting aside (Heb. vii. 19, viii. 13).

III. **The World.**—Of this, it was destined to be either—1. The salvation, or 2. The condemnation, according as it was accepted by the world or rejected.

The Christ of God and Christian History.—The expression, "all that Jesus began to do and teach," is a peculiar one, and seems to imply two things: *first*, that the Gospel was to be a record of the doings and sayings of Jesus *from the very beginning*, which it pre-eminently is, recording the previous prophecy, the angelic annunciation, the conception and birth of Jesus. Of the human side of Jesus, the Christ of God, Luke especially records the beginning. And all, from the very first, is grace and truth. But the expression "began" means, *secondly*, that this record is the beginning or fountain head of all subsequent Christian history; that out of these doings and teachings have flowed all things connected with the Church of God down to the last. It is a *fontal* record; a root; a well-spring; the source of a river which is still flowing amongst us, and refreshing the sons of men.

I. **We connect all subsequent testimony with Christ's doings and sayings.**—All the testimony delivered by Christian witnesses goes back to Christ's life; and is, as it were, a prolongation of His own voice, a continuation of His own doings. It is of His life and death that the witnesses speak; and it is that life and death that contain the power which their testimony embodies. The power of our testimony lies in the directness of its communication with the manger and the cross; as well as with all between. It is Jesus Himself that is working His miracles before our very eyes, and speaking to us still.

II. **We connect each individual conversion with Christ's sayings and doings.**—The soul, in the moment of its mighty change, is brought into direct communication with these; it is transported back over eighteen centuries, and feels itself in the very presence of Jesus of Nazareth—speaking, working, loving, blessing, saving, pardoning, comforting. Virtue goes out from these sayings and doings of this personal Christ to lay hold on the sinner. And this is the beginning of his eternal history!

III. **We connect each planting of a church with what Jesus did and taught.**—We see this very clearly in Luke's story of the planting of Christianity. Trace up the history of a church—at Jerusalem, or Samaria, or Antioch, or Thessalonica—to its true source, and you are landed at once among the scenes of Christ's life on earth. There is no church where there is no direct link of this kind. Other foundation can no man lay; other

soil can no church root itself in; round no other centre can any church revolve. For what is the temple if the shekinah be not there? What is a church or congregation if the Holy Ghost, revealing Christ in His grace and glory, be not the indwelling and inworking energy?

IV. **We connect each true revival of religion with what Jesus did and preached.**—No quickening can be genuine save that which goes back to this, and takes its rise from this. Excitement, earnestness, impression, there may be; but only that is authentic, and divine, and abiding, which springs directly out of that which Jesus began to do and to teach.—*H. Bonar, D.D.*

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 2—5.

The Forty Days; or, Fellowship with the Risen Christ.

I. **The termini of this interval.**—1. *The terminus a quo.* The resurrection. Demonstrated to be a reality by many "proofs" or "infallible signs." (1) To the eye, manifestations. "Being seen of," or appearing unto His disciples, forty days—not continuously, but from time to time, and not always in the same place but in different localities. Of these manifestations of the risen Christ Scripture records eleven or twelve, of which at least three are narrated by Luke (see below). (2) To the ear, words: "Speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God." Of this examples are furnished by Luke in the conversations Christ had with the Emmaus travellers, and the eleven in the upper room (Luke xxiv.). (3) To the touch, an invitation to satisfy themselves, by handling, that He was no bodiless apparition, but a veritable human person, clothed with "flesh and bones." Though not mentioned in the Acts, this is stated in the Gospel (Luke xxiv. 39). Whether the disciples accepted the invitation is not recorded. Most likely, as Thomas afterwards (John xx. 28), they felt this to be unnecessary, and prostrated themselves before Him in adoring worship, if they did not audibly exclaim—"My Lord! and my God!" (See "Hints on ver. 3.") 2. *The terminus ad quem.* The ascension. Spoken of in the passive voice, this was none the less a free act of Christ Himself (John vi. 62, xiv. 2, xvi. 5, xx. 17; Eph. iv. 10; Heb. iv. 14). Though referring principally to a change of condition, an exaltation from the form of terrestrial existence in which Christ had accomplished His redeeming work to that of celestial glory which He had with the Father before the world was (John xvii. 5), there is no room for doubting that it likewise pointed to a visible departure from the earth and passage through the opened heavens (John vi. 62; Heb. iv. 14). (See on vers. 9-11).

II. **The transactions of this interval.**—1. *The occupation of Christ.* (1) Appearing, manifesting Himself to His disciples. This was needful for the confirmation of their faith in His resurrection, and by consequence in His Messiahship and Divinity. The forty days constituted an important link in the chain of evidence which bound together the superstructure of the Christian religion. (2) Teaching. Enlightening the minds of His disciples. "Speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God." These were chiefly "things concerning Himself" as the Founder and Head of the kingdom. About the significance of His earthly career of humiliation, which culminated in the decease accomplished at Jerusalem (Luke ix. 31); about the import of His resurrection, as attesting at once the divinity of His Person, and the atoning work of His sufferings; about the meaning of His exaltation for Himself, for them, and for the world (see next "Homily"); and about the terms of His gospel message of which they were henceforth to be the bearers. (3) Commanding. Laying injunctions on the hearts of His disciples. In particular, enjoining them

"not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father"—a command reasonable on the part of Christ, who was henceforth more than ever to be their Lord and Master, since to Him alone belonged the prerogative of prescribing their duty, while the injunction laid upon them related to the reception of a gift He alone could bestow; suitable to the condition of the disciples, inasmuch as it was fitted to discipline them in greatly needed virtues, such as patience, caution, expectation, submission, courage; and necessary for the proper execution of their work, which could only be injured by overhasty action and insufficiently qualified zeal. (4) Promising. Holding out to His disciples a prospect of blessing, "Ye shall be baptised with (or in) the Holy Ghost, not many days hence." A great promise—the entering into them of the Holy Ghost; practically the implantation in them of the life of the Risen Christ, the exaltation of them to spiritual fellowship with Him, and the endowment of them with a power proceeding from Him. A certain promise—the words first uttered by the Baptist (Luke iii. 16; John i. 33), and again by Christ before His death (John xiv. 16, xv. 26, xvi. 7), being a third time repeated after His resurrection, when on the eve of departing to secure their fulfilment. A near promise—"not many days hence," intimating the decisive moment when this baptism should come upon them to be at hand. 2. *The business of the disciples.* This corresponded to Christ's occupation, and consisted of four things: (1) Beholding. Contemplating, not with the spirit's eye merely, but with the body's eye also, Christ's manifestations of Himself. The former a main part of the duty of believers still (John xiv. 21, 22). The latter will be possible for believers only in the day of Christ's glorious appearing (Titus ii. 13; 1 Peter i. 7; 1 John iii. 2). (2) Listening. The more attentively because His "comings" were intermittent, and everything connected with them betokened their speedy cessation—last words are always precious—because the theme on which they talked was one in which they were profoundly interested—the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, though as yet their conceptions both of the kingdom and of the manner of its restoration were somewhat carnal. To hear Christ's words with faith and love, an abiding mark of discipleship (John xviii. 37). (3) Obeying. Whatever commandments Christ laid upon them, it may be assumed, they promptly honoured. Obedience is always required of Christ's followers (John xv. 14).

> "Theirs not to reason why;
> Theirs but to do or die."—*Tennyson.*

(4) Waiting. This also formed part of the business of the apostles during the forty days. The context tells us they waited for the promise as directed. Waiting one of the hardest tasks of the Christian life, demanding strong faith, resolute self-control, and eager hope. Thousands can act who cannot wait. Yet is waiting not less needful than acting for the proper development of the individual life, and the successful conduct of Christian work (1 Cor. i. 7; 2 Thess. iii. 5); while it certainly is highly beneficial to all who practise it in patient humility (Isa. xl. 31).

Learn.—1. The value of God's intervals in providence and in grace. 2. The main business of a Christian, which is to study, hear, obey, and wait for his Lord. 3. The mistake of undue haste in working for Christ. 4. The certainty that all God's promises will be fulfilled.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 3. "*Alive after His passion*"; *or, Did Jesus Christ actually rise from the dead?*

I. **This is undoubtedly the teaching of New Testament Scripture.**—1. Of *Paul*, not only in his preachings in the Acts (xvii. 31, xxvi. 23), but also in his Epistles (Rom. i. 4, iv. 24, vi. 4,

viii. 11, x. 9; 1 Cor. vi. 14, xv. 4, 20; Eph. i. 20; Col. i. 18, ii. 12; 2 Tim. ii. 8). It is impossible to doubt that Paul both taught and believed in an actual bodily resurrection of Christ. 2. Of *Peter*, in his sermons (ii. 24, iii. 15, iv. 10, x. 40) and letters (1 Peter i. 3, 21, iii. 18, 21). Just as clearly was Christ's resurrection an article in Peter's creed and teaching. 3. Of *the Gospel writers*, who report that not only was Christ's tomb seen to be empty by those who visited it (Matt. xxviii. 6; Mark xvi. 6; Luke xxiv. 3, 6; John xx. 2, 6, 7), but that He was subsequently beheld by His disciples (Matt. xxviii. 9, 17; Mark xvi. 9, 12, 14; Luke xxiv. 15, 36; John xx. 14, 19, 26, xxi. 1). Unless, therefore, these New Testament writings are all unhistorical—a conclusion which criticism has not only not established, but successfully disproved—a presumption in favour of Christ's resurrection is created by their conjoint testimony.

II. The hypotheses which have been started to account for this unanimous belief in the resurrection, without admitting its truth, are all unsatisfactory.—These hypotheses may be reduced to five: 1. The *theft* theory, propagated originally by the Jews (Matt. xxviii. 11-15), and resuscitated by rationalist theologians like Reimarus—a theory "with which," says Professor Bruce, "men of all schools in modern times would be ashamed to identify themselves" (*Apologetics*, p. 385). 2. The *swoon* theory, proposed by Paulus, that Jesus never really died, but simply lost consciousness on the cross, and regained it in the cool cavern in which His seemingly lifeless body was deposited—a theory on which both Strauss and Keim turn their backs as totally inadequate, if not absurd, Strauss (*New Life of Jesus*, i., 412) saying "it is impossible that a being who had stolen half dead out of the sepulchre, who crept about weak and ill, wanting medical treatment, who required bandaging, strengthening, and indulgence, and who still at last yielded to His sufferings, could have given to the disciples the impression that He was a Conqueror over death and the grave, the Prince of Life, an impression which lay at the bottom of their future ministry," and Keim, after mentioning other difficulties, echoing his predecessor's sentiments: "Then there is the most impossible thing of all, the poor, weak, sick Jesus, with difficulty holding Himself erect, in hiding, disguised, and finally dying—this Jesus an object of faith, of exalted emotion, of the triumph of His adherents, a risen conqueror and Son of God! Here, in fact, the theory begins to grow paltry, absurd, worthy only of rejection, since it makes the apostles either miserable victims of deceit, or with Jesus themselves deceivers" (*Jesus von Nazara*, vol. vi., p. 330, E. T.). 3. The *vision* theory, espoused by Celsus, Strauss, Renan, and others, that first Mary Magdalene, and after her others of the disciples, had visions, which were the result of nervous excitement, and in which they fancied they beheld Christ alive after His passion, and resuscitated from the tomb, against which also lie a number of insurmountable objections which have been skilfully urged by various critics—as, *e.g.*, (1) That the interval between the resurrection and the commencement of these visions—viz., three days—was too short for their origination by the excited feelings of the disciples; (2) That so far from being in a state of expectancy with regard to Christ's resurrection during these days the disciples were in an exceedingly depressed state of mind, and had no hope whatever of His resurection (Luke xxiv. 11, 21, 37; John xx. 25); (3) That if widespread excitement was at this time characteristic of the disciples, it is not easy to understand why the visions were so few in number—limited at most to ten instances—and why they ceased altogether after forty days, and why the apostles so soon after returned to a grave and sober condition of mind such as they exhibit in the Acts; (4) that if all the Christophanies were purely subjective visions

it is surprising either that they should have differed from each other, as they did—Mary having first thought that the person on whom she looked was not her Lord, but the gardener (John xx. 15), and the Emmaus travellers that the companion who joined them was not Christ but a stranger (Luke xxiv. 16)—or, if differences were to be expected, that they (the visions) did not differ from each other more than they did; and (5) that the facts just adverted to concerning Mary and the Emmaus travellers that they did not at first recognise Jesus but mistook Him for another, afford strong proof that Christ's appearances were not subjective visions, but objective manifestations (compare Köstlin's *Der Glaube und seine Bedeutung für Erkenntniss*, etc., pp. 38, 39). 4. The *telegram* theory, suggested by Keim, that Jesus signalled to His disciples from heaven that He was still alive, by causing an objective image or likeness of His body as they had known it to appear before their eyes, and that out of this grew their faith in His resurrection. But against this hypothesis it has been forcibly urged that the production of such an image of Christ's body was no less a miracle than the rising of the actual body would have been, and that on this theory, equally with the proceeding, the faith of the disciples would be made to rest on a halluciation (Bruce, *Apologetics*, pp. 392, 393). 5. The *legendary* theory, favoured by Weizsäcker and Martineau, that Christ not only never rose, but that there were no appearances to explain, the doctrine of Christ's resurrection being only a later legend manufactured for the purpose of expressing the Church's strong conviction that Jesus still lived—a theory which does not harmonise with the experiences of the first disciples, whose visions of Christ (Paul's included) were not purely spiritual, as this class of critics so dogmatically assert, and which does not account satisfactorily for the legend of a physical resurrection, saying as it does that "faith in the continued existence of Jesus produced the later tradition of optical visions, not such visions the faith" (Bruce, p. 397).

III. **The results that flow from a denial of Christ's resurrection are absolutely incompatible with an acceptance of the Christian religion.**—These results may be thus summarised: If Christ never rose from the dead, then—1. *Christ was a false prophet and a deceiver*, since He distinctly claimed that He would rise (Matt. xvi. 21, xx. 19, xxvi. 32; Mark ix. 9; John ii. 19), and a false prophet could neither have been sinless nor divine, neither a Messiah for Israel nor a Saviour for the world. 2. *Christ's disciples and first followers were all victims of hallucination*, and hence were far from being trustworthy teachers of religion for after ages. If they were wrong in teaching that Christ rose, what guarantee exists that they are right in teaching He will come again? 3. *The whole magnificent structure of Christianity rests upon a lie*, which is barely conceivable, even though Mohammedanism and Buddhism originated with founders whose claims to divine inspiration cannot be conceded. 4. *Christians must be of all men most miserable*, since there can be no atonement and no salvation, no resurrection and no eternal life, if so be that Christ never rose (1 Cor. xv. 12-19). See "Hints" on xxv. 19.

The Appearances of the Risen Christ.

I. **Their time.**—1. *After His passion.* This clause implies that Christ had really died, and excludes the idea that He had merely swooned. 2. *After His resurrection.* That His resurrection was not merely spiritual, but physical, is involved in the term "alive," which points not to a disembodied existence like that of the "spirits of just men made perfect" (Heb. xii. 23), but to a corporeal form of being like that which Christ possessed before He died.

II. **Their continuance.** — During forty days. This precludes the notion that they were mere subjective illusions, since it is hardly supposable that illu-

sions would repeat themselves always in the same form to different persons and at different times throughout so lengthened a period.

III. **Their number.**—Ten. To—1. *Mary Magdalene* at the sepulchre (John xx. 11). 2. The *women*, returning to Jerusalem (Matt. xxv. 8). 3. *Peter*, on the resurrection morning, hour and place unknown (Luke xxiv. 34). 4. The *Emmaus travellers*, the afternoon of the same day (Luke xxiv. 13-31). 5. The *ten*, the evening of the same day, in the upper room (Luke xxiv. 33; John xx. 19). 6. The *eleven* in the upper room, eight days later (John xx. 26). 7. The *seven* in Galilee, beside the lake (John xxi. 1). 8. The *five hundred* brethren at once, time and place unknown (1 Cor. xv. 6). 9. *James*, the Lord's brother, time and place also unknown (1 Cor. xv. 7). 10. The *eleven* at Bethany (1 Cor xv. 7; Luke xxiv. 50).

IV. Their **certainty**.—Proved by many infallible signs; such as—1. *Their number and continuance*, as above explained. 2. *Christ's eating and drinking in presence of His apostles* (ver. 4; x. 41). This is fatal to the hypothesis that Christ's manifestations were purely spiritual and subjective. 3. *His request* that the disciples should handle Him and see (Luke xxiv. 39; John xx. 27). Christ would never have subjected Himself to such a test had He not been corporeally present with His disciples.

V. Their **object**.—Probably threefold. 1. *To attest the reality of His resurrection*, which, as the central fact in Christianity, was to form the theme of apostolic preaching. 2. *To confirm the faith of His disciples* at once in His Messiahship and His divinity. 3. *To instruct them concerning the kingdom* He was setting up, and whose heralds the apostles were soon to be.

The Words of the Forty Days.

I. **Words spoken to the whole body, or to the majority of the apostles.**—1. A *benediction*. "Peace be unto you" (Luke xxiv. 36; John xx. 19, 21). 2. A *commission*. "As the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you" (John xx. 21). 3. An *instruction*. "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Matt. xxvii. 19, 20; Mark xvi. 15). 4. A *dotation*. "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John xx. 33). 5. An *exposition*. "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer and rise again from the dead" (Luke xxiv. 46). 6. A *prediction*. "Ye shall receive power when the Holy Ghost is come upon you" (i. 8). 7. A *caution*. "It is not for you to know the times and seasons" (i. 7). N.B.—These seven words express the indispensable conditions of all apostleship or ministerial service in the Christian Church.

II. **Words spoken to individual disciples.**—1. To *Mary* at the sepulchre. "Woman! why weepest thou?" A question for Christian mourners. 2. To *the women* on the way. "All hail!" (Matt. xxviii. 9.) A salutation to anxious seekers. 3. To *Thomas* in the upper room. "Reach hither thy finger!" (John xx. 27.) An invitation to doubters. Also "Because thou hast seen Me thou hast believed," etc. (John xx. 29.) A commendation of faith without sight. 4. To *Peter* at the lake side. (1) "Lovest thou Me?" (John xxi. 16.) A question for self-examination. (2) "Feed My lambs." "Tend My sheep" (John xxi. 15, 17). A promotion for the penitent. (3) "Verily, verily, I say unto thee," etc. (John xxi. 18.) A trial for faith. (4) "If I will that he tarry till I come," etc. (John xxi. 23.) An admonition for the forward.

III. **Words spoken to apostles and disciples combined.** 1. To the *seven* on the sea. "Children, have ye any meat?" (John xxi. 5.) An inquiry of love and solicitude. 2. "Cast ye on the right side of the ship," etc. (John xxi. 6.) A direction for desponding workers, always to obey Christ's orders. 3. "Bring of the fish ye have now taken" (John xxi. 10). An encouragement for all faithful servants.

Things concerning the Kingdom.

I. **Concerning the founding of the kingdom,** which accomplished itself in His (Christ's) person after He, through His death and resurrection, had completed His work.

II. **Concerning the collection of the kingdom,** which was to be effected through the instrumentality of the apostles, and by the ministry of the word.

III. **Concerning the perfecting of the kingdom,** which should be carried forward by the power of the Holy Ghost whom He was to send from the Father, and who should sanctify all who believed on His (Christ's) name.

IV. **Concerning the revelation of the kingdom** which should take place at the end of time when He came again from heaven in the glory of His Father. —*Besser.*

The Kingdom of God.

I. **The underlying conception.**—"The kingdom of God is that perfect arrangement of all things, in which God Himself is the Ruler and His will alone is active and decisive. The conception includes three elements or ingredients: 1. A people. 2. A constitution. 3. A land, a sure dwelling-place and possession. Only where these three things are united can we speak of a kingdom" (Bornemann's *Unterricht im Christenthum*, p. 30).

II. **The threefold realisation.**—1. *The Israelitish, or the past.* (1) The people were the children of Abraham after the flesh. (2) The constitution was the law, moral and ceremonial, promulgated by Moses at Sinai. (3) The land was Canaan, into which the people were conducted by Joshua. 2. *The Christian, or the present.* (1) The people are professed believers on the Lord Jesus Christ. (2) The constitution may be said to consist of repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. (3) The land is the earth which has been given over to the Church for subjugation and occupation. 3. *The heavenly*, or, *the future.* (1) The people will be those who are truly born again and united to Christ by the spirit. (2) The constitution will be the possession of perfect holiness, or absolute submission to Christ. (3) The land will be the heavenly Canaan, or an eternal life of uninterrupted and intimate fellowship with Christ.

Ver. 4. *The Command of the Ascending Lord.*

I. **Depart not from Jerusalem.**—1. *Neither in fear for your safety.* It would not have been surprising had the apostles, in alarm for their persons, withdrawn from the holy city when Christ ceased appearing to them. Human nature is not naturally courageous, but essentially weak; and though the apostles were by this time renewed in the spirit of their minds, being Christians, yet were they not entirely delivered from the power of their constitutional infirmities, while the unusual circumstances in which they would be placed by Christ's ascension would tend to excite these into more than ordinary activity. Still they were not to retire from the metropolis till they got the signal from their Lord. Premature flight would (1) reveal a lack of fortitude on their part, showing them to be afraid of what man might do unto them, in which case they would not prove efficient preachers of the gospel; (2) display a feebleness of faith, as if they could not trust an unseen equally with a seen master to protect them, which would likewise prove fatal to their success; and (3) indicate a dulness of understanding which failed to perceive that in retiring from Jerusalem they would be practically acknowledging defeat, and surrendering the cause of their Master. 2. *Nor from exuberance of zeal.* The world might appear to them to be perishing for lack of knowledge, and they might be eager to spread abroad the tidings of salvation, they might even be desirous of proving on the instant their devotion to their Master, and their willingness to champion His cause, yea, the time before their Master's return might

seem too short to admit of being wasted in delay. Yet nothing would be gained by precipitate haste. It was not for them to give the signal to advance. Their duty was to follow, not to lead, not to order, but to obey.

II. **Wait for the promise of the Father.**—1. *Without this only failure would attend their efforts.* In spiritual matters nothing can be successfully accomplished without divine help (Zech. iv. 6; John xv. 5). In the kingdom of heaven upon earth the prime actor is the Holy Spirit. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers are subordinate instruments. 2. *With this success would be certain.* The Holy Ghost would clothe them with power—power to understand and expound the truth (John xvi. 13), power to convince gainsayers (Luke xi. 15; Acts vi. 10), power to touch the conscience (2 Cor. iv. 2)—which nothing and no one would be able to resist, 3. *Waiting for this would be an admirable test of their faith.*—Only in the strength supplied by a living faith could they hope to successfully discharge their commission. 4. *Waiting for this would evoke the best and strongest qualities in their characters.* The Lord is always good to them that wait for Him, and only great men can wait. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength," and "they also serve that only stand and wait."

Two Lessons.—1. "There are seasons in our lives when God appears to call us simply to wait"; and 2. True progress is often better secured by waiting than by working.

Ver. 5. *The Two Baptisms.*

I. **John's baptism.**—1. *Material.* A water baptism. 2. *External.* Affecting the body. 3. *Symbolic.* Representing moral cleansing. 4. *Preparatory.*—In anticipation of Christ's coming. 5. *Temporary.* Intended only for a season.

II. **The baptism of Jesus.**—1. *Spiritual.* A baptism in the Holy Ghost. 2. *Internal.* Descending on the heart. 3. *Essential.* Imparting spiritual renovation. 4. *Complementary.* Realising what had been symbolised by John's rite. 5. *Permanent.* Designed to abide for ever.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 6—11.

The Ascension; or, the Exaltation of the Church's Head.

I. **The attendant circumstances.**—1. *The place.* Olivet. This agrees with the statement of Luke (xxiv. 50), that the scene of the "taking up" was near Bethany, and contradicts not the account of Mark (xvi. 14-19), which seems to, but really does not, indicate as the point of departure the upper room in Jerusalem, in which Christ had appeared to His disciples as they sat at meat. The words "so that" (Mark xvi. 19) refer not necessarily to the immediately preceding conversation, but to the "speakings" in general of the Lord with His disciples during the forty days. (Compare Weiss, *The Life of Christ*, iii. 408, E. T.) 2. *The time.* The last of the forty days, the day of the Bethany manifestation, which, however, was not the interview enjoyed by the ten (John xx. 19; compare Luke xxiv. 36-49), but that granted to all the apostles (1 Cor. xv. 7), which most likely happened in Jerusalem on the evening of the fortieth day. In this case the journey to Bethany would be performed during night, and the ascension accomplished in the early morning, at the dawning of the day. 3. *The spectators.* The eleven. That others besides them should have witnessed the departure was not necessary, since to them alone, as His ambassadors, was about to be committed the task of witnessing both concerning and for Him. But that others along with them were in the upper room when Christ came to lead them forth is the natural deduction—others from whom they were withdrawn, who were left behind (compare Gen. xxii. 5; 2 Kings ii. 6), and to whom they returned (see ver. 13) when the sublime spectacle was over.

II. **The supernatural phenomenon.**—1. *The antecedent conversation.* (1) The curious question, "Lord! dost Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" Surprising that the apostles, after three years' training in the school of Christ, after the tragic event of the crucifixion, after the transcendent experience of the resurrection, and after listening to the risen Christ's exposition of the things concerning the kingdom, should have still clung to the idea of a temporal monarchy. Yet neither unnatural nor difficult to understand when one remembers how full the air then was of materialistic and carnal conceptions of the coming Messianic kingdoms, how the apostles from their youthful days had drunk in these ideas and practically lived upon them, and how invincible, even in good men, early prejudice is. (2) The discouraging reply. Leaving their mistaken notions to be corrected by the Holy Ghost (John xvi. 13), the risen Christ assured them their wisdom lay in not endeavouring beforehand to know times and seasons in connection with the kingdom—a hint to students of prophecy; that times and seasons were solely within the ken of the Father who had appointed these in the sovereign exercise of His own authority (Deut. xxix. 29); and that their special task would be that of witnessing for Christ, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke xxiv. 47), but progressing "to the uttermost parts of the earth"—light upon the mission of the gospel. (3) The comforting assurance. Great and arduous as the work of witness-bearing would unquestionably prove, they would not be left for its execution to their own unaided strength, but, by the Holy Ghost about to come upon them, would be endowed with power sufficient to meet every emergency that might arise in their sacred calling—a word of consolation to Christians in every sphere, but especially to preachers and missionaries. 2. *The immediate exaltation.* (1) He was taken up, raised into the air, immediately after He had ceased speaking, and while the apostles were looking at Him in wondering adoration. Luke (xxiv. 50, 51) describes Him at the moment as lifting up His hands and blessing them, and as in the act of stepping back and being parted from them. (2) A cloud received Him out of their sight, folding round Him like a fleecy garment. "He maketh the clouds His chariot" (Psalm civ. 3). Imagination may picture the upward path of the ascending king. Scripture leaves that unpainted, and confines itself to state the unadorned fact that He was taken up," that "He passed through the heavens" (Heb. iv. 10; 1 Peter iii. 22), that He "took His seat at the right hand of God" (Col. iii. 1; Heb. xi. 12). 3. *The subsequent vision.* Two men in white apparel stood beside the apostles as they looked steadfastly into heaven. Not Moses and Elias (Ewald), who had talked with Christ on the Transfiguration Mount, else Luke would have named them as he does in the Gospel, but two angels, probably the two who had figured at the resurrection (Luke xxiv. 4; John xx. 12). (1) Reproving the heaven-gazers, thereby reminding them their duty henceforth would be not so much contemplation as action, these celestial monitors (2) comforted them with the assurance that Christ would in like manner return as they had seen Him depart, thereby confirming Christ's promise that He would come again (Matt. xvi. 27; Luke ix. 26; John xiv. 3), and (3) directed them to look for His future appearing (Phil. iii. 20; 1 Thess. i. 20; Heb. ix. 28).

III. **The doctrinal interpretation.**—1. *What the Ascension signified to Christ.* —(1) The termination of His earthly humiliation and the commencement of His heavenly glory. (2) The conclusion of His redeeming work and its formal acceptance as well as reward by His Father. (3) The cessation of His direct visible activity on the earth, and the inauguration of His indirect and invisible working from heaven and through the Spirit. 2. *What the Ascension signified to the apostles.* (1) The certainty of Christ's resurrection. If Christ visibly withdrew from the earth He must have really risen from the dead. (2) The confirmation of their faith in Christ's Messiahship and Divinity. This followed

as a consequence from their faith in His resurrection. (3) The verification of Christ's authority as a Teacher, Christ having before the Crucifixion announced that the Son of man should ascend up to where He had been before (John vi. 62). When the apostles beheld this prediction fulfilled, they must have reasoned that in like manner all His other promises would be Yea and Amen! And in particular that His word about the Holy Ghost would not fail. (4) The necessity of henceforth knowing Christ no more after the flesh. This probably was the import of His word to Mary—"Touch Me not! for I am not yet ascended" (John xx. 17). (5) The certainty that they would ultimately follow whither He had gone. This had been promised at the supper table (John xiv. 3). When, therefore, they saw Christ exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high, they would no longer fear, if they ever feared, that He might not be able to implement His loving word concerning and gracious purpose toward them. 3. *What the Ascension signified in the world.* (1) The trustworthy character of Christ's redeeming work. His exaltation supplied proof that He was able to save unto the uttermost all that came unto God through Him (Heb. vii. 25). (2) Christ's supremacy over all things and persons on earth. This was an unavoidable deduction from Christ's investiture with all power in heaven and on earth (Matt. xxviii. 18; John xiii. 3). If Christ had "gone into heaven, angels, authorities, and powers being made subject unto Him" (1 Peter iii. 22), one might rest assured that all things on earth had likewise been placed beneath His feet (Eph. i. 22), so that henceforth He should be Lord of both the living and the dead (Rom. xiv. 9). (3) The certainty that Christ would eventually conquer His foes. "He must reign till He hath put all His enemies under His feet" (1 Cor. xv. 25; compare Heb. x. 12, 13).

Learn.—1. The title Christ has to be worshipped (Phil. ii. 10, 11). 2. The duty of seeking those things which are above (Col. iii. 1). 3. The propriety of looking for Christ's return (Titus ii. 13).

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 6. *A Questionable Question.*—"Lord, dost Thou at this time restore the kingdom?"

I. **Authorised.**—When dictated by: 1. *Shows faith*, which expects the kingdom. 2. *Tender love*, which wishes the salvation of the world. 3. *Holy grief*, which feels for the miseries of the times.

II. **Unauthorised.**—When prompted by: 1. *Carnal impatience*, which wishes to see the kingdom of God coming with external show. 2. *Spiritual curiosity*, which will pry into what the Father hath reserved for Himself. 3. *Pious indolence*, which with folded hands looks at the clouds instead of working for the kingdom of God in the calling entrusted to it.—*Gerok.*

Ver. 7. *Not for Man to know Times and Seasons.*

I. **A reasonable restriction.**—Considering: 1. That the Father hath arranged these in the exercise of His own sovereign authority; 2. That in other realms besides that of religion man's capacity to forecast the future is limited; and 3. That a knowledge of the times and seasons might act injuriously on man.

II. **A beneficial arrangement.**—As tending: 1. To inspire humility, teaching man that some subjects are beyond his ken. 2. To repress curiosity, which is always prone to overstep the bounds of what is legitimate. 3. To cultivate submission, directing man to leave secret affairs in the hands of the Father. 4. To discipline faith, training it to believe that He doeth all things well.

Ver. 8. *Christ's Witnesses.*—Christians in their several spheres and capacities should be testifiers:

I. Of **the facts of Christ's history.**—

Of His incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, to those who are ignorant of these.

II. Of **the doctrines of His Gospel.**—Of His vicarious sacrifice for sin, His free offer of forgiveness, and His gift of the Holy Spirit to believers, to such as are in need of these.

III. Of **the character and destiny of His Church.**—Of its spiritual nature, holy calling, and ultimate victory over the world, to those who are outside its pale.

The Christian's vocation.

I. Its **glory.**—Witnesses of the Exalted King, *His* witnesses.

II. Its **lowliness.**—Only His *witnesses*, nothing more.

III. Its **sufferings.**—Witnesses of the Lord in a *hostile* world.

IV. Its **promise.**—*Strength* from above.—*Gerok.*

Power for Service.

I. **In what it consists.**—The indwelling of the Holy Ghost. Whence the power is 1. Supernatural in its character; 2. Natural in its operations, employing man's ordinary faculties; and 3. Adequate in its measure, meeting all the necessities of those who serve.

II. **From whom it comes.**—From the Father as its source, and from Christ as its dispenser. Hence to be sought from these alone by: 1. Obedient waiting (ver. 4); 2. Earnest praying (i. 14, ii. 1); and 3. Humble self-emptying.

III. **To whom it is given.**—1. To those who are chosen, as the Apostles were by Christ. 2. To those who surrender themselves unreservedly for Christ's service. 3. To those who believingly wait for the heavenly gift.

IV. **For what it is granted.**—To enable its recipients to witness for Christ. This the Holy Ghost does by witnessing for Christ in them. Without the Spirit's help no words of apostle, prophet, evangelist, or preacher could efficiently testify for Christ—*i.e.*, testify in such a way as to savingly reach the hearts and consciences of hearers.

Pentecostal Power.—Let us look at this pentecostal power and see some of its characteristics and conditions. What is it? 1. First, it is the power of religious *earnestness.* Half-hearted religion is no religion at all. God wants the whole heart or none. Earnestness is working at religion, not playing at it. Earnestness makes religion one's chief business. It goes at it as men dig for gold in the mountains, determined to have it if it is there. That was the way with these first disciples. They knew the power existed and was meant for them. So they were going to have it. They would meet God's conditions. 2. Pentecostal power is the power of *union.* In union there is strength. In division or separation there is weakness. Again and again are we told that those one hundred and twenty disciples were *all* in that upper room—not one hundred and nineteen, but one hundred and twenty. All there, and all with one accord. The heat generated fused all hearts into one. Did you ever see the hard, cold pieces of iron melt and flow together in the furnace? Then the moulder can make what he pleases out of the molten mass. The lack of union destroys the power of the human body or of the Christian Church. Think how a few church members who never unite in prayer and work with the rest shear the Church of strength. 3. Pentecostal power is the power *to witness for Christ.* Christianity is a religion that advances by means of testimony; and *only* so. Where no one speaks for it, it dies. Imagine Peter spending a week or a month without mentioning the name of Jesus. Imagine groups of the disciples meeting and talking about the weather, the crops, politics, or finances, and not saying a solitary word about their ascended Lord. True, holy living is good testimony for Christ. Without it talk is mere hypocrisy. But true, also, that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, but when the heart is as full of Jesus as were the hearts of the first disciples, the tongue reveals

the fact. How many Christians are tongue-tied! 4. Again, Pentecostal power is the power of *the Word of God.* Have you noticed at Pentecost what a reasoner, what an expositor, what an orator Peter became? .Have you observed how his eloquence burned its way into the hearts of his auditors? What gave him that power to move men? Read over his address, and you will find nothing there you can explain by the ordinary rules of rhetoric or canons of secular eloquence. It is the plainest kind of a speech. Did you ever know an earnest student of God's Word that did not grow in piety? Did you ever know a Church that fed on God's Word that did not have something like Pentecostal power? Did you ever know that power to come where the Divine Word was not honoured? 5. Pentecostal power was the power of *prayer.* 6. There are many other characteristics of this Pentecostal power. It is the power of a complete consecration, the power of an indomitable courage, the power of spiritual concentration, the power to win souls to Jesus Christ. But they are all summed up in this, it is the power of the Holy Ghost—the power of human hearts when taken possession of by the Divine Spirit. Will there be any mistaking this power? Will there be any doubt what has happened to us when we are filled with the Holy Ghost? Did any one ever try to make you believe that a kerosene lamp or a gas-jet or even an electric light was the spring or summer sun? Could electric lights enough be manufactured to make the earth put forth her buds, and flowers, and fruits? Oh, how easily the sun awakens the sleeping forces of nature, and clothes the earth with verdure! What transformations when the sun goes to work! And what transformations when the Holy Ghost descends! Are the resources of the Holy Spirit limited? Is He not infinite? Are not all things possible with God? We have waited six thousand years for steam and electricity; but these forces existed even in Eden, and might have been used if we had only known how. We have waited two thousand years since Christ for the promised conversion of the world. The power to bring it about exists. It is possessed by the Holy Ghost. It is Pentecostal power. Shall we have it? Have it now? Or wait another two thousand years, while the world rolls on in iniquity and generation after generation passes on into hell?—*F. P. Berry.*

Ver. 9. *The Ascension of Christ and its Lessons.*

I. **The doctrine of the Ascension of our Lord holds a foremost place in apostolic teaching.**—"The doctrine of the Resurrection, apart from the doctrine of the Ascension, would have been a mutilated fragment, for the natural question would arise, not for one, but for every age: If Jesus of Nazareth has risen from the dead, where is He?"

II. **The Ascension of our Lord meant His withdrawal from this earthly scene.**—"The Book of the Acts does not describe our Saviour as ascending through infinite space. It simply describes Him as removed from off this earthly ball, and then a cloud shutting Him out from view, Christ passed into the inner and unseen universe wherein He now dwells."

III. **The Ascension of our Lord was a fitting and natural termination of Christ's ministry.**—"The departure of the eternal King was like His first approach, a part of a scheme which forms one united and harmonious whole. The Incarnation and Ascension were necessarily related the one to the other."

IV. **The Ascension of our Lord was a necessary completion and finish to His earthly work.**—"For some reasons secret from us, but hidden in the awful depths of that Being who is the beginning and the end, the source and condition of all created existence, the return of Christ to the bosom of the Father was absolutely necessary before the outpouring of the Divine Spirit of Life and Love could take place.

V. **The Ascension of our Lord rendered Christ an ideal object of worship for the whole human race.**—The Ascension of Jesus Christ was absolutely necessary to equip the Church for its universal mission, by withdrawing the bodily presence of Christ into that unseen region which bears no special relation to any terrestrial locality, but is the common destiny, the true fatherland of all the sons of God.

VI. **The Ascension of our Lord glorified humanity as humanity, and ennobled man simply as man.**—"The Ascension thus transformed life by adding a new dignity to life and to life's duties. From the beginning Christianity declared to all the dignity and glory of human nature in itself. Much of modern speculation tends to debase and belittle the human body. . . . The doctrine of evolution, to say the least, has not an elevating influence upon the masses. . . . The doctrine of the Ascension teaches men a higher and nobler view."—*G. T. Stokes, D.D.*

The Ascension of Christ.—What it meant.

I. **A continuation of the redemptive work of Christ.**—Without it the kingdom of God would have been but a divine dream. So long as the apostles were under Christ's visible guidance they could not dissociate His kingdom from the empire of physical conquest which had so long been the vision of Jewish passions and prejudices. "Not until they could no longer speak to Christ face to face did a purer faith draw them within the sweep of God's redemptive purpose, and open their eyes to the invisible kingdom of truth and justice, of love and moral beauty."

II. **A revelation of the unity of life.**—"Instead of being a parting it was a drawing near of the Lord in a higher and mightier fellowship with man, in a more fruitful and comprehensive relationship." "He was taken from the sight of His disciples that He might come into touch with all the springs of human thought and action."

III. **An enlargement of Christ's personal influence.**—"Death does not change but intensifies human relationships. Death is the gate through which the soul of the disciple ascends with Christ to larger life and more blessed influences." "Moses and Paul are greater forces in human society now than they ever dreamed of being while in the flesh. The influence of Calvin increases not only in power but in purity with each succeeding generation." So with Christ, whose ascension was "an uplifting and glorifying of all human life."—*George D. Herron, D.D.*

The Ascension of Jesus.

I. The conclusion of the appearances of the Risen One in the past.

II. The counterpart of His future return.

III. The point of entrance for His present sovereignty.—*Bornemann.*

Taken up; or, Views of the Ascension. Christ ascended into heaven.

I. **As a servant,** to receive His reward. Having finished His Father's work He ascended to receive His stipulated recompense (Heb. xii. 2).

II. **As a Son** into His Father's bosom. Out of this having come, into this He delighted to return (John xvii. 5).

III. **As a High Priest,** to intercede for His people. Having offered Himself once for all as a sacrifice, He passed into the heavens, there to appear in the presence of God for them for whom He shed His blood (Heb. ix. 24).

IV. **As a King,** to sit upon His throne. As appointed mediator He is Lord of all (x. 36).

The Ascension of Christ a Necessity.

I. **Because the polluted earth was not suited as an abode for the glorified Body of the Redeemer.**—Heaven was its appropriate sphere of existence. Before it could tabernacle again in this world, the new heavens and the new earth must be introduced.

II. **Because an essential part of His priestly office was to be exercised in**

Heaven."—"What the high priest did in the earthly temple it was necessary for the High Priest of our profession to do in the temple made without hands in the heavens."

III. **Because it was necessary that redemption should not only be acquired but applied.**—"Men if left to themselves would have remained in their sins, and Christ would have died in vain." To avert this the Holy Ghost required to be given, and heaven was the place whence the Holy Spirit could be outpoured.

IV. **Because Heaven itself required to be prepared for His people.**—Hence Christ said, "I go to prepare a place for you," etc. (John xiv. 2, 3).—*Charles Hodge, D.D.*

The Visible Ascension.

I. **The most befitting**, and naturally to be expected **attestation of Christ's heavenly origin** (John iii. 13, vi. 62, xvi. 28).

II. **The final** and most evident—for the first witnesses indispensable—**exhibition of the truth that the kingdom of Jesus should be established by the Spirit from heaven.**

III. The most assuring **guarantee of Christ's heavenly power.**

IV. **The strongest pledge of His future visible return.**—*Stier.*

Clouds that conceal Christ.

I. **Clouds of vapour** conceal His glorious form from the eyes of sense.

II. **Clouds of ignorance** conceal His image from the eyes of the understanding.

III. **Clouds of unbelief** conceal His grace from the eyes of the heart.

IV. **Clouds of sin** conceal His presence from the eyes even of faith.

Ver. 11. *Why stand we gazing into heaven?* Because we see—

I. **Jesus crowned with glory and honour** (Heb. ii. 9).

II. **Humanity glorified in Him** (Heb. iv. 15).

III. **Redemption fully completed by Him** (Phil. ii. 9).

IV. **The whole creation in future recovered by Him** (Rev. xi. 15).—*Oosterzee.*

The Second Coming of Christ.

I. **Personal.**—The same Lord Jesus.

II. **Visible.**—In like manner as ye beheld Him going.

III. **Glorious.**—On the clouds of heaven.

IV. **Certain.**—He shall come.

Vers. 9-11. *Was Christ's Ascension a visible phenomenon?*

I. **Against this** the following considerations are commonly urged: 1. *Scientific.* The idea of a "local" heaven beyond the atmospheric firmament and out in the depths of space has been rendered inconceivable by modern astronomy. But without admitting that heaven cannot possibly be a place, all that the Ascension as narrated in Scripture involves is merely a visible withdrawal beyond the limits of this sensible sphere. 2. *Theological.* "The proper Christian faith conception of the present exaltation of Jesus Christ is not dependent on that external ascension which is reported in the Acts, the last not being for the Christian faith essential, and fundamental, while the first is (*Bornemann*). A statement such as this, however, is incorrect, since without a visible bodily ascension, not only would the doctrine of Christ's bodily resurrection be insecure, but the doctrine of Christ's mediatorship would be imperilled (see Heb. iv. 14-16). 3. *Critical.* (1) The account of Luke (xxiv. 20), which seems to place the Ascension at or near Bethany, fifteen furlongs from Jerusalem, whereas Acts represents it as having occurred only five or six furlongs from the city. See this difficulty met in Critical Remarks and Homiletical Analysis. Of course, if the reading which omits "and was carried up into heaven" be adopted, the difficulty vanishes. (2) The representation in Mark (xvi. 19, 20), which places (or appears to place) the Ascension immediately after the interview with the

eleven as they sat at meat. But not to insist upon the incongruity of representing Christ as vanishing through the heavens from a dining-room and at night, there is no more necessity for supposing that Christ immediately went forth from the chamber and ascended than there is for thinking that the apostles rose from their seats at the banquet and went forth to preach. (3) The silence of Matthew (xxviii.), which at least suggests that he did not know of any such occurrence as Luke and Mark report. But Matthew may have simply regarded the Ascension as lying beyond the scope of his Gospel history, or may have regarded it as directly implied in the Saviour's promise, "Lo! I am with you always," etc., "since it could not have been unknown to any Christian at that time, that Christ was no longer with His people 'in the flesh,' but had ascended to heaven" (Ebrard, *Gospel History*, § 102).

II. **For this** the undermentioned arguments should be weighed. 1. *Scientific.* There can be nothing scientifically impossible in the idea of Christ ascending into heaven, since Christ's body had already undergone a transformation of which science can take no cognisance. 2. *Theological.* If Christ actually rose from the grave in a bodily form, a visible departure from earth would seem to be necessary to avert the suspicion that He may again have died. 3. *Critical.* The concurrent testimony of the Gospel and Epistle writers is too strong to be set aside. Compare Mark xvi. 19; Luke xxiv. 50, 51; Eph. iv. 8, 10; 1 Tim. iii. 16; Heb. iv. 14, vi. 20, viii. 26, ix. 12; 1 Peter i. 22, iii. 22. (See Whitelaw's *How is the Divinity of Jesus depicted?* Part iii., Chap. I.)

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 12—14.

The Church in Jerusalem; or, the Ten Days before Pentecost.

I. **The Church's meeting-place.**—An upper room in Jerusalem. 1. *Humble.* Not a splendid cathedral or ornate ecclesiastical edifice; but an apartment in a private house, in the topmost story beneath the flat roof. Compare the meeting-place of the Christians at Troas (xx. 8) and Rome (xxviii. 13; Rom. xvi. 5). 2. *Obscure.* Not a chamber connected with the temple, as some suppose, but most likely a room belonging to a follower of the Risen Christ, perhaps in the house of the goodman mentioned in Luke xxii. 11, or in that of John Mark's mother (xii. 12). 3. *Small.* Large for a private house, but in comparison with the buildings afterwards possessed by Christians, contracted and meagre. Yet 4. *Sufficient.* Capable of holding the entire company of Christ's disciples in Jerusalem before Pentecost. And 5. *Consecrated.* If the goodman's upper room, by the Last Supper there held; if Mary's, by the last interview of Christ with the Twelve before His Ascension (vers. 4, 13).

II. **The Church's Membership.**—1. *Its number.* "About a hundred and twenty." (1) Representing the fruits of Christ's ministry in Jerusalem, not throughout the country (see 1 Cor. xv. 6), the five hundred Galilean brethren having not yet come up to the metropolis. Christ's ministry, externally judged, had not been eminently successful. (2) Not a large or powerful band of spiritual soldiers. Indeed, in comparison with Christ's army of to-day, extremely diminutive and feeble. Yet (3) Christ was about to employ them in the magnificent task of reducing the world into subjection to Himself, the weakness of the weapon being more than counterbalanced by the Almightiness of the Arm that was to wield it (1 Cor. i. 27). 2. *Its composition.* (1) Men and women. A distinct advance upon the Church of the Old Testament, in which woman had no place as an individual, but only in and through and as represented by the male head of the family to which she belonged. The exceptional case of Zelophehad's daughters (Numb. xxvi. 6, 7) proved the rule. But now in Christ

Jesus there is neither male nor female (Gal. iii. 28). In the Church of the New Testament woman finds a place in her individual capacity, and enjoys rights and privileges equal with those of her male companion. Nothing more characteristic of Christianity or more demonstrative of her heavenly origin than the change she has effected on the position of woman both in Church and State. (2) Persons of distinction and people of no name. Individuals of repute, ability, and influence like the Apostles who had been selected by Christ, and had companied with Him from the beginning (ver. 21); like the Galilean women who had followed Him with devotion and ministered to Him of their substance (Luke viii. 3); like Mary, the mother of Jesus, and like the brethren of our Lord, of whom one (James) was soon to take his place (if already he had not secured it) as president of the congregation. Happily, however, also men and women of no name or fame, influence or ability, rank or wealth. Christian Churches should never be of one class; but "rich" and "poor," "wise" and "unwise," "patrician" and "plebeian," should meet together in profession of a common faith, in acts of common worship and in service of a common Lord. 3. *Its leaders.* Leadership not incompatible with equality. Never had the Church such a company of able and trusted guides as when it started on its glorious career. (1) Males, the Apostles. The first three: Peter, the man of rock (Matt. xvi. 18; John i. 42) and Apostle of action (Matt. xiv. 28; John. xviii. 10); John, the beloved disciple (John xxi. 20) and Apostle of love (1 John iii. 18, iv. 7); and James, his elder brother, who afterwards suffered martyrdom (xii. 2), perhaps distinguished by courageous zeal (Luke ix. 54). The next five: Andrew, one of the first to follow Christ, a man of decision (John i. 40); Philip, whom Christ found in the wilderness (John i. 43), representing spiritual aspiration (John xiv. 8); Thomas, called Didymus, doubtful and anxious (John xx. 25), touched with melancholy (John xi. 16), yet of ardent devotion (John xx. 28); Bartholomew or Nathanael (John i. 45), the soul of guileless simplicity; Matthew, who left all and followed Christ (Matt. ix. 9; Luke v. 28), the man of whole-hearted consecration. The last three: James, the son of Alphæus, sometimes called "James the Less" (Mark xv. 40), though "James the Little" would be better, of whose character nothing is reported; Simon Zelotes, otherwise named The Canaanite (Matt. x. 4; Mark iii. 18), or the Zealot, perhaps noted for fervour; and Judas, the brother or son of James, styled Lebbæus (Matt. x. 2) and Thaddæus (Matt. iii. 18), presumably from the warmth of his disposition, hence the man of heart. Along with these James, the brother of our Lord, enjoyed the reputation and held the position of a leader (xv. 13; Gal. i. 19). (2) Females, the women already referred to, Mary Magdalene, Mary the Mother of James and Joses, Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, Salome, the mother of John and James, and Susanna (Luke viii. 1; John xix. 25), and Mary the Mother of Jesus, here mentioned for the last time in Scripture and not assigned that precedence given her by the Church of Rome.

III. **The Church's disposition.**—*Unanimous.* Her members were all of one mind. The spirit of discord had not yet revealed itself among them. Their ranks were unbroken through either jealousy or rivalry. 2. *Steadfast* They persevered in maintaining this becoming and excellent temper. Doubtless it had not then been tried by either prosperity or adversity. Yet was it praiseworthy that they did not themselves grow weary of the monotony of concord.

IV. **The Church's occupation.**—Waiting for the promise. 1. *Praying.* Always becoming on the part of Christians (Phil. iv. 6; 1 Thess. v. 17), it was specially suited to the circumstances of the Church during the ten days before Pentecost. That the chief theme of their supplications was the heavenly baptism for which they were looking need not be doubted. That, though sure of it, they still prayed for its coming, accorded with a law of the kingdom (Ezek. xxxvi. 37;

Matt. xxi. 22; James i. 5). That they prayed in a social as distinguished from a private capacity, was grounded on Christ's well-known assurance (Matt. xviii. 19). 2. *Working.* The duty lying to their hand they did. They proceeded to fill the vacancy in the apostolic college. A hint to Christians to leave no known duty unperformed while waiting for other tasks to be enjoined.

"Strong in His faithfulness, praise Him and sing,
Then as He beckons thee,—'Doe the next thing.'"

Learn.—1. Not to suppose a splendid, or indeed any, building necessary to constitute a church. 2. Not to despise the day of small things. 3. Not to foster the class spirit in connection with Christian Churches. 4. Not to resent the leadership of those who by superior ability or influence are manifestly called to that office. 5. Not to mar by discord or division the unity of fellowship among believers. 6. Not to think praying can ever be out of place. 7. Not to mistake idleness for waiting.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 13. *The Upper Room.*—The upper chamber still forms the distinctive feature of a Syrian house. It is the guest chamber, where the guest is quartered outside the part of the house used by the host and his family in private life. The poor were generally content to leave their terraces uncovered, but the first luxury they indulged in was an upper chamber. The rich Shunamite made one for Elisha (2 Kings iv. 8). This was the most convenient part of the house, because it was large compared to the rooms inside, and was entirely independent of the rest of the building. It served for numberless uses. There the corpse was laid before burial (ix. 37). It was in an upper chamber Jesus met with His apostles to bid them farewell, to eat the Passover with them for the last time, and to institute the Lord's Supper. The ordinary meals He no doubt took, as they are still taken, in the court of the house and in public.—Stapfer, *Palestine in the Time of Christ*, p. 178.

The Four Lists of the Apostles.

MATTHEW.	MARK.	LUKE.	ACTS.
Peter	Peter	Peter	Peter
Andrew	James	Andrew	John
James	John	James	James
John	Andrew	John	Andrew
Philip	Philip	Philip	Philip
Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Thomas
Thomas	Matthew	Matthew	Bartholomew
Matthew	Thomas	Thomas	Matthew
James (of Alpheus)	James (of Alpheus)	James (of Alpheus)	James (of Alpheus)
Thaddeus	Thaddeus	Simon the Zealot	Simon the Zealot
Simon the Cananean	Simon the Cananean	Judas son of James	Judas son of James
Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	

From a comparison of these lists the following conclusions may be drawn: 1. That Peter was universally recognised as the leader of the apostolic band. 2. That, following him, Andrew, James, and John enjoyed a precedence over the remaining eight. 3. That, after these, the next in rank was Philip, who in all the lists occupies the fifth place. 4. That Bartholomew was another name for Nathanael. 5. That Thomas and Matthew, like Peter and John, Philip and Bartholomew, were probably companions. 6. That Thaddeus and Judas were the same individual. 7. That Judas Iscariot deserved the lowest place in the apostolic brotherhood.

Ver, 14. *The Brethren of Our Lord.*

I. **Their names.**—James, Joses, Simon, and Judah (Matt. xiii. 55). With the exception of the first, all ordinary men, who would probably never have been heard of but for their connection with Christ. The vast majority of this world's population are names, and nothing more; and even of those who emerge from obscurity it is not always true that they shine in their own lustre. Reflected radiance, or renown at secondhand, is more common than most suppose.

II. **Their relation to Jesus.** — 1. According to some *His cousins—i.e.*, the children of Alpheus and Mary. An opinion in support of which it is usual to advert to: (1) the customary practice among the Jews of employing the term "brother" in a loose sense, as equivalent to "near kinsman"; (2) the circumstance that Christ, when dying, commended His mother to John (xix. 26), which, it is thought, He would hardly have done had she possessed other children besides Himself; (3) the Scripture statement that Alpheus or Cleopas and Mary had two sons named James and Joses (Mark xv. 40), if not a third called Judas (i. 13); and (4) the appearance of individuals bearing the names of James, Simon, and Judas in the circle of the apostles, who are not the brethren of our Lord, but the sons of Alpheus (Matt. x. 3; Mark iii. 8). Against this opinion, however, it is urged, and with force, (1) that they are never styled Christ's cousins, but always his brethren—a fact remarkable, but not decisive; (2) that they always appear associated with the mother of Jesus, and not with the wife of Cleopas; (3) that one cannot be certain whether Mary, the mother of James and Joses, was the sister of our Lord's mother (see John xix. 25); and (4) that our Lord's brethren were not even among His disciples till towards the close of His ministry (John vii. 5), whereas the two sons of Alpheus and Mary were among the apostles from the first. 2. According to others, *His half brothers—i.e.*, the sons of Joseph by a former marriage. But this opinion, though not improbable, rests solely on the authority of the Gospel of James. 3. According to a third class of interpreters, *His whole brothers—i.e.*, children of Mary by her husband Joseph. In favour of this the arguments run—(1) that it is the simplest and most natural hypothesis; (2) that Our Lord's brethren are always spoken of as brothers, not as cousins; (3) that they are never said to be sons of Joseph, but always represented as brethren of Jesus; and (4) that they always appear to be under Mary's care. (See Whitelaw on *The Gospel of St. John*, ii. 12.)

III. **Their changed attitude towards Jesus.** 1. *The nature of the change.* They had become believers, which they were not prior to His crucifixion. Then they refused to accept His Messianic pretensions, though they found it impossible to deny His miracles (John vii. 3). Now their doubt was dispelled and their unbelief changed into faith. 2. *The cause of the change.* This was unquestionably the fact of Our Lord's Resurrection, and perhaps in particular His manifestation of Himself to James (1 Cor. xv. 7).

Vers. 1-14. *The Ascending Lord and His Witnesses.*—The ascension of the Lord Jesus is the one fact which properly belongs both to the story of the Gospels and to the history of the Acts of the Apostles.

I. **The preparation of the witnesses.**—For witnesses must be qualified. You cannot lay hands on any man at random, and ask him to bear testimony even to undisputed facts. He must have seen the things of which he claims to be the witness. And then he must be a man of truthful spirit. These two qualifications for a faithful witness Jesus supplies in the things which He does and says in this last interview with His disciples. By what He did that day before their eyes He gave them knowledge of the final fact which was to complete the circle of their testimony. They had wept by the

cross and mourned beside the sepulchre. They had seen Him, heard Him, touched Him risen from the dead, and had been glad when they saw the Lord again. And now they are assembled that the last needed link in the evidence they are to give may be added to make the chain complete. But what He said was needful, too, that they might discharge their office rightly. Not merely must their eyes behold the dying and the rising of the Son of man, but it was quite as essential that their spiritual vision should be illumined. It was for this that the Holy Spirit was needed. His coming is to complete what their outward vision had begun. He will teach all things, and bring all Jesus's sayings to remembrance. He will show things to come. They are to have power; but it shall be power, not to be warriors, but to be witnesses. This is the work of His disciples in every age. For this cause the Master came into the world—to bear witness to the truth. As the Father sent Him into the world, so He sends us. As He equipped the Twelve, so He furnishes us for the work. Instead of the vision of His face we have the fourfold Gospel.

II. **The limitation of the witnesses.**—For, even "while they beheld, a cloud received Him out of their sight." There was clear vision for a way, and then an utter mystery. Between Him and the eyes which gazed their love into the heavens came the intercepting cloud. So all our knowledge ends in mystery. Even where a veil is not hung to hide the divine realities from us, the shortness of our vision is as effective to conceal them. The strength and power of the witnessing of the early disciples was in this very thing: that they testified with all boldness up to the limits of their knowledge, and then relapsed into utter silence. It will be well for the later witnesses for Christ to follow more nearly the example of these earlier martyrs. We may with all boldness declare the well-attested facts. But do not let us try to witness to the things which are beyond the cloud, whether it may have been spread by divine wisdom or by human ignorance. Many an earnest witness has lost his power in the world because there was no clear line between the things which he has seen and known and the things which he has only felt and fancied. Nor is it necessary, because a cloud hides that which we long to see, that it should cast a shadow upon us, or darken our horizon. The cloud which underlies the mysteries of heavenly truth is not black with thunderbolts, not scarred with seams of lightning, but edged at least with the silver glory which it hides, and only laden for us with showers of peace and plenty. For it is not the darkness which hides God from us, but the light in which He dwells, which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see. This was the cloud of the transfiguration—the cloud of brightness. Paul, telling the story of his conversion, says, "I could not see for the glory of that light." Jesus is the brightness of the Father's glory and the Light of the World, but it is a light softened and screened for human eyes by the veil of His flesh; so that we now can look and see, and look and live. The cloud is the condescension of divine love to our weak sight. It testifies God's grace equally with the sunshine.

III. **The attitude of the witnesses.**—They stand gazing after Him up into heaven—how long we do not know; long enough, it is evident, to lead to the rebuke and reassurance which came to them from the lips of the two angels. However full of love or faith their motive may have been, their posture was not approved. It is when they cease their gazing and begin their going that they assume their true relation to the risen Christ. For the return to Jerusalem was their first act of obedience to Him. There He had told them to go, and there to wait, and there to witness first. To testify of Him first where it is hardest and most perilous to do it; back where the people of all

tongues will gather soon—they are to speak where their word will reach the greatest number; back where He bids them—that is, more than all beside, that they obey His last command. It is not by peering into the mysteries of God's unrevealed truth that any disciple gains grace to be a faithful witness. It is far rather by unquestioning obedience to His plain command that we shall come to such further light as He may have to give us. They who are actively engaged in doing His will and work shall be led on with surest step into the mysteries of godliness. They shall have more to witness who witness faithfully to what they know, rather than they who wait and watch for more to tell. Nor did they separate when the Master, who had at first drawn them together, had left them. He had appointed them a common mission. There was to come on them a common gift of power. And so they stayed together during the interval till it should come. And as it is in the way of obedience that we learn the truth, it is in the way of fellowship that we most often receive the richest spiritual gifts. If we would share the gifts which Jesus bestows upon His own, we shall be wise to keep with the other disciples. And then, of course, they prayed; not of necessity only for that which He had promised, and which was to come to them so soon, but quite as much, perhaps, for patience to wait for it, and then for grace to use it for His praise. Obedience, fellowship, and prayer, shall make you strong to be witnesses, martyrs if needs be, unto Him.—*Monday Club Sermons.*

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 15—26.

Completing the Apostleship; or, the Election of Matthias.

I. **The vacancy in the apostolic college.**—1. *The honoured place of Judas.* (1) Numbered with the apostles (see Luke vi. 16). Peter explains not the motives (he could not) which led Christ, who knew the traitor from the beginning (John vi. 70), to select him for this signal favour, but dwells upon the fact that in being so selected he received a mark of special confidence. Many besides Judas have obtained high privileges, and been called to important trusts by Christ, who, like him, have misapplied the one and abused the other. (2) Invested with ministerial office. Generally like his colleagues, but particularly also by being made the treasurer of the company (John xiii. 29). The management of their finances appears to have been "his portion in this ministry," or the duty assigned to him in connection with the apostolate. If the Twelve required a treasurer, it cannot be sinful for churches and congregations either to have secular affairs or to depute persons to attend to them. 2. *The melancholy fall of Judas.* (1) Tenderly referred to, not with vituperation, but in mildness. He was "guide to them that took Jesus." Even the worst sins of the worst men should be under rather than over stated. (2) Sufficiently indicated. What Peter says implies the rest of the pathetic story of the betrayal for thirty pieces of silver. Hence he dilates not on the sad theme, but leaves his hearers' imaginations to call it up to their own thoughts. A lesson for preachers, never to enlarge more than they can help upon the backsliding, of individual believers. (3) Divinely foreseen. By the Holy Ghost, who inspired David to pen words and thoughts exactly fitting the traitor's case, and depicting his ejection from office, "Let his habitation be made desolate, and let no man dwell therein" (Psalm lxix. 26), and "His office let another take" (Psalm cix. 8). 3. *The appalling end of Judas.* Slain—(1) In his own field, which he, or the priests (Matt. xxvii. 7), purchased with the blood money received for betraying Christ. (2) By his own hand, it being most likely that he hanged himself on a tree in his field, and that the rope breaking he fell heavily to the ground, with the consequence stated by Peter. (3) To his own shame, the

name given to the field, "Aceldama," or "The field of blood," perpetuating the memory at once of his wickedness and of his woe. (For the apparent discrepancy between Matthew's account and Luke's, see "Critical Remarks.")

II. **The proposal to fill the vacancy.**—1. *Made by Peter.* "And in those days Peter stood up," etc. Peter's forwardness on this occasion was completely in harmony (1) with the place assigned him in the lists of the apostles, (2) with his ardent and impulsive character, (3) with his practice in pre-crucifixion days to take the lead among his brethren and be their spokesman, (4) with the charge given him by Christ, when once he had been converted, to strengthen his brethren (Luke xxii. 32), and (5) with the foreshadowings that were beginning to appear of that spiritual pre-eminence to which he was henceforth to attain in the New Testament Church. 2. *Defined by Peter.* (1) As to the qualifications demanded of those who should fill the office. They must have companied with the apostles and been eyewitnesses of the Lord Jesus from His baptism by John to the day of His taking up. (Compare 1 Cor. ix. 1.) (2) As to the business to be done by the elected candidate, "To witness," with his colleagues, "to Christ's resurrection." (Compare Acts iv. 33.) (3) As to the urgency for proceeding with the election. "Of these must one become a witness." Peter has been accused of precipitation in filling up the ranks of the Twelve; but as Peter acted in this under the Holy Spirit's guidance, such an indictment is inadmissible.

III. **The method of carrying out the proposal.**—1. *The nomination of candidates.* Joseph, called Barsabas, or son of Sabas, surnamed Justus, and Matthias. Both, mentioned only here, probably belonged to the Seventy, and, it may be assumed, possessed the requisite qualifications. Of neither does historical information survive. Eusebius states, on the authority of Papias, that the former drank a cup of poison without being hurt—a legend modelled upon Mark xvi. 18. The latter, according to one tradition, suffered martyrdom in Ethiopia, according to another in Colchis, according to a third in Judæa, by being stoned. Justus was a Roman cognomen, "probably assumed according to prevalent custom" (*Alford*). 2. *The asking of divine direction.* The prayer of the congregation, presumably led by Peter, was (1) directed to the glorified Christ, in the context styled "Lord" (ver. 21), (2) on the ground that He knew the hearts of all men (John i. 50, ii. 25, vi. 64, xxi. 17), (3) requesting Him to show of the two candidates which He had chosen, since Christ's choice was indispensable to the holding of apostleship (John vi. 70, xiii. 18, xv. 16). 3. *The casting of lots.* "These were probably tablets with the names of the persons written on them, and shaken in a vessel or in the lap of a robe (Prov. xvi. 33); he whose lot first leaped out being the person designated" (*Alford*). This method of ascertaining the divine decision, derived from the Old Testament Church, in which "lot-casting" was common (Lev. xvi. 8—over the two goats on the great day of atonement; Numb. xxxiv. 13; Josh. xiv. 2, xviii. 2—at the dividing of the land; 1 Chron. xxiv. 5, xxv. 8—in the appointment of temple singers), appears to have never again been followed in the election of office-bearers in the New Testament Church. Instead of lot-casting, vote-giving by show of hands seems to have been substituted (Acts xiv. 23, which see). 4. *The enrolling of the chosen.* Matthias the elected was numbered with the eleven apostles. That he was formally "voted" in by the suffrages of the congregation, which thereby, as it were, confirmed the divine selection, may be suggested by the verb (*Plumptre*), but hardly appears admissible in the circumstances. If the congregation added anything to the decision of lot it was merely an intimation (unanimous doubtless) of its acquiescence in the appointment.

Lessons.—1. The danger of falling. 2. The heinousness of betraying Christ. 3. The appalling doom of apostates. 4. The grand theme of apostolic preaching. 5. The cessation of the apostolate in the New Testament Church.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 15. *The first Christian Assembly.*

I. **The ornament of Jerusalem.**—Its members more distinguished in Heaven's eye than Caiaphas, Annas, or any other Jerusalem dignitary.

II. **The glory of Christ.**—Having been called into existence by Him.

III. **The commencement of God's kingdom.**—The hundred and twenty persons have since grown into an innumerable company.—*Oosterzee.*

Ver. 16. *Old Testament Scripture*—Its fourfold relation:

I. **To the Holy Ghost.**—Indicated by the words "which the Holy Ghost spake." Though perhaps the express authority of the Holy Ghost should not be claimed—in this place, at least—for more than the two citations from the Book of Psalms which are given in ver. 20; yet it cannot be doubted that both Christ and His apostles regarded the Holy Ghost as the Author of the whole book in such a way and to such an extent as to make Him responsible for its contents. (See Matt. xxii. 31, 43; Luke i. 70; Acts xxviii. 25; 2 Tim. iii. 16; Heb. i. 1; 1 Peter i. 11; 2 Peter i. 21.)

II. **To David.**—As representing its writers. This pointed to by the clause "spake by the mouth of David." Although this appears to guarantee that David had a hand in producing the Psalter—an honour which modern critics are extremely anxious to deny him—it does not necessarily signify that David (or the other holy prophets and psalmists) were merely passive instruments in the hand of the Spirit, who mechanically reproduced what the Spirit inbreathed. All the facts go to show that, while the writers of Old Testament Scripture maintained their personalities and individualities in what they spoke or penned, they were nevertheless in a mysterious (and probably incomprehensible) manner superintended and controlled by the Holy Spirit.

III. **To Jesus.**—A glimpse of this looks out from the words, "It was needful that the Scripture should be fulfilled." Besides being the sacred books of His people, the Old Testament Scripture was for Him, Jesus, the Father's and the Holy Ghost's *vade mecum*, which they had prepared for Him to be used as a light unto His feet and a lamp unto His path—a sort of Messianic programme—when He entered on His public career. What Old Testament Scripture was to Jesus the whole Bible should be to His people—a directory for daily life.

IV. **To Judas.**—Referred to in the words "concerning Judas." That the traitor's person, character, and transgression were outlined beforehand in Old Testament Scripture neither compelled him to act as He did nor relieved him of responsibility for his deeds, any more than in ordinary matters the divine foreknowledge destroys the individual's liberty of will.

Concerning Judas.

I. **His early fame.**—"Numbered among the apostles."

II. **His guilty fall.**—"Guide to them that took Jesus."

III. **His woful fate.**—Committed suicide, and went to his own place.

Ver. 19. *Aceldama, the field of blood.*

I. **Purchased by the price of blood.**—Whether Judas or the chief priests were the purchasers is immaterial. The money payment was the thirty pieces of silver delivered to the traitor in reward for his iniquity. The field was "the clay-yard of a potter of the town" (*Geikie*), and to purchase this the blood money was devoted, because to cast it into the treasury would have been unlawful.

II. **Defiled by the stain of blood.**—Somewhere in this clay-yard the traitor put an end to his life by hanging. "Nor was even this the end, for the cord by which he had suspended himself gave way, and he fell beneath, ruptured and revolting" (*Geikie*).

Matthew agrees with Luke in reporting the suicide; Luke differs from Matthew in describing the rupture.

III. **Kept as a memorial of blood.**—The name could not fail to preserve a recollection of both of Judas's crimes—his infamous treachery towards his Master, and his cowardly execution of himself. "The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance, but the name of the wicked shall rot."

Vers. 17-20. *The Wages of Sin; or, the Miserable End of Judas.*

I. He ought to have been **a disciple of Christ,** and he betrayed his Lord.

II. He ought **to have performed the duties of his bishopric,** and he acquired the field of blood.

III. He ought **to have proclaimed the Risen One,** and he perished as a suicide.

IV. He ought **to have received the Holy Ghost,** and he went into condemnation.—*Florey, in Lange.*

Ver. 23. *Justus and Matthias.*

I. **Justus the equal of Matthias,** in being: 1. A disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. 2. Esteemed by his fellow-believers. 3. Proposed for the apostleship. 4. Honoured with a place in sacred history.

II. **Matthias preferred to Justus.**—1. Elected to the apostleship. 2. Chosen by Christ. 3. Numbered with the Eleven.

Ver. 24. *Prayer addressed to Christ.*

I. **As a personal divine Being.**—"Thou, Lord."

II. **As a possessor of Omniscience.**—"Who knowest the hearts of all men."

III. **As the director of His people.**—"Show us!"

IV. **As the disposer of offices in the Church.**—"Show of these two the one whom Thou hast chosen."

Vers. 16-25. *The Personal History of Jesus.*

I. **His baptism by John.**

II. **His companionship with the apostles.**

III. **His betrayal by Judas.**

IV. **His arrestment by the Romans.**

V. **His death upon the cross.**

VI. **His resurrection.**

VII. **His ascension.**—In all these points Peter agrees with the Gospel writers.

Ver. 25. *Individual Destiny.*

I. **Every man's destiny is prepared for him beforehand.**—As Daniel had his lot (Dan. xii. 13), so had Judas his own place. The Father's kingdom is prepared for Christ's people from the foundation of the world (Matt. xxv. 34). Paul speaks of vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction, and vessels of mercy prepared unto glory (Rom. ix. 22, 23).

II. **Every man's destiny will correspond with the character which he possesses.**—Like Judas, every man will go to his own place—he who by patient continuance in well doing has sought for glory and honour and incorruption, to eternal life; he that has obeyed not the truth, but obeyed unrighteousness, to tribulation and anguish (Rom. ii. 7-9). In every case the environment will correspond with the life.

III. **Every man's destiny will be the outcome of his own doings.**—Each individual on earth will ultimately be what he makes himself. He may permit himself to become the victim of his surroundings, but the fault will be his own. He may be helped by divine grace, but even divine grace does not enable him to dispense with personal exertion. The solemnity which this gives to life needs no remark.

Natural Selection in the Spiritual World.—The subject of the text of practical moment to us, is one of moral adjustment, and involves fitness for the sphere occupied. Every realm of creation—mind or matter, animate or inanimate—has its order and label because of its nature, its identity, its surroundings peculiar to itself, with relations and dependencies—essential adjuncts of the nature and surroundings of the realm. That this principle may be seen in its tangible actuality turn to

the pages of natural history, where we find represented the families, tribes, and species of the different continents, each with its peculiar nature and the environment contributing most to its vigorous development. Also in logic and psychology, in the sense of a peculiar office or sphere, than "place" there is no more pregnant term nor more requisite factor. It is the third foot of a tripod—a *sine quâ non*. But interesting as it may be for us to consider the import of "place" in the spheres of natural and intellectual science, still greater is its significance amid the species and graduations of the moral and spiritual world; for here the term is used not only in mechanical arrangement and scientific analysis, but it has also all the additional gravity of the moral and eternal world, with its attraction and repulsion, its reward and retribution.

I. The preservation intact of the families, species, and habitat of the spiritual world requires that the members of each great family, the redeemed and the unredeemed, should be assigned to their fittest place or habitat for eternity. 1. This must be true out of respect for the harmony, purity, and order of heaven. There is no one in the city of God of whom it could be said: "He is a disturber of the peace, a shame and grief to his relatives, and a disgrace to the avenue on which he lives." Such a character or species cannot be permitted there. The order of the celestial community may not be so disturbed. The *rôle* of eternal praise and the spotaneity of the currents of felicitous thought are inviolable rights which inhere in the citizenship of heaven. 2. Not only for order's sake, but from moral considerations must he go to his "own place." All the opportunity which unfathomed depths of compassion and the sweep of mercy's unbounded forecast could provide have been extended. By all the inducements which life's opportune and sanguine day of probation could proffer, he has been overturned. The die is cast. Before God and His government he stands unacquitted—a rebel. Through all life's paths he has afforded the material for the record of a rebel—the habits and the development of a rebel; the wishes, heart, and character of a rebel—against his own soul's requirements, the provisions for an eternity of peace and the beneficent laws of God. Probation is past; and now to the place of what grade or species of character does he belong?

II. Let us now consider the means of reaching one's moral grade, destination, or "place" in the spirit world. We need not falter in the belief that God, whose scrutiny none can evade, is able by His word directly to appoint each to his place. But in the apportionment to the abodes of the righteous and wicked—heaven and hell—the respective habitat of each of the two great families under the genus Spirit, there are certain natural forces or laws of moral adjustment which may well claim our attention. 1. There are characteristic functions of privilege or duty in every position of honour; and this is intuitively true of the home of the saints of God. 2. A second function of the life in heaven is fellowship. Now, if permitted, could the unrepentant soul endure such association? 3. Another function of the heavenly life is unveiled mental vision and untrammeled mental freedom. What kind of freedom here could the impenitent soul enjoy—whose habits of life have drilled him in wrong methods and whose sources of pleasure have blinded, deafened, and paralysed his conscience and spiritual functions in company with the redeemed whose pinions never tire? But another mighty agency in moral adjustment and consequent assignment to "place" to which sinners are subject and which is a positive and not a negative factor in the work of adjustment is natural retribution, one of the forces of which is the reason, which now sees the effect of a wrong ideal, a practical idolatry, selfish and gross, by which the soul which might have been assimilated into the likeness of Christ—the model of

heaven—has been gradually metamorphosed into a type of moral degradation. The conscience also presents its unmet claims, and sad regret causes memory, as another factor in natural retribution, to point backward to days of opportunity, and a conscientious reflection iterates:

"Of all sad words of tongue or pen,
The saddest are these; it might have been."

4. But still another force, which is decisive in effecting God's own proclamation of a separation between the redeemed and unredeemed, may be mentioned; it is the law of sustentation. Just because the ponderous iron mass or the stone block should see the balloon sustained in mid-air, ascending to the clouds, shall they say, "Oh, we shall fly too"? Never in their present gross form. Never, until by fiercest heat they become sublimated into gaseous matter. Never as iron and stone will they fly. So the fact that the inhabitants of heaven can remain there sustained and enjoy the fulness of bliss is only by the support and protection of the laws of the kingdom of God; and to the sinner in "outer darkness" there is no protection or support from the laws of the kingdom of God, therefore he cannot remain in heaven—nor enter there. To illustrate: The rigor of the frigid zone is so great that only such animals as are provided to endure its exposures can there sustain life. The sloth and ant-eater are animals which are not provided to endure the exposures of the frigid zone; therefore they cannot there sustain life. Let us now briefly notice—

III. The sense in which the hell of the hereafter is the unrepentant sinner's "own place." The adjective "own" signifies a "place" peculiar to himself, But it is his own also as a member of a class or grade. Students belong to a class, and yet each holds his "own place" according to his standing. So you, if you choose the way of death, must take your place according to your proficiency in the customs of that dark abode, along with adulterers, the lustful, the hypocrites, unbelievers, drunkards, liars, and all that is profane and abominable. It is peculiarly his "own place," then—1. By course of preparation, which course may be termed the conservation of energy in the spiritual realm—*i.e.*, all the forces of the sensibilities, intellect, and will are differentiated into a unit of essential wickedness. In natural science, heat and electricity are proved to be only different phenomena of a single force; so in this course of preparation for his "own place," the different faculties and functions, conscience, moral accountability, etc., are by the voluntary course in sin transmuted into the distinctive features of a unity and substance of wickedness. 2. It is peculiarly his "own place," in that it is a greatly curtailed sphere of activity. The fish of Mammoth Cave are blind—not by accident nor special creation, but being so situated that the organs of vision may not be exercised, the energies or life force which would have utilised these avenues of communication with the outer world were applied elsewhere and that apartment abandoned, and the fish left blind in a dark cave as a consequence of the disuse of its eyes. So the moral and spiritual faculties are atrophied and the privilege of their healthful functions lost through disuse. It is the sinners' own place, then, because it is the contracted and degraded sphere in which he has enclosed himself.

IV. The eternity of this doom. 1. This doom is eternal, because it is the verdict of moral government. The protection of the good demands it. The *finale* is pronounced, and to no higher court can you appeal. 2. It is a self-imposed destiny, and never, until "the Ethiopian can change his skin and the leopard his spots" and *transmute* themselves into a different type or species, will there be any commutation of the sentence. 3. This matter is eternal with the lost, who abide in their own "place" not only because they have cut themselves off from agencies and appliances in the kingdom of grace, but

because all the conditions are now complied with for growing worse and worse.—*C. R. Hunt.*

Vers. 12-26. *The Waiting Time.*—What were its characteristics? It was:

I. **A time of transition.**—"It stood midway between Christ's work on earth now completed and the yet unopened work of the Spirit from heaven. In the history of redemption the first or preparatory chapter closed on the day of the Incarnation." The second, "though ending tragically, in a sense unknown to human history, brought life and immortality to light through the darkness and death of the cross." The third and last chapter, the dispensation of the Spirit, was about to open.

II. **A time of felt need.**—As yet the eleven had no clear conception of the tale they were to tell, while they could not but feel that they had neither the position, culture, nor influence to move the world, and not one ground to hope for success save in their assurance of the truth of their story and the help they might receive from above in the telling of it.

III. **A time of expectancy.**—How often would they recall, and find it indispensable to recall, such words as these, "Behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you"; "Ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."

IV. **A time of prayer.**—"These all continued with one accord steadfastly in prayer." And who can have any doubt what would be the burden of their prayers?

V. **A time of fraternal conference.**—It seems only reasonable to assume that the intervals (between the prayers) would be filled up by free interchange of recollections and reflections on the astonishing events and thrilling scenes in the earthly life of their now glorified Lord and the encouragements thence arising.

VI. **A time of action.**—"On one of these days Peter—now fully restored, and, as originally designed, taking the lead—rose and explained to the assembly why the vacancy amongst the Twelve which the fall of Judas had created required to be filled up; and having pointed out the qualifications required, he left it to themselves to select one of their number whom they might lay before their enthroned Lord for His approval." This resulted in the choice of Matthias.—*David Brown, D.D.*

CHAPTER II.

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST EQUIPPED FOR ITS WORK—THE IMPLEMENTING OF THE PROMISE.

§ 1. The Baptism of Fire; or, the Descent of the Holy Ghost (vers. 1-4).
§ 2. Excitement in Jerusalem; or, what the Multitude thought of the Phenomenon (vers. 5-13).
§ 3. Peter's Sermon.—1. The First Christian Apology; or, the Pentecostal Mystery explained (vers. 14-21).
§ 4. Peter's Sermon.—2. The Mystery of Pentecost traced up to Christ (vers. 22-36).
§ 5. The First Converts; or, the First Fruits of the Gospel Harvest (vers. 37-41).
§ 6. The Pentecostal Church; or, the Daily Life of Primitive Believers (vers. 42-47).

CRITICAL REMARKS.

Ver. 1. **Pentecost.**—So called from the date of its occurrence, the fiftieth from the second day of the Passover. **Fully come.**—Lit. *was being fulfilled*, referring to the completion of the interval between the two feasts. If the 16th Nisan was a Friday, the fiftieth day forward would fall upon a Saturday, or the Jewish Sabbath. **With one accord.**—ὁμοθυμαδὸν = ὁμοψύχως, with one mind. The Revised Text reads ὁμοῦ, together, which seems superfluous when followed by ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό, *in one or the same place.* (Compare i. 15.)

Ver. 2. **A sound as of** shows that the noise was not occasioned by the wind, but by a mighty blowing which resembled the vehement rushing of air. In the Old Testament (2 Sam. v. 24), Josephus (*Ant.*, VII. iv. 1), and Homer (*Od.*, I. 98), the noise of wind was a sign of the Divine Presence. According to Josephus (*Wars*, VI. v. 3), earthquakes and supernatural sounds were heard in the Temple at the feast of Pentecost before the destruction of Jerusalem.

Ver. 3. **Cloven tongues as of fire.**—These, which consisted not of, but merely resembled material flame, and certainly were not electrical or light manifestations (Renan), real or pretended, appeared to part themselves asunder, διαμεριζόμεναι, which may signify either that each tongue divided itself (Alford) or that the flame divided itself so that the tongues were distributed amongst the company (Zöckler, Hackett).

Ver. 4. **Other tongues.**—In this case foreign languages, not previously learnt by the speakers, which required no interpreter (ver. 8), but were understood by the hearers. Ver. 13 shows that they resembled the "tongues" of the later Corinthian church by being accompanied in their possessors with an ecstatic condition of consciousness. (See Homily on vers. 1-4.)

Ver. 5. **Dwelling at Jerusalem.**—Not "permanently residing" only, a sense the word usually has in Luke's writings (Luke i. 19; iv. 16, xiii. 4), but also "temporarily sojourning," a meaning not excluded by the term, and apparently demanded by the context, which speaks of the multitude (ver. 6) as embracing "dwellers in Mesopotamia"—*i.e.*, persons having their homes there, and "strangers of Rome"—*i.e.*, Romans at the time sojourning in the city. **Devout men.**—Lit. *cautious, circumspect*, hence God-fearing persons, "men of piety and weight" (Alford), like Simeon (Luke ii. 25), those who buried Stephen (viii. 2), Cornelius and his servant (x. 2, 7).

Ver. 6. **When this was noised abroad.**—Better, *when this sound occurred*, or was heard (R.V.). Not when this report arose (Calvin), or when these tongues were listened to (Neander), but when this sound (of the mighty, rushing wind) was heard (Meyer, Alford, Hackett, Holtzmann, Zöckler, and others). If the house stood in one of the thoroughfares leading to the Temple the sound may have been audible all over Jerusalem. **Every man . . . in his own language**—*i.e.*, one apostle spoke in one language and another in another. By this time the apostles and their company had probably gone forth into the streets.

Ver. 7. **Galileans.**—This constituted the marvel, that the speakers were all recognised as natives of the northern Palestinian province. This suggests that only the eleven addressed the multitude, or—what is more probable—that the eleven being most prominent were

regarded as leaders of the rest, and their nationality taken as representative of the nationality of their followers, the one hundred and twenty, who, however, were not all Galileans.

Vers. 9-11. **Parthians and Medes,** etc.—The catalogue of peoples, fifteen in all, begins in the north-east (three), passes round to the north (one) and north-west (five, or including Judæa, six), moves toward the south (two), and closes in the west (one), Cretes and Arabians (two) being added as an afterthought. That **Judæa** should come between Mesopotamia and Cappadocia has led to the supposition that *Idumæa* should be read. But the MSS. forbid. The reason for the mention of Judæa is obscure. It may have been simply to serve as a connecting link between Mesopotamia and Cappadocia (Holtzmann), or in order to complete the enumeration of languages (Bengel, Meyer), or for the sake of Roman readers (Olshausen). Though the dialects may have been fifteen, Holtzmann thinks the actual tongues spoken were only three, or at most four—the Zend (Medes and Elamites), Semitic (Mesopotamia, Judæa, Arabia), Greek (Asia and Egypt), Latin (Rome). **Both Jews and proselytes** refers to persons from all the preceding places, and not exclusively to the Romans sojourning at Jerusalem.

Ver. 11. **The wonderful works of God.**—Lit. *the great things of God* (magnalia dei, Vulgate) done by Him through Christ for the salvation of men. (Compare Luke i. 49.)

Ver. 12. **Amazed** depicts the astonishment, **in doubt** the perplexity of the multitude.

Ver. 13. **New wine.**—Lit. *sweet* drink. A peculiarly intoxicating beverage made from dried grapes by soaking them in old wine and pressing them a second time. "Furrer" (in Schenkel's *Lexicon*) reports that a Jew in Hebron prepared such sweet wine by pouring water on dried grapes and distilling the infusion with an addition of spice" (Riehm's *Handwörterbuch des Biblischen Altertums, art. Wein*).

Ver. 14. **Men of Judæa.**—Natives of Jerusalem. **Ye that dwell at Jerusalem.**—Foreign Jews, sojourners in the city from other parts.

Ver. 15. **These.**—Not the eleven with Peter merely, but all who had been heard speaking (ver. 7). **The third hour.**—Nine a.m. in our time; the hour of morning prayer (Schürer considers this doubtful), before which no respectable Jew allowed himself to become intoxicated (Isa. v. 11).

Ver. 16. **Through the prophet.**—Joel ii. 28-32. διὰ since he was not the author but the medium of the message.

Ver. 17. **The last days.**—The LXX. read μετὰ ταῦτα, after these things. The Hebrew "afterwards," expounded by Peter as referring to Messianic times. **Saith God** indicates the source of the prophecy. **Young men . . . old men.**—The order of the clauses in Joel is transposed.

Ver. 20. **That great and notable day of the Lord.**—Notable = clear, far shining. (Compare Luke xvii. 21.) The Hebrew prophets used "the day of the Lord" to signify any remarkable interposition of Jehovah for the punishment of His enemies (Isa. ii. 12; Jer. xlvi. 10; Zeph. i. 7). Joel used it to describe the Messianic coming, both first and second.

Ver. 22. **Mighty works, wonders, and signs.**—Compare 2 Cor. xii. 12; 2 Thess. ii. 9; Heb. ii. 4. Of these terms, the first, δυνάμεις, refers to the powers by which Christ's miracles were performed; the second, τέρατα, to the astonishment they awakened; the third, σημεῖα, to the significance they possessed.

Ver. 23. **Counsel and foreknowledge** are distinguished as antecedent and consequent.

Ver. 24. **The pains of death.**—τὰς ὠδῖνας τοῦ θανάτου. Quoted from the LXX. (Psalm xviii. 5, cxvi. 3)—the Hebrew having "the cords of death."

Ver. 25. **David speaketh.**—In Psalm xvi. 8-11, which is here ascribed to the sweet singer of Israel as distinguished from the Hebrew Psalmist generally (xiii. 35). **Concerning Him.**—Not merely words that might be applied to Him—*i.e.*, Christ—but words that typically and prophetically referred to Him.

Ver. 26. **My tongue** as in the LXX. instead of "my glory" as in the Hebrew. The LXX. may have regarded man's faculty of speech as his highest excellence; and Peter, reflecting on the miracle of Pentecost, may have agreed with them.

Ver. 27. **Hell,** ᾅδης, *Hades,* the unseen world, the realm of the dead, comprising two regions, Paradise, the abode of the blessed (Luke xxiii. 43), and Gehenna, the prison of the lost (Matt. v. 29, 30), is here represented as a rapacious destroyer.

Ver. 28. **The ways of life** were those which led from the realm of death to that of life—a hint of the doctrine of the resurrection. **With Thy countenance** signified not "by" but "in Thy presence"—*i.e.*, in heaven.

Ver. 29. **Let me freely speak.**—Better, *it is lawful for me to speak with boldness.* David is here called **patriarch** as founder of the royal family. **His sepulchre is with us.**—On Mount Zion (1 Kings ii. 10), where most of the kings of Judah were buried. Compare Neh. iii. 16; Josephus, *Ant.*, VII. xv. 3, XIII. viii. 4; *Wars*, I. ii. 5. "David's tomb, on the south side of Mount Zion, is still pointed out by the guides. The tomb is described by one who has seen it as an immense sarcophagus in a room comparatively insignificant in its dimensions, but

very gorgeously furnished by the Moslems, under one of whose mosques it stands" (Lawrence Hutton, in *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, March 1895, p. 549).

Ver. 30. A **prophet** was a divinely inspired person, hence one who could predict future events. The words, **according to the flesh He would raise up Christ**, are wanting in the best MSS.

Ver. 31. **His soul** is also omitted by the best authorities.

Ver. 32. **Whereof**, or *of whom*. In the former case the subject of witness is the resurrection; in the latter, the person of Christ.

Ver. 33. **By the right hand of God.**—*I.e.*, through His almighty power; compare v. 31 (Calvin, Meyer, Zöckler, and others). The translation "at or to the right hand of God" (Neander, De Wette, Bleek, Hackett, and others), though admissible, is not so good.

Ver. 34. **For David is not ascended** should be *did not ascend*; **but he saith himself** in Psalm cx. (1) which Christ ascribes to David (Matt. xxii. 43; Mark xii. 36). **The Lord said unto my Lord**, etc.—Thus distinguishing between himself and his Lord, who could be no other than the Messiah.

Ver. 36. **All the**, or *every* **house of Israel** shows that Peter's address was directed exclusively to the Jews. **Lord and Christ.**—Compare Eph. i. 22: "Head over all" and "Head of the Church." In both passages the general expression precedes, the specific follows.

Ver. 37. **What shall we do?**—As in Luke iii. 10, 12, 14. The cry showed how deeply Peter's words had penetrated.

Ver. 38. **Be baptised.**—The rite known to the Jews as a means of admitting proselytes to the Jewish Church had been practised by John (Matt. iii. 6) and commanded by Christ (Matt. xxviii. 19). **In** or *upon* **the name of Jesus Christ.**—*I.e.*, Not for the sake of the salvation accomplished by Jesus Christ (Hofmann), but upon the ground of the name of Jesus Christ or with confession of that which this name signified (Zöckler, Holtzmann, Hackett, and others). To the question, Why in the Acts (x. 48, xix. 5) baptism is never, as in Matt. (xxviii. 19), performed in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost? various answers have been given. 1. Baptism in the name of any one of the Persons of the Trinity involves baptism in the names of the other two. 2. Luke, though employing the shorter, really meant the longer formula. 3. The longer formula was designed for Gentiles who had never known the Father, the shorter for converts from Jewish people or Jewish proselytes. The *Didache*, or Teaching of the Twelve (x.), seems to favour the second explanation by using as synonymous the two expressions, "baptism into the name of the Lord" (ix. 5) and "baptism into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (vii. 1). **For**, or *in order to*, εἰς, **the remission of sins** (compare Matt. xxvi. 28, and Luke iii. 3), defines the negative aspect of the blessing which ensues upon a right reception of baptism. **The gift of the Holy Ghost** (compare x. 45, xi. 17) represents the positive side of the same blessing.

Ver. 39. **Your children.**—"Little ones" rather than, though not exclusive of, posterity or descendants. **All that are afar off.**—Not remotely dwelling Jews only (Bengel, Meyer, Wendt, Holtzmann), but Gentiles as well (Calvin, Neander, Lange, Zöckler, Hackett). **Shall call**, *sc.* unto Him; so preserving the force of the preposition πρός.

Ver. 41. **Were baptised.**—How? By immersion? or by sprinkling or pouring? The *Didache*, vii. 2, 3 seems to suggest that both methods may have been employed. See further on this under "Hints and Suggestions."

Ver. 42. **They continued steadfastly.**—Lit. *constantly applying themselves unto*, or *being engaged in*. A term characteristic of Luke (see ii. 46, vi. 4, viii. 13, x. 7). **The apostles' doctrine**—*I.e.*, listening to and applying to themselves the teaching of the Twelve. From this expression, τῇ διδαχῇ τῶν ἀποστόλων, the title of *Didache* seems to have been borrowed. (Compare Wohlenberg, *Die Lehre der Zwölf Apostel*, s. 49). **And fellowship.**—Rather, *and in fellowship*, but whether: (1) unity of spirit and brotherly intercourse with one another (Gal. ii. 9), or (2) in acts of sacramental communion, or (3) in communication—*i.e.*, distribution of money (Rom. xv. 26) is disputed. The second sense is excluded by the fact that "fellowship" was not used to mean communion in the Lord's Supper before the fourth century. The third, though supported by eminent authorities (Olshausen, Bengel, Zöckler, Hackett, Spence, and others), does not appear so good as the first (Meyer, Holtzmann, Alford, Lechler, and others). **Breaking of bread** meant the Lord's Supper, as in Luke xxii. 12; xx. 7-11; 1 Cor. xi. 23. **Prayers** were public and private devotions (iii. 1, iv. 24).

Ver. 44. **All things common.**—This pointed not merely to an exuberant and spontaneous liberality (De Wette, Neander, Bengel), but to an actual community of goods—which, however, was not legally instituted, but voluntarily practised. See iv. 32 *ff.*, v. 1. "A sort of community of goods appears already to have existed in the lifetime of Christ. See Luke viii. 3; John xii. 6, xiii. 29" (Holtzmann).

Ver. 46. **From house to house**, though not inadmissible (Titus i. 5; compare κατ' οἴκους, xx. 20, and κατὰ πόλιν, Luke viii. 1), should perhaps be rendered "at home" (Phil. 2), as distinguished from "in the temple. Possibly both ideas should be included, as the number of believers was already too large to find accommodation in one house.

Ver. 47. **Added to the Church** should be *added*, the words "to the Church" being omitted in the best MSS., and "together," ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ, found in its stead. **Such as should be saved.**—Rather, *such as are being saved.* The present participle denoting a process rather than a completed fact. "The Greek should have been τοὺς σεσωσμένους, to signify that they had already secured their salvation; and τοὺς σωθησομένους to signify that they were certain of its completion" (Hackett).

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 1—4.

The Baptism of Fire; or, the Descent of the Holy Ghost.

I. **When it happened.**—1. *When the day of Pentecost was fully come.*—Literally, when it was being fulfilled; which has led to the idea that the time referred to was the evening with which Pentecost closed, but the notion rather is that the interval which lay between the Passover and the Pentecost was then filled up. Pentecost, as its name implied, was the feast of the fiftieth day, and was celebrated seven weeks after the Passover. The suitability of this feast for the implementing of the Father's promise lay in three things: 1. Its nearness. The next national festival after the Passover it fitted admirably to the words of the promise—"Ye shall be baptised . . . not many days hence." Had the fulfilment of the promise been deferred till Tabernacles in October, the interval would have been long, and the Church's faith and patience might have been overstrained. But the sending of the Spirit at Pentecost, not more than ten days after the Ascension, averted this danger, and, as it were, caught up the hearts of Christ's followers, when their enthusiasm stood at its height. The Lord of the Church knows the best times for His movements, and can so order the gifts of His grace as not to overstrain the patience, overtax the faith, or over discourage the zeal of His people, but rather to reward their patience, increase their faith, and fan their zeal into a flame. 2. Its popularity. At no other religious celebration did such numbers flock to Jerusalem as at Pentecost, the early spring (the time of the Passover) and the late autumn (the date of Tabernacles) being less suitable for travellers from distant parts. If, therefore, the high endowment of the Holy Ghost or the miraculous phenomenon by which it was heralded and symbolised were to efficiently impress the world it was needful that the number of those witnessing it should be as large as possible. The Gospel of Christ, doing nothing in a corner, has no need to shun the light. It invites and will bear the closest observation and the keenest scrutiny. 3. Its significance. (1) As the great harvest festival of the Hebrew Church (Exod. xxiii. 16), it was a fitting time for the first ingathering of souls into the Christian Church. (2) As the feast of the firstfruits in which two wave loaves of fine flour, baked with leaven, were presented to the Lord (Lev. xxiii. 17), it supplied a proper season for the presentation to Jehovah of the firstfruits of redeemed souls in the persons of the Jewish disciples and the Gentile converts which were to be gathered in as the result of the Pentecostal effusion. (3) As a feast at which sacrifices of all kinds were offered (Lev. xvii. 20), it formed a suitable occasion for the dispensation of that Spirit which was to bring about the entire consecration of believers to God. (4) As a feast in which remembrance was made of the Egyptian bondage (Deut. xvi. 12) and of the Exodus from Egypt, it served as a fit moment for endowing the Church with that spirit which is pre-eminently styled the spirit of liberty (2 Cor. iii. 17). 2. *When all the disciples were together in one place.* That this place was the upper room already referred to in i. 3 (which see)—and not, as many excellent expositors prefer, one of the chambers belonging to the temple—is upon the whole the likelier hypothesis; and that on this occasion the entire body of the disciples, one hundred and twenty in number, and not merely the twelve apostles, were convened, is sufficiently apparent from the context. Nor is it without suggestiveness

that the Holy Ghost descended on them when all were present in their usual place of assembly. Does this not afford some reason for believing that the heavenly gift would have been withheld or at least delayed had any of the company been absent? If so, how many blessings, it may be asked, what outpourings of the Spirit, what times of revival and refreshing, may Churches and congregations not miss because of the irregularity with which their members come together? It is a signal error to suppose that absence from Church on the part of a professed Christian inflicts no injury or loss on his fellow-Christians who repair thither. May not the absence of the one seriously diminish, if not effectually hinder, the blessing of the many? Then quite as inaccurate is the reasoning that one may derive as large benefit at home from private meditation as in the Church from social devotion. The blessing of the Holy Ghost, it should be observed, was dispensed in the public assembly and not in the private chamber —was given to the disciples when together and not when isolated one from another. 3. *When all the brethren were of one mind.* The words "with one accord," though omitted in the R.V., are better than the adverb "together," which is substituted in their stead, but which is almost synonymous with "in one place," and therefore superfluous. In any case "with one accord" expresses the inward disposition of the disciples on that eventful morning when the Holy Ghost for the first time fell upon them. Had they been otherwise—disunited in heart and mind, torn with jealousies and rivalries, broken up into hostile factions or unfriendly cliques—does any one believe the Spirit would have fallen on them—that Spirit, who, if anything, is a Spirit of concord and unity (Eph. iv. 3)? What a rebuke to the Church of to-day, which is not only marred by divisions and separations, but too often also actuated by mutual antipathies, cut up into sects and animated by a spirit of proselytism rather than of co-operation, a spirit of reciprocal opposition rather than of mutual affection! And what an explanation of the comparatively slow progress of the Church in past ages, as well as of its spiritual deadness at the present time! If the Church is to awake from her lethargy and clothe herself with energy, if she is to shake herself from the dust and put on her beautiful garments, she must receive a fresh baptism of the Holy Ghost; and before that can take place there must be a laying aside of hostilities and a cessation of animosities on the part of rival denominations and congregations, there must be a healing of breaches in the walls of God's Spiritual Zion, there must be a gathering into one of the tribes of the New Testament Israel.

II. **How it was accompanied.**—1. *By a mysterious sound.* (1) Sudden. At a moment when it was not expected there was heard from heaven a noise. Divine movements are mostly of this character. It is not possible for us to discern beforehand the noise of Jehovah's footsteps (Psalm lxxvii. 19), though it is by no means impossible for Him to detect ours (Psalm cxxxix. 1-5). God's interpositions in the original work of creation partook of this character (Gen. i. 3, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24). So did they in His providential judgments, as, *e.g.*, the Deluge and the destruction of Sodom (Matt. xxiv. 39; Luke xvii. 26, 28). So were they of this sort when Christ came in the flesh (Luke ii. 3-14). So will they be when He returns in glory (Mark xiii. 35, 36). (2) Violent. Strong and impetuous, like a current of air rushing vehemently in upon and roaring through the chamber, like the trumpet sound which was heard at Sinai (Exod. xix. 19; Heb. xii. 19), or like the "great and strong wind" that rent the mountains of Horeb (1 Kings xix. 11). (3) All pervading. Filling the chamber in which the disciples sat, it left no part untouched by its mysterious breath. All within the room could hear the strange, weird sound. (4) Supernatural. This must have been apparent to all. The sound was not produced by ordinary physical causes. All attempts to explain it as a natural phenomenon, whether as thunder or as

an earthquake, signally fail. It came from heaven, caused directly by the Holy Ghost, whose breathing it was (John xx. 22). 2. *By an unusual sight.* There appeared unto the disciples "cloven tongues" or "tongues parted asunder like as of fire." Like the wind these tongues were also: (1) Supernatural. "Electrical phenomena, such as the gleaming lights sometimes seen on the highest points of steeples or on the masts of vessels, and which have been known even to alight on men, bear a very faint resemblance, if any, to those wondrous tongues of fire" (Spence). Besides, "this phenomenon took place not in the open air, but in the inside of a house" (Lechler). Then, if possible, even less admissible is the notion of a flash of lightning which sat simultaneously on one hundred and twenty heads without doing injury to one of them, which would have been a miracle as great as that for which it is proposed to be substituted. "But indeed the expression "tongues as of fire" demands that the words be taken in their literal signification" (Zeller). Whether the tongues were also (2) cloven—*i.e.*, divided, or parting asunder, as a flame occasionally does, is doubtful. Though the word admit of this interpretation, it is better taken to mean dividing themselves, so that the tongues were (3) distributed—*i.e.*, parted amongst the company, one resting upon the head of each. In this way they became (4) visible to all within the chamber, each seeing the tongues resting on his neighbours' heads, but not that sitting on own. A happy hint that each Christian should be quick to discern the gifts of his fellow-Christians—which is charity, and slow to recognise those belonging to himself—which is humility. Finally, the tongues, again resembling the wind, were (5) symbolic. Of the effect which should result from the baptism about to be experienced; of the exalted and consecrated speech which would thereby be set in motion; and of the illumination which thereby would come to others. 3. *By a peculiar touch.* The distributed fiery tongues sat one upon each man's head. As the tongues only resembled fire, so their contact with the heads of the disciples differed from that of ordinary flame, which would have scorched the disciples' heads, whereas they were quite unconscious of burning. The touch of the tongues was like the touch of Christ when He healed men's bodies; it was the touch by which He influenced souls.

III. **By what it was followed.**—1. *The disciples were all filled with the Holy Ghost.* (1) The Holy Ghost now came upon them in the fulness of His saving operations as He had not done before (John vii. 39). Prior to the Ascension Christ had breathed on them, and said "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John xx. 22); not until now had the Holy Ghost been imparted to them in the plenitude of His gracious influences. (2) They were taken possession of by the new endowment in all departments of their being, so that they were filled with it. (3) This inhabitation of their hearts by the Holy Ghost was to be permanent. Under the Old Testament the Spirit had descended upon men at special times and for special purposes, as upon Bezaleel (Exod. xxxi. 3) and Joshua (Deut. xxxiv. 9), to impart to them wisdom. Now He entered the disciples' hearts to abide with them for ever (John xiv. 16). And this stupendous endowment was not conferred on the apostles only but upon the brethren as well, and not upon the leaders of the Church merely but upon the followers likewise; nor upon the eminent personages alone but also upon the humble and obscure individuals. 2. *They all began to speak with tongues.* That those tongues were something higher than and beyond those conferred on the churches at Corinth (1 Cor. xiv. 2-33), may be inferred from the circumstance mentioned in vers. 6 and 8, that the multitude who listened to the inspired utterances of the apostles and brethren "were confounded because that every man heard them speaking in his own language." The Corinthian tongues were unintelligible to those who heard them, and to be of service for public edification required interpretation; at Pentecost the tongues needed no exposition by a third party. The listeners

"heard every man in his own language wherein he was born." Yet, like the tongues at Corinth, those of Pentecost were not required for edification, which was principally secured by Peter's sermon; and were accompanied by a kind of ecstatic utterance which led some at least of the auditors to think and say the speakers were intoxicated, as Paul afterwards suggested some hearing the Corinthians talk with tongues might allege they were mad (1 Cor. xiv. 23). As to what these Jerusalem "tongues" were, the traditional opinion which sees in them foreign languages which the apostles and their company were enabled to speak, though not without difficulty, is probably correct. Nor does it militate against this idea that such foreign languages were not necessary to qualify the apostles for preaching to the multitudes at Pentecost, since the majority, if not all, of these would be able to understand either Greek or Aramaic, or both, and that the apostles do not appear afterwards to have used these new dialects (compare Paul at Lycaonia, xiv. 14) in addressing themselves to foreigners. The answer to both objections is, that the Pentecostal tongues may not have been intended to be permanent but only temporary, as a sign to arrest the attention of the multitude and accredit the apostles as heaven-sent ambassadors. All attempts to discover other explanations of the tongues than the natural one lie open to as great, if not greater, difficulties than those they are devised to surmount. The fancy that the apostles spoke an original elementary "tongue of the Spirit," which every listener in the crowd heard as if it were his own mother tongue (Erasmus, Meyer, Delitzsch, etc.), only adds a miracle of hearing to the existing one of speaking. That the tongues were merely ecstatic utterances which acted on the hearers in such a way as to make them think they were being addressed in their native languages (Beyschlag) is to put a construction on the narrative which it will not bear. The hearers did not think, but knew they were listening to their mother tongues. Besides, the tongues were spoken before the multitudes were present to hear. Then the notion that the assembly of believers was composed of Jews of various nations who spoke as the Spirit moved them, but in their ordinary speech (Paulus, Kuinoel, etc.), is expressly contradicted by the narrative which affirms that the one hundred and twenty were all, or at least mostly, Galilæans. The solution which detects in the narrative only a legendary or mythical reproduction of the Rabbinical fable, that the law was given from Sinai in a tongue which was intelligible to the seventy different peoples of the Table of Nations (Overbeck, Hausrath, etc.) is completely to destroy the credibility of the historian.

IV. **What it signified.**—1. *It attested the reality of Christ's ascension* (see ver. 33). Before His death Christ had promised on returning to His Father to send forth the Spirit (John xvi. 7). Forty days after His resurrection they had seen Him ascend through the opened heavens (i. 10). The descent of the Holy Ghost after ten days' waiting was the intimation to them that Christ had been exalted to the Father's right hand. 2. *It gave the signal for commencing the work of witness bearing*, for which they had been selected and appointed, while it was natural for the apostles and their company to suppose that immediately on Christ's departure they should begin the glorious business of publishing the good news of a crucified, risen and exalted Saviour. Christ Himself commanded them not to start upon their mission until they got the signal from the Father, who alone understood the times and seasons (i. 7). That signal they recognised when the Holy Ghost descended on them. 3. *It equipped the apostles and first believers for their service.* The task committed to them was one that immeasurably transcended their native ability. Power from on high was absolutely indispensable for its efficient discharge. That power was to be supplied by a special baptism of the Holy Ghost (i. 8); and now that the Holy Ghost had come they were prepared (1 Cor. ii. 4; 2 Cor. iii. 5).

Learn.—1. The faithfulness of the Father in implementing His promise (Titus i. 2; Heb. vi. 18). 2. The blessedness of those who humbly and prayerfully wait on God (Isa. xl. 31; Heb. vi. 15). 3. The reality of superterrestrial things (2 Cor. iv. 18). 4. The power of the Holy Ghost as shown in the gift of tongues (2 Peter i. 21). 5. The mission of the Christian Church—to utter what the Holy Ghost teaches (1 Cor. ii. 13). 6. The diversities of gift and service in the Christian Church; all had not the same tongue, but each as the Spirit gave him utterance (1 Cor. xii. 4).

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 1. *The Feast of the Fulfilment.*—On this day (Pentecost) was fulfilled:—

I. **The most beautiful anticipation of antiquity.**—The hope that not only an atonement would be made to Jehovah for the sins of the people, but also a new heart and a right spirit should be given them.

II. **The deepest want of humanity.**—Fellowship with God now for the first time rendered possible by the reconciliation effected through the sacrifice of Christ, and the renovation accomplished by the baptism of the Spirit.

III. **The highest manifestation of Divinity.**—All that went before, even the gift of the Son, being designed as a preparation for the dispensation of the Spirit.—*Oosterzee.*

Ver. 3. *Tongues of Fire.*

I. **Whence they come.**—From heaven, from the Father, from the glorified Christ—*i.e.*, they are gifts of grace bestowed in fulfilment of God's promise, and on account of the merit of Christ.

II. **On whom they are bestowed.**—On praying, waiting, and united believers; on souls possessed of faith, hope, love, and longing.

III. **How they are fed.**—By the Holy Ghost, whose creation they are, for whose manifestation they serve, and under whose control they perpetually remain.

IV. **What they speak.**—Not the wisdom of this world, but words which the Holy Ghost teacheth.

V. **The Effects they produce.**—Always amazement, sometimes unbelief and mockery, frequently conviction and conversion.

Ver. 4. *A Sermon on the Holy Ghost*

I. **His personality.**—Though not here specially emphasised, yet involved in the scriptural representations given of Him generally (see v. 3, 32, vii. 51; Eph. iv. 30).

II. **His Divinity.**—Implied in His co-ordination with the Father and the Son (Matt. xxviii. 19; 2 Cor. xiii. 14).

III. **His agency.**—Symbolised by the Sound, the Fire, and the Tongues.

The Personality and Divinity of the Holy Spirit. The customary objections to this doctrine are thus summarised by Bornemann (*Unterricht im Christentum*, p. 151):

I **The Trinitarian formula proves nothing.**—This, however, is only Bornemann's opinion. Others hold it inconceivable that unless the Son and the Holy Ghost had been co-equal with the Father they would have been thus associated with the Father by either Christ or God.

II. **The phrase "The Spirit Speaks" (Acts xxi. 11; Rev. xiv. 13) no more establishes the personality of the Holy Ghost than the similar phrase "The Scripture speaks"** (Gal. iv. 30) demonstrates the personality of the Bible. But other personal attributes are ascribed to the Holy Spirit which are not and cannot be assigned to Scripture, such as grieving (Eph. iv. 30), comforting (Acts ix. 31), interceding (Rom. viii. 26), etc.

III. **Nowhere in the New Testament is the Holy Ghost represented as the object of worship.**—Yet all true worship is in the New Testament distinctly declared to be the inspiration of the Spirit (John iv. 24; Rom. viii. 26; Gal. iv. 6; Eph. ii. 18).

IV. **The word person as applied to the Holy Spirit is not the same thing as Moderns mean by this term.**—Granted. Yet whatever the vocable "person" signifies as applied to the Father and the Son, that same it imports as applied to the Holy Ghost.

Filled with the Holy Spirit.

I. **A transcendent mystery.**—That the soul of a creature should be inhabited by the Spirit of its Creator.

II. **A demonstrable fact.**—Proved in Pentecostal and early Christian times by the gift of tongues, evinced now by the production of the fruits of the Spirit.

III. **A gracious privilege.** — Bestowed upon believers not of merit on their part, but of spontaneous kindness on God's part.

IV. **A comforting experience.** — Being the seal of acceptance with the Father, and an earnest of the heavenly inheritance.

V. **A valuable talent.**—Such as are its recipients are thereby endowed for service, and will eventually be held answerable for its employment.

Vers. 1-4. *The Ideal of Christian Unity.*—Believers united.

I. In **Worship.**—"Together in one place."

II. In **Heart.**—"With one accord."

III. In **Privilege.**—All witnessing and sharing alike.

IV. In **Endowment.**—"All filled with the Holy Ghost."

V. In **Service.**—All speaking with tongues.

The Pentecostal Blessing.

I. **The conditioning circumstances.** 1. *The Time.* "When the day of Pentecost was now come." "Here again, as in the fact of the Ascension and the waiting of the Church, we trace the outline of Christianity in Judaism, and see in the typical ceremonial of the Old Dispensation the outline and shadow of heavenly realities." 2. *The Place.* An upper chamber. "Round this upper room at Jerusalem has gathered many a story dating from very early ages indeed. This upper room has been identified with the chamber in which the Last Supper was celebrated." 3. *The Spirit.* With one accord. "There was unity of spirit and unity in open manifestation to the world at large. Christ's disciples, when they received the gifts of Heaven's choicest blessings, were not split up into dozens of different organisations, each of them hostile to the others, and each striving to aggrandise itself at the expense of kindred brotherhood."

II. **The external manifestations.**—Three. 1. *A Sound as of a Rushing Mighty Wind.* "The marvels of the story told in the first of Genesis find a parallel in the marvels told in the second of Acts. The one passage sets forth the foundation of the material universe, the other proclaims the nobler foundations of the Spiritual universe." 2. *Tongues as of Fire, separate and distinct, sitting upon each of the Disciples.* "The sign of the Holy Spirit's presence was a tongue of fire. It was a most suitable emblem, pregnant with meaning, and indicative of the large place which the human voice was to play in the work of the new dispensation, while its supernatural character declared that the mere unaided human voice would avail nothing." The separateness of the tongues also was "significant of the individual character of our holy religion." 3. *A Miraculous Gift of Tongues.* "That gift indicated to the Apostles and to all ages the tongue as the instrument by which the gospel was to be propagated." The gift itself was "the power of speaking in foreign languages, according to Christ's promise, 'They shall speak with new tongues'" (Mark xvi. 17). *G. T. Stokes, D.D.*

The Pentecostal Wonder.

I. **The rushing sound.**—"The Divine power which descended on the waiting company of disciples revealed itself first according to its new creative energy or as heavenly life" (*Leben, πνοή, Odem, Windshauch*, ver. 2).

II. **The fiery tongues.** — "The

Divine power revealed itself secondly according to its critically separating force as heavenly light or fire" (ver. 3).

III. **The foreign tongues.**—"The Divine power revealed itself thirdly according to its salvation-revealing might as heavenly discourse and speech, λαλεῖν γλώσσαις ἑτέραις" (ver. 4).—*Dr. Otto Zöckler.*

The Phenomena at Pentecost.

I. The praying congregation.
II. The sound from heaven.
III. The holy flames.
IV. The new tongues.—*Lisco.*

Three Marvels.

I. **In the realm of Nature.**—The sound, the tongues, the speech.

II. **In the sphere of mind.**—Men speaking languages they never learnt.

III. **In the domain of grace.**—Sinful men endowed with the Holy Ghost.

The Descending Spirit.—Among the thoughts and lessons that readily connect themselves with the event of our chapter are the following: 1. The Christian Church was born at Pentecost. There is no Christian *Church* history before that point. The materials of the Church were already present, but standing out of organic relation with each other. It was the brooding of the Spirit that, as we are told in the first of Genesis, produced the formless elements of things into a shapely and prolific world. It was the inbreathing of God into the being of our first parent that developed him into a living soul. It was the influx similarly of the divine Spirit that composed the disciples of Christ into an organised and living Church. A Church is Christianity organised. 2. This was the first Christian revival of religion. The Church was born in a revival, and the *survival* of the Church has been along a continuous line of *revival.* A revival is substantially a fresh appropriation of divine power. The dynamic element enters Christianity not at the cross, not at the Easter sepulchre, but at Pentecost. Pentecost is as much a fact of Christianity as is the crucifixion. The Acts of the Apostles is the Gospel of the Holy Ghost and the Gospel of power. It is the scope of a revival to work in men Christian sinew. There is nothing in the whole New Testament narrative more startling than the transformation which the Twelve suddenly underwent on the fiftieth day after Calvary. An apostle is a disciple plus the Holy Ghost. Appliances are valuable, but only as vehicles for the conveyance of energy that is from God. Christianity would have stopped at Olivet had it not been for the event of our chapter or its equivalent. 3. The Spirit descended upon the disciples when they were together. The full meaning of Christianity is not exhausted in any relation in which it sets us individually to Christ. It comprises a relation between men mutually as well as a relation to God personally and separately. There are blessings and enrichments that accrue to Christians only by their standing in fellowship with each other. That first Sunday evening, the evening of Resurrection-day, Christ showed Himself unto His disciples while they were *together.* The week after, the second Sunday evening, He again appeared to them while they were *together.* And similarly, as we learn from the first verse of our chapter, the Holy Spirit descended upon them while "they were all with one accord in one place." And this gathering together of theirs was not for the purpose of instruction, but in order that they might remain together in the fellowship of concerted prayer and holy waiting. The Church was born thus in a prayer-meeting. The first Christian revival was inaugurated in a prayer-meeting. In spiritual matters two are considerably more than twice as many as one. 4. This first revival of religion began with the spiritual replenishment of those already Christian. It is time wasted, and runs counter to the divine order of things, for a Church that is not itself revived to attempt revivalistic

operations among the unconverted. Christianity, to the degree in which it extends itself, does so as a kind of contagion. 5. After the ascension of their Lord the disciples simply waited for Pentecost. They prayed together, as it would seem, but exactly what was the subject of their prayers it would be very hard to tell. They probably did not pray for a baptism of the Holy Spirit. They had not been instructed to pray for it, but to "tarry" till it came. There was no further work that needed to be wrought in them before its bestowment. They were ready to be blessed. The outpouring of the Spirit was deferred till Pentecost, only because that day would give to the event greater publicity. Our prayers would often seem to imply that the gift of the Holy Ghost is something that has got to be wrestled from God by hard struggling. His Spirit is with us. He has already entered into the world. He is among us like a subtle atmosphere that crowds itself with a gentle intrusion into every space of our hearts and lives that is left open to its occupancy. He is like the sunshine, that fills with brightness and touches with colour every object of ground, sea, and sky that is bared to its silent impact. When we are not illumined, it is not because we have neglected to pray for the sun's rise upon us, but because we have neglected to stand out in the sunshine. 6. The Holy Spirit descended upon all the disciples—not only upon the Twelve, but upon the whole hundred and twenty. So far as we are, then, Holy Ghost Christians, all substantial distinctions in this respect between the laity and the clergy are erased. 7. The Holy Spirit revealed Himself outwardly in the shape of tongues. This was prophetic of the way in which revealed truth was to be disseminated. It does not suffice that men should simply live lives of Christian consistency, and that they should think that conduct fills to the full their measure of obligation. Christ not only lived, He preached. "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." And the word "preaching" must not be construed too narrowly. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh"; "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. The first revival, then, opened men's mouths and set men talking. It was a gift of *tongues*. There is no place for silent Christians under the administration of the Holy Ghost. Inspiration and utterance are inseparable.—*C. H. Parkhurst, D.D.*

I. **Distinguish the permanent from the transient manifestations of this descending Spirit.**—The miraculous displays were designed to attract attention, and to teach by symbols His nature and power. Air is necessary to life. The Spirit, of whom no one can tell whence He comes, or whither He goes, is symbolised by the air we breathe. Air in motion represents power. Fire is purifying. In great crises of the ancient Church God had revealed Himself by fire. The tongues of fire were tokens of the living, conquering, purifying energy by which the Spirit spreads truth through the world. They sat on each of the disciples, showing that each Christian has a special commission and a special power given him from heaven. The disciples, thus supernaturally excited, spoke of the wonderful works of God in dialects which men from all lands heard and understood. Here was displayed the sign that the obstacles to the spread of the gospel were removed. The transient symbol has departed, but the Word of God has leaped the barriers of strange tongues and spread through all the world. The miracle of that hour, emphasised by the miracle of centuries, says to us: "The gospel from heaven has been committed to you. The power of God is promised to you. Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." We see, then, what abides in the Church from the descending Spirit. A great change had already, within a

few days, taken place in the apostles. But the task before them required supernatural power *in* them. They were to undertake a new kind of work. When, then, the Spirit descended to dwell in them, He changed their thoughts. He gave them confidence in the place of timidity. He led them to perceive the grandeur and spirituality of their mission, and their own position in it. They not only recognised that they were divinely commissioned, but they were divinely illuminated. The effects of their preaching were what we should expect from such changes in themselves. The Spirit gave them *utterance.* Their word was with power. Men were moved to acknowledge the truths they proclaimed. Paul the Apostle set against the power of Rome, the greatest nation on earth, the power of God unto salvation. Rome yielded. The gospel triumphed. It is the most impressive truth which God has revealed, that each of His disciples can, by his daily thoughts and acts, bring down upon the Church the power which has achieved the mightiest triumphs of history.

II. **We see that the power imparted by the Holy Spirit is unique and supernatural.**—He created the Christian Church, and now sustains and extends it. Without Him, it is without Christ; and apart from Christ it can do nothing. This gift, then, is not eloquence, nor logic, nor rhetoric, nor any acquired power. The Spirit can employ all these things, all that there is of a man, for His great ends. But His presence is the breath of Him who created all worlds. And His presence distinguishes the Church from all other institutions. Without that, with all its splendid history, it would be only a Samson shorn. There are diversities of gifts; but it is the same Spirit that divides them to every man severally as He will.

II. **We see the purposes for which the Holy Spirit descended and abides with Christians**—to perpetuate the presence of Christ with His disciples, and to enable them to proclaim His gospel. This gift was and is a fruit of the continued operation of the earthly life of Jesus. These truths realised will help us to feel more deeply the immense responsibility that rests on each disciple of Christ. "There is offered to you, as a gift, that which wrought all these wonders. Take it, and greater works than these shall you do." Then think of the misery that sin is still working, of lives blasted by passion, of homes ruined and actions ruled by selfishness, of the millions that sit in darkness, of immortal souls disappearing from these scenes to wake to shame and everlasting contempt. Only one power can change these things—the Holy Spirit in the disciples of Christ. God has placed this measure of opportunity in our hands. Is it possible that Christians will allow anything to hinder the descent of this Spirit on them in His fulness? But evidently whatever wastes this power brings on us fearful loss; and we know the things that waste it. It is not merely the open breaking of the Decalogue which appears inexcusable in Christians, but that any of them can waste in trifling pleasures and selfish pursuits the abilities given from God to save our fellow-men from eternal death, and plead in excuse that they do not transgress any definite command. What do we need so much as the baptism of fire for spiritual life, and the tongue of fire to tell that life to the world? One thing more. This gift is offered to the unconverted. Do any who have not received the Holy Spirit wonder at and criticise the want of power and zeal in Christians? You may yourselves receive that which you think wanting in them. "Repent ye," said Peter to the wondering audience, "and be baptised every one of you for the remission of sins, and *ye* shall receive the Holy Ghost." Yes, you whose ambitions are unsatisfied, whose affections are unstirred by heavenly things—this promise is to you.—*Monday Club Sermons.*

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS (*Verses* 5—13).

Excitement in Jerusalem; or, what the Multitude thought of the Phenomenon.

I **The subjects of this excitement.**—1. *The regular inhabitants of the city.* "Devout men dwelling at Jerusalem." Besides the ordinary native population, these would naturally include pious Jews from foreign countries who had become domiciled in the city for a longer or a shorter period. 2. *The feast pilgrims temporarily sojourning in the city.* "Devout men from every nation under heaven." Of these fifteen different classes are mentioned. (1) Parthians, from the north-east of Media—referred to nowhere else in Scripture. (2) Medes, inhabiting the region between the Caspian Sea on the north, Armenia on the west, Hyrcania on the east, and Persia on the south (2 Kings xvii. 6; Ezra vi. 2; Dan. v. 28). (3) Elamites, located east of the Tigris, north of Susiania, and south of Media (Ezra iv. 9). (4) Mesopotamians, from the lands between the Tigris and the Euphrates (Gen. xxiv. 10; Judges iii. 8; 1 Chron. xix. 6). (5) Judæans, including Jerusalemites, from the Holy Land—*i.e.*, from different parts of Palestine. (6) Cappadocians, whose settlements lay in the east of Asia Minor (1 Peter i. 1). (7) Pontians, who resided in the north-east (1 Peter i. 1), and (8) Asians from Proconsular Asia in the west of Asia Minor (vi. 9, xvi. 6, xix. 10). (9) Phrygians, also from the east of Asia Minor, and north of Pamphylia (xvi. 6, xviii. 23). (10) Pamphylians, whose territory stretched along the Mediterranean coast, south of Phrygia (xiii. 13, xv. 38, xxvii. 5). (11) Egyptians from the Nile valley (vii. 22). (12) Lybians from Cyrene on the west of Egypt (Jer. xlvi. 9; Dan. xi. 43), the native place of Simon, who bore Christ's cross (Luke xxiii. 26), and of Lucius, the prophet in the Church at Antioch (xiii. 1). (13) Romans, from the world's capital on the banks of the Tiber (John xi. 48; Rom. i. 7). (14) Cretans, islanders from the Mediterranean (xxvii. 7; Titus i. 5). (15) Arabians from the desert regions east of the Nile (1 Kings x. 15; 2 Chron. xvii. 11; Gal. i. 17). A motley group, a veritable microcosmus, or little world in the heart of Judæa.

II. **The cause of this excitement.**—1. *A mysterious sound.* The noise of the rushing wind, or what resembled this, which pervaded the town arrested the attention of those who were abroad, and led them to investigate its cause. It is hardly to be supposed that thunder or even an earthquake would have produced the same sort of commotion. 2. *A more mysterious experience.* Every man in Jerusalem, from whatsoever regions arrived, heard one at least in the apostolic company preaching in his own tongue. Probably fifteen foreign languages, or dialects, were that day spoken in the streets of the Jewish capital. (See "Critical Remarks" on vers. 9-11.) 3. *A most mysterious circumstance.* That none of the speakers were themselves foreigners, but all (or most) of them were Galileans, who had never been abroad and certainly had never been at school to acquire such command of foreign tongues. It is obvious that the tongues of Pentecost were not mere unintelligible gibberish, ecstatic or frenzied utterances, "sound and fury signifying nothing," but distinct, articulate, and reasonable speech which could be followed and understood. Nor is it at all likely that the miracle was one of hearing rather than of speaking.

III. **The manifestations of this excitement.**—These were three. 1. *Astonishment.* All, without exception, were confounded, amazed, and constrained to marvel. And no wonder. What they saw and heard was no every-day occurrence, but something altogether out of, and beyond, their usual experience. The universality of this astonishment guaranteed the reality of the phenomenon. 2. *Perplexity.* They could neither explain nor understand the phenomenon. Yet they did not on this account deny it. They felt at a loss to fathom its significance. Yet they did not conclude it had no significance. They

realised that it must import something, and kept on asking one another what each man thought about it. In this their conduct was praiseworthy so far as it was serious; where it was insincere it was frivolous and deserving of blame. 3. *Mockery.* This was the attitude assumed by a portion of the crowd, who, because they failed to comprehend the phenomenon, lost their judgment, and began to scoff, accusing the Spirit-borne speakers of being under the influence of strong drink: "These men are filled with new wine"—a strongly intoxicating beverage. Ridicule and calumny have always been common weapons in the hands of unbelief since the days of Christ (Matt. xi. 19). But neither the one nor the other is a satisfactory way of dealing with religion. Neither can disprove religion, scarcely even hinder its advancement; frequently they hasten its triumph, and often reveal the folly of those who resort to them.

Learn.—1. The wide court to which Christianity appeals—men out of every nation under heaven. 2. The effect Christianity never fails to produce in every community it visits—excitement, wonder, inquiry, faith, and unbelief. 3. The adaptation of Christianity to every people under heaven a striking evidence of its supernatural origin. 4. The mystery which sometimes accompanies Christianity; its phenomena are not always capable of being accounted for by natural causes. 5. The unreasonable treatment Christianity often receives—ridicule instead of refutation or reception.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 5. *Devout Men.*

I. **Are to be found in every nation under heaven**—a lesson of charity (x. 35). Examples Job and Cornelius.

II. **Are in the way of meeting Heaven's revelations**—a ground for hopefulness as to men's ultimate destinies (Psalm xxv. 14; Isa. lxiv. 5).

III. **Are often perplexed at the divine dealings with themselves and others**—a cause for humility (Micah iv. 12; Job xxxvii. 21; John xiii. 7).

IV. **Are sometimes led into sin**—a warning against rashness in judgment (Eccles. v. 2).

Ver. 11. *The Wonderful Works of God.*

I. **In nature.**—1. The creation of the material universe (Gen. i. 1). 2. The origination of life (Gen. i. 20). 3. The formation of man (Gen. i. 26).

II. **In providence.**—1. The preservation of created things—of the material cosmos (Heb. i. 3) and of all animated beings (Psalm xxxvi. 6, civ. 27). 2. The selection and education of Israel (Isa. xliii. 21). 3. The preparation, inspiration, and preservation of the Bible (1 Cor. x. 11; 2 Tim. iii. 16).

III. **In grace.**—1. The redemption of a lost world through the atoning death of Christ (Gal. iv. 4). 2. The regeneration and renewal of souls through the Spirit and the word (Eph. ii. 10; Titus iii. 5).

Vers. 7-11. *How the World receives the Spirit's Utterances.*

I. It commonly **undervalues** the Spirit's witnesses. "Are not all these Galileans?"

II. It is **startled** at the sound of the truth in its own conscience. "How hear we each in our own language?"

III. It **distrusts** the issue of the ways of God. "What meaneth this?"

IV. It **mistakes** the source of the Spirit's operations. "These men are full of sweet wine."—*Gerok.*

Ver. 12. *What meaneth this?*

I. **The majesty of the Father**, from whom the whole family in heaven and on earth is named.

II. **The glory of the Son**, which now appears in heightened splendour, as the glory of the exalted sovereign of God's kingdom.

III. **The power of the Holy Ghost**, which is here seen in signs and tokens which, at the same time, presage a

higher and more glorious future.—*Oosterzee.*

Vers. 12, 13. *Man's Reception of the Great Things of God.*

I. **The great things of God.**—These great things are everywhere, for God is everywhere; and everywhere they produce much the same effects on man. Truly great is our Jehovah, and of great power! He has not forsaken man nor man's earth. He shows Himself more signally than by lightning, or thunder, or earthquake, or tempest; even by the Holy Ghost.

II. **The impression made by them on man.**—1. *Wonder.* With that their religion begins and ends. They wonder, but believe not. They wonder, but love not. They wonder, but depart not from iniquity. 2. *Perplexity.* They know not what to think. They see and hear, and are puzzled. These "great things of God" were not meant to breed perplexity, nor to end in perplexity, yet how often do we find them doing both, through man's perversity, or cowardice, or love of sin and darkness. 3. *Mockery.* This is the worst, yet not the least common treatment which the great things of God receive at the hands of men. Thus the natural heart speaks out. Let God's great things produce their due, their natural impression. He does not work them for mere show. (1) *Let them overawe us.* (2) *Let them break us down.* Our hearts need breaking. (3) *Let them lead us to faith.*—*H. Bonar, D.D.*

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 14—21.

Peter's Sermon. 1. *The First Christian Apology; or, the Pentecostal Mystery explained.*

I. **The attention of the people summoned.**—1. *By a courageous attitude.* Peter's standing up with the eleven signified that they did not intend to shirk investigation, be overborne by clamour, or hurried away with excitement. A reasonable amount of fortitude is requisite for all who would bespeak the attention of their fellows on any subject, but especially on religion. This fortitude ought never to be wanting when the interests of Christ's kingdom are at stake, or anything about the behaviour of Christ's ambassadors requires to be investigated. 2. *By an earnest utterance.* As Peter's manner was unshrinking, so were his words fervent. Like the multitude around, he, too, was under strong excitement, only different from theirs. Besides, he perceived a crisis had arisen in the history of His Master's cause—the time had passed for keeping silence, and the hour struck for speech (Eccl. iii. 7). 3. *By a frank appeal.* Intending to hide nothing from his auditors, he invited the attention of all who could understand him, the men of Judæa, and of those who could only reach his meaning through translation, the foreign dwellers at Jerusalem.

II. **The charge of drunkenness repelled.**—1. *As mistaken.* Founded on a hasty generalisation, and grounded on appearance, which is seldom reliable as a basis for judgment (John vii. 24), it was an altogether unwarranted inference. 2. *As impossible.* Not because wine was not obtainable before 9 a.m., the third hour of the Jewish day, but because during festal seasons it was unlawful to take food, and much more to drink wine earlier than the hour of morning prayer, and because the characters of the accused rendered the charge absurd. "These men," said the Apostle, "whom ye all see and know, and who like yourselves have come up to worship at the feast, are not likely to be drunk at 9 a.m." 3. *As ridiculous.* Drunken men, he might have added, have commonly a difficulty in speaking their own tongues, let alone making use of foreign languages.

III. **The mystery of the tongues explained.**—As a fulfilment of prophecy. 1. *Of the effusion of the Holy Spirit.* (1) By God, whose the Spirit was, and who had engaged to pour it forth in the last times, or in the closing dispensa-

tion of the world. (2) Upon all flesh, without distinction of sex—"Upon your sons and your daughters"; or age—upon "young men and old"; or condition—upon "bondmen" and "bondmaidens," as well as upon free persons. (3) With inward illumination, so that they who received it should "prophesy" or utter divine communications of religious truth, as the apostles and other Christians who had the gift of prophecy did (see 1 Cor. xiv. 3), should "see visions," or possess insight into spiritual and unseen realities, as Stephen did in the judgment hall (vii. 55), Peter on the housetop (x. 10), and Paul on the Damascus road (ix. 3), and in the Temple (xxii. 17), and should "dream dreams," as perhaps John did in Patmos on the Lord's day (Rev. i. 10). 2. *Of the Second Coming of Christ.* Characterised as a "great and notable" day. (1) In comparison with His first advent, which was lowly and obscure, whereas this was to be conspicuous and glorious (Matt. xxv. 31). (2) Because of the portents which should attend it, "the wonders in heaven above and signs on the earth beneath," etc.—language descriptive of the woes and horrors that should overtake such as refused to acknowledge Christ—which received its first and partial fulfilment in the Destruction of Jerusalem, and will attain its complete realisation at the Last Day, when those who decline to believe and obey Christ will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of God, and from the glory of His power (2 Thess. i. 9). 3. *Of the free publication of the Gospel.* This also, according to the prophet, should distinguish Messianic times. Under the dispensation of the Spirit, whosoever should call upon the name of the Lord, not merely evoking but accepting Him and trusting in Him for all that His name should imply, should be saved. (Compare Rom. x. 13.)

Learn.—1. It is no disparagement to a Christian to be found fault with by the world. 2. It is better to be drunk with the Spirit than to be intoxicated with wine. 3. The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. 4. The gospel has two outlooks—one of mercy for the believer, another of wrath for the unbeliever.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 15. *Drunkenness and Spiritual Influence.*

I. **Compared.**—1. Both accompanied by bodily manifestations. 2. Both frequently attended by mental excitement. 3. Both, as a rule, followed by corresponding prostration.

II. **Contrasted.**—1. The one is a carnal excitement; the other is a spiritual ravishment. 2. The one, a degrading sin; the other, an elevating grace. 2. The one leads to moral and spiritual ruin, the other terminates in salvation and eternal life.

Vers. 17-18. *The Dispensation of the Spirit.*

I. The **age** to which it belongs.—The last days—*i.e.*, all the days of the New Testament era.

II. The **author** from whom it proceeds.—Jehovah, the God of the ancient Church and the founder of the new, the God and Father of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

III. The **persons** on whom it descends.—"All flesh," without distinction of sex or age, provided they be "servants and handmaidens" of the Lord.

IV. The **measure** in which it is given.—Not in drops but in streams. "I will pour out."

V. The **effects** by which it is followed.—The highest forms of spiritual illumination—prophesying, seeing visions, and having dreams.

Ver. 17. *Visions for Young Men.*

I. **The vision of the Saviour Christ.**—Such as Saul of Tarsus received in the hour of his conversion (xxii. 14)—

a vision of Christ as the Righteous One, "as the greatest, the wisest, the dearest, and the best—all one's salvation and all one's desire."

II. **The vision of a better self.**—Such as every young man obtains when he gets his vision of Christ. In this vision of a better self are included two spiritual experiences: 1. *An immediate and an intense self-depreciation*, as if the first outcome of the vision of the divine ideal of goodness were "to send down into the dust and break all to pieces"; as with Simon Peter (Luke v. 8) and the Publican (Luke xviii. 13). 2. *The springing up of an intense aspiration.* "There is a gradual emptying of self, and a gradual abandonment to the ideal in Christ, so much so that the motto of Paul becomes that of every Christian, 'To me to live is Christ.'"

III. **The vision of a better society.**—"A common vision with the saints of God is to see the kingdom of God established on the earth." "A modern preacher of righteousness—the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes—specifies no less than a round dozen of devils which must be cast out of modern society—drunkenness, lust, slavery, ignorance, gambling, pauperism, disease, crime, war, the opium trade, the torture of dumb animals the sale of spirits and gunpowder to savages."

IV. **The vision of a better Church.**—"Of a Church free, united, and energetic"—*i.e.*, free to recognise the Lord Jesus Christ alone as its head, and neither pope nor prelate, Queen nor State; united, in the sense that all unnecessary separations shall have ceased; and energetic in doing its God-appointed work amongst men.

V. **The vision of a heavenly inheritance.**—"On the wall of the house in Hamburgh, where the poet Klopstock lived and died, was a board with this inscription—'Immortality is a great thought'; but the thought of Eternal Life in an eternal Home is greater still." A vision of this will defy all the negations of science, and lift the soul higher than all the guesses of philosophers and all the dreams of poets." "Hopeful saw the gates of the city, and that was enough. He looked, and from that happy peace (the Delectable Mountains) God's glory smote him on the face. 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.'"—*P. Wilson, M.A.*

Ver. 20. *The Day of the Lord.*—Great and notable.

I. As regards the **splendour** of Christ's manifestation.—On that day the Son of man will appear in the glory of His Father and with His holy angels.

II. As regards the **blessedness** of Christ's people.—Then this will reach its highest point. They will appear with Him in glory.

III. As regards **the destruction of Christ's foes.**—This will then be sudden, complete, and final.

Ver. 21. *The Messianic Salvation.*

I. Its **import.**—Deliverance from the guilt and power of sin—victory over death and the grave—Resurrection and Eternal Life.

II. Its **foundation.**—The Name of the Lord. The merciful and gracious character of God in Christ, the only plea of a sinner's justification.

III. Its **condition.**—Calling on that Name, which implies faith and earnestness on the part of the caller, as well as an acknowledgment of his need of salvation and utter helplessness to procure it for himself.

IV. Its **universality.**—It is offered to every one who chooses to comply with the aforesaid condition. "Whosoever shall call shall be saved."

V. Its **certainty.**—"It shall be," of a verity, without any peradventure. The believer's salvation is guaranteed by the oath and promise of God, both of which are Yea and Amen in Christ.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 22-36.

Peter's Sermon. 2. *The Mystery of Pentecost traced up to Christ.*

I. The earthly life of Jesus Christ (ver. 22).—1. *His human nature.* "A man"—*i.e.*, no mythical creation or docetical simulacrum, but a *bonâ fide* flesh and blood personality; a genuine member of the race, possessed of a true body and a reasonable soul like the ordinary descendants of Adam. The certainty of this was attested by the fact that He lived among men, performed actions which they saw and uttered words which they heard, sorrowed and suffered like the rest of His contemporaries, and was eventually put to death at their hands. That Peter in connecting the Pentecostal effusion of the Holy Ghost with Him takes as a starting point His humanity does not signify that Peter was in doubt of His divinity (Matt. xvi. 16; John xxi. 17), or regarded that only as a consequence of His exaltation, but merely that in attempting to gain a hearing from his countrymen he commenced with a proposition which he and they held in common—viz., that Christ had been amongst them as a man. That He had been even from the first more than this Peter believed and proceeded to show (vers. 34-36). 2. *His divine attestation.* "Approved," shown forth, accredited as a special messenger to His countrymen—(1) by God, so that, like the prophets of old, He could at least claim to be an ambassador of Heaven, a plenipotentiary and representative of Jehovah (Luke iv. 18; John vi. 39, xvi. 28). (2) Through "mighty works and wonders and signs"—*i.e.*, deeds of power, of mystery, and of significance, which God did, by Him, so that men, reasoning like Nicodemus (John iii. 2), ought to have had no hesitation in recognising Him as "a teacher come from God." 3. In the most public manner—not at all in secret, as His unbelieving brethren insinuated (John vii. 4)—so that the fullest evidence was furnished of who and what He was and claimed to be (John xiv. 11). Though Peter represents God as working by and through Jesus, he does not thereby deny that Christ performed His miracles by His own inherent power; simply in addressing his countrymen, he asserts the least that could be affirmed about Christ—viz., that the divine power manifested itself through Him.

II. **The atoning death of Jesus Christ** (ver. 23).—This Peter represents as having been brought about by a concurrence of human and divine will and action. 1. *In accordance with the divine purpose.* Reverting to the original and eternal decrees of God, who worketh all things according to the counsel of His own will (Eph. i. 11), Peter finds a place among them for the crucifixion of Jesus. The death of Christ was in his view no accident which had surprised either Christ Himself or God. As the story of the arrest in Gethsemane shows that Christ freely surrendered Himself into the hands of His captors (John xviii. 1-11), so does Peter here affirm that God delivered Him into their toils, not because He was unable to rescue His darling from the power of the dog (Psalm xxii. 20), but in pursuance of a deliberate and determinate counsel, formed in eternity, to thus save man from sin and death (1 Peter i. 2, 20). 2. *By an infamous act of betrayal.* Though the person of the traitor is not named, clearly Judas is thought of as the perpetrator of this wicked deed. (Compare Matt. xxvi. 15; John xix. 11.) As the counsel of God did not compel the man of Kerioth to sell Christ to His foes, so neither did it absolve him from guilt for so doing. While the predestination and foreknowledge of God are incontrovertible facts, being involved in the very conception of God, yet must they ever be conceived by us in such a way as neither to make God the Author of sin nor to destroy the efficiency of second causes. 3. *By a cruel deed of crucifixion.* The tragic event was too recent for any call on Peter's part to reproduce the spectacle. Doubtless the strangers from foreign parts had been made acquainted with the deed of blood. Peter restricts himself to two points: (1) That while the instruments

of the crucifixion were "lawless men," meaning, most likely, the Roman soldiers, (2) The real authors of it were the people "ye," who cried "Away with Him!" or their leaders who instigated them to demand His death. Both acted in ignorance, comparatively at least, of the personal dignity of Christ and of the heinous character of their crime (iii. 17; 1 Cor. ii. 8), yet were neither thereby excused.

III. **The triumphant resurrection of Christ** (vers. 24-32). Peter presents this in a fourfold light. 1. *As effected by God.* "Whom God raised up" (ver. 24; compare iii. 15, iv. 10, x. 40, xiii. 30, xvii. 31; 1 Peter i. 21), "having loosed the pangs of death." Quoted from the LXX. version of Psalm xviii. 5, which in the Hebrew reads "cords of death"; the imagery lying in "the pangs of death" may be different, but the sense is the same. The Hebrew poet represents death as a strong man, who binds his victim with cords, which must be untied to admit of resurrection; the Christian apostle compares death's agonies to the pains of parturition—doubtless because in both cases life follows—with this difference, that he depicts these as not ending with the expiry of physical life, but as pursuing the body into the grave in the form of corruption, and requiring to be loosed-or made to cease in order that their victim might be raised. In Christ's case both conceptions were realised. His body saw no corruption, and the cords of death were unloosed. 2. *As necessitated by Christ Himself.* "It was not possible that He should be holden of death" (ver. 24). Inasmuch as the like averment could not be made of any ordinary son of man, the use of it concerning Christ marked Him off as standing in a distinct category by Himself. The impossibility of death's dominion over Christ remaining unbroken lay in this, either that He, Christ, was the Resurrection and the Life (John v. 26; xi. 25), and had power in Himself to resume as well as to lay down His life when He pleased (John x. 17, 18), or that, having satisfied the claims of justice in behalf of man by dying and lying in a sinner's grave, the conditions of His covenant with the Father demanded His restoration to life (Isa. liii. 10-12). 3. *As foretold by David.* "David saith concerning Him." (1) That Peter referred to David the sweet singer of Israel as the author of this psalm, and did not merely use the term David as a convenient synonym for the Hebrew poet, or for the collection of hymns and spiritual songs that passed current under his name, is obvious from even a cursory glance at the passage, and must be held as confirmed by the fact that Paul also, indirectly at least, ascribed it to the son of Jesse (xiii. 35), notwithstanding that the higher critics of to-day pretty generally assert that both Peter and Paul were mistaken (?). (2) That the psalm was prophetically written with an outlook to Christ must be maintained on the same twofold apostolic authority. That the passage cited literally from the LXX. version of the psalm (vers. 8-11) could not have been meant by David to apply to himself was apparent, first, from the language (*e.g.*, Thy Holy One), which befitted not a sinful mortal; and secondly, from the circumstance that David saw corruption and never rose again—his tomb being amongst them on Mount Zion at the very moment when the Apostle spoke (ver. 29, compare xiii. 36). That it was designed to fore-announce the resurrection of Christ, Peter contended, was the unambiguous testimony of the Holy Ghost (ver. 31). 4. *As attested by the apostles and primitive disciples.* "Whereof" or "of whom"—*i.e.*, of the fact or the person; "we all," the one hundred and twenty of i. 15, "are witnesses" (ver. 32). If none of them had been present at the opening of the sepulchre, it is probable that all of them had looked on their risen Lord after His emergence from the tomb. Nor can it be doubtful that what these first witnesses understood by Christ's resurrection was not the exaltation of His spirit to celestial life after His death (Ritschl), but the actual return of His body, though in a glorified form, from the tomb.

IV. **The glorious exaltation of Jesus Christ** (vers. 33-36).—That Peter, as well as Luke and Paul, distinguished between the resurrection and the exaltation of Christ is too manifest to be successfully challenged. Having treated of the former occurrence, he naturally advances to speak of the latter, replying in succession to the following unspoken inquiries: 1. *Whither?*—"Into the heavens" (compare i. 11; Luke xxiv. 51; 1 Peter iii. 22; Heb. ix. 24) and up to the right hand of God" (see vii. 55; Mark xiv. 62, xvi. 19; Rom. viii. 34; Col. iii. 1). This also had been a subject of prophecy by David in Psalm cx. 1, 2, who could not have referred to himself for the simple reason that he "had not ascended into the heavens," and therefore must have spoken of Christ. N.B.—The Davidic authorship of Psalm cx. is guaranteed by Christ (Matt. xxii. 43-45). 2. *By whom?*—"By the right hand of God." Though not the better of the possible renderings of this clause, it contains a thought in full accord with the teaching of Scripture, that Christ's exaltation was the work of the Father (see Eph. i. 20; Phil. ii. 9), who so rewarded Him for His redeeming work. 3. *For what?*—To be "both Lord and Christ" (ver. 36). (1) Lord, or possessor of divine dominion, an idea already expressed in His sitting at the right hand of God as partner of His throne, which dominion, though originally and from eternity belonging to Him as the preincarnate Word (John i. 1, xvii. 5), was now conferred on His divine manhood in reward for His obedience unto death (Phil. ii. 9; Heb. i. 3; Rev. iii. 21). (2) Christ or Messiah, which signified not that Christ had not been Messiah in the days of His flesh (John iv. 26), but that His Messiahship was, by His exaltation, incontestably proved, and that the purposes for which His Messiahship had been constituted could not begin to realise themselves in all their fulness until after His Ascension. That is to say, He was not to be a temporal deliverer rescuing Israel from political thraldom and erecting a world-empire upon earth, but a spiritual Saviour, wielding authority from heaven. 4. *How long?*—"Till His enemies should be made the footstool of His feet" (ver. 35). Till the ends contemplated by His mediatorial sovereignty should be accomplished (1 Cor. xv. 23-28). Till all His believing people should be fully, perfectly, and finally saved (John xvii. 24). Till all His unbelieving adversaries should be reduced into absolute, if still unwilling subjection (Phil. ii. 10, 11).

V. **The Mediatorial Activity of Jesus Christ** (ver. 33).—This, according to Peter, was—1. *Authorised* by Christ's exaltation to the right hand of the Father. Manifestly, only one possessed of divine authority could act as the glorified Redeemer is here represented as doing. More, only one who was the equal and fellow of the Most High. A Moses might serve as mediator for a nation; a mere man would be insufficient to officiate as mediator for the race. 2. *Prepared for* by the promise of the Father that He would pour out the Spirit upon all flesh in Christ's days—a promise given to Christ beforehand in the words of Old Testament prophecy which referred to Him, and renewed to Him on His exaltation. 3. *Manifested* by the Pentecostal effusion of the Holy Spirit, which Peter now ascribes to Him. "He hath poured forth this," an indirect proof of Christ's exaltation and divinity. 4. *Verified* by the unusual phenomena which the house of Israel saw and heard.

Lessons.—1. The close and intimate connection with one another of all evangelical doctrines. This a powerful argument in favour of their truth. 2. The reality of distinct Messianic prophecy. A point contested by modern criticism. 3. The inspiration of the sacred Scriptures and, in particular, of the Psalms of David.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 22. *Did Jesus of Nazareth really Work Miracles?*—1. "It is incontestable that Christ" (in asking the faith of his contemporaries) "appealed very emphatically to His miracles, to His 'works,' which He was able to perform in virtue of the divine power which stood at His command, to His 'signs' in which His Godlike character, and specially the energy and grace pertaining thereto, showed themselves." 2. "In all the wonderful works which the Evangelists report of Him, the question concerns occurrences in which, if they really happened so (*i.e.*, as reported), we cannot at all find merely specially striking arrangements of a common divine providence ruling in the world and nature, but must recognise a direct intrusion of superterrestrial divine power into the regularly ordered connection of finite natural things and the forces deposited in them by God." 3. "It is, and remains, incontestable, that Jesus intended to perform such works and referred (His contemporaries) to them—and that such works were not first assigned to Him by a late, fabulous tradition, which, at the same time, put into His mouth the (above-mentioned) appeal to them." 4. "Apart from every other thing, it is unthinkable that His first disciples and apostles would have ascribed to themselves miraculous powers, as they unquestionably did, had not such miraculous powers been known of Him." 5. Hence "to a historical critic, who will deny to Jesus all real miraculous activity, remains only the supposition possible—at least, if he is clear and honest—that Jesus and His disciples, with respect to this matter of miracles, practised deliberate and constant deception" (Köstlin, *Der Glaube*, p. 28).

Ver. 23. *Divine Afterknowledge and Foreknowledge.*

I. **The divine afterknowledge.**—Does God know all persons, other creatures, or things that have existed, as well as all occurrences that have taken place in the past? 1. *This question must be answered in the affirmative.* God's eye never closes. It never droops. He has never slumbered or slept. He is never unobservant (Psalm cxxxix. 1-16, cxlvii. 4; John xxi. 17; Heb. iv. 13). 2. *The effect of this knowledge on persons, creatures, things, events past, is nothing.* It does not in the least degree modify their nature. It does not make them either good or bad. It does not alter their relations to one another or to God.

II. **The divine foreknowledge.**—Does God foreknow all the persons, other creatures, events, and things that shall be in the future? 1. Some theologians have maintained *that God can and does foreknow things necessary, but not things contingent—i.e.*, such things as owe their existence to free will. But this idea is not tenable, inasmuch as—(1) It ascribes ignorance to God, and (2) is at variance with the existence of prophecy in the Bible, and (3) traverses the statements of both Peter (1 Peter i. 2) and Paul (Rom. viii. 28-30). 2. Other theologians hold that *it is neither logical nor scriptural to maintain the universal foreknowledge of God.* "Whatever is actually foreknown must, they think, be actually fixed by being foreknown." But "knowledge, whether simple (*i.e.*, present) or after or fore, never fixes the object which it knows." "Things foreknown, whether necessary or contingent, will come to pass, but each according to its own nature"—things necessary as necessary, things contingent as contingent. 3. The true theology is that *while all things are foreknown nothing is thereby bound to be.* "There is no certainty imparted to the essence of the things that are foreknown."—*James Morison, D.D.*

Vers. 25 and 34.—*The Two Right Hands.*

I. **God upon the right hand of Christ** (ver. 25).—This was equivalent to a promise from God to Christ of

four things. 1. *Of support and protection in the execution of His redemptive work.* Compare Isa. xlii. 1; Matt. xii. 18. 2. *Of joy and satisfaction in the inception and progress of His work.* Compare Prov. viii. 31; Isa. xlii. 4; John xv. 11, xvii. 13. 3. *Of hope in death.*—Not merely of inward peace, but of prospective recovery from death's dominion. Compare Isa. liii. 10, 11. 4. *Of a glorious resurrection* to embodied existence beyond the grave.—Isa. liii. 11, 12.

II. **Christ upon the right hand of God** (ver. 34).—This could only mean the enjoyment on Christ's part of three things additional. 1. *Co-ordination* (in the sense of equality) *with God—i.e.*, essential divinity. Compare Zech. xiii. 7. 2. *Communion* (in the sense of fellowship) *with God—i.e.*, such converse as alone could be held by equals. Compare John i. 1, v. 19, 20. 3. *Co-partnership* (in the sense of dominion) *with God—i.e.*, the possession of absolute power. Compare Dan. vii. 13; Matt. xxviii. 18; Eph. i. 21; Phil. ii. 9; 1 Peter iii. 22; Rev. xvii. 14.

Vers. 25-28. *The Lord upon the Right Hand.*—What that signifies to the follower of Christ.

I. **Confidence.**—He shall not be moved. With such a Companion and Protector, why should we either be troubled or afraid? (Prov. xxix. 28; Isa. xxvi. 3).

II. **Joy.**—Arising from a sense of the divine presence and fellowship. All the nobler faculties of that man who has God for a defence begin to exult (Psalm v. 11; Rom. v. 11).

III. **Hope.**—When the good man's flesh lies down to tabernacle in the grave, it does not do so in despair, but rather with the joyous expectation of a future coming forth (Prov. xiv. 32; Acts xxiv. 15; Rom. viii. 19).

IV. **Resurrection.**—His soul will not be left in Hades, neither will his body be abandoned as a prey to corruption. It may be allowed to see corruption, but that which is sown in corruption will be raised in incorruption (1 Cor. xv. 42).

V. **Immortality.**—The good man will not be raised to judgment and condemnation, but to justification and eternal life (John v. 29).

VI. **Glory.**—He will be filled with gladness with Jehovah's countenance; he will behold Christ's glory and experience, the highest felicity in Christ's presence (1 John iii. 2; Rev. vii. 13-17; John xvii. 24).

Ver. 31. *The Resurrection of Christ.*—Was—

I. **The necessary counterpart of His death.**

II. **His final victory** over all hostile powers.

III. **The divine attestation** of His Messiahship.

IV. **The presupposition of His exaltation** as "the Son of God in power."

V. **The pledge of His supremacy** over the living and the dead.

VI. **The seal of all blessings**, rights, and privileges given through Christ, especially of the forgiveness of sins and the future resurrection.

VII. **The constraining argument for a new life** in the spirit on the part of Christians.

VIII. **The decisive proof** for the reality, supernaturalness, and eternity of the kingdom of God.

IX. **The starting point** of all Apostolic missions and evangelical preaching.—Bornemann, *Unterricht im Christentum*, p. 102).

Ver. 34. *The Mediatorial Throne.*

I. **Its divine appointment.**—"The Lord said unto My Lord." Jehovah its Author. By His decree was it constituted.

II. **Its glorious occupant.**—"My Lord." 1. David's divine Sovereign. 2. Jehovah's personal fellow.

III. **Its specific object.**—Here represented to be the subjugation of all the enemies of that throne—*i.e.*, all the foes of Jesus Christ and His kingdom.

IV. **Its long duration.**—Till that subjugation is effected. But not for ever. (See 1 Cor. xv. 28.)

Vers. 22-36. *Four Remarkable Things in Peter's Sermon.*

I. The **courage** that could venture to charge upon an immense miscellaneous street audience the death of God's Messiah, and this in the most naked terms, and by a man who had himself but a short while before, quailing before a servant maid in the high priest's palace, denied Him thrice.

II. The **tenderness** which tempered this awful charge with the announcement of an eternal purpose of God in that very death, so paving the way for holding forth this crucified One as their own now exalted Lord and Christ.

III. The dread **harmony** with which one and the same event is here presented as on men's part a crime of unparalleled atrocity, and on the part of God the result of an eternal decree of saving mercy.

IV. The **description** given of that death itself—by a word signifying travail pangs, as the throes of a death which was to give birth to a new life.—*David Brown, D.D.*

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 37—41.

The First Converts; or, the Firstfruits of the Gospel Harvest.

I. **The anxious inquiry.**—*By whom it was preferred.* The men and women who had listened to Peter's sermon; who had manifestly kept awake when the Apostle preached, attended to his words, taken in and reflected on their significance, as well as applied them to their own circumstances and condition; in all which they offered an example to hearers of the Gospel in general. 2. *To whom it was addressed.* "To Peter and the rest of the Apostles." From this conjunction of the eleven with Peter (see ver. 14) it should perhaps be inferred that they also as well as Peter solicited a hearing from the crowd. Nor need it be doubted that, enjoying the same inspired assistance as Peter, they treated their themes in much the same way as he did his. In any case they were believed by the multitude to be able, as well as Peter, to direct those who asked from them guidance. It is good when preachers have the confidence of their hearers, in respect of both intelligence and willingness to place that intelligence at their service; it is better when hearers in their anxiety appeal for spiritual counsel to such preachers; it is best when they repair to Him who is the Lord both of hearers and preachers. 3. *By what it was prompted.*—A heartfelt conviction of guilt. Realising the terrible mistake they had been under both as to who Jesus of Nazareth had been and as to their behaviour in sending Him to a cross, they understood the heinous criminality of their lawless deed; and discerning clearly that if Christ were now exalted to the right hand of God they were in danger indeed, they became forthwith filled with alarm. Besides, by their exclamation they practically owned their sin, and openly confessed their belief that the Christ they had crucified was Lord of all. Once more furnishing a pattern to hearers of the Gospel, who should allow it when addressed to them to carry conviction of its truth to their understandings and of their guilt to their hearts and consciences. 4. *For what it was directed.* Guidance in their distressful perplexity: "What shall we do?" Pierced through with the arrows of conviction, rent with spiritual anguish under a sense of guilt, enlightened as to their wickedness, and alarmed for their safety, they felt that to remain indifferent or do nothing was impossible. They must escape from the peril in which they stood, know how to act in the crisis that had come upon them, find out where to turn and what to do in order to obtain remission of their guilt, peace for their consciences, and eternal life for their souls. A fourth time their behaviour was a splendid illustration of how convicted, anxious, and distressed Gospel hearers should act in time of soul concern.

II. **The comforting reply.**—1. *The direction.* Two things were needful for

all, without exception and without delay. (1) Repentance. "Repent ye." Without a change of mind, heart, and behaviour, salvation was impossible. Repentance for them meant an alteration in their way of thinking about Christ, who must no more be looked upon as a man, and far less as a malefactor, but regarded as Lord and Christ; in their way of feeling towards Christ, who must no more be treated with indifference and unbelief, far less with hate and persecution, but honoured with earnest faith and cordial love; in their way of acting before Christ, who must no more be pained by seeing them walking after their own ways, and far less in ways of sin, but must behold them following holiness and keeping His commandments. (2) Baptism. "Be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ." The repentance, faith, and obedience already demanded, if existing in the heart, must be outwardly expressed by submission to baptism, in which it was designed that all should be symbolised. Rightly viewed, this religious ordinance was intended for a material and visible representation not of the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but of the answer of a good conscience or the laying aside of the works of the flesh in repentance (1 Peter iii. 21), of the faith which looked for cleansing from guilt and sin to the sprinkling of a Saviour's blood (Heb. xii. 24), and of that spirit of submission to Christ which acknowledged Him as Lord (Gal. iii. 27). That baptism was connected with repentance as necessary for the remission of sins did not signify that any saving efficacy resided in the water, or in the ceremony, but merely that without compliance with this ritual there could be no guarantee of that repentance which was required for salvation. Where, however, baptism was sincerely submitted to, it became a visible pledge to the repenting and believing recipient that the covenant of salvation, of which it was a seal, would be kept in his experience, and that the blessings of the covenant, of which it was a sign (washing from guilt or pardon, and washing from pollution or regeneration), would be bestowed upon him. 2. *The promise.* "Ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Their cry indicated that already they had been visited by the gracious operations of that Spirit who Christ said (John xvi. 8) should convict the world of sin; what Peter's statement imported was that the Holy Ghost should descend upon them as He had upon the Apostles themselves and their fellow-believers, and should remain with them as a permanent endowment (John xiv. 16), enlightening their minds (1 Cor. ii. 12), purifying their hearts (2 Thess. ii. 13), sanctifying their whole natures (1 Cor. vi. 11), witnessing with their spirits (Rom. viii. 16), and conferring upon them sundry gifts for the edification of themselves and the Church (1 Cor. xii. 7). The permanent inhabitation of the believer by the Holy Ghost is a recognised doctrine of the New Testament (v. 32, x. 44, xiii. 52, xv. 8; Rom. v. 5; 1 Cor. iii. 16; 2 Cor. i. 22, etc.). 3. *The encouragement.* "The promise of the Holy Ghost," which was virtually a promise of salvation, had been freely extended unto them, the Jews, domestic and foreign, then present in the city and listening to the Apostle, along with their children, descendants, or offspring (a warrant for infant baptism), and unto all that were afar off, not merely Jews of the dispersion, but Gentiles as well; an unambiguous hint that from the first the Gospel, as preached by Peter, contemplated the admission of the Gentiles into the Church, though Peter from the first did not understand the exact terms and conditions upon which their reception should take place. The only limitation to that universality which sounds in the Gospel offer arises from the appended clause, "as many as the Lord our God shall call unto Him," which may signify either that the promise would realise itself only in the case of those whom God inwardly called to Himself by His grace, or that it was extended only to those who were invited by the Gospel. Both propositions are correct. All who hear the Gospel call are invited freely to lay hold of the promise; but the promise is fulfilled to them alone who by faith embrace it, and

so prove themselves to have been inwardly drawn by the Father (John vi. 44). 4. *The appeal.* Besides encouraging his hearers Peter endeavours to arouse them to instant action, by exhorting them to save themselves from the then existing crooked generation (compare Phil. ii. 15), for which the Hebrew Scriptures threatened ultimate destruction (Psalm cxxv. 5); and this he tells them they could do only by repenting and being baptised. In no other way yet can men rescue themselves from the doom which overhangs this present evil world (1 Cor. xi. 32; Gal. i. 4).

III. **The happy result.**—About three thousand souls (persons) responded to this appeal. 1. *They received the Apostle's word.* With faith. A customary New Testament phrase for believing acceptance of the Gospel (xi. 1, xvii. 7; 1 Thess. i. 6, ii. 13). 2. *They submitted to baptism.* Whether this rite was administered on the spot, or at a subsequent hour of the same day, or still later, to suit the convenience of the recipients, is not certain from the text (see "Critical Remarks"), though the second alternative is the more probable. (On the subjects of baptism, see "Hints on ver. 39.") 4. *They were added to the Church.* The word Church, though not expressed, is understood. The new converts were reckoned to the number of professed disciples, and professed disciples form the visible Church.

Learn.—1. The genesis of true religion in the soul. Conviction of sin, repentance, faith (implied in baptism), pardon, the Holy Ghost. 2. The defectiveness of those (so-called) evangelical systems that have no place in their teaching for conviction of sin or repentance. 3. The certain test of religion's reality in the soul of an individual—his having received the Holy Spirit. 4. The universality of the Gospel promise of salvation, not inconsistent with Divine Sovereignty in respect of the Gospel call. 5. The urgency of seeking after personal salvation, by separation from the sinful world. 6. The necessity of confessing Christ before men by submitting to baptism. 7. The duty of believers connecting themselves with the visible fellowship of the saints.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 37. *Conviction of Sin.*

I. **By whom required?**—All, seeing that all have sinned.

II. **Wherein lies its seat?**—In the heart, as distinguished from the head.

III. **By what produced?**—1. The *instrument*—the word of God, either preached or read. 2. The *agent*—the Holy Ghost applying the word to the conscience.

IV. **To what it leads?**—A sense of danger and feeling of alarm, prompting the cry, "What shall we do?"

V. **How removed?**—By: 1. Repentance. 2. Remission of sin. 3. Reception of the Holy Ghost.

The Cry of awakened Souls, "What shall we do?" The cry of:

I. **Acknowledged guilt.**
II. **Realised danger.**
III. **Conscious helplessness.**
IV. **Earnest desire.**
V. **Eager hope.**
VI. **Humble docility.**
VII. **Arising faith.**

The Spirit and the New Sense of Sin.—Confucius is said to have once exclaimed, in an outburst of despondency, "It is all over! I have not yet seen one who could perceive his fault and inwardly accuse himself." Confucius is not alone in that verdict upon human nature. The lament is suggestive. It implies the enormous difficulty of bringing an average man to admit his fault. It is all but impossible to argue the world into a frank and unreserved acknowledgment of its follies and misdemeanours. The most horrible offences which have ever blotted and befouled the history of mankind find ingenious apologists. At

this very hour men will write to the newspapers to defend with sociological sophistries every vice that saps and smirches our national life. Where the Spirit of God does not work in the fulness of His power true moral discernment is wanting. You might as well make a colour-blind man judge at a flower-show, as accept from one who has not the Spirit of God a verdict upon questions of morals not already determined by statute law or public opinion. To convince of sin is a work of supreme difficulty worthy of the Spirit's matchless light and wisdom and resource. So many forces militate against the work of the Spirit in convincing the world of sin, that the wonder is we should come to see any dawning humility, reproach, and self-accusation in human nature at all.

I. **The instinctive pride of human nature is arrayed against this first task of the Comforter.**—The man who, born to wealth, lands himself in an unhappy bankruptcy is rarely able to adapt himself to a life of straitened circumstance. He will think he has the right to ride behind horses, to be waited on, and to drink the best wines, to the end of his days, although he may never redeem his fortunes. His habits cling to him, and he goes upon the assumption that once a merchant prince, always a prince. A fallen king can rarely reconcile himself to the position of a mere subject. Poor plaything of chance though he is, he looks upon his hereditary rights as interminable, and claims from his followers on the tossing sea, or in the mountain cave or island prison, to which his conquerors have banished him, the deference he had claimed when the head of a brilliant court. And so with human nature. It seems to possess some faint hereditary consciousness of its own high birth. It has some pathetic and indefinable reminiscence of the position to which it was designated in the beginning. The reverence of children and the honour of neighbours are demanded as rights. The Bible, too, seems to give its sanction to this code of etiquette; for, in spite of all it has to say about the depravity of human nature, it enforces the universal honour of man as man. Can we be content to honour ourselves less than it is claimed others must honour us? We are built up in pride by that habit of expecting honour at the hands of others, the germ of which is perhaps hereditary, and we repel and resent that self-humiliation to which the Spirit must needs bring the best of us.

II. The work of the sin-convincing Spirit is further hindered by the fact that **we judge ourselves in the light of an imaginary future**, as well as by the ideals of an outfading past. We draw the material for our own portraiture from the flattering hopes we have been wont to cherish, rather than from the practical record we have left behind us. We had meant to be holy and noble and without reproach, and have not yet relinquished our great intentions, and it is from that standpoint we form the estimate of ourselves. It is not the spendthrift youth only, with a small income and extravagant conceptions of life, who makes audacious drafts upon the future. We are all prone to live in a fool's paradise, in the ethical sense. We are not yet at the end of our career, and of course we are going some day to be faultless from every point of view. And the glamour of that dream is always before our eyes when we are called to the task of knowing ourselves. The future, as we intend to shape it, will more than outbalance the past.

III. Another difficulty encountered by the Spirit in this preparatory work is that we **find ourselves with personalities whose natural perceptions are more active than their moral.**—Two diseases work within us, our physical senses are in a condition of hyperæsthesia and morbid sleeplessness, and our spiritual senses are blunted by an ominous coma and a fast-developing induration. The perceptions of pleasure and pain are so much keener than the consciousness of right and wrong, that we never forget the wrongs done to us

by others, and spend our lives in counting up the pitiful sum, whilst our heart grows stone-dead to the trespasses we have committed against both God and our fellows. We are occupied with an arithmetic that is entirely false, vicious, and misleading, and can never give us an equation of justice and of truth. Whilst our natural sensibilities are so keen, that we can give a most minute and detailed account of all the wrongs inflicted upon us by others, our moral sensibilities seem to be represented by a single attenuated nerve-thread only, which is so obtuse that it fails to register a tithe of the wrongs we do to others; and it is hard to bring us to that state of soul described by the expression "pricked in the heart." And we come to look upon these solitary delinquencies as more than outweighed by the losses of which we are the victims through the multitudinous delinquencies of others. And by thinking of these possible offsets in judgment, we shut out the operation of the Spirit as He seeks to convince of sin.

IV. We are sometimes **trained to self-justification by the exigencies of our daily life,** and a tenacious habit is formed within us adverse to the sin-convincing work of the Spirit. The current conditions of society are such that certain cardinal moralities, and a reputation for them, are necessary to worldly success. We must vindicate our name at every turn if we are to live. The competition that prevails in all sections of the world, grave and gay alike, is in the last analysis the competition of reputations, and we must keep up our reputations, unless we are to go to the wall. It has become a second nature to us to overlook our own faults entirely, and to be ever dressing out our virtues for the eye of the world; and we carry the habit of self-vindication into God's presence, and exercise it before His bar, perhaps at the very time we are joining in the General Confession of the Liturgy. When trees have been bent by the prevailing winds that have been beating upon them for half a century, it is not easy to make them lean in the other direction. A passing hurricane will not effect the reversion.

V. Our **passionate self-interests league themselves against the work of the Spirit** as He comes to convince us of sin.—We live in a world sadly lacking in charity and tenderness, and to plead guilty of a trespass in the common affairs of life would often be to invite punishment more or less severe. The world gives us the full benefit of all the confessions we pour into its ear, and we soon learn the art of keeping confessions to ourselves. In very few communities indeed is the admission of error a highway to advancement. Wherever Governments are cruel and public opinion is harsh and pitiless, you will find a proportionate reluctance to admit error and shortcoming. The most immaculate people in the world, according to their own estimate at least, are to be found in the lands where rule is despotic and public opinion pitiless. And some traces of this fact are present in our own midst. For the servant to confess error would be in many instances to challenge dismissal, especially if his position is one of trust and responsibility; for a master to confess error would be to invite strikes and to risk the break up of his authority; for a tradesman to confess grave error would in some cases lead to a discontinuance of the business that has been given him. I have heard some men plead that authority must be upheld when it is wrong, because to allow that it had made mistakes might pave the way to anarchic conditions of feeling. And this repugnance to the acknowledgment of error, ingrained into us through our worldly training and experience, influences us when the Spirit begins to deal with us and to convince us of our sin. Confession is almost inseparably associated with the idea of drastic punishment. What is the method of the Spirit's logic? By what process does He introduce into the human mind and implant there these stern, unflattering convictions of sin?

His work is creative, and we cannot penetrate its many secrets; and answers to these questions are necessarily fragmentary and inadequate. 1. The Holy Spirit for the fulfilment of His appointed work puts *an environment of new ideals before the mind.* He testifies of Christ, and in so doing makes us see how in His humanity all divine excellencies have come down into the midst of men and made themselves a new law to the conscience. Some little time ago I was passing through a country lane, and saw a flock of sheep feeding on the hillside. They seemed to be milk-white, justifying the scriptural metaphor, "He scattereth hoar-frost like wool," and fit to be welcomed as pets into a drawing-room. In comparison with the green pastures in which they were feeding, their fleeces seemed bleached into spotlessness. Not long after, a snowstorm came, and I had occasion to pass by the same field. But the sheep did not seem to be the same creatures at all. The background had changed as if by magic, and they were in a new world, the conditions of which served to bring out their griminess. The collier, rising out of the pit into the sunshine after a night of toil, scarcely looked grimier than those spotless sheep of yesterday. So when the Spirit brings down from the presence of God on high into these human souls new ideals of truth and righteousness, love, purity, faithfulness, the soul sees itself against a new ethical background. The philanthropist puts himself by the side of churl and niggard, and says, How open-handed I am! A man poses before the background of ethical mediocrity current in his town, or city, or nation, and is quite content with his past record. And for the time his self-satisfaction seems to be warranted. But by-and-by the new background comes in. He awakes to the fact that he is in God's presence, and sees himself standing by the side of the spotless Son of man in whom the Father has revealed Himself, and before the great white throne of all-searching judgment, and he is filled with shame and self-condemnation. 2. The Spirit enwraps the man to whom He comes with *a new atmosphere of sympathy and graciousness*, unlike that which exists in the world and provokes to ingenuous self-justification. He who comes under this ministry feels almost instinctively His right to search the heart and bring every delinquency before a divine tribunal. It is useless to attempt concealment, for the Spirit knows us more thoroughly than we know ourselves, and can constrain the most reluctant natures into a consciousness of their own evil. He acts upon us, not like the angry storm which leads men to bar their doors and close their shutters, but like the soft south wind, which opens every labyrinth of the heart and life to the light. It is no treachery or ill-will or unrelenting antagonism which is bringing right home to us the unwelcome facts of the past, but helping and healing beneficence. 3. But over and above these things, a *new power of moral discernment* needs to be aroused in those who are to be re-created by the ministry of the Spirit. The Pharisee met Jesus, and had no sense of guilt. The idea of spiritual sin seemed to be entirely foreign to the genius of his thought. He looked upon the surpassing excellence of this man of Nazareth as mere eccentricity, a freak of fanaticism, a spasm of madness. Men needed new senses, an enlargement of the conscience that would enable them to feel the guilt of unchastened desire, evil imagination, soulless worship. And where the Spirit comes, whilst He deadens to the illusions of the world and its vain shows, He makes men conscious of the paramount significance of the faintest things which touch their relation to the invisible. By awakening these new perceptions the Spirit brings into view the countless spiritual sins of the former days, and shuts men up for hope to the one common law of mercy. The fact that the sins of the spirit as well as the sins of the body are rebuked by this inward Teacher is indicated by that expansion of the words immediately

added—indeed, sins of the spirit are the roots of all outward transgression—"of sin, because they believe not on Me." In the view of the Spirit this is the core of all heinousness in either the ancient or the modern world, and the Spirit will demonstrate it to those with whom He deals. 4. The conviction of sin is *the groundwork of all religious belief*, and there can be no genuine consciousness of divine things which does not begin here. Remember in what an awful state the man is who lacks this new sense of sin. If the natural senses were blotted out, a man would walk into some death-trap or other in less than twenty-four hours. And when a man lacks these spiritual senses, is the peril less tragic, think you? The highest thing that the love of God or man can seek for you is that you may have this sense of sin. Has it been born within you? Do you possess this sign of a dawning spiritual life?—*T. G. Selby.*

Ver. 38. *The Gift of the Holy Ghost.*
I. **Supernatural** as to its origin.
II. **Mysterious** as to its enjoyment.
III. **Free** as to its bestowment.
IV. **Conditioned** as to its reception.
V. **Permanent** as to its duration.
VI. **Saving** as to its effect.

Vers. 36-38. *The Cross, the Crucifiers, and the Crucified.*

I. **The crucified One.**—Let us note concerning this. 1. *Who He was.* "That same Jesus"; yes, Jesus of Nazareth. 2. *What was done to Him.* He was betrayed, tried, condemned, crucified, slain. 3. *By whom was this done?* By "His own"; by "Israel," the house of Israel. 4. *What God has made Him.* "Both Lord and Christ." The stone which the builders rejected has been made the head of the corner.

II. **The crucifiers.**—They were, as we have seen, "the house of Israel." They had deliberately united to crucify. —1. *An innocent man.* 2. *A good man.* 3. *A prophet.* 4. *The Lord of Glory.* 5. *Their own Messiah.* They were thus not merely murderers, but no ordinary ones; criminals in the highest and darkest sense.

III. **The connection between the crucified and the crucifiers for evil and for good.** 1. *For evil.* For condemnation. It was this that they felt so awfully when the Apostle had stated the simple facts. (1) They were pricked in their hearts. (2) They cried out, What shall we do? A full sense of their awful criminality flashed through them. 2. *For good.* This connection for *evil* might be disannulled, and a new one formed.—*H. Bonar, D.D.*

Ver. 39. *The Promise of the Gospel.*
I. As to its **giver**, divine.
II. As to its **contents**, saving.
III. As to its **terms**, free.
IV. As to its **recipients**, universal.
V. As to its **continuance**, irrevocable.

To you and to your Children; or, the Church Membership of Children.

I. **The import of this statement.**—Not that all children indiscriminately and promiscuously should be regarded as within the pale of the Church visible, but only those of such parents or parent as accepted and relied upon the promise.

II. **The ground of this statement.**—That children were considered as within the pale of the Old Testament Church, and that under the New the promise of salvation (remission of sins and reception of the Holy Ghost), and therefore of Church membership, is distinctly offered to men and women not by themselves, but along with their offspring.

III. **The consequence of this statement.**—1. *The salvation of children dying in infancy.* This seems, in the case at least of the children of believing parents, involved in their relation to the promise. The promise belongs to them in virtue of their connection with believing parents, and is given to them the moment they accept it by an act of personal repentance and faith. Hence, in the case of such as die before this

repentance and faith can be exercised, it seems reasonable to conclude that they are saved. Nor is it an unnatural supposition with regard to infants generally who die before attaining to years of responsibility that they also, for Christ's sake, share in the blessing of the promise. 2. *The reasonableness of infant baptism.* If to them belongs the promise of salvation, why should they not receive its sign and seal? If it be answered that faith must precede baptism, the answer is that faith must also precede salvation. If, then, a child cannot be baptised without faith, the conclusion is that neither can he be saved without faith. In other words, a child dying in infancy must be lost. We prefer to believe Christ: "Of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Vers. 37-40. *Words for Anxious Inquirers.*

I. **Their duty pointed out.**—1. Repent. 2. Believe. 3. Be baptised.

II. **Their salvation assured.**—1. The Holy Ghost is for them who perform these duties. 2. As a free gift. 3. In undoubted certainty.

III. **Their warrant set forth.**—1. The promise of salvation is for them. 2. They are called to believe the promise and accept the gift.

Ver. 41. *The Miraculous Draught of Souls.*

I. **The deep sea.**—The listening multitude.

II. **The gospel net.**—The sermon of Peter.

III. **The great catch.**—Three thousand converts in one day.

Vers. 38-41. *Scala Salutis; or, the Ladder of Salvation.*

I. **Repentance cherished.**
II. **Faith expressed.**
III. **Sin forgiven.**
IV. **The Holy Ghost received.**
V. **Baptism submitted to.**
VI. **The Church entered.**

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 42-47.

The Pentecostal Church; or, the Daily Life of Primitive Believers.

I. **The leaders of the Church.**—The apostles, who were employed in two ways: 1. *Teaching.* Instructing the newly baptised converts in the elements of Christian truth. Baptising and teaching the order prescribed by Christ (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20). This traverses the idea that baptism should not be administered to infants because these cannot understand the gospel before being baptised. 2. *Working miracles.* Doing signs and wonders; most likely healing sick persons. The curing of the lame man (iii. 1-10) an example of their activity in this direction. Their "works" secured a hearing for their "words." "Good works" should always accompany "good words."

II. **The members of the Church.**—1. *The New Converts.* Devoted to four things: (1) Waiting on the teaching of the apostles. An example for young Christians, who should desire the sincere milk of the world that they might grow thereby (1 Peter ii. 2). (2) Cultivating religious fellowship with one another. Joining, doubtless, in common acts of worship and mutual deeds of kindness. So should Christ's disciples not forsake the assembling of themselves together (Heb. x. 25), or forget to be kindly affectioned one to another (Eph. iv. 32), speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs (Eph. v. 19), and endeavouring to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. iv. 3). (3) Celebrating the Lord's Supper. At first observed on the evening of every day, at the close of a common meal or lovefeast (Agapæ), it gradually came to be dissociated from the lovefeast, and to be celebrated at wider intervals. (4) Engaging in acts of devotion. Praying both in public "in the temple" and privately "at home." Perhaps using the prayers of the Jewish sanctuary; more likely employing the prayer which Christ had taught His disciples (Matt. vi. 9); and outpouring besides, in speech of their own, their

hearts' desires for themselves and for one another. 2. *The whole body of believers.* Of these, who also continued daily in the temple praising God and celebrating the Lord's Supper in their homes, three things additional are recorded: (1) They maintained visible unity among themselves. Not only being of "one accord," but meeting "in one place." Not necessarily in one building all at once, since a commodious enough chamber might be difficult to find in Jerusalem, but in separate groups in different rooms, the essential thing about their meetings being that they were characterised by a spirit of concord and unity. (2) They supported themselves by a common purse. Those who had "lands" or "estates"—*i.e.*, real property—and those who had "goods" or personal property, sold what belonged to them and cast the proceeds into a common fund, out of which each man received what was needful for his daily sustenance. This, the first effort after Christian socialism, was probably dictated by two things—a desire to live as nearly as possible like Christ and His apostles (John xiii. 29), and the necessity of finding a livelihood for those who, by becoming Christians, had been thrown out of their customary employments, and so reduced to want. How far this experiment of the Jerusalem Church was binding on the Churches that afterwards arose, or how far it should be followed by Churches to-day, are questions on which the "Hints on iv. 34, 35" may be consulted. (3) They grew in popularity with the outside public. Owing doubtless to the "signs and wonders of the apostles," by which the populace were impressed; to the increasing number of believers, which caused the new movement to be respected; to the peaceful character of the Christians, who, not being turbulent fellows, gradually disarmed the people's fears and suspicions; and to the kindness they exhibited towards each other, which naturally drew the people to regard them with sympathy.

III. **The Head of the Church.**—The Lord—*i.e.*, Jesus Christ. Occupied in two ways. 1. *Impressing the people.* (1) With fear towards Himself. Religious awe (Luke i. 65) fell on every soul who witnessed what was going on. They said "This is the doing of the Lord!" (Psalm cxviii. 23). (2) With favour towards the disciples. These came to be looked upon with approbation (Luke ii. 52), on account doubtless of their serious characters and peaceful lives. 2. *Increasing the Church.* Adding to it daily through the preaching of the apostles—not those who should be, or those who were, but those who were being saved.

Learn.—1. The secret of spiritual growth—continuing in the apostles' doctrine, etc. (ver. 42). 2. The secret of Church stability—walking in love and bearing one another's burdens (ver. 44). 3. The secret of happiness—the cultivation of piety at home and the exhibition of it abroad (ver. 46). 4. The secret of ecclesiastical prosperity—God adding to the Church those who are being saved.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 42. *Christian Steadfastness.*

I. **In the Apostle's doctrine.** (Compare xiv. 22; 1 Thess. v. 21; 2 Thess. ii. 15; 2 Tim. iii. 14; Heb. x. 23.)

II. **In mutual fellowship.** Compare Rom. xii. 10, xv. 2; Gal. v. 13; Eph. iv. 2, v. 2.)

III. **In the breaking of bread.** Compare xx. 7; 1 Cor. v. 7, 8, x. 16, 17, xi. 17-34.)

IV. **In prayers.** (Compare Eph. vi. 18; Phil. iv. 6; Col. iv. 2; 1 Thess. v. 17.)

Vers. 44, 45. *Primitive Christian Socialism and Modern Unchristian Communism compared and contrasted.*

I. **Points of resemblance.**—1. The sale (or surrender) of lands and goods. 2. The creation of a common sustentation fund. 3. The distribution to each man according to his need.

II. **Points of difference.**—1. Christian socialism (as practised in Pentecostal days) said—"What is mine is thine"; modern communism, as frequently advocated, says, "What is thine is mine." 2. Christian socialism said, "Take what I have"; modern communism says, "Give what thou hast." 3. Christian socialism was prompted by love to the poor; modern communism is too often actuated by hatred to the rich. 4. Christian socialism drew men together in love and sympathy; modern communism rather tends to separate men by anger and hostility.

III. **Points of suggestion.**—1. That if Christian socialism were more practised modern communism would be less rampant. 2. That the existence of modern communism shows something to be wrong in the social body. 3. That the equality of classes and individuals should rather be brought about by Christian socialism than by modern communism.

Ver. 46. *Model Christians.*

I. **In their duty towards God.**—Worshipping daily with one accord in the temple.

II. **In their love towards each other.**—Cultivating friendly relationships in private life. Breaking bread at home.

III. **In their happiness by themselves.**—Eating their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.

Ver. 47. *A Prosperous Church.*

I. Increasing in **numbers.**

II. Increasing in numbers **daily.**

III. Increasing **through the addition of saved souls.**

IV. Increasing through additions **made by the Lord.**

Vers. 37-47. *The Believing People.*

I. We are shown, first, **the elements of genuine conversion.**—Two words may express these—"repentance," "faith." Conversion is turning round and coming back to God. Sin is the only thing which can keep men from God. But for that, we should fly to him, as a raindrop hastes to the ocean. The beginning of salvation with this multitude was in honest conviction of guilt. Peter charged them with the greatest crime—crucifying their Messiah. They admitted the charge without excuse or resentment. If such a sinner ever gets to heaven, something more than repentance and consecration must bring him there. The sinner has violated the eternal law of righteousness, compared with which the law of gravitation is weak and transient. He may repent, he may yield to God; but something harder to be managed than a cold heart and a stubborn will is a broken law. Deep conviction cannot rest short of expiation. It demands not only forgiveness, but cleansing. This it finds by an absolute trust in the sacrifice of Christ. Just as soon as the people learned what to do they joined the company of disciples; so we are to notice—

II. **The qualifications for Church-membership.**—Plainly, conversion at the outset. The Church was to be made up of regenerate souls. This was a new thing. In the Jewish Church, one came into membership by being born of the flesh. To enter Christ's Church he must be born of the Spirit. At the birth of the Christian Church, the apostles, filled with the Holy Ghost, set, as conditions of membership, true conversion and public confession of a sound faith.

III. **The characteristic life of the Church** is also described here.—1. *Worship.* 2. *Fellowship.* 3. Thus strengthened within, it had a *Zeal* which reached out to bless the world. Born in a revival, it breathed a revival spirit into all its work.—*Monday Club Sermons.*

1. Observe the effect of Peter's sermon, which was instrumental in winning the first converts. His hearers were "pricked in their hearts." 2. Next we have the cry of the wounded conscience; and there are no wounds which prompt to so earnest a cry as those which an awakened conscience suffers. "Men

and brethren, what shall we do?" 3. We are taught the means of cure—repentance and baptism into the name of Jesus. Of course faith in Jesus is here clearly implied. 4. Next consider how this large company of believers grew in grace and acquired strength in their spiritual life. The means employed were four—every one essential to Christian progress. (1) "Steadfast continuance in the apostles' doctrine." Christianity is a religion based on facts, all of which embody vital and eternal truths. And this is ever one of the indispensable methods of nourishing the soul in piety and holiness. We must study the truth as it is in Jesus, and be built up into Him in all things. Moreover, there must be "steadfast continuance" in this work. Never will the time come for even the most studious to say, "I have learned it all." If a Paul could say, "I count not myself to have apprehended," there is no chance for a reasonable boast with any of us that we have attained all and are perfect in knowledge. The more we know truly, the better shall we become. (2) The second means of edification is "fellowship." By this I understand friendly intercourse of believers with each other as brethren and sisters in Jesus Christ. Their faith had united them in a new and holier sympathy. One divine Spirit pervaded their hearts. Fellowship is one of the essential conditions of a healthful, happy, and vigorous existence. The Church that does not take pains to cultivate it is untrue to itself. Disintegration by reason of class-distinctions or mutual jealousies and rivalries or personal alienations is weakness, is destruction. Let it be avoided by all means. The "communion of saints" should be no dead article of our creed, but a living fact. (3) "The breaking of bread" is the third specific. This expression may be taken in a broader sense to denote the lovefeasts of the earlier time, or it may be restricted to denote simply the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, with which the lovefeast was always concluded. Now, since lovefeasts are no longer held, it will not be out of place to take the words in their more restricted application. And how important the observance of the Lord's Supper is to the development of the Christian life need not be largely insisted upon. It brings us, we all know, into special communion with our Lord in the mystery of His great sacrifice in our behalf. Sacramental seasons are therefore the Church's festal seasons. They should be so celebrated, and mark as they come the stages of its enlargement. (4) "In prayers." Whether there are intended here public or private supplications, the essential thing is "the offering up of the heart's desires for things agreeable to God's will in the name of Christ." Such prayer is the breath of the Christian life. No soul that has been quickened to feel its own ignorance and weakness and perverseness, that has been awakened to discern the beauty of holiness, and see what it ought to become, that has learned something of the glory of God's kingdom, and what a renovation it was designed to effect on earth, can live without prayer. If Christians would grow in grace they must pray for grace. 5. A Church thus alive and edified will be likely to exhibit some fruits of its new life. What fruit the early Church bore the text tells us. First, there was the largest liberality. The time was one which called for special sacrifices on the part of believers resident at Jerusalem. A large number of people had come from a distance to attend the feast of Pentecost, and, expecting soon to return to their homes, they had not provided for a long stay. And the need was heartily supplied. In the first fervours of their love and joy all selfishness seems to have melted away. No one called aught he had his own, but they had all things common. Generosity is one mark of a true Church. Let no person deem himself a Christian who does not exhibit something of it. Other fruits were gladness, singleness of heart, praise. Indeed, to such an extent did these fruits abound that one would

infer that the early days of the Church were one continuous festal season. The new life burst forth at once in full beauty and fragrance as a spring-time, and all hearts blossomed with joys and gushed out in song. How could it be otherwise? This is the natural effect of that religion the object of whose worship is a God of love, and whose spirit breathes love into every believing soul. Love is gladsome, love is musical. 6. Finally, we see the influence which this exhibition of this Christian spirit had upon the multitude. The new converts "found favour with all the people." And this, too, was a legitimate result. The gospel, truly acted out, commends itself to every man's conscience. It creates a blessedness which wins admiration. "The Lord added to the Church daily." This is the way every Church must grow and spread. It must aim to make itself attractive by catching and reflecting the beauty and the glory of its risen Lord. There is no community on earth that has in itself the possibility of exercising such an all-conquering power over mankind as the Church possesses.—*D. W. Poor, D.D.*

Vers. 1-47 (on the whole chapter.) —*The Day of Pentecost.*

I. **The descent of the Spirit** (vers. 1-4). 1. The time. 2. The signs. 3. The tongues.

II. **The effect** (vers. 5-13). 1. Astonishment. 2. Perplexity. 3. Mockery.

III. **The explanation** (vers. 14-36). 1. The fulfilment of prophecy. 2. The realisation of the same in Christ.

IV. **The fruit** (vers. 37-41). 1. Conversion of multitudes. 2. Their reception into the Church by baptism.

V. **The Beginnings of Church life** (vers. 42-47).—1. Instruction. 2. Fellowship. 3. The breaking of bread. 4. Prayers.—*David Brown, D.D.*

CHAPTER III.

The Church of Christ entering on its Mission—The First Apostolic Miracle.

§ 1. The Beautiful Gate of the Temple; or, the healing of a Lame Man (vers. 1-10).

§ 2. Solomon's Porch; or, Peter's Second Sermon (vers. 11-26).

1. The Secret of the Miracle explained (vers. 11-16).
2. The People comforted and counselled (vers. 17-26).

CRITICAL REMARKS.

Ver. 1. **Peter and John.**—The old companionship which had existed between these two disciples before the crucifixion (John i. 20; Matt. xvii. 1), and was resumed after the resurrection (John xx. 2), is here continued. A peculiar affinity of nature as well as of grace appears to have bound these together. **Went up.**—Rather, were (in the act of) going up—*up* because the Temple stood on Mount Moriah. **Together.**—Lit., *into the same place*, as in i. 15, hence together or in company. **The ninth** hour.—*I.e.*, about 3 p.m., at which time the evening sacrifice was offered. For the hours of prayer see ii. 15, x. 9, 30.

Ver. 2. **Was carried.**—*Was being carried* along just when the apostles arrived. Compare Luke v. 18, 19. **They laid.**—Or, *it was their custom to lay*, taking at the hours of prayer and carrying him back between times (Alford). **The gate of the temple which is called Beautiful.** —Either, 1. The gate *Shushan* of the Talmud on the east side of the outer wall which led into the court of the Gentiles (Bengel, Alford, Zöckler); or 2. The *Corinthian* gate, which opened from the court of the Gentiles into that of the women (Lightfoot, Delitzsch, Olshausen, Schürer, etc.; or 3. The *Nicanor* gate (Ewald, Holtzmann, Lechler, and Gerok),

between the women's court and that of the men. Other gates have been selected, as, 4. That from the *Tyrophœan* bridge in the south-west to the beautiful southern cloister built by Herod (Conder); and 5. The gate of the *Cotton Merchants*, in the west wall of the Haram (Wilson). The choice lies between the first and second, the third being too far within the sacred enclosure, and the fourth and fifth too distant from Solomon's porch. The *first* lay in close proximity to this colonnade, and may have been styled ὡραία, Beautiful, because, in commemoration of Cyrus the Liberator, a picture of Shushan, the City of Lilies, (whence its name), the royal residence of the Persian kings, was painted or carved upon its panels, or because of the lily-shaped capitals with which it was crowned. Whether this gate should be identified with the golden door in the east Haram wall is doubtful. Yet ground exists for thinking the Golden Door has supplanted the gate Shushan of the Mischna. The *second* derives countenance from this, that if it, the Corinthian gate, was the door described by Josephus (*Wars*, V. v. 3; VI. v. 3)—which is not certain—the epithet, ὡραία, "beautiful," must in its case have been exceedingly appropriate (see "Homily"). **To ask alms.**—"The approaches of the Temple, like those of modern mosques, were commonly thronged with the blind, lame, and other mendicants. Compare John ix. 8 (Plumptre).

Ver. 4. **Fastening his eyes.**—Or, *having gazed intently* (compare i. 10, xiii. 9), so as to read the man's character and (perhaps) discern that he had faith to be healed.

Ver. 5. **Gave heed unto them.**—The apostles. Rather, *fixed* his mind (νοῦν being implied) *upon them* (compare Luke xiv. 7), expecting to receive **something,** τι, *somewhat* from them.

Ver. 6. **In the name of Jesus Christ.**—*I.e.*, speaking and acting with His authority. Christ always wrought miracles in His own name and with His own authority (Luke v. 24). **Rise up and** are omitted in the best MSS., as an imitation of Luke v. 23, 24. Post-apostolic writers report marvellous deeds as having been wrought in the name of Jesus (Origen, *c. Celsum*, I.; Justin, *Dial. c Tryp.*, 85; Lact., *Inst.*, iv. 6).

Ver. 7. **Feet and ankle bones.**—These words, like "came from his mother's womb" (ver. 2), show traces of Luke's professional knowledge. *Proprie locutus est medicus, Lucas* (Bengel).

Ver. 8. **And he leaping up, stood.**—A proof of the reality of the miracle, though, of course, rationalistic interpreters see in this only a proof of the unhistorical character of the whole narrative.

Ver. 9. **All the people saw him.**—Another evidence that the healing was no deception.

Ver. 10. **Wonder.**—θάμβος, belongs more to the domain of the feelings. **Amazement.**—ἔκστασις, more to that of the intellect.

Ver. 11. For **the lame man which was healed** the best codices read *he*. **The porch** (or portico) **that is called Solomon's** ran along the eastern wall of the temple on both sides of the gate of Susa, and overlooked the Valley of Jehoshaphat. It had three rows of columns fifty feet high, and two walks thirty feet wide. The columns were each of one stone (white marble), the walks were paved with stones of various colours, and the roofs adorned with sculptures in wood. The porch, which was a survival from the Solomonic temple, was frequently resorted to, especially in winter, as a promenade or public walk (John x. 23; Jos., *Ant.*, XV. xi. 5).

Ver. 12. **At this.**—*Sc. man* rather than thing. **Look earnestly.**—Fasten your eyes, as in ver. 4. For **this man** read *him*.

Ver. 13. **Hath glorified.**—Better, *glorified* not by this particular miracle (Meyer, Spence), or by all the mighty works which attested His mission (Hackett), but by His exaltation through death, as in John xii. 23, xvii. 10 (Alford). **His son.**—Should be His servant, this being an Old Testament title of Messiah (Isa. xli. 8, xlii. 1-7, xlix. 3-6); and applied as such to Christ by Matthew (xii. 18), and outside of canonical scripture by Clem., I. *ad Cor.* lix. 3; *Barnabas*, vi. 1; *Didache*, ix. 2. **Had determined.**—Or decided that it was just (see Luke xxiii. 16, 20-23; John xix. 4).

Ver. 15. **Prince.**—Author, in the fullest sense (see Heb. ii. 10, xii. 2). **Whereof.**—Or *of whom* (compare ii. 32, xiii. 31).

Ver. 16. **Through**, or on the ground of, **faith.**—Not the man's or the people's (Olshausen) but the apostles' (Alford, Spence, Holtzmann, Hackett) faith in **His** Christ's **name.**

Ver. 18. **All His holy prophets.**—Best taken as a collective phrase for the prophets as a whole. Most of the Books of the Old Testament foretell distinctly the sufferings and death of the Messiah (Hackett),

Ver. 19. **That your sins may be blotted out.**—According to Isa. liii. 12, Christ's death was to be the meritorious cause of forgiveness. **When the times of refreshing shall come,** should be *in order that times or seasons of refreshing may come.* These "seasons of refreshing" have been interpreted as equivalent to "the times of the restitution of all things" of ver. 21. Both seasons considered as identical have been explained differently: 1. as referring to the Second Coming of Christ (according to this view spoken of in ver. 20), which will be (subjectively considered) a season of refreshment, peace, and repose, after the toils and tribulations of life, but objectively regarded a season of the restoration of all things (Alford, Hackett, Spence, Gloag, Holtzmann); 2. as alluding to the inward refreshment of

soul which follows after the blotting out of sins consequent on conversion, which refreshment is also a fulfilment of all those gracious promises God had before spoken by the mouth of His holy prophets since the world began (Stier, Zöckler). A third, and in our judgment, a better interpretation distinguishes the "seasons of refreshing" and "times of restitution," making the former the inward quickening which should follow on sincere repentance and experience of forgiveness, and the latter the restoration of all things which should accompany the Second Coming of the Saviour (Plumptre).

Ver. 21. **Whom the heaven must receive.**—Decidedly preferable to *who must possess the heaven* (Bengel, Luther, Olshausen, Stier).

Ver. 22. **For** and **unto the fathers** should be omitted as a gloss. **A prophet**, etc.—Partly cited from the LXX. (Deut. xviii. 18, 19), and partly new. Stephen (vii. 37) as well as Peter ascribes this prophecy to Moses, and interprets it of Christ, **Raise up.**—Not "from the dead," but in the sense of causing to appear. **Like unto me.**—Or *as He raised up Me.*

Ver. 23. **Shall be destroyed from among the people**, should be, *shall be utterly destroyed.* Peter here interprets the Deuteronomic phrase, "I will require it of him," which meant that he would be excluded from the congregation.

Ver. 24. **Samuel.**—Though nothing remains from him which can be construed into a prediction of the latter times, he may nevertheless have uttered such; or his name may be introduced simply because he was the "father of the prophets."

Ver. 25. **Children of the prophets and of the covenant.**—Not "sons" in the sense of "descendants," which would be incongruous with the clause "of the covenant," but sons in the sense of participants of what the prophets and the covenant held out (compare Matt. viii. 12; John iv. 22; Rom. ix. 4, etc.).

Ver. 26. **Raised up**, as in ver. 22. **From your iniquities.**—A conclusion similar to ii. 40. "Aculeus in fine orationis" (Bengel)—A sting in the tail of his address.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 1—10.

The Beautiful Gate of the Temple; or, the Healing of a Lame Man.

I. **The scene of the miracle.**—1. *The temple.* Herod's, which, when Christ entered on His public ministry, had been building for six-and-forty years (John ii. 20). It stood upon the threshing floor of Araunah, on the summit of Mount Moriah, the site formerly occupied by the temples of Solomon and Zerubbabel, and presently covered by the "noble sanctuary" of the Mahommedans. In Herod's time the area was surrounded by a wall which Josephus (*Ant.*, XV. xi. 3) thought "the most prodigious work that had ever been heard of by man," while the sacred edifice, in his estimation, "wanted nothing that was likely to surprise men's minds or eyes." Built of immense blocks of beautiful white limestone, from the royal quarries under Bezetha, a hill in the north of Jerusalem, and gleaming with gold and marble, viewed from a distance it must have been a gorgeous spectacle (compare Psalm xlviii. 2). 2. *The beautiful gate.* Either (1) the gate Shushan, whose site is now occupied by the golden door in the eastern wall of the great quadrangle on Mount Moriah, and which led from the outer world into the court of the Gentiles; or (2) the Corinthian gate, which opened from the court of the Gentiles into the court of the women, The preference should perhaps be given to the former in consequence of its proximity to the porch called Solomon's. (See "Critical Remarks.")

II. **The time of the miracle.**—Probably a few weeks, or, it might be months after Pentecost. At the ninth hour, or 3 o'clock in the afternoon, at which hour three things were taking place in connection with the temple. 1. *The Jerusalem populace were flocking towards it.* The Jews were a religious people, fond of their temple, and given to devotion, and this was the hour of evening sacrifice, the favourite season for devotion in Jerusalem, as then the business of the day was over, and the time for the evening meal had now arrived. 2. *Peter and John were bending their steps towards it.* The disciples of Christ had not yet broken with the outward forms of Jewish worship (ii. 46), and Peter and John, who possibly since their early days had been companions (Matt. iv. 18, 21; Luke v. 10), and who certainly since they had cast in their lot with Christ

(John i. 40, 41) had frequently acted in concert (Luke xxii. 8; John xviii. 16; John xx. 6, xxi. 7), were, in accordance with wont, as pious Jews repairing to the house of prayer. An example worthy of imitation by all, and much needed in days when men are so engrossed with business that only with difficulty can they find leisure for devotion. 3. *A cripple was being borne along to be laid at its gate.* Like the gates of heathen mosques, that of the temple was a frequent resort for mendicants. This particular mendicant had probably been deposited at his usual station when the two apostles arrived upon the scene. Worth observing how all the above-mentioned three groups of persons, which were necessary for the miracle, converged towards the temple at this moment—the multitude to witness it, the apostles to work it, and the lame man to be the subject of it. Nothing wonderful when it is remembered who the Prime Mover was.

III. **The subject of the miracle.**—The malady from which the patient suffered was—1. *Extremely severe.* Lame in both feet, he required to be carried. Difficult to say which form of affliction is easiest to be borne—blindness, deafness, or want of power to walk or stand. All fitted to excite pity for such as suffer from them. 2. *Of long standing.* Forty years. Indeed his lameness was congenital. He had never known the luxury of leaping, walking, or even standing. Compare the cripples at the pool of Bethesda (John v. 5), and at Lystra (xiv. 8), and the man blind from birth (John ix. 1). 3. *Greatly aggravated.* Poor, he had no means of supporting himself, except by soliciting alms. A man who could not stand would not quickly learn a trade. Clearly a sad case, deserving commiseration, and a fit subject for miraculous assistance. A case also impressively symbolising the natural estate of man.

IV. **The performance of the miracle.**—1. *A voice of invitation.* "Look on us." Intended to enlist the man's attention, and spoken by Peter in John's name as well as his own. The man's response indicated that he expected to receive something from them; as yet his faith rose not to the height of anticipating a cure. Even Christians little dream of the great things God is preparing for them (1 Cor. ii. 9). 2. *A note of exposition.* "Silver and gold have I none." Designed to repress the carnal and material hopes of the beggar, to explain that Christianity was not merely a philanthropic mission to relieve man's bodily wants, and to kindle anticipations of something higher. 3. *A word of command.* "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth walk." On the face of it, an order impossible to be obeyed; yet an order issued in the name of One who had all power in heaven and on earth, and was both able and willing to give what He commanded. 4. *An act of assistance.* As if to proffer the divine aid, without which the injunction could not be carried through, Peter took him by the right hand and raised him up (compare Mark ix. 27). Suggesting two thoughts—that God never enjoins orders He is not willing to extend help to perform, and that in seeking to succour others more is demanded than simply to say "do this"; there is needed also sympathy and assistance.

V. **The proof of the miracle.**—1. *The behaviour of the man.* In the consciousness of new power he leaped up, stood, began to walk, entered with the apostles into the temple, and gave thanks to God, all of which actions were inconsistent with the idea that the man had not been healed but only deceived, perhaps through a species of hypnotism energised for a season but not permanently restored to health. So, when a soul has been cured, the spiritual health it has received manifests itself in an analogous way. It leaps up out of its old sinful condition; it stands, realising its new-found power, it walks in the way of God's commandments; it exults or dances inwardly for joy; it praises God for His grace and mercy. 2. *The testimony of the people.* They saw Him walking, and heard him praising God. They knew he was not what he had once been, a cripple and a beggar. They could not account by natural means for what had

happened. So is it a strong argument that one has been spiritually healed when those who knew one formerly can perceive and are obliged to confess the change. 3. *The admission of the Sanhedrim.* When the case was brought before the highest tribunal of the day it could not be gainsaid (see iv. 14). So is it the crowning evidence of one's conversion when his enemies are constrained to acknowledge its reality.

Learn.—1. That Christ's people should love to pray in Christ's house. 2. That intending worshippers may be lawfully detained from Church by works of necessity and mercy. 3. That the cries of the poor should not fall unheeded on the ears of Christ's people. 4. That the best help Christ's people can give is to point men to Jesus Christ. 5. That the clearest evidence of conversion is a reformed life.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 1. *Peter and John.*

I. In early days **partners in trade** (Matt. iv. 18, 21; Luke v. 10).

II. In the time of the Baptist **seekers after God** (John i. 37, 42).

III. After their conversion **colleagues in the apostleship** (Matt. x. 2; Acts i. 13).

IV. During the days of the Son of man **fellow intimates of Christ** (Luke viii. 51, ix. 28; Matt. xxvi. 37).

V. In the passion week **companions in action** (Luke xxii. 8; John xviii. 16).

VI. After the resurrection, **comrades in witness bearing** (viii. 14).

The Hour of Prayer.

I. **Divinely appointed.**
II. **Devoutly hallowed.**
III. **Sweetly refreshing.**
IV. **Always profitable.**
V. **Frequently forgotten.**

Ver. 2. *Alms-asking and Alms-giving.*

I. **Alms-asking.**—1. Should never be practised unless absolutely necessary. 2. Should always be practised with respectful courtesy.

II. **Alms-giving.**—1. Should always be performed with discretion and kindness (Rom. xii. 8). 2. Should never be performed with ostentation or vanity (Matt. vi. 3, 4).

The Beautiful Gate of the Temple.—That gate is entitled to be so called, which—

I. **Admits sincere worshippers.**

II. **Echoes with the sound of the gospel.**

III. **Witnesses deeds of love** and mercy.

Ver. 6. *The Church's Poverty and the Church's Wealth.*

I. **Destitute of silver and gold.**—No great calamity since: 1. Material wealth is not indispensable to her progress. 2. Material wealth might corrupt her sincerity. 3. Whatever material wealth she needs can be obtained from her exalted Head, to whom the gold and silver belong.

II. **Abounding in the treasures of salvation.**—Which are: 1. Laid up in Christ her living Lord (John i. 16; Col. i. 19, ii. 39). 2. For distribution through her hands (Matt. v. 16; Phil. ii. 16). 3. Without money and without price (Matt. x. 8).

Peter's Pence; or, the Wealth of the Apostles.—A study for persons in the Christian ministry.

I. **Not material.**—"Silver and gold have I none." 1. *It had not been their practice to levy contributions from the faithful.* Although the faithful may have ministered, and doubtless did minister, to their support (Luke x. 7). N.B.—It cannot be argued from this practice of the Twelve or of Paul (xx. 34; 2 Cor. xi. 7) that a paid ministry is unscriptural (1 Cor. ix. 14). 2. *They had not applied their talents to the acquisition of money* (Matt. vi. 19), but had consecrated their lives to the

work of preaching the gospel, having left all—Peter and John with Andrew and James, their boats and nets (Matt. iv. 18-22), Matthew his customs' booth (Matt. ix. 9), and the others their respective occupations, to follow Christ (Mark x. 28; Matt. xix. 27). The work of the ministry is too important, and, where faithfully executed, too laborious to admit of the sacred calling being combined with secular avocations. 3. *Whatever goods they may have had they had doubtless cast into the common fund* (ii. 44).—This fact alone would account for Peter's being without pence on his way to the temple. Here, again, it cannot be inferred that a Christian minister should devote all his goods to feed the poor (1 Cor. xiii. 3), though undoubtedly he ought to practise charity (Gal. vi. 10).

II. **But spiritual.**—"Such as I have." Peter and John, with their colleagues, were possessed of unseen and imperishable treasure. 1. Of *personal grace.*—The beauty of holiness by which their characters were adorned (iv. 33; compare Psalm xc. 17). Such wealth immeasurably superior to material riches. 2. *Of spiritual power.* Which enabled them (not at discretion, but when directed by the Holy Spirit) to work miracles, a power which has ceased in the Church, though the power of working (instrumentally) spiritual miracles (such as conversion) remains. 3. *Of posthumous influence.* The apostles still sit upon twelve thrones in the Christian Church (Matt. xix 28), their writings and example constituting a standard for the regulation of duty and the determination of controversies. Similar influence, though in a lesser degree, is exerted by all true disciples. 4. *Of heavenly glory.* Of such treasure in the heavens as awaits all who on earth are rich in faith and abound in good works (Matt. vi. 20).

Changed Times, etc.—Cornelius A. Lapide relates that on one occasion Thomas Aquinas paid a visit to Innocent II., arriving at a moment when that Pontiff was engaged in counting a large sum of money, "See, Thomas," said the Pope, "the Church can no longer say, 'Silver and gold have I none,'" to which Aquinas answered, "True, Holy Father, but neither can she now say, 'Arise and walk.'"

Apostolical Generosity.

I. **A believing man is a man of large possessions.**—Silver and gold he may have none; but not the less on that account are his possessions great. There is no end, no measure of his possessions, for they are summed up in the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. He is rich beyond measure in all things whereby he can benefit his fellows.

II. **A believing man is a man of large liberalities.**—He cannot keep anything he has got to himself. His joy is in pouring out, not in hoarding up. But, indeed, the heavenly gifts which constitute his possessions cannot be hoarded. They must be used, or they will vanish away.

III. **A believing man is a man of large sympathies.**—He pities the world in the midst of whose miseries and sins he lives, and would fain contribute to its relief.

IV. **A believing man is a man of large powers.**—He has power from God, and power with God. He is strong in weakness, and resistless in dependence.

V. **A believing man has large opportunities.**—He both *has* and he *makes* opportunities every hour.

VI. **A believing man has large returns for his gifts.**—"Give and it shall be given; good measure, pressed down, and running over." Some of this now, most hereafter.—*H. Bonar, D.D.*

Vers. 1-6. *The First Apostolic Miracle.* — Typical of the Church's future work.

I. It was **a beggar that was healed,** and the beggar typified humanity at large.

II. The beggar **received blessing** when the Church roused itself to the discharge of its great mission.

III. The beggar's **conversion** was effected through his healing. Spiritual work went hand in hand with healing power.—*G. T. Stokes, D.D.*

A Miracle of Healing.—Look at this miracle in the light of what has already taken place. There is great enthusiasm in the Church. The divine life is, so to speak, at its highest point. The Church, though on earth, has been brought very nearly to the gate of heaven. We are now invited to go beyond the Church line, and at our very first step we find a man who appeals to our sympathy in his pain and helplessness. See how world lies within world, and how misleading are all the inferences drawn from a limited set of facts: 1. The man who has access to every means of *mental and spiritual culture* may think all the world as highly privileged as himself. 2. The healthy and prosperous family may forget that other households are afflicted and depressed. Look beyond your own sphere. You have not far to look; there is but a step between thee and the world which is either higher or lower than thine own.

I. **The social side.**—1. We may be able to *carry* the cripple when we are unable to *heal* him. Do what you *can*. Human helplessness is a continual appeal to human power. There are *secondary* services in life. We cannot always do the *great* deed. 2. The commonest minds, as well as the highest, have always associated the idea of *charity* with the idea of *religion*. This is *right*. This is a high *compliment* to any form of religion. The theology that has no philanthropy is its own vain god. 3. Look at the *compensations* of the poorest life. The man was carried daily by *friendly* hands. The man had the *temple* as his daily hope. The sun shines even on the poorest lot.

II. **The apostolic side.** — 1. The apostles never attempted to do without *public worship*. Such worship has distinct advantages—(1) Provocation of *thought*; (2) Development of *sympathy*. 2. The apostles never neglected *human want* in their anxiety to render divine worship. Some people are *one-sidedly* religious. 3. The apostles never attended even to physical necessities in their *own name*. The incident as thus regarded suggests two questions: (1) Are we too pious to be philanthropic? (2) Has the name of Jesus lost its power?—*J. Parker, D.D.*

Vers. 1-7. *Christian Work.*

I. The **need** for it. To heal the bodies and save the souls of men.

II. The **power** for it. That which comes from Jesus Christ, through His Spirit.

III. The **method** for it. Faith in Christ, sympathy for the sufferers, and personal service.

IV. The **encouragement** for it. The certain hope of success.

Vers. 6-8. *A State of Sin, a State of Impotence.*

I. **The case of this sufferer as illustrating the state of fallen man.**—1. His infirmity was natural. Congenital. Birth-sin. 2. It caused total inability to walk. Moral inability is as total as natural inability. 3. It was long continued. Forty years and more. 4. It was accompanied with poverty. The sinner a beggar.

II. **The nature of his cure as illustrating the plan of salvation.**—1. It was miraculous. 2. It was unsolicited. 3. It was instantaneous. 4. It was real and permanent.

III. **The effects of the cure as illustrating the effects of faith in Christ.**—1. Joy. 2. Devotion. 3. Gratitude to the instruments of the cure.—*G. Brooks.*

Ver. 10. *The Miracle at the Temple Gate.*

I. **As a manifestation of power.**—δυνάμις. 1. *Not the power of nature.* The healing of the lame man could not be explained by what is called the *vis medicatrix naturæ*. The long-standing character of the man's trouble

was against this (iv. 22). 2. *Not the power of man.* Either of superior will (animal magnetism) or of moral goodness, or even of exalted faith. 3. *But the power of God*, or of Jesus Christ, the risen and glorified servant and Son of God.

II. **As a phenomenon of wonder.**—τέρας. Three things removed this act of healing outside the category of ordinary occurrences. 1. *The instantaneousness of the cure*, which was effected, not by any slow and laborious process of pharmacy, but suddenly, in a moment, and at a word. 2. *The completeness of the cure*, which was patent to all, and could not be denied (iv. 16), nay, which was permanent, and showed no symptom of tending to a relapse. 3. *The means of the cure*, which was faith in the name of Jesus Christ, exercised, if not by the man, at least by the apostles—an instrumentality that seemed altogether inadequate to the effect produced.

III. **As the exhibition of a sign.**—σημεῖον. 1. *Of the reality of Christ's resurrection and ascension*, since it was manifestly impossible that any such work of power could be performed by a dead Christ. 2. *Of the certain descent of the Holy Spirit*, since it is clear that something must have happened to make two men like Peter and John, to all appearance, depositaries of a supernatural influence. 3. *Of the wonders that might be expected from faith in the name of Jesus*, wonders not alone of a physical kind, but of a moral and spiritual sort, the healing of the cripple being typical of the salvation of a soul.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 11—16.

Solomon's Porch; or, Peter's Second Sermon. 1. *The Secret of the Miracle explained.*

I. **The people's excitement calmed.**—The effect produced upon the healed man was scarcely greater than that wrought upon the multitude who saw him in the Temple. Filled with wonder and amazement at what had taken place, the crowd swarmed round the two apostles, to whom the cured cripple was eagerly clinging in Solomon's porch as if unwilling to permit them to depart. Taking speech in hand, Peter, with his customary readiness, proceeded to address them with a view to quieting their agitation. Their wonder and amazement he—1. *Admitted as not unnatural.* It would have been surprising if they had not marvelled on seeing a forty years' old cripple restored to perfect health. When in Capernaum a similar miracle had been wrought by Christ (Luke v. 18-26), "amazement took hold on all . . . and they were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to-day." So wherever Christ's religion operates it performs moral miracles, at which men gaze sometimes with incredulity and even with hostility, but always with astonishment (see xvii. 6). 2. *Rebuked as wrongly directed.* The multitude imagined that Peter and John had healed the cripple by their own power and in virtue of their own goodness. Hence their wonder and admiration were turned rather upon the instruments than towards the agent. The sole connection John and Peter had with the miracle was that a higher power had used them as a means of effecting His gracious will. It does not appear that the apostles ever had the power of working miracles at their own discretion, but only at a signal given by the Holy Spirit. Significant as proof of this is the circumstance that Paul, though he wrought miracles, could not cure Epaphroditus when he was sick nigh unto death (Phil. ii. 27), or Trophimus, whom he left at Miletus sick (2 Tim. iv. 20). So the moral miracles performed by the Gospel in changing men's hearts and lives are due to neither the ability nor the piety of those who preach the Gospel but solely to Him of whom the Gospel speaks. The right to say "I am He who healeth thee" belongs to God alone (Exod. xv. 26; Psalm ciii. 3, cxlvii. 3). 3. *Instructed as ill informed.* The

miracle had been done (1) instrumentally by the apostles, which they did not deny: they had made the lame man to walk (ver. 12); and (2) mediately by the man's own faith, or at least by the apostles' faith—a point which is duly emphasised (ver. 16; compare xiv. 9); but nevertheless (3) causally, or efficiently by the name of Jesus of Nazareth, or by the power which that name represented, and which accompanied the utterance of and belief in that name. So the healings of a spiritual sort which are effected by the Gospel of Jesus Christ are to be ascribed neither to the human agents by whom it is preached nor to the words in which it is set forth, but to the spirit and power alone of the exalted Christ (1 Cor. iii. 6, 7; 2 Cor. iv. 6; Eph. ii. 1; Phil. i. 6).

II. **The people's guilt rehearsed.**—This is done indirectly and, as it were, by way of parenthesis, while introducing to their notice the real author of the miracle. The extent of their guilt lay in four things: 1. *Treachery.* By acquiescing in the wickedness of Caiaphas and Judas they had been practically guilty of delivering up Jesus into the hands of His enemies—they had, in fact, endorsed the crimes of their leaders and rulers. The solidarity of nations which renders the individual members thereof responsible, in a certain measure at least, for the deeds of their representatives, is apt to be forgotten. 2. *Denial.* When He stood before Pilate, and was by that Roman Governor pronounced "innocent," and offered to be released as a compliment to their nation, they had cried "Away with Him! Crucify Him!" (Matt. xxvii. 22; John xix. 4, 15.) In the most deliberate manner possible they had disowned Him who was really God's holy and righteous One. 3. *Rejection.* Nor was that the worst that could be charged against them, but when Pilate gave them an opportunity of choosing between Jehovah's Servant, the Prince of Life, and Barabbas, who for a certain sedition had been cast into prison, they actually chose the murderer to be granted to them (John xviii. 39, 40). To such a depth of moral depravity had they sunk in their hostility to Jesus of Nazareth. 4. *Crucifixion.* They paused not in their hate till they had killed the Prince of Life, who not only had life in Himself but on more occasions than one had given life to others (Matt. ix. 25; Luke vii. 15; John xi. 44)—killed Him by adjudging Him to the shameful and painful death of the cross (John xix. 17, 18). Here it should be noted that, heinous as these sins were, as great may still be committed against Christ (Heb. vi. 6).

Learn.—1. The mistakes men make in judging of Christianity and its preachers. 2. The humility that ought to characterise every true servant of Christ. 3. The covenant-keeping character of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 4. The possibility of repeating the crimes of the Jews who crucified the Prince of Life.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 13. *The God of our Fathers.*

I. **Our fathers had a God.**—They were not atheists or agnostics. Descent from a pious ancestry a great privilege, entailing large responsibilities.

II. **The God of our Fathers covenanted with them to bless their children.**—The promise was made to them and to their children (ii. 39). And He is faithful who hath promised (Heb. x. 23, xi. 11).

III. **For this purpose the God of our fathers raised up Jesus and sent Him to bless us.**—The whole mission of Christ, in His incarnation, death, resurrection, exaltation, and coming again in the spirit, a carrying out of the divine idea and purpose of salvation to which in a manner God had pledged Himself by His gracious promises to the fathers of Israel and the father of the faithful.

IV. **Have we, the children of those fathers and the heirs of these promises, risen to the height of our privileges?**—Have we taken our fathers' God as our God? And the Saviour promised to the fathers as our Redeemer?

The Glory of Christ.

I. **Essential.**—1. That which He had with the Father before the world was (John xvii. 5). 2. That which belonged to His own person when on earth—the glory of an only begotten from a Father full of grace and truth (John i. 14).

II. **Delegated.**—1. When appointed by His Father to be the High Priest of humanity (Heb. v. 5). 2. When in answer to prayer His Father showed Him to be the conqueror of death (John xi. 4). 3. When by His own death upon the cross He triumphed over the principalities of evil (John xii. 23, xvii. 1). 4. When raised from the dead by the glory of His father (ver. 15; Rom. vi. 4). 5. When the Spirit reveals Him to the soul of man (John xvi. 14).

III. **Acquired.**—1. The glory of sitting on the mediatorial throne (1 Cor. xv. 25). 2. The glory of being worshipped by the Church universal (Rev. v. 8-14). 3. The glory of being the heir of all things (Heb. i. 2). 4. The glory of being the final judge of mankind (John v. 27; Acts xvii. 31).

Vers. 11-16. *A Model for the Christian Preacher.*—Found in Peter and his sermon, which reveal—

I. **The spirit which should animate the preacher.**—A spirit of self-abnegation and humility, which turns away the attention of his hearers from himself, as did John the Baptist (John i. 23, iii. 30).

II. **The object at which the preacher should aim.**—To exalt Christ and bring His glory and claims before the minds of his hearers, as again did the Baptist and Paul (1 Cor. ii. 2).

III. **The manner in which the preacher should address his hearers.**—With much plainness of speech, and even with personal directness, but yet with tenderness and sympathy, as once more did Paul (Phil. iii. 18; 2 Cor. iii. 12).

IV. **The theme on which the preacher should descant.**—Not on himself, his own virtues and achievements, but on the name of Jesus, its glorious excellence and its power to heal and save, with the terms and conditions on which alone it can operate, as again did Paul (1 Cor. ii. 2).

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 17—26.

Solomon's Porch; Peter's Second Sermon. 2. The People comforted and counselled.

I. **The people's alarm soothed.**—That such an appalling charge, pressed home upon the consciences of the auditors, awakened in their bosoms guilty fears is what one would naturally suppose. Possibly this is why Peter so dexterously wove into his discourse words that were fitted to administer comfort to those among them who might be troubled. 1. *The disastrous results of their wickedness had been undone.* The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of their fathers, had glorified His servant Jesus, whom they had delivered up (ver. 13). Observe the tenderness with which he leads back their thoughts to their glorious ancestry and up to their covenant God, as if he meant to suggest to their troubled hearts that the merciful Jehovah had not yet cast them off. Then note the kindness with which he places in the foreground the fact that their appalling crimes had been, as it were, rendered harmless before he mentions the crimes themselves. It was not without a purpose of love that, both before and after the recital of these, Peter speaks of the resurrection of the Crucified One. 2. *Their wickedness had been the result of ignorance.* If not total, yet partial; which, though not an excuse, was still an extenuation of their fault (ver. 21). Peter's verdict as to the knowledge concerning Christ which was possessed by the rulers and the people is confirmed by the opinion of Paul (1 Cor. ii. 8). Both apostles seem to imply that neither the people nor their rulers had an adequate idea of the divinity of the Saviour when they demanded His crucifixion. Nor need this be wondered at, when it is remembered that

the crowning demonstration of Christ's Godhead was only furnished by the Resurrection, and that before this event occurred the conceptions of the apostles themselves as to Christ's true personality were but dim. 3. *Their wickedness had been the means of fulfilling the Divine predictions concerning Christ recorded in Scripture.* "The things which God foreshowed by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He thus fulfilled" (ver. 18). Though this did not relieve them from blame, it nevertheless tended to mitigate their grief, by showing that Christ suffered in accordance with the Eternal purpose of God Himself (ii. 23). The like comforts belong to sinners of to-day who, through their connection with the first Adam, are more or less responsible for the death of Jesus; and yet because of their ignorance and want of actual participation in the crime of Christ's death are not left in a condition of despair (1 Thess. v. 9).

II. **The people's duty set forth.** In two particulars. 1. *To repent and be converted* (or turn again). Always insisted on in Scripture as a condition of forgiveness and salvation (Isa. lv. 7; Jer. iii. 12-14; Ezek. xiv. 6; Joel ii. 12; Zech. xii. 10; Matt. iv. 17; Mark vi. 12; Luke xiii. 3, xxiv. 47), repentance signifies a change of mind, heart, and conduct (see on ii. 38). For this four reasons are assigned by the Apostle: (1) That their sins might be blotted out and their guilt removed; since without heartfelt repentance, meaning sincere godly sorrow on account of sin, acknowledgment of guilt and desire as well as resolution after new obedience, pardon is impossible. (2) That times of refreshing might come from the presence of the Lord, seasons of gracious quickening for them, Israel, and through them for the world at large—eras of spiritual awakening, epochs of revival, when men's souls being refreshed and stirred would manifest an interest in heavenly things, as parched ground, when moistened with showers of rain, puts forth herbs and flowers. Moreover, every such season of refreshing would prove a prelude of, and preparation for, the grand culmination of the future, "the times of the restitution of all things." (3) That Jesus Christ (or the Christ) might be sent unto them, that same Christ who had been appointed for (R.V.), and in the days of His flesh preached unto (A.V.) them, but whom they had rejected and the heavens had received, no more to be manifested till the close of time (1 Tim. vi. 14, 15). It is clear that Peter meant by this that in answer to every such "season of refreshing" in which longings after heavenly gifts would be awakened in renewed hearts, there would be a sending forth of the Christ, the Risen and Ascended Lord, not visibly, but spiritually, in the plenitude of His power and grace to bless men's souls by deepening in them the feeling of repentance and turning them away from their iniquities (ver. 26; compare Heb. vi. 7). (4) That finally the times of the restitution of all things might come. This should be the goal of that stupendous restoration movement which was heralded by John the Baptist (Matt. xvii. 11), and initiated by Jesus in the days of His flesh. Of which so far as they were concerned their repentance would be the first step (2 Cor. v. 17), and the revelation of the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness (2 Peter iii. 13) the last—the summing up of all things in one under Christ (Eph. i. 10), the subjection of all powers and things to His authority and rule (1 Cor. xv. 27, 28)—not necessarily the salvation of all intelligent beings, but the subordination of the universe, each part in its place, beneath His sway. 2. *To hearken in all things to Christ.* And that for a variety of reasons. (1) That Christ was a prophet whom the Lord God, their own covenant Jehovah, had raised up, and was therefore as much entitled to their obedience as had been Moses himself or any of the prophets from Samuel downwards. (2) That Christ was a prophet raised up from among themselves, again as Moses and Samuel had been—one of their own flesh and blood (Heb. ii. 14, 17), and therefore one who might be supposed to

have their best interests at heart—their emancipation from the guilt and power of sin—and therefore as much entitled as Moses had been to receive their confidence. (3) That Christ was a prophet like unto Moses, their renowned lawgiver, in respect of the authority He bore; yea, better than he in respect of the announcements He made (John i. 17), and on this account more entitled than even he to their respectful attention. (4) That the soul which would not hearken to Christ would be cut off from amongst the people, exactly as the disobedient Israelite who refused to obey Moses was excluded from the congregation. (5) That Christ had been fore-announced as their Messiah by the whole race of prophets from Samuel downwards, so that in refusing to hear Christ they were rejecting the voices of the prophets (compare vii. 51, xiii. 27, 40). (6) That Christ had a claim on their submission because of their covenant relation to Jehovah, the God of Abraham their father, to whom He, Christ, had been promised (ver. 25). If Christ was the seed of Abraham (compare Gal. iii. 16), they could not reject Him without sin. (7) That Christ had been offered to them first, so that their responsibility for accepting Him was greater than it would otherwise have been, while their guilt would be more heinous if they declined to receive Him (ver. 26).

Learn.—1. That it is dangerous to sin against the light. 2. That all true preaching aims at convicting of sin. 3. That the prime blessing of the gospel is the blotting out of sin. 4. That unforgiven sin blocks the way to higher gifts of grace. 5. That disobedience to Christ is pre-eminently inexcusable. 6. That Christ's supreme desire is to turn men away from their iniquities. 7. That Christ's triumph, though long delayed, is absolutely sure.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 17. *Sins of Ignorance.*

I. **A man may sin through ignorance.**

II. **Ignorance is not a valid plea** in extenuation of sin.

III. Sins of ignorance **require an atonement** quite as much as sins of knowledge.

IV. Sins of ignorance **require to be repented of** as sincerely as sins of presumption.

Ver. 18. *The Sufferings of Christ.*

I. **The character and dignity of the Sufferer.**—1. The Son of God (ver. 13). 2. The Holy and Righteous one (ver. 14). 3. The Prince of Life (ver. 15).

II. **The form and severity of His sufferings.**—1. As to form. He suffered (1) in His reputation (ver. 14), (2) in His soul (Matt. xxvi. 37, 38), and (3) in His body (John xvii. 12). 2. As to severity. They were aggravated by the fact that they were all foretold and so known to Him beforehand.

III. **The reason and purpose of His sufferings.**—1. To glorify God (John xvii. 1). 2. To save sinners (Isa. liii. 5; John iii. 16).

I. **Foreordained by the Father.**
II. **Foretold by prophets.**
III. **Inflicted by men.**
IV. **Endured with patience.**
V. **Rewarded with glory.**
VI. **Recorded in Scripture.**
VII. **Proclaimed by evangelists.**
VIII. **Believed on by sinful men.**
IX. **Studied by angels** (1 Peter i. 11).

Ver. 19. *The Blotting out of Sin.*

I. **What it implies.**—1. The liability of men to condemnation on account of sin. 2. The exercise of grace on God's part towards the condemned. 3. The complete release from condemnation of all who experience such grace.

II. **What it presupposes.**—1. On God's part that no obstacle exists to the outflow of grace and exercise of forgiveness; in other words, the removal of antecedent obstacles by the work of Christ. 2. On man's part the frank

acknowledgment of guilt conjoined with repentance of sin.

III. **What it secures.**—1. Times of refreshing, or the joy of forgiveness. 2. Times of restoration, or the ultimate attainment of perfect holiness, felicity, and glory.

Times of Refreshing.

I. **What they mean.**—Seasons of soul quickening, when, the inward life reviving, the soul begins to manifest desires after heavenly things.

II. **Whence they come.**—From the Presence of the Lord. Such seasons can never be got up, but must always be fetched down.

III. **What must precede.**—1. *Pardon.* Spiritual quickening can belong only to those whose sins have been forgiven; though all may enjoy this heavenly gift who will comply with the second condition. 2. *Repentance.* Change of mind, heart, will, concerning Jesus Christ and the things of salvation.

IV. **What will follow.**—Christ with the fulness of His joy and salvation will be sent into the soul that repents and is forgiven.

Ver. 21. *Times of Restoration.*

I. **When they shall arrive.**—1. At the end of Time. 2. With the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ. 3. On the completion of the present world plan.

II. **What they shall introduce.**—1. Not the re-erection of the monarchy of Israel, and far less the bringing about of universal salvation. But 2. The delivering up of all things, now in the Mediator's hand, to God that He may be all and in all (1 Cor. xv. 28). Which will imply—3. The glorification of the Church. And 4. The subjection also of the wicked to the rule of God.

III. **How they should be waited for.**—1. By the children of God, with faith, patience, holy living, and eager expectation. 2. By the unbelieving world, with assurance of their certain coming, with apprehension of the peril they will bring with repentance and turning to God and Jesus Christ.

Vers. 12-21. *The Prince of Life.*

I. **Jesus presented.**—Jesus did not need to be brought forward. There was no necessity of going up to heaven to bring Christ down. He was there—there in their midst, there in all the perfection of the God-man, in all the majesty of the Godhead, in all the plenitude of His Messiahship, and in all the kindness and helpfulness of the Friend. He was there, but *unseen* by the multitude. Two obstacles stand in the way of His being seen. First, the disciples, Peter and John. They perceived this. The miracle was being ascribed to them. How promptly they remove this obstacle! how promptly and emphatically they step aside! "Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power and holiness we had made this man to walk?" Thus they stand aside that Jesus may be seen. But blind men cannot see the most conspicuous object. Those whose eyes are thickly veiled are the same as blind. This was the condition of these Jews. Hence the second thing necessary that Jesus might be seen was to remove the veil, to snatch the thick covering of moral and intellectual ignorance and prejudice from their eyes. This the disciples proceed to do with characteristic promptness and energy, "The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers"—thus they seize the veil at its farthest extremes; there the lift must begin if the uncovering would be successful and complete—"You believe in God, the God of our fathers; this miracle was wrought by His power; it was performed in honour of His Servant, His Messiah. That Messiah, that Servant, is Jesus. He is the Prince of life. He is the Messiah of prophecy. He was crucified in exact fulfilment of the writings of all the holy prophets. He is exalted, has passed into the heavens, has there His dwelling-place—there for a purpose, a purpose sublime and eternal, to bring in the final, complete, and glorious restoration of all things. Behold, then, in the miracle

that fills you all with amazement so profound, behold, not the power of men, but of God. Ascribe the glory of this miracle not to us, but to Jesus, your Messiah." Thus Peter presented Jesus to the multitude. This is preaching *Christ*, and Him *crucified.*

II. **Sinners condemned.**—The Spirit by which the disciples witnessed made no mistakes; a different spirit, I fear, guides not a little of the witness-bearing of the present. That Spirit did not allow the disciples to make the miserable mistake of preaching Christ to those who could get along very well without him. And what a condemnation! How the astonished thousands must have shuddered as Peter passed from one count to another of his fearful indictment! Note these terrible counts: First, he charges upon them the infamy of betrayal: "Whom ye delivered up." But, second, betrayal, infamous as it is, was not the extent—nay, it was but the first act—of your wickedness, for after ye had betrayed Him, when natural justice demanded His release, when Pilate, the Roman governor, who was neither scrupulous nor tender-hearted, was about to let Him go, ye denied the Holy One and the Just. Third, but betrayal, denial, and rejection, damning as these charges are when in the rejection ye must take a murderer to your bosoms, are not the weightiest counts of this indictment nor the extent of your infamy and wickedness. Ye are guilty of the awful crime of killing the Prince of life. There is no shifting the guilt and responsibility of that death. Thus with firm and steady hand does Peter thrust the iron of a terrible accusation into their guilty breasts.

III. **Pardon proclaimed.**—Peter was severe in his indictment, but he was wounding to heal. He thrust the keen lance of conviction into their souls, that he might open the way to pour into their hearts the grace of pardon and peace. Hence, the moment he saw that the truth had done its work of conviction, he hastened to apply the balm of Gilead. 1. He softens the indictment by referring their murderous deed partly to their ignorance: "I know that through ignorance ye did it." Ignorance is no excuse for wrongdoing, especially such criminal ignorance as theirs; still, there is a distinction between a crime committed by one fully informed and the same crime by one largely ignorant of the real character of the act. "Father, forgive them, *for they know not* what they do," said Jesus. "But I obtained mercy, *because I did it ignorantly* in unbelief," wrote Paul. 2. He urges upon them the consideration that God had overruled their murderous work to the accomplishment of His eternal purpose. All the suffering which, through their cruelty, Jesus had endured was, in the wise ordering of God, endured on their behalf. While this did not lessen their guilt, it did hold out to them a good hope of mercy and pardon. 3. He calls them to repentance and a different life: "Ye are guilty of the blackest crime, but it is mitigated by your ignorance of what ye were doing, and it has been overruled to the fulfilment of God's purposes; and the very sufferings that ye caused Messiah prepared the way, in the eternal purpose of God, for the pardon of your sin in crucifying Him. Now, if ye are truly sorry for your sin, and will but turn from it unto God with all your heart, God will blot out your transgressions." He urges all this upon them by a glorious consideration. This consideration was the fact that the times spoken of by all the holy prophets, the glorious times of deliverance, rest, refreshment, and joy which Messiah was to introduce, had come. Let us now attend to a few of the important lessons suggested. 1. We are reminded that it is strong faith, on the part of the disciples, in the name of Jesus, that works wonders. No one engaged in any way in the Master's service can afford to be unmindful of this fact. To be faithless is to be helpless and useless, so far as spiritual matters are concerned. You can do nothing for your own or another's welfare without faith. The

faith of the humblest disciple may yet work wonders that will startle and amaze the world. Let this be the first inquiry in every work we undertake, "In whose name?" 2. The wise and true teacher always puts Jesus forward and hides self. How easy would it have been for these disciples to have secured for themselves the fame of that miracle! Is there not a profound lesson here for us all? Are we always careful to bring Jesus forward when our works of kindness and acts of faith turn the eyes of unbelievers toward us? 3. The true gospel-teacher tells men the truth, however severe or distasteful it may be. What a contrast between Peter's method and that of not a few so-called teachers in our day!—men standing before the godless and guilty with cringing, shuffling, apologetic words and manner, aiming to excuse Moses and David and Isaiah, and all the inspired teachers, and prophets, and apostles, for their hard sayings against sin and sinners, "Oh, you know the race was not enlightened in the time of David"; or "Paul, being a Jew, could not, of course, get entirely rid of his Jewish ideas and prejudices." Miserable gospel-tinkers! 4. The true gospel-teacher calls to repentance and faith, and offers pardon to the worst of sinners. 5. We learn to encourage, in every legitimate way, those to whom we preach the gospel.—*T. J. McCrory.*

Ver. 22. *A Prophet like unto Moses.*

I. **Moses a prophetic type of Christ.**—1. In being of the same race with those he delivered. 2. In delivering his brethren from a state of captivity. 3. In acting as mediator between his brethren and Jehovah. 4. In promulgating a system of divine laws to his brethren. 5. In leading them through the wilderness towards the borders of Canaan.

II. **Christ though an antitype of, yet greater than Moses.**—1. In being one with his brethren, yet of superior nature to them. 2. In delivering His brethren from a sadder than temporal bondage, and at a greater cost to himself than Moses incurred. 3. In being the mediator of a better covenant than that formed at Sinai. 4. In revealing to men not the laws only, but the grace and truth of Jehovah. 5. In conducting all who obey Him, not to the borders merely, but to the interior also of the Promised Land.

Moses and Christ. Related to each other as—

I. **Prophecy and fulfilment.**

II. **Law and gospel.**

III. **Servant and Son.**—*Leonhard and Spiegel.*

The World's True Prophet.—The world needs a prophet—1. *Perfect*, well-instructed, filled with true wisdom. 2. *Authoritative*, one who speaks, not from conjecture or in virtue of superior talent or position, but from authority, "as one having authority." 3. *Divine*, a teacher sent direct from God. So must be the world's true teacher. God has given us such an one; not for Israel only, but for the world. He has sent His Son as the world's Prophet. He is all that is described in the passage before us.

I. **He is of our brethren.**

II. **He is raised up to God.**—Not self-called, nor man-called.

III. **He is like unto Moses.** 1. *Because God speaks with Him face to face* (Numb. xii. 8; Deut. xxxiv. 10). 2. *Because He is Mediator and Intercessor.* 3. *He is like unto Moses, because He is Israel's King.* Moses was the only prophet who was also king,—"he was king in Jeshurun," he was Israel's captain. 4. *He is like unto Moses because He is a worker of miracles.* 5. *He is like Moses because He is Israel's great Teacher.* 6. *He is like Moses because of His meekness.* 7. *He is like Moses because rejected of men.* As Moses was rejected of his brethren (vii. 35), so was Jesus despised and rejected of men.—*H. Bonar, D.D.*

Ver. 24. *Christ in the Prophets.*

I. His **incarnation** (Gen. iii. 15; Isa. ix. 6).

II. His **humanity** (Gen. iii. 15; Psalm lxxxix. 19; Isa. xi. 1, xxxii. 2).

III. His **divinity** (Psalm ii. 6, cx. 1).

IV. His **sufferings** (Gen. iii. 15; Psalm xx. 6-21, lxix. 7-9, 20-26; Isa. l. 6, lii. 14, liii. 2-10; Zech. xiii. 7).

V. His **death** (Isa. liii. 8; Dan. ix. 26; Zech. xiii. 1).

VI. His **resurrection** (Psalm ii. 7, xvi. 9, 10).

VII. His **ascension** (Psalm xxiv. 7, lxviii. 18).

Ver. 25. *The Abrahamic Covenant.*

I. The **parties.**—God and Abraham.

II. The **promise.**—"In Thee and in Thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." 1. A promise of salvation. 2. To all the families of the earth. 3. Through a descendant of Abraham.

III. The **performance.**—Seen in Christ. 1. A descendant of Abraham. 2. The Author of Salvation. 3. To as many as obey Him.

Lessons.—1. That salvation is all of grace. 2. That it should be offered to all. 3. That the New Testament Church is a continuation and development of the Old.

Ver. 26. *The Mission of Christ.*

I. **By whom He was sent.**—God. 1. To whom He stood in the twofold relation of son and servant; and 2. By whom He was raised up first, by His incarnation, and secondly, at His Resurrection.

II. **To whom He was sent.**—1. To the Jews, who were God's ancient people, to whom pertained the adoption and the glory, etc. (Rom. ix. 4, 5). 2. To the Gentiles, who, no less than the Jews, were included in the Abrahamic covenant.

III. **For what He was sent.**—For blessing. 1. Of a spiritual sort, the turning away of sinful men from their iniquities, which meant more than the turning away from them of (the consequences of) their iniquities. 2. To every one—*i.e.*, who was willing to be blessed—this condition, though not expressed, being manifestly and necessarily implied, since no one can be turned from his iniquities without the concurrence of his will.

Lessons.—1. The grace of God. 2. The power of Christ. 3. The responsibility of Man.

The Names of Christ.

I. **Jesus,** Joshua or Saviour, the personal name of Our Lord.

II. **Christ,** Messiah, His prophetic designation.

III. The **son of God,** indicating His relation to the first person in the Godhead.

IV. The **servant of Jehovah,** an official title expressive of His economical subordination to the Father.

V. The **Holy** and **Righteous One,** descriptive of His character as a man, and as servant of Jehovah.

VI. The **Prince of Life,** depicting Him as either the possessor or giver of life or as both.

VII. **A prophet like unto Moses,** setting forth the character of His work as mediatorial and legislative.

Vers. 12-26. *Peter's Threefold Testimony concerning Christ.* As—

I. The **substance of all miracles** (vers. 12-17).

II. **The Redeemer of all souls** (vers. 18-21).

III. **The accomplisher of all prophecies** (vers. 22-26).—*Lisco.*

The Speech of Peter may be regarded in four aspects:—

I. **As showing the false method of looking at human affairs.**—"As though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk." 1. The *visible* is not the *final.* 2. *Second causes* do not explain life. There is a false method of looking at the results (1) of *preaching*; (2) of *business*; (3) of *thinking.* The man who does not look beyond second causes lives in distraction—in chaos!

II. **As showing the true method of regarding the most extraordinary events.**—"God hath glorified His Son

Jesus." "Faith in His name hath made this man strong." That is the sublime explanation of all recovery, all progress, all abiding strength and comfort. Forget God, and society in every phase and movement becomes a riddle without an answer; its happiness is but a lucky chance, its misery an unexpected cloud. Regard human life as controlled and blessed by the mediation of Jesus Christ, then: 1. There is *discipline* in every event,—design, meaning, however untoward and unmanageable the event. 2. A purpose of *restoration* runs through all human training.

III. **As showing the only method of setting man right with God.**—"Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." The men who worked Christian miracles spoke plain words about men's souls. There is no ambiguity here! Are the old rousing words "repent," "be converted," being allowed to slip out of Christian teaching, and are we now trifling with the character and destiny of men? 1. Every man must *repent*, because every man has *sinned*. 2. Every man must be *converted*, because every man is in a false moral condition.

IV. **As showing the sublime object of Jesus Christ's Incarnation.**—"To bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." 1. Where *iniquity* is, there is no *blessing*. 2. Physical restoration is but the type of spiritual completeness. Two practical lessons arise out of the subject. (1) It is not enough to *wonder* at the *mighty works* of God. (2) God's glory is ever identified with the *well-being* of man. "Restitution," "refreshing," "blessing." Peter's appeal rested upon a solid biblical basis—Moses, Samuel, all the prophets. God's message is the summing up of all the voices of holy history.—*J. Parker, D.D.*

Ver. 25. *Prophets and Sons of the Prophets.*—Therefore whatsoever the prophets did you may do. God is as near to you as He ever was to them. He may inspire you for the work of the hour—to understand its problems and to fight its battles—just as He inspired them for the problems and battles of their day. God did not speak to men for the last time nineteen hundred years ago. Poetry was not buried in Tennyson's grave, and, given the "eye to see," we may have Raphaels and Murillos yet, who shall find their subjects in the romance of these commonplace days. Romance! Ay, life still *teems* with romance. And so here. We may be sons not only of the scientists and poets, of the critics and painters: we may be "sons of the prophets"; we may receive messages as direct as any message they ever received, and do work as distinctly divine as they ever did. That, then, is my subject—the prophet, the prophet of the present hour, of *to-day*.

I. **England as well as Judæa has had its prophets**; and it is of the English prophet I want to speak. The prophet has always been the same man, whether in England or in Judæa. The form which his work has taken may be different in England from what it was in Judæa, but it has been essentially the same work. And, to start with—1. The prophet is, first of all, the *good* man; the witness for truth and righteousness; the witness, not by his genius, not by the work he is able to do, but by what he *is*. That in the Old Testament is always the sign that a man is a genuine prophet—his soul burnt with a passion for goodness, for purity, for religion. The prophet would sometimes be a herdsman, sometimes a statesman; but he was always a noble *man*. You have noticed that in the Old Testament story there were "schools of the prophets," what we to-day would call theological colleges; but it did not follow that because a man had had a theological education he was a prophet. To-day there are "schools" of *art*, but every one who has been trained in the school is not an *artist*. The first thing the artist has often to do is to emancipate his own soul, and shake off every

sign of the school. If a man have the soul of music in him the school may do him good; but the school cannot make him a musician. So there were "schools of the prophets," which turned out a prophet now and then, but turned out many who were not prophets. They had gone through all the drill, were perfect masters of the technicalities of their calling; they had a high sense, I have no doubt, of what was due to their order, of the respect that ought to be paid to them; but the fire that burns in the prophet's soul—the passion for truth, for goodness, for purity, the courage that would fight any battle for God—*that* burnt but feebly in them. *They* were no prophets. The prophet before everything was a good man, consumed with a passion for righteousness. 2. Then, secondly, the prophet was the man moved by what he saw and felt to *act*; to whom to *do* was the first necessity. Not only a man who understood the times, but who rose up to do the things which the times demanded; who not only saw, but who dared not be silent. Elijah the Tishbite was not the only man in Israel who saw the curse that Ahab was to the land. There were "seven thousand," so we read, "who had not bowed the knee to Baal"; but he was the only man who dared to confront the man who had really troubled Israel. Three things in this respect make the prophet, and the man is never a prophet unless the three be in him. First, he has the "eye to *see*." Nothing tortures you more than a man who tries to console you, but does not understand you; who imagines he is soothing you, when every word he utters cuts your soul until it bleeds. How many good people you have known who have been a terror to you! They wanted to help, but they did not know where the problems of life hurt you—good, tender-hearted souls, brimming over with concern and sympathy; but your soul shuts itself up, and you could die rather than talk of your difficulties to them. Others read you at their first glance; their first word proves that they have plumbed your soul's deepest depths. Like the physician who has the "eye to see," they lay their finger upon your soul and say, "Thou ailest here, and here." Then, secondly, the prophet *feels*. What he sees moves him, haunts him, draws a veil of sadness over his face. Many who imagine they are sitting at the feet of Jesus are calmly indifferent to the sorrows and woes of the world. What do hosts who "sit down to the feast" in our churches every Sunday care for the heathen London over which you fret? The prophet is the moved man, the man who has made the sorrows and problems of his generation his own; the throes of his hour beat in him. Every shock of the French Revolution broke through Carlyle's heart. Carlyle was not a spectator, but he tasted the bliss and the horrors of it. Carlyle in this also was a prophet. Once again: The prophet descries the remedy. He is the "seer." But even that is not all. He is not prophet merely because he is "seer." The prophet embodies his vision—works out what he sees.

3. The prophets are of many orders. I will mention a few. *The great preachers*. That goes without saying. England has had a noble line of them. No truth is established until it comes into the pulpit; the man who sets the hall-mark upon it and gives it currency is always the preacher. *The great poets;* and England has had a grand succession of them. We are only slowly getting to understand the poet's mission. The poet is not the mere reciter of the deeds of the past, the mere romancist or troubadour, though we do not despise *him*. The world will never grow weary of Homer. Shakespeare has brightened hosts in every generation for three hundred years; broken the clouds of their despair and moodiness. Spring breaks wherever he comes. *The great reformers*—creators of new eras. And these are always the world's great saints. Tyranny was buried in the grave of Charles. And the men that did it—Cromwell, Milton,

Pym—did they no hard things? Nay, we cannot say that; stern times demand stern deeds, stern weapons. But these men were made out of the stuff of which prophets are made. And now—

II. You **are in the succession of these prophets.**—"Ye are the *sons* of the prophets." 1. That is your incalculable advantage. There are truths which the prophets have established that will never need to be opened up again. That is a great gain. The law of gravitation has been settled for ever. We shall not need to discuss that again. So there are social, political, and religious battles that will never have to be fought again. We shall never need another Magna Charta. So also of the great questions of theology. The hideous doctrines which tortured our fathers,.once swept out of the Church, will never re-invade it. And now you stand upon the threshold of life—"sons of the prophets." What will you make of it? Solomon, when he came to build the temple, found all but everything ready to his hand. It was for Solomon to see that the temple should be worthy of the preparation that had been made for it. So you, who are just stepping out into life. The generations that have preceded you—I will venture to say, *the generation that has immediately preceded you*—has been hard at work; but we sometimes feel that we have been doing nothing but preparing material, *making ready for* YOU. And now it is for you to *build.* It is for *you* to determine the design into which the temple is to grow. Christian enthusiasm shall express itself. Will you remember this? "*Ye are the sons of the prophets.*" 2. It is more than an advantage—it is an inspiration. I know a man at the present moment whom I revere—a noble specimen of an English man of business. I have often found him busy studying the story of his own family, tracing the line back through father, grandfather, great-grandfather—honourable men of business every one of them. And when I have come upon him so engaged, he has said, "I often go over the story of my forefathers' lives; I remind myself of what they were, for I must live to be worthy of them." Young men and women, ministers' children many of you, listen. I remind you of the homes in which you were nurtured. I would not be a rake, or an idler, or a spendthrift; I would be a *man.* I would not be frivolous, or shallow-souled and empty-headed, if I were you; I would be a godly *woman.* "Ye are the sons" and daughters "of the prophets." 3. Once again: That you inherit these memories is a great responsibility. Will *you* forget who *you* are? You are *Englishmen.* The blood of Shakespeare, Milton, Bacon, is in you. You are *Protestants.* The hand of Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, John Rogers, is upon you. You are *Puritans.* Greenwood, Barrow, Penry, were your forefathers. That is the succession in which you stand. Shall your lives be small, narrow, wicked, mean? I leave you with one sentence: "Ye are the sons of the prophets."—*J. Morlais Jones.*

Vers. 25, 26. *Israel beloved of God.*—"To the Jew *first*"; "beginning at Jerusalem." This was God's order, and it is so still. The designations of honour, and the intimations of privilege as still possessed by the sons of Abraham (as given in these two verses), are worthy of notice.

I. **They are the children of the prophets.**

II. **They are the children of the covenant.**

III. **They are they to whom God first sends His risen Son.**—1. *God's love to Israel.* He looks down on them, yearns over them, pities them, says, "How shall I give thee up?" 2. *God's purpose concerning Israel. God's desire that we should feel towards Israel as He does.—H. Bonar, D.D.*

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHURCH'S FIRST CONFLICT WITH JUDAISM—OPPOSITION FROM THE SANHEDRIM.

§ 1. The Apostles (Peter and John) in Gaol; or, the First Taste of Persecution (vers. 1-4).
§ 2. The Apostles before the Sanhedrim; or, the Sheep among Wolves (vers. 5-12).
§ 3. The Apostles removed from Court; or, the Conspirators in Conclave (vers. 13-22).
§ 4. The Apostles with their own Company; or, the Welcome of the First Confessors (vers. 23-31).
§ 5. The Apostles and the First Christians; or, the Effect of the First Persecution (ver. 32-37).

CRITICAL REMARKS.

Ver. 1. **As they spake.**—Lit., *they*, the apostles, either Peter for John or John with Peter, *speaking*. The discourse was probably interrupted after the utterance of the preceding words. **The priests.**—*I.e.*, those who had been at the time officiating in the temple. **The captain of the temple.**—The priestly commandant of the Levitical troops, whose business it was to preserve order in the sacred edifice (Luke xxii. 4). **The Sadducees.**—The rival sect to the Pharisees had taken a foremost part in persecuting Christ (Matt. xvi. 1, xxii. 23, 34), and were now most probably the instigators of this movement against the apostles, as they were of a later (v. 17).

Ver. 2. **Through**, or in, **Jesus.**—*I.e.*, in the fact of His resurrection, in His personal example. **The resurrection from the dead.**—A tenet denied by the Sadducees (xxiii. 8).

Ver. 3. **It was now eventide.**—When no judicial examination could take place.

Ver. 4. **Men.**—Most likely including (Hackett, Spence), though, according to others (Meyer, Stier, Plumptre), excluding women. **About five thousand.**—The number of the new converts (Stier), or better, of disciples altogether in Jerusalem (Alford, Hackett, Holtzmann, Plumptre).

Ver. 5. **Their rulers.**—Not of the new converts or of the apostles, but of the people; hence the Sanhedrists. **Elders,**—Heads of families, **Scribes,**—Teachers of the law, and **chief priests** composed the Sanhedrin.

Ver. 6. **Annas the high priest and Caiaphas.**—Exactly as in the gospels (Luke iii. 2; John xviii. 13), which accord to the former the first place in the high priesthood, "although his proper term of office (6—15 A D.) had long since expired" (Zöckler), while the active duties of the high priest were performed by Caiaphas, his son-in-law (18—36 A.D.). **At** or **in Jerusalem** should form part of ver. 5, as in the R.V. "In" may imply that the court met not in the temple, but in the city (Alford), but this is only a conjecture. Some MSS. read *into* Jerusalem, as if several of the members had resided beyond the precincts of the city, and on being summoned had hastened in overnight (Holtzmann).

Ver. 7. **In the midst.**—*I.e.*, in full view, in the centre of the Sanhedrists, if, as tradition reports, these were accustomed to sit in a circle. **By what power, or in what name,** etc.—Compare Luke xx. 2, of which the question here addressed to the apostles is supposed to be a legendary echo (Gfrörer, Zeller, and others); but why the same inquiry should not have been twice put, on different occasions, and to different individuals, is not easy to understand.

Ver. 8. **Filled with the Holy Ghost.**—Specially bestowed upon him for the crisis which had arisen (compare ver. 31, ii. 4, xiii. 9; Matt. x. 19, 20).

Ver. 9. **By what means.**—Or *in whom*. **Is made whole.**—Lit., *has been saved*, not merely from the power of disease, but from that of sin, of which the physical malady was a fruit and sign (compare ver. 12).

Ver. 10. **Of Nazareth.**—Frequently applied to Jesus (ii. 22, vi. 14, x. 38, xxii. 8; Matt. xxi. 11; John i. 45). Here connected with Jesus Christ (compare iii. 6), and used to identify the Jesus of whom Peter spoke with the Jesus whom the rulers had crucified (John xix. 19). **Whom ye crucified; whom God raised.**—Peter seldom omits to exhibit the antithesis between

man's treatment of Jesus and God's. The death and the resurrection of Christ formed the two poles of Peter's teaching. The one without the other would have been defective and powerless for salvation.

Ver. 11. **The stone which was set at nought,** etc.—Quoted from Psalm cxviii. 22, and applied to Christ as already it had been by Christ Himself (Matt. xxi. 42; Luke xx. 17; compare 1 Peter ii. 4, 7).

Ver. 12. **Salvation.**—Should be *the salvation*, the Messianic deliverance and blessing, which men were needing and the apostles were preaching (ii. 21). **Given among men.**—Better, *which is* or *has been given—i.e.*, provided. Hence the use of **must**, because no other has been given or provided.

Ver. 13. **Perceived.**—Lit., *having perceived* from what they saw and heard at the time, or from previous inquiry. It would certainly have been strange if the Sanhedrists, and in particular Annas and Caiaphas (see John xviii. 16), had not been acquainted with Peter and John (Zeller, Holtzmann); but this is not necessarily implied in the language, which rather suggests that they recognised the apostles as having been formerly among Christ's disciples. **Unlearned.**—*I.e.*, illiterate, untaught in the learning of the Jewish schools (see John vii. 15), and **Ignorant.**—*I.e.*, private or obscure persons, plebeian as distinguished from persons in the higher walks of life (1 Cor. xiv. 16).

Ver. 15. **Out of the council.**—Which was open to others, so that Luke could easily have ascertained from parties who had been present what was said and done during the absence of the apostles. It has been thought not improbable that Saul of Tarsus was there (Hackett).

Ver. 16. **That indeed a notable miracle hath been wrought by them is manifest.**—This confession on the part of the Sanhedrin has been pronounced incredible, and inconsistent with the instruction given in ver. 17 (Gfrörer, Zeller); but their conduct in this instance is no more difficult to understand than their behaviour in the case of the man who was born blind (John ix.), with which it is pretty much of a piece.

Ver. 17. **Let us straitly threaten.**—Lit., *with a threat let us threaten* **them.** For a similar construction see Luke xxii. 15. The R.V. omits "with a threat."

Ver. 18. **Nor teach in** or upon (*ἐπί*) **the name of Jesus.**—So as to make it a theme of discourse.

Ver. 19. **Whether it be right,** etc.—See on v. 29; and compare Amos iii. 8; 1 John i. 1-3. This remarkable utterance is not without Greek, Roman, and Rabbinical parallels.

Ver. 21. **Glorified God for that which was done.**—Compare Luke v. 26; Gal. i. 24.

Ver. 22. **Forty years old.**—A note characteristic of Luke (compare ix. 33, xiv. 8; Luke viii. 43).

Ver. 23. **Their own company.**—Not the apostles merely, but their friends in the faith generally.

Ver. 24. **O Lord!**—Addressed not to Christ, as in i. 24, who, however, is also called *δέσποτης* (2 Peter ii. 1; Jude 4), but to God as the absolute Master of the universe which He has made (xiv. 15; Neh. ix. 6; Isa. xlii. 5; Rev. iv. 11).

Ver. 25. **By the mouth of Thy servant David** should be *by the Holy Ghost*, by *the mouth of our father, David Thy servant*—the mouth of David being regarded as the mouth of the Holy Ghost. The text in this verse is confessedly difficult, and "doubtless contains a primitive error" (Westcott and Hort). The citation is from the second Psalm (LXX.); which is undoubtedly ascribed to David.

Ver. 26. For **Christ** read *Anointed*, which term, however, applied by pre-eminence to Christ.

Ver. 27. The best texts insert *in this city, ἐν τῇ πόλει ταύτῃ*, after **of a truth** (compare x. 34), which certifies the fulfilment of the divine oracle in the proceedings which were taken against Christ by **both Herod and Pontius Pilate** (Luke xxiii. 1-12).

Ver. 28. **To do whatsoever,** etc.—Compare ii. 23.

Ver. 29. **Lord.**—As in ver. 24. Here distinguished from Jesus.

Ver. 31. **The place was shaken.**—In answer to the prayer of the disciples, not by an earthquake (Kuinoel), which, according to the notions of the time, gave intimation of the presence of the Deity (see Virgil, *Æneid*, iii. 89, 90: *Da pater augurium, atque animis illabere nostris; vix ea fatus eram, tremere omnia visa repente*), but by a supernatural movement of the chamber according to the promise of "signs on the earth" in ii. 19.

Ver. 32. **The multitude of them that believed** were not the new converts merely, but the general body of the disciples.

Ver. 33. **Grace.**—Not favour with the people, as in ii. 47 (Grotius, Olshausen, Holtzmann), but divine favour, as in xi. 23; John i. 14 (Meyer, Alford, Zöckler, Hackett), of which vers. 34 and 35 furnish proof.

Ver. 36. For **Joses** read *Joseph*. **Barnabas, the son of consolation,** or son of exhortation (Holtzmann, Zöckler)—*i.e.*, of consolatory discourse. A title given to Joseph from the sympathetic character of his preaching (xi. 23). Barnabas afterwards became Paul's com-

panion on his missionary travels (xiii. 2). **A Levite** —A descendant of Levi, but not a priest. **Of the country of Cyprus.**—Rather, *a Cyprian by birth—i.e.*, a Jew who had been born in Cyprus.

Ver. 37. **Having land**, or *a farm belonging to him.* Whether in Palestine (Holtzmann, Zöckler) or in Cyprus (Hackett) is not said, but most likely in the former. Though the Levites had no share in the soil of Canaan, that destroyed not their right of private ownership within the forty-eight cities assigned them, or in the territory adjacent to these (see Jer. xxxii. 7). **The money.**—The price realised by the sale of his farm. **At the apostles' feet.** —As a voluntary contribution to the common fund, for distribution among the poorer brethren. The case of Ananias (v. 1) shows that Barnabas was under no compulsion to either sell his farm or donate his money.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 1—4.

The Apostles in Gaol; or, the First Taste of Persecution.

I. **The time.**—1. *While exhorting the people.* At the very moment when their usefulness appeared to be at its height, when their words seemed to be effecting an entrance into the hearts of their hearers, they were apprehended. Verily, "God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform." One would have expected that the hand of Providence would have kept the adversaries' movements in check, at least till Peter's sermon was closed; but no; Peter's enemies were allowed the freest scope to carry out their malignant designs. Divine wisdom is perfectly able to outwit the cleverest of man's machinations, and cause man's wrath to praise Him, and therefore never needs to be in a hurry either to hinder man's projects or thwart his purposes. 2. *At eventide.* When Peter's sermon must in any case have before long been brought to a termination, and when it was too late for him and John to be put on trial before the Sanhedrim; so that, on the one hand, Peter's hearers had received the most of what he purposed saying, and, on the other hand, Peter himself, with John, had leisure to reflect upon the situation before being called into court to answer for their misdemeanour. There is always some mitigation, even in the worst lot.

II. **The agents.**—1. *The priests.* Those engaged at the time in the Temple, the division into twenty-four orders originally made by David (1 Chron. xxiv. 3; 2 Chron. viii. 14) having been revived after the exile. If the Feast of Pentecost had not yet terminated, a larger number than usual of these religious officers may have been present on this occasion. A pitiful mistake it is when ministers of religion leave their proper work to become instigators of persecution. This unfortunately they have often done. 2. *The captain of the Temple.* Not the Roman officer who kept guard at the Tower of Antonia, near by, but the priestly commandant of the Levitical troops, whose business it was to preserve order about the sacred edifice (compare *Jos., Wars*, VI. v. 3). Though the captain little thought of it, what looked to him like disorder was in accordance with the highest order of the Temple. It is not safe to judge according to appearances. 3. *The Sadducees.* The rivals of the Pharisees, properly the rationalists of the day (xxiii. 8). From the first bitter enemies of Jesus (Matt. xvi. 1, 6, 12, xxii. 23), these were most likely the prime movers in this hostile action against the two apostles. The men who killed Christ were not likely to be scrupulous in consigning His disciples to gaol.

III. **The motives.**—Twofold. Indignation at the apostles for—1. *Teaching the people.* Strange that the priests should have been sore troubled at the apostles for doing what they themselves should have done—"the priests' lips should keep knowledge" (Mal. ii. 7)—but possibly the consciousness of neglected duty had rendered them uneasy. That the Sadducees should have objected to the education of the vulgar crowd, whom they despised as the "scum" of the world's population, was not surprising. The Temple commandant presumably

shared the prejudices of the official class to which he belonged. 2. *Promulgating the doctrine of a resurrection.*—This was the head and front of the apostles' offence in the eyes of the Sadducees. To preach that Jesus, whom they had hunted to death, was risen, and that all who believed on Him should eventually rise like Him and by virtue of His power, was to lay the axe at the root of their favourite dogma, that this life was the whole of man's existence. Such preaching was of course an outrage upon their superior wisdom.

IV. **The consequence.**—1. *The apostles were imprisoned.* Their liberty was for the first time abridged. No such experience had befallen them prior to the crucifixion. They had seen their Master's forerunner (Luke iii. 20) consigned to a dungeon, and Peter at least had professed his readiness to follow Christ to prison and to death (Luke xxii. 33). Now, for the first time, they knew what it signified to languish within prison walls. How they spent their first night in gaol is not recorded. Perhaps, like Paul and Silas, they prayed and sang hymns to God, "who giveth songs in the night" (Job xxxv. 10), and of whom it is written, "He hath looked down from the height of His sanctuary . . . to hear the groaning of the prisoner," etc. (Psalm cii. 19, 20). 2. *The people believed.* The most foolish thing in the world is to expect to hinder any cause, and least of all a good one, by means of persecution. So many received the word that afternoon that the number of believers (men and women) swelled to five thousand souls. The experience of Israel in Egypt was repeated in the history of the Christian Church (Exod. i. 12).

Learn.—1. That what seems a hindrance often turns out a help to the gospel. 2. That that religion condemns itself which opposes the education of the people. 3. That that religion is worthless as well as false which has nothing to say about a resurrection. 4. That rationalism never will satisfy the deepest instincts of the heart. 5. That Christ's enemies are always clever at outwitting themselves.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 2. *Troubles of Unbelievers.*—Like the priests, the captain, and the Sadducees, many moderns are sore grieved—

I. **At the exaltation of Jesus.**—They would be much more comfortable were they sure that He was only a man crucified and buried.

II. **At the preaching of a resurrection.**—They can see well that if Christ is risen they are wrong in their opinions, and in danger of the judgment.

III. **At the progress of Christianity.**—Having so often and so confidently affirmed that Christianity was a decaying religion, if not already obsolete, it annoys them to see their predictions turned to foolishness.

Ver. 3. *Troubles of Christ's Servants.*

I. **Severe,** but not more so than were those of Christ. Like the apostles, Christ was arrested; but, unlike them, who were only committed to prison and afterwards liberated, He was hurried from the garden to the hall of judgment, and thence to the place of doom.

II. **Undeserved,** but not more so than those of Christ. The apostles were put in prison for doing good; Christ was nailed to the cross for seeking the salvation of a lost world. The apostles suffered while innocent of any crime; Christ was numbered with transgressors, though without sin.

III. **Expected,** but not more so than were those of Christ. The apostles must have known that opposition and persecution would await them the moment they stepped forth to advocate the cause of their Crucified and Risen Lord (John xvi. 2); but Christ's sufferings and death were foreseen by Him from the first (Matt. ix. 15, xvi. 21).

IV. **Futile,** but not more so than

were those of Christ. They came too late to impede the triumph of the gospel; and Christ's sufferings were too late to hinder the successful accomplishment of His design—the salvation of the world.

The Opposition of the Jewish Leaders.—I. **Why it began when it did.** Why commenced it not on the Day of Pentecost? Perhaps—1. Because they were then too much occupied with the festivities of the time. 2. Because the popular enthusiasm aroused by the apostles was too great. 3. Because the task of apprehending one hundred and twenty people without previous preparation would have been a somewhat formidable task.

II. **Why it was prompted as it was.**—By the healing of the lame man, and not by the preaching at Pentecost. Probably because—1. They realised that the miracle would be more influential among the populace than the sermon. 2. They saw that the miracle confirmed what report said had taken place at Pentecost. 3. They feared that the miracle might authenticate the story of Christ's resurrection.

III. **Why it took the form that it did.**—Why, instead of offering violence to the apostles, they did not expose the deception contained in the so-called miracle, and refute the errors propounded in the teaching of the apostles? Answer—1. Because they knew well that they could do neither the one thing nor the other. 2. Because they understood that force was more convincing than argument. 3. Because the isolation of the two apostles afforded them an excellent opportunity for using the strong hand.

Ver 4. *Hearing and Believing.*

I. **Hearing** must precede believing, otherwise believing will be (1) unenlightened and (2) unavailing, if not (3) impossible.

II. **Believing** ought to follow hearing, else hearing (1) will not save, but (2) will increase guilt, and (3) result in hardening.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—VERSES 5—12..

The Apostles before the Sanhedrim; or, the Sheep among Wolves.

I. **The mustering of the court.**—1. *The time.* On the morrow, probably with the dawning of the day, say between six and seven a.m. As in Christ's case (John xviii. 28), no time was lost in bringing the apostolic offenders to book. Wickedness can seldom afford to proceed at leisure (Prov. vi. 18); it is the good man who never requires to make haste (Isa. xxviii. 16). 2. *The place.* Jerusalem, in a chamber connected with the Temple. If any of the Sanhedrists lived beyond the city limits—quite a probable supposition—they were duly summoned for the work on hand. 3. *The members.* Seventy one persons in all, chosen from (1) the elders, or heads of families, among whom were included both priests and laymen; (2) the scribes, or teachers of the law, professional jurists who mostly adhered to the party of the Pharisees, as the priestly members commonly belonged to the Sadducees; and (3) the chief priests and their families. Of these the first mentioned is Annas, or Hanan—"gracious"—the aged head of the high priestly house before whom Christ had been set for examination (John xviii. 13), whom Josephus pronounced "the most fortunate man of his time," because for upwards of half a century he and five of his sons had occupied the highest ecclesiastical position in the country, but whom "the most unsuspected sources" compel us to recognise as "nothing better than an absolute, tyrannous, worldly Sadducee, unvenerable for all his seventy years, full of serpentine malice and meanness which utterly belied his name" (Farrar, *The Life of Christ*, chap. lviii., p. 639). Associated with him was Caiaphas, of evil fame, his bold and unscrupulous son-in-law, who first suggested the expediency of Christ's removal by death (John xi. 49, 50), and eventually put the crown upon his criminality by

pronouncing Christ guilty of blasphemy (Matt. xxvi. 65), and handing Him over to Pilate for crucifixion (John xviii. 28). Other members of the court were John and Alexander, about neither of whom is anything known, and "as many as were of the high priest's family," from which perhaps it may be inferred that not only Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were absent, but also Gamaliel, Paul's celebrated teacher, who honourably figured at a later meeting (v. 34). In short, it was a packed assembly, and one not calculated to reassure the apostles, or even promise them an honest trial.

II. **The examination of the prisoners.**—Placed in the centre of the circle which according to tradition the Sanhedrists formed, the apostles were asked two questions. 1. *By what power they had wrought the miracle on the lame man?* This amounted to a practical admission that the miracle had been wrought (compare ver. 16), a serious difficulty in the way of those who deny the possibility of miracles. Had the Sanhedrists been able to show that no miracle had been wrought, who can doubt that they would cheerfully have done so? The fact that they did not so much as attempt this proves that in their judgment the miracle was undeniable. Even so the higher miracles of the gospel can as little be challenged. 2. *In what name they had performed the wonder?* The Sanhedrists were perfectly acquainted with the name, but "wanted to convict Peter and John of sorcery, by having worked a miracle not in the name of God, but in that of a crucified malefactor" (*Spence*). One marvels how they did not perceive that if a crucified malefactor's name could work miracles, the so-called malefactor must have been other than they deemed Him. It is noticeable that the Sanhedrists avoid saying anything about what grieved them most, the apostles' teaching the doctrine of the Resurrection. Was this due to the mixed composition of the tribunal, as afterwards in Paul's case (xxiii. 7)? Possibly.

III. **The reply of the apostles.**—Given in John's name as well as his own, and delivered by Peter, under the guidance of the Spirit. This consisted of three propositions. 1. *That the miracle in question had been done in the name and by the power of Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had crucified but God had raised.* The apostles themselves had been nothing but instruments in the hands of the exalted Redeemer, whose existence and power were certified by the miracle they had wrought and none could deny. The utter absence of self-glorification on the part of Peter and John is remarkable, only surpassed by their splendid confidence in and absolute surrender to Jesus. 2. *That they, the Sanhedrists, who were supposed to be temple builders for Jehovah, in crucifying Christ, had really rejected Him whom Jehovah had chosen to be the Head Stone of the Corner.* Their mistake had been the most appalling that persons in their position could commit. God by raising up Christ had demonstrated Him to be the true Messiah, whom they should have been the first to recognise and welcome, but whom nevertheless they had despised and rejected (John i. 11). Man's judgment and God's do not always coincide in spiritual things, so much the worse of course for man's judgment. Even those who from their privileges and training might be expected to be men of "light and leading" sometimes turn out "blind leaders of the blind." As in the former proposition the humility of the apostles was conspicuous, so in this stands out strikingly their boldness. 3. *That in no other name than Christ's could salvation be found.* The salvation of which Peter spoke was not temporal and corporeal healing merely—although Christ's name could effect that also—but spiritual and eternal healing for the soul, the Messianic deliverance and blessing; and of this as of that, the Risen Christ was the sole fountain and source. His was the only name given under heaven among men whereby the soul could be saved. This was sufficient proof of "the completely certain knowledge" which the apostles possessed of the nothingness of all other pretended ways of salvation" (Harless, *System of Christian Ethics*, p. 159, E. T.). N.B.—A statement like this pronounces no

judgment on the question whether one who has never heard Christ's name, like the heathen, or having heard it has not understood it like infants and imbeciles, can be saved; it simply asserts that Christ's is the one saving name, and that all who are saved must be saved through Him. Equally arresting in this third proposition is the Apostle's insight.

Learn.—1. The impotence of man when he conspires against God. 2. The fortitude of those the Holy Ghost inspires. 3. The all-sufficiency of Christ's name for salvation.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 11. *The Builders and the Stone.*

I. **The Church as a building or house.**—1. A spiritual house (1 Peter ii. 5). 2. Divinely planned (Heb. iii. 1-6). 3. Erected by human instrumentality. 4. Variously used. As (1) a dwelling house (Psalm lxxvi. 2; Eph. ii. 22); (2) a treasure house (Mal. iii. 17; (3) a banqueting house (Song ii. 4).

II. **Christ as the corner stone.**—1. Of God's choosing (1 Peter ii. 4). 2. Of God's approving (Matt. iii. 17). 3. Of God's trying (Isa. xxviii. 16). 4. Of God's laying (Isa. xxviii. 16; 1 Cor. iii. 11).

III. **The rejection of the stone by the builders.**—This proceeded from: 1. Blindness as to the excellency of Christ's person. 2. Ignorance of the mystery of redemption and salvation through Him. 3. Mistaken views of the nature of Messiah's kingdom.

IV. **The exaltation of the stone by God.**—Implying: 1. Christ's victory over all His enemies. 2. His institution as King and Head of His Church. 3. The resting on Him of the whole fabric of the Church. 4. His distinction as the centre of unity for and chief ornament of the Church.—*Compiled from Ebenezer Erskine.*

The Rejected Corner Stone.

I. **The sin of the builders.**—1. *The Builders.* The ecclesiastical leaders of the Jewish people. The place occupied and the function performed by them have now passed into the hands of the pastors and teachers of the Christian Church. 2. *The building.* The temple of God's kingdom on the earth, symbolised in ancient times by the Hebrew nation, in modern days by the Christian Church. 3. *The stone which the builders rejected.* Christ, who was despised by the Jewish authorities because of His obscure personality and lowly condition, and who is sometimes slighted and passed over still by Church teachers, who corrupt the true doctrine of a crucified Saviour, or attempt to build on another foundation than that of His person and work.

II. **The glory of the rejected stone.**—1. *It had been prepared by God.* The Hebrew builders had not perceived, and Christian builders occasionally forget this. The incarnation, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus were successive steps by which God fitted Him to be a sure and tried foundation for His Church. 2. *The supposed defects about the stone were its best qualifications, for the place it was intended to fill.* The Jewish leaders could not away with a Messiah who was meek and lowly in His character, as well as spiritual and heavenly in His mission, who was to suffer, die, and rise again; but these were the very facts about Christ that fitted Him to be the Saviour and Head of His believing Church. Modern teachers who feel offended at a crucified and risen Redeemer should ponder this. 3. *The stone which the builders rejected has become the headstone of the corner.* Christ crucified, dead, risen, and exalted, is the sole source and author of salvation to a perishing world, and the sole foundation and support of His Church.

Ver. 12. *Salvation in Christ alone.*

I. **There is no salvation out of Christ.**—1. No other name but that of Christ has been given among men for this purpose. 2. If any are saved, whether

in gospel or heathen lands, it is through the name of Christ.

II. **There is salvation in Christ.**—1. Salvation in fullest measure. 2. Salvation on the easiest terms. 3. Salvation with the greatest certainty.

None other Name.

I. No **higher** name than that of Christ, the glorified Son of God.

II. No **abler** name than that of Him who can save to the uttermost.

III. No **surer** name than that of Him who has been given for the purpose.

IV. No **sweeter** name than that of Him who is not ashamed to call men brethren.

V. No **easier** name than that which asks only faith to be exercised in it.

No Salvation out of Christ.

I. **No other system of salvation maintains the glory of God's character as moral Governor.**—Two principles in the character of God that can never be disjoined in their exercise are Justice and Mercy. In their manifestation these principles are naturally sympathetic and invariably coincident. Just at this po nt every other system breaks down, whereas in the gospel scheme both are harmonised.

II. **No other system of salvation upholds the honour of God's law as the rule of moral government.**—The law of God, being the counterpart of God's nature, can never change. It must therefore be upheld in its exercise of justice, before mercy can be shown to the sinner. The gospel scheme alone magnifies the law and makes it honourable.

III. **No other system of salvation bears the stamp of God's sanction as a Divine Revelation.**—An axiomatic truth that no system of salvation is worthy of acceptation which does not bear as its credential the *imprimatur* of God. This the gospel scheme alone has. "Whatever may be the pretentiousness and plausibility of other systems, they have no force or validity, for they cannot put into their preamble, 'Thus saith the Lord.'"

IV. **No other system of salvation meets man's exigencies as a sinner under the Divine condemnation.**—"The salvation man needs" is one which shall, 1. *Cancel the guilt* which has necessitated his condemnation. "Whence then is this salvation to come? Not certainly by the law." 2. *Make provision for the renewal of his whole nature* after the image of God. "And where is the earthly alembic that can transmute its character from pollution to purity?" Every other system, save that of the gospel, seems to contemplate a salvation *in* sin and not a salvation *from* sin."—*R. T. Jeffrey, M.D.*

The Only Salvation.—That in Christ. Because—

I. **Glorifies the divine character.**—By securing the salvation of the sinner "without any rent in the divine character, or collision of the divine attributes.

II. **Magnifies the divine law.**—1. *Vindicates it* by the vicarious sacrifice of Christ. 2. *Amplifies it* by an actual addition to its attributes, by the introduction of mercy as an element of its jurisprudence.

III. **Verifies the divine word.**—Gives truth, substance, and significance to all the divine disclosures contained in scripture.

IV. **Qualifies for the divine glory.**—By imparting 1. *A right* and *title*, and 2. *A meetness* for heaven.—*R. T. Jeffrey, M.D.*

Vers. 8-12. *The Characteristics of a Good Preacher.*—As exhibited by Peter.

I. **Undaunted courage.**—He addresses "the rulers of the people and the elders of Israel" without trepidation. Preachers should fear the face of no man (Ezek. ii. 6).

II. **Genuine candour.**—He is willing to be "examined of the good deed done to the impotent man." Preachers should never shun investigation into either themselves, their doctrines, or their deeds (1 Cor. x. 15).

III. **Clear exposition.**—"Be it known unto you all," etc. Preachers should have nothing to hide, and ought to leave nothing obscure (2 Cor. iv. 2).

IV. **Profound humility.**—Peter gave the glory of the miracle entirely to Christ, reserving none for himself. Preachers should always say, "Not unto us, O Lord, but unto Thy name be the glory!" (Psalm cxv. 1).

V. **Immovable conviction,**—Peter had no doubt as to the place occupied and the part played by Christ in the scheme of salvation. Preachers should not instruct others before they know the truth themselves (John iii. 11; 2 Cor. iv. 13).

VI. **Evangelical fervour.**—The sum of Peter's preaching was Christ. Preachers that have no room for Christ in their sermons should seek some other calling (1 Cor. ii. 2).

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 13—22.

The Apostles removed from the Court; or, the Conspirators in Conclave.

I. **The perplexity of the Sanhedrists.**—These holy inquisitors before whom John and Peter were arraigned were 1. *Staggered at the boldness of their prisoners.* These behaved not like criminals who had been apprehended in acts of wickedness, taken, as it were, red-handed, but like persons who felt conscious not of having done wrong, but of having performed a great good. Peter could have replied to Annas or Caiaphas—

> "Thou shalt not see me blush
> Nor change my countenance for this arrest;
> A heart unspotted is not easily daunted.
> The purest spring is not so free from mud
> As I am clear from (wrong doing)."—*Shakespeare.*

Neither Peter nor John resembled their old selves who ran away when they beheld their Master bound with cords, and hurried off to face that awful tribunal. Things had changed since the Gethsemane transaction, both with their Master and with themselves. He had risen from the tomb into which His enemies had thought to shut Him down, and had ascended to His throne; they were being assisted and upheld by His Almighty Spirit. 2. *Confounded by their prisoners' eloquence.* Peter and John, though neither learned nor distinguished persons like their judges, but ignorant and obscure fishermen, nevertheless spoke with such fluent and cogent utterance as the most gifted of their Rabbis could not equal or even imitate. The only possible explanation of the phenomenon which presented itself to the Sanhedrists was one they did not like—viz., that their prisoners had been companions of Jesus. It was a virtual admission that Christ had impressed even those who rejected Him with a secret conviction of His superhuman dignity. 3. *Unable to deny the miracle.* The evidence of its reality stood before them. The man who had been healed was in court. The whole town besides was ringing with excitement at what had happened, and had pronounced it a miracle. The theory of imposture would impose on no one. Just as little would the hypothesis of illusion or delusion. The man himself might have been a hypochondriac, and the apostles might be counted jugglers, but a whole town could not be cheated into believing that a miracle had been wrought, if no such thing had occurred. 4. *At a loss what to do with their prisoners.* To punish them for healing a lame man would look ridiculous; common sense would say they should rather be rewarded with the freedom of the city. Besides, in the present temper of the people, it would be dangerous to proceed to violence, the people being manifestly on the side of the apostles. Then to debar them from working similar miracles upon other lame persons would be hard upon the invalids. To drive them from the metropolis would only be to send them with their philanthropies to other towns. When men will not do the obviously right thing, it is

no wonder they become perplexed in choosing the best of the wrong things. Wrong things are never best.

II. **The resolution of the Sanhedrists.**—How Luke ascertained what was talked in the council chamber, after Peter and John had been removed, may be difficult to tell. If the court was opened to the public (see "Critical Remarks") some of the apostles' friends may have been present; if it was closed against the public some of the Sanhedrists themselves, on becoming converted, may have revealed the secrets of the court. In any case, what the Sanhedrists resolved upon was this—1. *To prevent, if possible, the spread of the report about the miracle.* They felt that if the story was repeated it would be believed, which shows that they regarded it as true. So will Christ's gospel, wherever told, commend itself to men's consciences in the sight of God. Hence, the chief aim of its enemies is to prevent its diffusion among the people. 2. *To forbid the apostles any more to speak or teach in the name of Jesus.* Still avoiding the explosive topic of the resurrection, they limit their prohibition to a general order not to speak in Christ's name. What they wanted was, if possible, to suppress the name altogether. But as Christ could not be hid when on earth (Mark vii. 24), so now that He is risen can He not be suppressed. "He must reign till all His enemies have been placed beneath His feet" (1 Cor. xv. 25).

III. **The action of the Sanhedrists.**—Having concluded their deliberations, and recalled the apostles, they did three things. 1. *Charged them.* Not to speak at all, nor to teach in the name of Jesus. But such an order neither John nor Peter could obey. It invaded the domain of conscience, which was God's peculiar territory. It traversed the commandment of Jesus, which had already bound them to preach the gospel to every creature (Matt. xxviii. 19; Mark xvi. 15). It sought to silence the convictions of their souls that what they had seen and heard was true. It collided with that three-fold necessity which urged them on. Hence Peter told the Sanhedrists, that where the alternative lay between obeying them and obeying God, the choice could only be the latter. So affirmed he afterwards to the same judicial body for himself and his brethren. "We ought to obey God rather than man" (v. 29). So replied Socrates to his Athenian judges: "Athenians, I will obey God rather than you; and if you would let me go and give me my life on condition that I should no more teach my fellow-citizens, sooner than agree to your proposal I would prefer to die a thousand times" (*Apology*, 23, B.). "In this first conflict between conscience and force," says Pressensé, "victory remains with the former. This day is liberty born into the world never to be destroyed." 2. *Threatened them.* With pains and penalties endeavoured to deter them from following the path of duty. "Had the judges of Peter and John gone no further than this prohibition and threatening, they would have been entitled to be called persecutors (Pressensé). The essence of persecution is the application of physical force to religion, in which the only forces admissible are those of truth for the understanding and love for the heart. 3. *Dismissed them.* The Sanhedrists lacked the courage to inflict punishment upon their prisoners. As yet they feared the people, who, siding with the apostles, and glorifying God for what had been done, would not have tolerated either imprisonment or scourging. Hence they felt compelled to let their prisoners go.

Learn.—1. The transformations Christ through His grace can effect on human character and life, exemplified in Peter and John. 2. The best sort of evidence in support of Christ's religion—such miracles as are wrought upon men's characters and lives through its influence. 3. The holy courage that should at all times be displayed by Christ's servants—to obey God and Christ rather than man. 4. The confidence with which Christ and His servants can appeal to the consciences even of their enemies.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 13. *Companionship with Jesus.*

I. A distinguished **privilege.**
II. A transforming **power.**
III. A perilous **distinction.**
IV. A high **responsibility.**

Vers. 1-14. *The Courage of the Apostles.*

I. **The occasion of the courage.**—It was an imposing assembly, made up of the intelligence and authority and ecclesiastical power of the Jewish nation. The court demanded by what power or efficacy, and in the use of what name, they had done this now notable miracle. Peter stood in view of them all, calm and confident, a splendid illustration of the truth that "the righteous are bold as a lion" (Prov. xxviii. 1), and made his reply.

II. **The secret of the courage.**—"Filled with the Holy Ghost." This was the secret of Peter's boldness. This made the difference between Peter before the Ascension and Peter after it. It was not natural courage, "to the manner born." Peter was impulsive and forward, quick and stout in assertion, but by nature a coward. The coward is become a hero. The bank of sand is transformed into a rock of firmness. Impulse has given way to principle. Fear of man is exchanged for fear of God. His being "filled with the Holy Spirit" accounts for the difference. That Spirit has given him a sense of things invisible, has opened to his faith's sight invisible troops of God, has lifted him to a level where he can look with something of the calmness and fearlessness of his Lord upon those who can only "kill the body." He knows now, even better than he knew before, his own weakness and his own need, but he has been taught of the Spirit the illimitable sufficiency of God. "Filled with the Spirit" means assurance of sonship. "Filled with the Spirit" is proof that "God is for us and in us," and that therefore they that be for us are more than they that be against us. It can easily be understood how this would arm the timid soul with a dauntless and deathless courage. One, with God, is a majority always. Weakness, with God, is omnipotence.

III. **Characteristics of the courage.**—But a courage of this sort, born of the presence of the Spirit of God, true Christian courage, will be marked by certain characteristics. Let us look at them as they appear in the record of Peter's speech before the court. 1. *Courtesy* marks the first words of this brave soul. Peter gives the men of the court their appropriate titles, recognises their office and authority, and addresses them with deference and respect: "Ye rulers of the people and elders of Israel." Bravery does not consist in brusqueness and bravado and bluster. To speak the truth boldly one need not be a boar or a bear. The bully is not the ideal hero. The kingdom and patience of Jesus go hand in hand. There is a so-called maintaining one's self-respect which is simply a manifesting one's impudence. 2. *Prudence* is another characteristic of Christian courage, as shown by Peter in this defence. His courteous recognition of the position and office of the men composing the tribunal is immediately followed by a reference to the character of the deed for which he was arraigned: "If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man." The deed was "good," and Peter reminds them of it. An impotent man has been made whole. Mark the prudent wisdom of this answer. Peter first turns attention from the method of the doing to the thing done. The work itself could challenge only gratitude and joy. Of itself it could provoke no opposition. He thus by a wise tact sought to pave the way for a favourable hearing. He made the most of his circumstances. So will the highest courage always. It does not disdain the use of every justifiable means to conciliate opposition. While scorning compromise of principle, it presses into service every

alleviating circumstance. It does not court a tilt or invite a conflict. 3. *Frankness* is another characteristic, as exhibited by Peter. The council demanded by what authority or by what name they had done this. They got for instant answer, "By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth." Here Peter might have stopped. But this was not the truth that put Peter in bonds. Peter could answer the court's questions without any allusion to the crucifixion and resurrection. But it was this that got him into trouble, and he must not withhold it now to get out of trouble. Christian courage is always the very soul of frankness. It will wear no masks—tell the whole truth, as well as nothing but the truth. The temptation to be compromisingly politic at the point of real danger is most plausibly insidious and subtle, and a brave spirit gets here its sorest test. 4. *Fidelity* is one more mark of Christian courage that shone out conspicuously in this court-scene at Jerusalem. This pushed Peter beyond the mere claims of frankness. He had fully stated the facts. The Jews had crucified Jesus, and God had raised Him from the dead. These two facts Peter had put in the plainest terms. They were offensive to the tribunal. They implicated his hearers both in crime and folly. Yet out they came with courageous frankness. This was the top and crown of Christian courage. It was transforming the prisoner's bar into a pulpit from which to preach a gospel sermon to men, some of whom probably had never heard it before, and whose ear the preacher might never have again.

IV. **Effect of the courage.**—It only remains to speak briefly of the effect of this righteous boldness. These effects are common where Christian courage gets anything like such public exhibition in such hostile circumstances. 1. Men *wonder* first at the boldness. They see nothing behind it, nothing to support it—no arms, no government, no material resource—and they are astounded. They marvel where it gets its spring and inspiration. The world knows not its secret. It is born of the invisible Spirit of God. 2. Then *they have nothing to speak against.* Christian courage has a wonderful way of disarming opposition.

Christians, there are some things taught here that ought to be to our spiritual profit. 1. The Spirit of God can make the weakest saint bold. 2. We can afford to trust Christ. 3. Truth will sometimes smite to silence when it does not smite to heal.—*H. Johnson, D.D.*

Ver. 16. *What shall we do with these men?*—The world's question concerning Christians.

I. **To this the world has usually answered.**—Let us 1. Suspect them as hypocrites. 2. Disbelieve them as liars. 3. Oppose them as enemies. 4. Punish them as evildoers; and, generally, 5. Persecute them as sectaries, separatists, and heretics.

II. **To this the world ought to answer.**—Let us 1. Listen to them as bringers of good tidings. 2. Honour them as self-denying philanthropists. 3. Credit them as sincere preachers. 4. Reward them as benefactors of their race; and, generally, 5. Imitate them as noble exemplars of virtue.

Ver. 19. *Liberty of Conscience.*

I. **The principle stated.** — To hearken unto God rather than unto man.

II. **The principle exemplified.**—By the behaviour of the Apostles.

III. **The principle justified.**—By an appeal to the moral and religious instincts of the Sanhedrists.

IV. **The principle recognised.**—In part, at least, by the dismissal of the apostles from the council chamber. (See further on, v. 29.)

Ver. 20. *The Preacher's Motto.*

I. **The nature of the preacher's function.**—To speak, to address his fellow-men by the living voice. This function can never be superseded by the press. There is that in the contact

of soul with soul, through the medium of the living voice, which no printed page can supply.

II. **The extent of the preacher's commission.**—To speak what he has seen and heard. This what the apostles were called to do when they were made witnesses of Christ's resurrection. In like manner the proper business of the Christian preacher is to lay before his fellow-men the truth of sacred Scripture as that is revealed to and appropriated by his own understanding, heart, and conscience.

III. **The constraint of the preacher's action.**—"We cannot but speak" showed that the apostles had not taken up their calling as a matter of self-directed choice, but in obedience to the impulse of conscience, and not from interested motives as a means of procuring a livelihood or acquiring fame, but from an irresistible sense of duty, or, as Paul afterwards expressed it, "because necessity had been laid upon them" (1 Cor. ix. 16). So should none assume the preacher's office except under a similar constraint. To exercise the preacher's office for a piece of bread (1 Sam. ii. 36) is to desecrate the office and be guilty of sacrilege.

Ver. 21. *God glorified by the People for the Healing of the Lame Man.*

I. For the **exhibition of divine power** which they had witnessed.

II. For the **rich grace** which had been shown to the cripple.

III. For the **signal honour** which had been put upon the apostles in making them the instruments of this miracle.

IV. For the **glorious hope** of heavenly succour which was brought to themselves, the people, through this wondrous deed.

Vers. 1-22. *The Jewish Leaders and the Apostles.*

I. On the side of the Jewish leaders there was—1. *Illiberality.* "Being grieved that they taught the people." The highest pre-christian culture! Christ alone has shown Himself the friend of universal man—slave or king. Christianity is a *universal* appeal. It is not a taper, it is the *sun.* 2. *Shortsightedness.* They put the apostles in prison! Fools! They could not put *God* in prison! Had the apostles been *original* workers, had the cause of their actions lain within themselves, imprisonment might have met the case. But *God!* etc. Why were the apostles put in prison? For two reasons: (1) They did good to the diseased; (2) They instructed the ignorant. Christianity is *still* the great physical and mental regenerator of the world. The only charge which can be brought against Christianity is that *it continually seeks to do good.* 3. *Impotence.* "What shall we do to these men? For that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it." They "*threatened*" the apostles. That is, they shook their fists in the face of the sun in order to darken the world! They stamped a foot angrily on the sea-shore in order to repel the advancing tide! They sent a message to the wind stating that they would henceforth be independent of the living air! We see how small men are when they set themselves against Truth. They know not what they do! Truth is to them an unknown quantity; at any moment it may smite them; it is subtle, mysterious, intractable. Terrible is the hand of the Lord upon all them that oppose the truth.

II. On the side of the *apostles* there was—1. *Complete intelligence within the sphere of their ministry.* Though the apostles "were unlearned and ignorant men," yet within the compass of the work which they were called to do they were wise and efficient. This is the secret of success. Know what you *do* know. Do not venture beyond the line of your vocation. Every preacher is strong when he stands upon *fact* and *experience.* Christians must not accept the bait which would draw them upon unknown or forbidden

ground. 2. *Inconquerable courage in narrating and applying facts.* (1) Look at the *dignity* of the address; (2) Look at the calm and emphatic assertion of *the name of Christ*; (3) Look at the direct and special *impeachment* of the hearers; "whom ye crucified"; "set at nought of you builders." *Dignity* is proper in the preachers of truth; *Christ* is the life of Christianity —beware of lauding the *system*, and forgetting the *Man*. *Accusation* is the first work of every Christian evangelist. Prove the world's crime! 3. *Christian magnanimity in preaching the Gospel.* "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Thus was the Gospel preached to the murderers of God's Holy One. "Beginning at Jerusalem." In this brief sermon Peter proceeds upon two assumptions: (1) That men need saving; (2) That there is but *one* true way of saving them. These assumptions have been proved to be true. 4. *Incorruptible loyalty to God and to His truth.* "Whether it be right in the sight of God," etc. (ver. 19). "Things which we have seen and heard!" What a field! Missions at home and abroad, — Schools, — Labours, — Sacrifices, — Death-beds!—*J. Parker, D.D.*

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 23-31.

The Apostles with their own Company; or, the Welcome of the First Confessors.

I. **The report of the apostles.**—1. *To whom it was delivered.* To their own company—*i.e.*, to their own colleagues in the apostleship, or, more accurately, to their friends in the faith, who doubtless had convened at their usual resort, the upper room (i. 13), on learning of the arrest and imprisonment of their two principal leaders. Christ's people, as brethren, should cultivate between each other a spirit of mutual confidence and sympathy (1 Peter iii. 8), bearing each other's burdens, and so fulfilling the law of Christ (Gal. vi. 2), and remembering that when one member suffers all the other members suffer with it (1 Cor. xii. 26). 2. *Of what it was composed.* "Of all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them." Most likely of nothing they themselves had said in reply to the chief priests and elders (Chrysostom). If so, the report must have been as remarkable for its omissions as for its inclusions. For Christ's servants there is a time to be silent as well as a time to speak (Eccles. iii. 7); the former, when the glory of self is concerned (Prov. xxvii. 2), the latter when the honour of Christ or the safety of His cause is endangered (1 Cor. xvi. 13). If "all the words of the chief priests and elders" were faithfully reported, it may be confidently assumed that none were added to them; "if nothing was extenuated" it may equally be assumed that "naught was set down in malice."

II. **The prayer of the congregation.**—1. *By what it was prompted.* By the dark outlook which, according to Peter's and John's report, loomed before the friends of Jesus—the highest ecclesiastical tribunal of the land having pronounced against them. As yet the adherents of the New Cause were a feeble folk, poor in wealth and obscure in station, and therefore ill fitted to contend against the "powers that be" either in Church or State; and though for the present the hostility of the Sanhedrim was held in check by the popularity of the New Cause, no one could predict how speedily the favour of the crowd might change and the aspect of affairs be completely altered.

> "An habitation giddy and unsure
> Hath he that buildeth on the vulgar heart."—*Shakespeare.*

And well the Church in Jerusalem knew, or might have known from the case of its Master (compare Matt. xxi. 9 with xxvii. 22), that the present popularity of the apostles might not long continue.

"The noisy praise
Of giddy crowds is changeable as winds."—*Dryden.*

Hence, in circumstances so depressing, the Church betook itself to prayer—invoked the aid of Him who is without variableness or shadow of turning (James i. 17). An example deserving imitation by all (Psalm l. 15, xci. 15; Phil. iv. 6). 2. *To whom it was directed.* To God, the only hearer of prayer (Psalm lxv. 2), addressing Him (1) As Lord, or Master—*i.e.*, as the possessor of absolute authority and power (Deut. iii. 24; 1 Chron. xxix. 11, 12; Psalm lxii. 11), this being the import of the term used by Peter—a term which he also applies to Christ (i. 24; 1 Peter ii. 3; 2 Peter ii. 1), as Paul likewise does (2 Cor. iii. 17; Phil. iv. 5). (2) As Maker of the universe in its three parts—heaven, earth, and sea, with all that in them is; and therefore as mightier than the Sanhedrim or all Christ's foes combined. (3) As Inspirer of sacred Scripture, who by the Holy Ghost, speaking through David, predicted beforehand the opposition of earth's kings and rulers to Christ's cause and the utter folly of it, and therefore as one in a manner obliged by fidelity to His own word to defend them in the crisis which had arisen. (4) As Lord and Father of Jesus, His holy Child and Servant, for both renderings may be adopted; and consequently as one who must necessarily be constrained by love and faithfulness to champion Christ's cause. N.B.—Petitioners at God's throne should have a clear grasp of the greatness, majesty, and power of Him whose favour they bespeak. 3. *In what manner it was presented.* (1) With one heart. "One heart," says Delitzsch (*Bib. Psych.*, p. 295, E. T.), "is the conscious perfect agreement of will, thought, and feeling"; and such oneness of heart existed in the present instance. All realised the danger, discerned the only quarter whence help could be procured, and bestirred themselves to act in concert in a fervent approach to the Heavenly Throne. Prayer, of course, is only then united when the hearts from which it issues are united, and to such prayer special hope of success has been given (Matt. xviii. 19, 20). (2) With a loud voice. Whether all recited the prayer together cannot be concluded from the writer's words. Verses 25 and 26, culled from the second Psalm, would doubtless be familiar to the audience, and if the whole passage (vers. 24-30) was an early Christian liturgy composed shortly after the crucifixion (which is only conjecture) the whole congregation may have simultaneously and vocally joined in the supplication, though it is more likely one led the devotions with his voice while the rest followed with their hearts and voices also as they felt inclined. Baumgarten's view may approach the truth that all sang the second Psalm, while Peter, or some other, applied the contents to their situation in the terms here recorded. 4. *For what it entreated.* (1) That God would look upon the threatenings of Christ's adversaries, and consider the situation of His praying servants. The peril then impending they regarded as of a piece with, in fact as a continuation of, the machinations which in that very city had been formed against Jesus by Herod and Pontius Pilate, and along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel who had then come together out of every tribe, to do whatsoever God's hand and counsel had foreordained to come to pass. Here again in the prayer of the congregation, as in Peter's sermon (ii. 23), the sovereignty of God and the freedom of man are recognised, without the feeling that these were incompatible the one with the other. (2) That God would embolden His servants, the apostles, and the disciples generally, to speak His word—of grace and mercy, salvation and eternal life—without shrinking through fear of man. Not a whisper escapes their lips about calling down vengeance upon the heads of their persecutors. (Contrast Luke ix. 54, xxii. 49; John xviii. 10.) The spirit of their dying Master having taken possession of their hearts, they only ask for themselves courage and constancy, that they might stand fast and not grow

weary and faint in their minds (Heb. xii. 8). (3) That God would continue to stretch forth His hand in works of healing such as had been performed upon the lame man, doing signs and wonders through His holy Servant Jesus. This alone, the special manifestation of Almightiness, they craved. It was a prayer remarkable for its comprehensiveness and its brevity, its sublimity and its humility, its intelligence and its faith.

III. **The answer of God.**—Given in three ways. 1. *A shaken chamber.* Scarcely had their supplication subsided than the walls of the house trembled, "as if they had been touched by the wings of the descending Spirit" (Spence). This supernatural vibration of the edifice, like the sound of the mighty rushing wind on Pentecost (ii. 2), betokened the Divine Presence. (See "Critical Remarks.") 2. *The descending Spirit.* "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost." As on Pentecost, they were again taken possession of by an inward spiritual influence, which abode not with them always, but seized them at intervals. This to be distinguished from the permanent inhabitation of believers by the Holy Ghost. 3. *Courageous preaching.* "They spake the word with boldness." Not within the chamber merely, but outside, in the temple courts and on the streets (ver. 33; v. 12, 21, 25). What they prayed for had been granted, instantaneously (Isa. lxv. 24) and literally (Matt. xxi. 22).

Learn.—1. That the best refuge in time of danger is God. 2. The best prayer is that which directly tells God the soul's or the Church's need. 3. That the best way of overcoming enemies is to pray for their highest good. 4. That the best evidence of being filled with the Spirit, is to speak the word with boldness.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 24. *A Congregation at Prayer.*—A model for the times.

I. **United.**—"With one accord."

II. **Fervent.**—"They lifted up their voice to God."

III. **Reverent.**—"Lord, Thou art God," etc.

IV. **Believing.**—"Who by the mouth of Thy servant David," etc.

V. **Intelligent.**—They knew whom they addressed and what they wanted.

VI. **Merciful.**—They asked not for vengeance on their enemies.

VII. **Hopeful.**—They had large expectations as to the future of Christ's cause—"that signs and wonders," etc. (ver. 30).

Ver. 25. *Vain Imaginings.*

I. That **God's purpose** of salvation can be defeated by man's opposition.

II. That **Christ's cause** can be destroyed even by the fiercest persecution.

III. That **the Spirit's work** upon the earth can be arrested by the most powerful combinations against it.

The World's Treason against its King.

I. **The fact.**

II. **The impotence of their rage.**—*It is very useless anger.* It accomplishes nothing. 1. *It won't alter the purpose of God.* 2. *It won't make Him afraid.* "Are we stronger than He?" asks the apostle. "Hast thou an arm like God?" asked Job. 3. *It won't shake the eternal throne.* 4. *It won't change truth into error, or error into truth.* It tries to do this. But in vain.

III. **The reason of their rage.**—1. *Because they hate God Himself.* 2. *They hate His government.* 3. *They hate His Son.* 4. *They hate His Bible.*

IV. **God's reasons for allowing this.**—Why not arrest the blasphemy? 1. *To show what the evil of sin is.* 2. *To show the abysses of the human heart.* 3. *To show His power and grace.*

V. **God's time for interposing.**—The close of the Psalm shows that He will interfere at length. He is not slack

concerning His promises and threats.—*H. Bonar, D.D.*

Vers. 24-31. *The Christian Conception of God.*

I. **A triune personality.**—Father (Lord), Son (Christ), and Holy Ghost.

II. **The Maker of the Universe.**—Of "heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is."

III. **The hearer of prayer.**—Implied in the Church's supplication of His aid.

IV. **The inspirer of Scripture.**—"Who by the mouth of Thy servant David hath said."

V. **The providential ruler** of the world.—"To do whatsoever Thy hand and counsel determined before to be done."

VI. **The omniscient observer** of all men and things.—"And now, Lord, behold their threatenings."

VII. **The author of salvation.**—The Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, by whose name signs and wonders, moral and spiritual, as well as physical and temporal, were done.

Ver. 29. *Boldness in Preaching.*

I. Because the preacher's **commission** is from heaven.

II. Because the preacher's **message** is the Word of God. Which is 1. True; 2. Life-giving; 3. Much needed; 4. Indestructible.

III. Because the preacher's **foes are feeble.**—In comparison with those who are on his side.

IV. Because the preacher's **helpers** are divine.—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Vers. 18-31. *Christian Courage.*—"And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus," etc. It is always an impressive moment when a jury, or an important deliberative body, is about to render a decision. This is especially true if the question at issue involves vital interests, and the determining body speaks with authority. To such a decision from such a body the text relates. The scene is in Jerusalem, soon after Pentecost. In considering the conduct of these men, thus arraigned, threatened, and commanded, we notice—

I. **The test of the apostles' courage.**—It is evident that the early followers of Christ did not design or wish to separate themselves from the Jewish Church. They differed from other Jews in believing that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah; but they still supposed that the way into the Messianic kingdom was through the portal of the Jews' religion. Hence, although those of kindred spirit met privately for worship in each other's houses and in upper rooms, the disciples of Jesus kept up their observance of the Mosaic ritual, and were constant attendants upon the temple service. See now these men, Peter and John, confronted by a positive command from the nation's highest tribunal to be silent. This is the first utterance of the Sanhedrim concerning the new religion since Christ's resurrection. These men remember how determined this same court had been upon the crucifixion of Him in whose name they have been teaching. If they persist, can they expect a better fate than befell their Master? We can have little conception of the severity of the ordeal. National love, respect for law, pride of race, reverence for institutions hoary with age, strength of social ties, personal friendships, a shrinking from becoming disturbers of the peace, fear for personal safety—all these conspired to intensify the command "not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus." What enables them to oppose the Sanhedrim's command? It is their personal love for Jesus. In their hearts a fire has been kindled, and their breasts are aglow with flame. To be silent is impossible. "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Instead of being silent, they proclaimed Christ with added boldness. There are currents in the sea which, despite opposing winds and storms and tides, move on their

way unhindered, impelled by a mighty force hidden far in the ocean's depths. Such a force in the hearts of these disciples was love for Christ. This caused them to listen to the Sanhedrim's decree unmoved. Love had cast out fear. Such courage, resulting from such love, could then, and can always, bear the severest test.

II. **The manifestations of the apostles' courage.**—Men are sometimes called courageous when they are only reckless. The man of real courage will be bold enough, and calm enough, to act wisely. His bravery will be something more than bravado. In the conduct of the apostles—commanded by the Sanhedrim to be silent, and they resolved meanwhile to speak—every mark of true courage is manifest. They show that their course is not prompted by impulse or passion. They are moved by deep convictions. "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." They plant themselves on the highest conceivable ground, the sense of *right*. They have no ambitious ends to seek, no revenge to gratify, no popular applause to gain. There is no other courage so lofty or so enduring as this. It keeps the nerves steady and the head cool and the heart brave. Note, as an evidence of wisdom, how sagaciously the apostles appeal to this self-same principle of right in the minds of their accusers. The idea of unquestioning allegiance to God was deeply implanted in the Jews' religion, and the Sanhedrim was set for its defence and inculcation. Who, then, better prepared than the Sanhedrim to decide whether it be *right* to "hearken more unto men than unto God"? "Judge ye." This sense that it is *right* to hearken more unto God than unto men enters into the universal consciousness. Whether this principle is adopted in one's practical life or rejected, it *must* and does commend itself to every man's conscience. Those who adhere to it gain the confidence of all. It is the right rule for the young to select. Another manifestation of the apostles' courage is seen in the company they keep. "Being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them." The scene now changes from the council chamber of the Sanhedrim to the midst of the Christian brotherhood. Those to whom they are come have doubtless been praying for their imperilled brethren. How changed the aspect! In the Sanhedrim the air was dense with suspicion and malice—here is love, purity, and the peace of heaven. Courage is of the right kind when it seeks to sustain itself by breathing an atmosphere like this. It is a praying circle into which these apostles come. "They lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, Thou art God."

III. **The source of the apostles' courage.**—What has transformed the timorous Simon to the undaunted Peter? The answer is not far to find. A heavenly influence has fallen upon him. This new-born courage of the apostles, although in them, was not of them. Its source was above: it was a divine energy infused within them; the breath of God's Spirit upon their spirits. Christ did not send the apostles into the trials and persecutions incident to their day without providing them with a power adequate to every want. What Christ did for His early disciples He does to-day. Often to-day the need of Christians is courage. Now the opposition to be encountered is not, usually, persecution or prison doors. It may, however, be something requiring as true a heroism to withstand. So long as the world remains as it is, no Christian, and especially no one just becoming such, will find himself where to stand by his principles will not often be at cost, and require an effort for which he is inadequate only as God shall help him. To this end the Holy Spirit is given.—*Monday Club Sermons.*

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 32-37.

The Apostles and the First Christians; or, the Effect of the First Persecution.

I. **It united the congregation.**—Contrary to the expectations of its instigators, the hostility directed against the followers of the Nazarene resulted in banding them more closely together. 1. *In amity and concord.* The multitude, by this time, numbering at least five thousand persons, were of one heart and soul—"heart" representing the intellectual (Mark ii. 6, 8, xi. 23; Luke ii. 35, iii. 15, vi. 45), and "soul" the emotional (Luke ii. 35, xii. 22; John xii. 27) side of human nature. In their views of divine truth had emerged no divergence, in their regards for one another no estrangement, in their plans no division. As brethren they were of one mind (1 Peter iii. 8), walked by the same rule (Phil. iii. 16), and cherished the same love, being of one accord and of one mind (Phil. ii. 2). "All wished the one thing, to be blessed; all thought the one thing, to remain true to the Lord Jesus; all felt the one thing, the comfort of the Holy Spirit; and this oneness of heart in willing, thinking, and feeling was the moving soul in the action of the whole body" (Besser). "At the time of Constantine Eusebius was able still to write of Christians, 'One and the same power of the divine spirit goes through all members, in all is one soul and one liveliness of faith'" (*Ibid.*). Alas! that such cannot now be affirmed of the Christian community as a whole, or of Christian individuals, who are not only gathered into rival communities, but often filled with mutual jealousies and engaged in mutual strifes. 2. *In self-sacrifice and beneficence.* "Not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common." Thus "they abolished property, as it were, without abolishing it, and possessed it as though they possessed it not. Everything, both heart, soul, and spiritual life, and also all property and worldly enjoyments were in common, so far as was lawful and expedient" (Stier). They so considered each other's needs that none were allowed to want. There were no beggars among the Christians. Owners of houses and lands, like Barnabas the Cypriote, sold these and cast the proceeds into a common treasury, out of which distribution was made to each disciple according to his need. That this was an attempt to establish communism as a rule of the Christian society cannot be made out (see on ver. 32). Most likely it was prompted by a desire to relieve the necessities of those who, in becoming believers, had been obliged to renounce their worldly goods.

II. **It inspired the apostles.**—Instead of intimidating the leaders of the new society, the opposition of the Sanhedrim fired them with increased zeal. 1. *To continue their work of preaching.* Changing not their theme, manner, or place of preaching, they kept on repeating the old story of the resurrection of Jesus, knowing it to be true, and to contain the one Gospel for sinful men. The Church had prayed that they might be enabled to speak the word with boldness (ver. 29), and so abating nothing of either their confidence in the message they proclaimed, or the courage with which they set it forth, undaunted by fears or frowns, they gave witness of what they had seen and heard. As a consequence, their preaching was accompanied by great power—*i.e.*, with deeply convincing effect; and no preaching will tell that lacks this element of boldness. 2. *To undertake additional toil.* Naturally, at first, the labour of distributing the common funds fell to the apostles as the heads of the community, and as persons in whom the community had confidence. Before long, however, it was seen that even apostles might be overburdened with work. Besides, the work in question was of a sort for which less than apostolic talent might suffice. Accordingly, another order of officers, the diaconate, was soon after called into existence to superintend this department of Christian activity (vi. 1-6).

III. **It enriched both.**—Designed to dispirit them in their religious ardour and discredit them in public estimation, the persecution of the Jewish rulers had the contrary effect. It enriched them. 1. *With divine favour.* "And great grace was upon them all,"—upon apostles and believers alike. There is no reason to depart from the ordinary sense of the term grace, though some (Grotius, Kuinoel, Olshausen, and Holtzmann) understand by it the favour of the people (compare ii. 47). That the apostles were recipients of this grace from Heaven was evidenced by "the great power," or convincing effect with which "they witnessed of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus"; that the disciples generally were not without experience of the same was attested by the munificent liberality which they displayed. 2. *With popular acceptance.* Though not the best meaning of the term "grace," it need not be excluded. Instead of damping the cordiality of the people towards the apostles and disciples, the persecution of them and their cause on which the ecclesiastical authorities had entered rather helped to augment the same. In this respect persecution is always a failure—never killing, but rather strengthening the cause against which it is directed.

Learn.—1. The excellence of Christian unity. 2. The beauty of Christian charity. 3. The power of Christian truth.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 32. *All Things Common; or, a Sermon on Christian Socialism.*

I. **How the early Christians were led to this experiment.** 1. *They were not in any way commanded or counselled so to act by the apostles.* At least it does not appear from the narrative that they were. Who originated the proposal is not told. 2. *Most likely the plan adopted was suggested by the necessities of the situation.* In the course of a few weeks as many as five thousand men (possibly not including women and children) had passed over from Judaism into the Christian Church, in many instances, doubtless, not only snapping the ties that bound them to their kinsmen and relatives, but also throwing themselves out of their accustomed employments. 3. *The plan would probably commend itself to them as desirable.* As being in accordance with (1) the precepts (Matt. vi. 19, 20, xix. 21; Luke xii. 33), and (2) the practice (John xiii. 29) of Christ, who not only enjoined the renunciation of earthly goods but shared a common purse with the Twelve. 4. *The movement may have sprung from the warm hearts of the richer members of the Church* who compassionately regarded the destitution of their Christian brethren.

II. **The exact character of this early experiment.** 1. *The sale of goods and lands was not compulsory,* or binding on believers as a term of communion. The language of Peter to Ananias and Sapphira (v. 4), and the case of John Mark's mother who had a house in Jerusalem (xii. 12), show this. It is not needful to add that it was their own goods and not other people's that these early Christians cast into the treasury. 2. *It is not clear that all the Jerusalem Christians were placed upon this common fund.* Possibly only those were who from age, infirmity, lack of employment, or want of friends were destitute of support (the mention of "widows," vi. 1, points to this); and even of those it does not appear that all received an equal aliment ("according as he had need," iv. 35, favours this). 3. Hence what wears the aspect of a universal sustentation fund was probably nothing more than *a voluntary relief fund,* to which those contributed who felt themselves able and were moved thereto by love to Christ and sympathy for their needy brethren, and out of which those were supported who were unable to maintain themselves.

III. **Indications that this early experiment was not designed to be permanent.**—Even should it be conceded that the experiment in question was of

a strictly communistic character, and that the apostles originally meant it to become a fixed practice, there is ground for thinking that they pretty soon changed their minds in this respect. 1. *It was not mentioned at the First Council in Jerusalem as a method of living which might be imitated by the Gentile Churches.* On the contrary, Paul and Barnabas were directed to remember the poor (Gal. ii. 10)—*i.e.*, to lift collections from the rich Gentile congregations for the support of the poor disciples in the Judæan metropolis. 2. *It was probably found that the experiment had not been successful in Jerusalem, but rather hurtful.* If it met an emergency, it appears to have been followed by the usual results which flow from common funds. It destroyed the independence of the Jerusalem Church, which became practically filled with lazy paupers, who sorned upon their wealthier brethren. "The system of common property" (among the New England Pilgrims), writes Bancroft, "had occasioned grievous discontents; the influence of law could not compel regular labour like the uniform impulse of personal interest; and even the threat of 'keeping back their bread' could not change the character of the idle" (*History of America*, i., 238).

Christianity and Socialism.—"As a movement for the deliverance of the poor and their introduction to a good and happy life, the gospel of God's love in Christ thoroughly agrees with socialism." Yet "there is a broad line of distinction between the two."

I. **Socialism** insists on *external and economic conditions* for good; **Christianity** insists on the *inward and moral*, because all social disorders are spiritual at heart, and the spiritual is the ultimate root of all life.

II. **Socialism** makes *the community* the final and absolute proprietor of all wealth; **Christianity** makes *God* the proprietor and us His stewards for others.

III. **Socialism** too much seeks to enforce its doctrine of property by *brute force*; **Christianity** by the moral leaven of *love* in the soul of man.

IV. **Socialism** thinks by *equalising human conditions* to secure the greatest amount of comfort and happiness; **Christianity,** or Jesus Christ, teaches that all vital development must be spontaneous, and from within, that *a change of character* is to be sought rather than a change of conditions." Yet "Christianity and socialism need not be spoken of as rivals; they are compatible, and should not be made parties in a quarrel. The fact is that socialism needs to be christianised, and that Christianity needs to be socialised."—*A. Scott Matheson.*

Ver. 33. *The Christian Ministry.*

I. **Its personnel.**—No longer the apostles, but the pastors and teachers of the New Testament Church.

II. **Its function.**—Witness-bearing. Not arguing or philosophising.

III. **Its theme.**—The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ—including, of course, all the connected facts and doctrines.

IV. **Its influence.**—When rightly exercised it wields great dynamic force of a moral and spiritual kind.

V. **Its reward.**—It attracts towards itself "great grace" both from God and man.

The Best Graces for a Church.

I. The grace of **unity.**
II. The grace of **witness-bearing.**
III. The grace of **liberality.**

Ver. 33. *The Risen Christ and the Power of the Gospel.*

I. **The resurrection.**—It is not so much with *death* as with *resurrection* that the apostles had to do, at least in Jerusalem and Judæa. The *death* was a believed fact there, not needing witnesses.

II. **The testimony.**—It was the testimony of apostles; and yet it was not as apostles, or with official authority that they testified, but as men of integrity and good sense, who saw with their eyes, and heard with their ears.

III. **The power.**—"With great power gave the apostles witness." The word which they spoke was in itself a word of power. But apart from this, the "great power" here spoken of was exhibited. 1. In the accompanying miracles, by which God identified Himself with the apostolic testimony, declaring that their testimony was His truth; for of this the miracles were the seal. 2. In the accompanying power exercised over, and in, men's souls.

IV. **The grace.**—It is "great grace"; free love in no ordinary measure.—*H. Bonar, D.D.*

Ver. 36. *Joses surnamed Barnabas.*

I. **The possessor of a good pedigree.**—He was a Levite, a member of the priestly tribe, though not himself a priest.

II. **The owner of a good name.**—The son of exhortation, or the son of consolation, with reference to either his eloquence or his sympathy.

III. **The author of a good deed.**—"Having land he sold it, and laid the money at the apostles' feet."

Joses Barnabas; or, the Consecration of Wealth.

I. **The pious landowner.**—1. *His name and surname.* Joses, or Joseph—an honourable name in Israel. Barnabas, the son of exhortation or consolation—a more honoured surname in the Christian Church. 2. *His character and ability.* A good man and full of the Holy Ghost; also a talented man, as may be concluded from his rank alongside of the apostles, his power of eloquent speech, and his usefulness as a colleague of Paul. 3. *His land and property.*—A native of Cyprus, and the possessor of a piece of ground in that island.

II. **The great renunciation.**—He sold his land, that which men highly value, probably his patrimonial inheritance, and cast the proceeds into the common fund. 1. *Out of love to Christ,* whose disciple he was. 2. *Under the impulse of the Holy Spirit,* by whom his heart was filled. 3. *From consideration of his fellow-Christians' needs,* whom he regarded as Christ's brethren and his own.

III. **The cheerful consecration.**—He laid it at the apostles' feet. 1. No doubt *without reluctance,* as a cheerful giver. 2. *Without reservation,* keeping back no part of the price. 3. *Without stipulation,* leaving it for distribution entirely under the apostles' control.

Vers. 36, 37. *A Sermon on Wealth.*—Its right use exemplified by Barnabas.

I. **Wealth possessed.**—No sin, at least not necessarily, but a great talent.

II. **Wealth surrendered.**—Not an obligation imposed upon Christians, yet a sacrifice that may be freely offered.

III. **Wealth consecrated.**—Whether retained or renounced it should be devoted to the service of God and Jesus Christ.

IV. **Wealth distributed.**—One way of devoting wealth to God and Christ is to disperse it abroad and give to the poor (Psalm cxii. 9), to do good with it and to communicate (Heb. xiii. 16; 1 Tim. vi. 18).

Vers. 31-37. *The True Blossoms of a Christian Congregation.*

I. Where the **preaching** of Christ flourishes there living faith flourishes. "The multitude believed."

II. Where living **faith** flourishes there genuine love flourishes. "One heart and one soul."

III. Where genuine **love** flourishes, there true prosperity flourishes. "No one lacked."—*Gerok.*

CHAPTER V.

DANGERS BOTH WITHIN AND WITHOUT THE CHURCH—FALSE FRIENDS AND OPEN FOES.

§ 1. The Story of Ananias and Sapphira; or, Hypocrisy unveiled (vers. 1-11).
§ 2. A Page from the Church's Life History; or, the Calm before a Storm (vers. 12-16).
§ 3. Annas on the Move; or, the Bursting of the Storm (vers. 17-32).
§ 4. Gamaliel and his Colleagues; or, a Friend at Court (vers. 33-42).

CRITICAL REMARKS.

Ver. 1. **Ananias.**—Perhaps the same name as Ananiah (Neh. iii. 23) or Hananiah (1 Chron. iii. 21; Jer. xxviii. 1; Dan. i. 6), translated in the LXX. Ἀνανίας, and signifying *the cloud or mercy of God.* **Sapphira.**—Possibly from the Greek σάπφειρος, *sapphire*, or from the Syriac שְׁפִירָא, *beautiful.*

Ver. 2. **Kept back part of the price.**—Lit. *took away for himself from the price*, as Achan did of the accursed thing (Josh. vii. 1); compare Titus ii. 10. **Privy to it.**—*Conscious of it to herself—i.e.*, aware of the reservation.

Ver. 3. **Why hath Satan filled thine heart?**—Compare the influence exerted by this father of lies (John viii. 44) upon Judas (Luke xxii. 3; John xiii. 27). **To lie to the Holy Ghost.**—Lit. *that thou shouldst lie, as regards the Holy Ghost—i.e.*, with intent to deceive Him, ψεύδεσθαι, with the accusative of the person deceived, as in Deut. xxxiii. 29; Isa. lvii. 11 (LXX.). Though the purpose was rather that of Satan who had filled Ananias's heart, than of Ananias himself, yet Ananias's freedom of will and power of resistance to the tempter is recognised in the question "Why?"

Ver. 4. **Was it**—*i.e.*, the possession—**not thine own?** should be, *remaining* (unsold) *did it not remain to thee* (as thy possession)? The language shows that the practice of selling private property and casting the proceeds into a common fund was not obligatory on the first Christians as a term of communion. **Why?**—τί ὅτι = τί ἐστιν ὅτι = *quid est quod* = cur? **Hast thou conceived.**—Lit. *placed in thy heart;* compare Dan. i. 8; Mal. ii. 2. "Satan suggested the lie, which Ananias ought to have repelled; instead of that *he put it in his heart*" (Alford). **Not unto men, but unto God.**—(Compare 1 Thess. iv. 8.) A weighty testimony to the divinity, as well as personality of the Holy Spirit (compare Matt. xxviii. 19).

Ver. 5. **Gave up the ghost.**—*Expired*, breathed out his life; used again only of Herod Agrippa (xii. 23). The phrase occurs frequently in the LXX. **Great fear came on all them that heard these things.**—Not merely upon all present (De Wette), but upon all to whom the report came.

Ver. 6. **The young**, or *younger* **men**, were the more youthful members of the assembly (Neander, De Wette, Alford, Hackett, Zöckler, and others) in distinction from the older. There is no need to suppose them a special class of assistants (Kuinoel, Meyer), or that presbyters had already been appointed (Olshausen), although on the ground of this natural distribution of work between the young and old in the common life of the Church, the later official distinction may have arisen (Holtzmann). **Wound him up.**—συνέστειλαν. *I.e.*, taking συστέλλω to be = περιστέλλω (Ezek. xxix. 5, LXX.; Jos., *Ant.*, XVII. iii. 3), *wrapping the body up—e.g.*, in their own mantles (Alford, De Wette); or, perhaps better, adhering to the literal sense of the word, to place together, *laying the body out*, composing its limbs (Zöckler, Holtzmann), and so making ready for burial. "The speedy burial of the dead practised among the later Jews was unknown in earlier times. See Gen. xxiii. It was grounded on Numb. xix. 11 *ff.* The practice was to bury before sunset of the same day" (Alford).

Ver. 7. **Three hours after** allowed sufficient time for interment.

Ver. 8. **So much.**—Perhaps pointing to the gold still lying where it had been laid by Ananias.

Ver. 9. **To tempt the Spirit of the Lord.**—Compare 1 Cor. x. 9. **Behold** draws attention to the sound of approaching footsteps (Olshausen, Hackett, Holtzmann) although the whole clause may be only a lively or poetic manner of speech (Alford, Zöckler).

Ver. 10. **Fell down straightway.**—That the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira were designed

by the writer as supernatural occurrences cannot be doubted; and that they were so is shown by the impossibility of accounting for them by natural means, such as horror at detection and fear superinduced by Peter's words. The idea that the story of Ananias and Sapphira, though having a basis in fact, is only a legend, corresponding to the Old Testament narratives of Achan (Josh. vii.) and Nadab and Abihu (Lev. x. 1-8), and framed for the purpose of supporting the notion that he who is excommunicated must perish bodily (Weizsäcker) may be dismissed as without plausibility.

Ver. 11. **The Church,** ἐκκλησία. Here used for the first time in the Acts to signify the body of believers who had been called out of the world.

Vers. 12, 13. **Among the people.**—*I.e.*, the population of Jerusalem. **All.**—Either all the apostles, **the rest** being believers and unbelievers (Alford, Olshausen, Hackett), or more likely all the believers, the rest being **the people**, or those not believing (Bengel, De Wette, Meyer, Holtzmann, Zöckler, Spence, and others).

Ver. 15. **Into the streets.**—So the best MSS. (ℵ, A,B, D²). Codex D reads κατὰ, along or down, as if whole streets were occupied with sick people. That **couches** were cheap articles (Kuinoel) used by the common people, whereas the rich employed beds, is an unfounded distinction. **The shadow of Peter,** etc., should read, *that, Peter coming along, at least his shadow*, etc. Compare the miracles wrought by Paul's handkerchiefs (xix. 12). It is not expressly said that Peter's shadow worked cures, but this is thought by some (Zeller, Holtzmann, Besser) to be implied by the narrator in the statement of.

Ver. 16. **And they were healed every one.**—Yet the clause does not say they were healed by Peter's shadow. "If however this really took place with respect to some of them, it was, done *through faith*" (Stier). (See further in "Hints.")

Ver. 17. **The high priest.**—Annas, as in iv. 6. **Indignation.**—Not envy or jealousy (R.V.), but hot, angry zeal.

Ver. 19. Not **the** but **an Angel of the Lord**; *i.e.* sent by the Lord, or the Exalted Christ.

Ver. 20. **All the words of this life.**—*I.e.*, of this resurrection life which the Sadducees denied, or of this eternal life which the apostles preached, or of this blessed life which the angel himself enjoyed, or all of these together.

Ver. 21. **All the senate,** or *eldership*. Whether a special meeting of the presbyters (a wider conception than the Sanhedrim) was summoned to assist the Sanhedrim (Meyer, Wendt, Holtzmann), or only the Sanhedrim, called in the Old Testament Apocrypha, the senate (Schürer, ii. 149) was convened (Zöckler, Hackett), cannot be determined.

Ver. 24. **They doubted of them.**—Better, *were much perplexed concerning them—i.e.*, the apostles (Alford), or the words reported about the apostles (Hackett). **Whereunto this would grow.**—*What this would become*, this incident of their escape from prison and this movement of which they were the leaders.

Ver. 26. **Lest they should be stoned** depends upon "not with violence" (Alford, Hackett), rather than upon "they feared" (Holtzmann).

Ver. 28. **This man's blood upon us** recalls Matt. xxvii. 25.

Ver. 29. **We ought to obey** (πειθαρχεῖν, to *obey* or acknowledge as ruler, stronger than ἀκούειν, iv. 19) **God rather than man.**—Compare Socrates to his judges, πείσομαι δὲ μᾶλλον τῷ Θεῷ ἢ ὑμῖν (Plato, *Apologia*, xvii. D).

Ver. 31. **With,** or *by*, rather than "to." See ii. 33. Not *to be*, but (as) **a prince** (as in iii. 15)—*i.e.*, as theocratic Lord and King of His people, **and a Saviour**—*i.e.*, as the originator of the Messianic salvation (Holtzmann).

Ver. 33. **Cut to the heart.**—Lit. *sawn asunder*, torn in pieces, *sc.* in their hearts. Compare vii. 54—a much stronger expression than that used in iv. 2 or xvi. 18, and closely resembling that employed in ii. 37.

Ver. 34. **A Pharisee.**—A member of one of the principal religious sects in Jerusalem, the others being Sadducees and Essenes. See further on xv. 5. **Gamaliel** = "Benefit of God" (see Numb. i. 10, ii. 20). Probably Gamaliel the elder, one of the seven to whom the Jews gave the title Rabbi. In the Talmud he appears as a zealous Pharisee and distinguished teacher of the law.

Ver. 35. **Take heed to yourselves.**—Either *with respect to these men*, what ye intend to do (Hackett), or *what ye intend to do with respect to these men* (Holtzmann).

Vers. 36, 37. **Theudas** and **Judas.**—Concerning the supposed chronological difficulty connected with these names see "Homiletical Analysis."

Ver. 39. In **ye cannot overthrow it** read for "it" *them*. **Lest haply,** etc., may be connected either with "let them alone," or with a supplied thought such as "and ye ought not to attempt to overthrow them," or "take heed to yourselves."

Ver. 40. **And when they had called the apostles,** *sc. unto them*, so as to preserve the force of the preposition πρός—the apostles having been removed a little space apart from the council during the progress of the deliberations (ver. 34).

Ver. 41. **Worthy to suffer shame.**—Or, worthy to be disgraced; a bold oxymoron. **For His**

name should be *for the name—i.e.*, of Jesus, which is here omitted, either because it had just been mentioned (ver. 40), or because "the name" had already come to be a term in familiar use among the disciples. (Compare ix. 16.)

Ver. 42. **In every house.**—Better, *at home*, or *from house to house*, as in ii. 46.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 1—11.

The Story of Ananias and Sapphira; or, Hypocrisy unveiled.

I. **The character and standing of Ananias and Sapphira.**—1. *Husband and wife.* They stood towards one another in the holiest of natural relations. "Marriage is honourable in all" (Heb. xiii. 4). Happy they in whom the sacred bond of wedlock is cemented by love and religion (Eph. v. 25). Had Ananias and Sapphira been like their names, "finer names than Barnabas" (Stier)—he a vessel of the grace of God, and she clear and transparent like the sapphire (see "Critical Remarks")—all had been well. But, alas! "their souls were not like their names" (Stier), and in them the marriage union, having been perverted to unholy ends, what was meant for a blessing turned out to be a curse. Instead of being helpers of each other's faith and joy (2 Cor. i. 24), and provoking one another to love and good works (Heb. x. 24), they became mutual tempters and confederates in sin. Adam and Eve, if they were the first married couple who conjointly went astray (Gen. iii), have, unhappily, not been the last: witness Abraham and Sarah (Gen. xii., xvi.); Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kings xvi. 29-33); Herod and Herodias (Matt. xiv. 3). 2. *Of good social standing.* This was obvious from the circumstance that they possessed a bit of land. Ownership of the soil—whether right or wrong—has always been esteemed a mark of superior position (see Job xxii. 8, 9). The landless have ever been accounted mean, and not unfrequently treated as slaves and chattels. Nor have such ideas been confined to men of the world, but they have been suffered to penetrate even within the precincts of the Christian Church. 2. *Of fair Christian profession.* "Without doubt," says Besser, "the Holy Spirit had had His work upon them both. They were both believers, and embraced in the precious word spoken of the multitude of the faithful (iv. 32). Probably they had made themselves prominent above others through their beautiful gifts (of grace), had prayed with power, and been able boldly to despise the threatenings of the enemy." Whether this was so or not, unquestionably they belonged to the number of disciples. Having publicly professed their faith in Christ, they had been baptised and received into the Christian community. Whether their so-called conversion dated from the day of Pentecost, or the healing of the lame man, cannot be ascertained. But manifestly they were persons of repute in the congregation. "They had a name to live" (Rev. iii. 1), whether it was deserved or not.

II. **The project and sin of Ananias and Sapphira.**—1. *Their project.* (1) Its substance was good—to sell their property, retain part of the purchase money, bring the remainder into the Church, and lay it down at the apostles' feet exactly as Joses had done. If they had a wish to emulate the man of Cyprus, there would still have been nothing reprehensible in what they proposed to do had they only let the truth be understood that they were contributing not the whole but only a part of their estate. (2) Its motive was bad—to obtain credit for doing a handsome, generous, self-sacrificing deed of kindness without inflicting on themselves a total loss, to secure for themselves praise to which they were not entitled—viz., for giving all, whereas they were only giving part of their patrimony. In other words, vanity and greed lay at the root of their procedure. (3) Its execution was clever—the scheme was carried out promptly, soon after it had been conceived, so that no space was left for hesitation which might lead to an alteration in their plans; faithfully, in exact accordance with the prearranged

programme, so that little chance was left for miscarrying; conjointly, with the full concurrence of both partners, so that neither could cast the blame of failure upon the other; and publicly, with the knowledge and approbation of the Church, so that all might appear open and above board. 2. *Their sin.* (1) In what it consisted. Not in selling the land or in contributing only a portion of the price to the common fund. They need not have sold the land unless they pleased. Nor were they obliged to surrender the whole or any portion of the realised price, if they chose to do otherwise. "There was no law imposing payment and specifying amount" (Binney). All was voluntary. Their transgression lay in pretending to contribute the whole when they were only devoting a part. Deception and hypocrisy were the faults with which they were chargeable. (2) By whom it was instigated. The nearer motives have been explained. The power behind these was the Devil. Satan had filled their hearts with the desire of gaining reputation as generous and self-sacrificing givers without parting with too much of their property. To the promptings of the arch deceiver they had yielded. Having opened the gateways of their souls at his suggestion, they had soon sunk beneath his sway. (3) Against whom it was directed. It was a sin against their own souls, against the apostles, against the Church, and even against Christ; but it was chiefly a sin against God and the Holy Ghost. This, according to Peter, formed its main aggravation. Yet it must not be confounded with what is specifically called the sin against the Holy Ghost (Matt. xii. 32).

III. **The detection and punishment of Ananias and Sapphira.**—1. *The detection.*—This was (1) unexpected. By Ananias and Sapphira themselves, who, no doubt, never dreamt that any one, and least of all Peter, would get to know of their little plot; but hardly less by the congregation who, it may be imagined, never anticipated that any of their number would be guilty of such a miserable crime. The unexpected, however, is that which mostly happens; nor can evil doers count on a moment of security. (2) Instantaneous. No preliminary suspicions, or strange surmises, or precognoscing of witnesses, or leading of evidence, was required. At once and on the spot, with the suddenness of a flash of lightning, the secret offence was laid bare. Ananias and Sapphira were hypocrites, and had lied unto the Holy Ghost. (3) Complete. The whole story was divulged,—the selling of the land, the keeping back part of the price, the concert between the two. Nothing remained concealed from the searching gaze of Peter, whose eyes had been inwardly illumined by the Holy Ghost. (4) Public. The sin had been conceived in secret, but its exposure occurred in public, according to the saying of our Lord: "There is nothing hid which shall not be manifested," etc. (Mark iv. 22). 2. *The punishment.* (1) Sudden. Swift upon the heels of detection followed the infliction of retribution, as it did with our first parents (Gen. iii. 8), with Cain (Gen. iv. 9-12), with Judas, i. 18), with Herod (xii. 23), and as it often does in Providence still. (2) Severe. "Ananias, hearing Peter's words, fell down and gave up the ghost" and three hours after, "Sapphira," entering the congregation, and learning what had happened to her husband, also "fell down immediately at Peter's feet." One after the other their bodies were composed for interment, wrapped up in linen, or perhaps in the young men's mantles, carried forth, and buried. Whether their souls perished with the dissolution of their bodies cannot be told. Charity would incline one to the belief of Augustine that this terrible doom was inflicted on their bodies that their spirits might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. v. 5). (3) Supernatural. The suggestion that Ananias and Sapphira died through shame and the detection of their crime, and fear of the consequences that might ensue to them on its getting known to the community, will not explain the double death in manner and circumstances so exactly alike. Besides, Peter's language (ver. 9) shows that both of the deaths were miraculous. To dismiss the whole story as a legendary

working up of some simple occurrence connected with Ananias and Sapphira is inadmissible. (4) Solemnising. It profoundly impressed the whole Church and the outside public, so far as it became known. And no wonder. "When God's judgments are abroad the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Isa. xxvi. 9). (5) Sanctioned. By right and justice. Though severe, it was not more severe than the sin deserved (Rom. vi. 23), or the circumstances of the case demanded. It was needful to check hypocrisy on the threshold of the Church; and if the rigour of Divine vengeance has since then been relaxed, that is not because the sin of hypocrisy has become less hateful in God's sight (Job xiii. 13, 16; Luke xi. 44), but because "mercy" has began to "rejoice against judgment" (James ii. 13).

Learn.—1. That two actions may be similar in men's eyes, and yet intrinsically different in God's. Example: the actions of Barnabas and Ananias. 2. That God will accept no gift for either His Church or His poor of that which hypocrisy and greed leave over. God's proper portion is the firstfruits. 3. That God still sits over against the treasury of the Church and jealously guards His honour from all reproach that may be cast upon it by His people's gifts. 4. That no plot can be too secret to escape the all-seeing eye of God. 5. That, though hand join in hand, yet will not the sinner go unpunished. 6. That "not a great and mixed multitude, but the holiness of His people, is pleasing to the Lord of His Church" (Lechler). 7. That Christ's people should guard themselves carefully against temptations to sin.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 1. *Ananias and Sapphira; or, the Fearful Perversion of the Marriage State.*—This occurs when marriage is—

I. **A fellowship of goods** and a business transaction, instead of a union of hearts in the Lord.

II. **A union to the service of the flesh**, the world, and the devil, instead of a pious resolution, "As for me and my house."

III. **A walking together to hell**, instead of being helpers together of one another's joy, and pilgrims towards heaven. Contrast Ananias and Sapphira with Zacharias and Elizabeth.—*Gerok.*

Ver. 1, with iv. 3-6. *Barnabas and Ananias.*

I. **Compare.**—In being—1. Men; 2. Professors of Christianity; 3. Givers.

II. **Contrast.** — In their—1. *Characters.* Barnabas, a good man and sincere Christian; Ananias, an insincere disciple and flagrant deceiver. 2. *Gifts.* That of Barnabas proceeding from Christian love and sympathy, and being complete as well as honest; that of Ananias being inspired by envy and selfishness as well as impaired in its extent, and deceitful in its mode of presentation. 3. *Rewards.* Barnabas being set upon a pedestal of immortal renown; Ananias being fixed on a pillory of undying shame. Barnabas being promoted to a position of usefulness in the Church; Ananias being punished with instantaneous destruction, and so held up as a warning to future ages.

III. **Suggest.**—1. That all who profess faith in Jesus Christ are not sincere disciples. 2. That all gifts to Christ's treasury are not equally acceptable to Christ. 3. That different destinies await the true and the false professor of religion.

Ver. 3. *Man's Partnership with Satan in his Sins.*

I. **In connection with lies.**—He is a liar, and the forger of lies; the hater of truth and uprightness.

II. **In connection with errors.**

III. **In connection with forms.**

IV. **In connection with unbelief.**

V. **In connection with his own**

original falsehood in Paradise.—*H. Bonar, D.D.*

Ver. 3-10. *Satan and the Holy Ghost.*

I. **Satan.**—1. *The existence and personality of Satan.* Peter did not speak in allegory when he said, "Why hath Satan filled thy heart?" 2. *The reality of Satanic influence on the human heart.* The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was traced back to the direct agency of the devil. 3. *Satanic influence, though undeniable, does not destroy the responsibility of man.* Satan can fill no man's heart against his will.

II. **The Holy Ghost.**—1. *The divinity and personality of the Holy Ghost.* The former implied in the fact that the Holy Ghost could be lied against and tempted; the latter in the title God ascribed to Him (ver. 4). 2. *The access the Holy Spirit has to the human heart.* Proved by the inward illumination of Peter as to the conduct of the guilty pair. 3. *The perpetual inhabitation of the Church by the Holy Ghost.* Ananias and Sapphira imagined they had only their fellow-Christians to hoodwink. Peter explained the aggravation of their sin to lie in this, that it had been committed against the Holy Ghost.

Vers. 5-10 *Sudden Deaths.*

I. **Possible occurrences.**—And may be either natural events or supernatural judgments.

II. **Impressive spectacles.**—Calculated to arrest the careless and render the wicked thoughtful.

III. **Solemn lessons.**—Teaching all (1) the nearness of the end, and (2) the wisdom of being ready.

Vers. 5-11. *Church Discipline.*

I. **Its necessity.**—Shown then by the case of Ananias and Sapphira; shown now by the admitted presence in the Church of those who "walk disorderly."

II. **Its authority.**—The example of Peter, supported by the teaching of Christ (Matt. xviii. 15-18), Paul (1 Cor. v. 2-7; 2 Cor. ii. 6; 2 Thess. iii. 6; Tit. iii. 10), and John (2 John 10).

III. **Its effect.**—When faithfully and lovingly administered mostly good; if not to the offending party salutary, to the Church and the world mostly impressive and instructive.

Vers. 1-11. *The Sevenfold Union of Ananias and Sapphira.*

I. **United in marriage.**—Husband and wife.

II. **United in profession.** — Both members of the Church.

III. **United in liberality.** — Both agreed to give a contribution to the Church fund.

IV. **United in sin.**—Their plot was devised and acted on in concert with each other.

V. **United in detection.**—Both were found out at the same time and by the same apostle.

VI. **United in punishment.**—Both were visited with death.

VII. **United in infamy.**—Both serve as a memorial and warning to future ages.

The Love of Money, as exemplified in Ananias and Sapphira.

I. **It impaired their Christian characters.**—Assuming them to have been genuine disciples, it certainly prevented them from rising to any height in the religious life, if it did not utterly extinguish grace within their hearts. Alongside of the love of Mammon the love of God cannot thrive (Matt. vi. 24).

II. **It maintained its hold upon them, notwithstanding their privileges.**—They had probably witnessed the wonders of Pentecost, beheld the healing of the lame man, listened to Peter's sermons, enjoyed the fellowship of the disciples, perhaps themselves led the prayers of the congregation; and yet this deeply seated vice, the passion for money, kept its ground.

III. **It impelled them to a course of heinous sin.**—To avarice, to deception, to hypocrisy, to vainglory, to lies, to pretence and ostentation—a pitiable crop of evil to come to harvest in Christian souls. "The love of money is the root of every kind of evil" (1 Tim. vi. 10).

IV. **It involved them in an awful doom.** — Detection, exposure, death, infamy. "They that will be rich," etc. (1 Tim. vi. 9). For other examples of the love of money see Simon Magus (viii. 18-23), the Sorcerers (xvi. 19), Demetrius (xix. 24-27), Felix xxiv. 26).

The sin of Ananias and Sapphira.

I. **The character of the sin.**—It was not simple falsehood. The common practice of holding it up before children, as an illustration of the guilt and danger of lying, has no warrant to justify it. Their sin was the attempt to deceive and defraud *God*. Many a man since has ventured upon the same experiment. In every community there are some who are so convinced of the worth of religion that they desire to share in its blessings. They outwardly embrace the Christian faith; they unite with the Church; they are measurably careful in the discharge of routine duties. Neither their conduct nor their neglect is such as to subject them to discipline; and yet, while conceding so much, they are far from having made a complete surrender of themselves to God. Their religious life is a perpetual attempt at compromise. The bulk of their time and energy is devoted to self and the world; the dust and sweepings are offered to God. Ananias in broadcloth and Sapphira in silk sit in the churches every Sabbath. They call themselves disciples, and pride themselves on their consistency; but both the name they assume and the boast they make is a lie to the Holy Ghost. They keep back a part, and the greater part, of the price of discipleship.

II. **The origin of the sin.**—In general phrase, we may say that it was due to an evil heart, but its specific root was the love of money. In our day, when men are called to choose between piety and property, there are many who hesitate, prevaricate, and end with a compromise. Multitudes of avowed believers withhold as much as possible of their wealth from God. They are prodigal in their prayers and hymns and exhortations, but close-handed with their money. Like the tree in the ancient legend, which uttered a moan and bled whenever a twig was broken off, those who call themselves Christian men writhe and suffer when forced to anything like a liberal surrender of their worldly substance for the glory of God and the salvation of men. The old poison of avarice is still in the veins of the Church.

III. **The discovery of the sin.**—It seemed unlikely that the transaction would be made public. Ananias and Sapphira would not circulate the story of what they had done. There was apparently no way in which the affair could become known. So, doubtless, these deceivers reasoned. But there was an uncalculated factor in the equation. There was a spiritual side to the matter which was unreckoned. It affected the kingdom of God as well as the real estate market. It is a truth which men are slow to learn, that there is a Divine detective system in the universe, by whose workings "all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." It is easy to deceive the world. Men may consider us generous, when in reality we are pinched and small in our charities. To God, this world is one vast whispering-gallery, and every sin which men commit reports itself to Him; and "there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, and hid that shall not be known." Men cannot measure our consecration to God.

IV. **The punishment of the sin.**—It was startling and severe. One moment Ananias and Sapphira stood before the apostle in the flush of life and health, with the lie upon their lips; the next they were in eternity, beginning the experience of its unchanging awards. The penalty might be judged extreme for a single sin; but, at the outset of the Christian Church, it was important to emphasise the fact that the liberty of the Gospel was not license. More than that, the sin itself was significant. As the single

blossom is evidence whether the stock from which it comes is noxious weed or fragrant flower, so this action was proof of a heart alienated from God in its deepest life and purposes. Such feeling and intention was a hindrance to the kingdom of righteousness. And this punishment was anticipated and representative. The judgment continues to be executed. Men now who attempt to defraud God by their partial consecration, by the much they spend on themselves and the little they devote to Him, are not beaten down as with a lightning-stroke; but, all the same and just as really, they die spiritually. They are dying at the root. The complete loss of spiritual life is only a question of time. Atom by atom their interest in Divine things dissipates; headland after headland of faith sinks into indistinctness in their drift away from them; doctrine and duty lose their hold on their acceptance and conduct; and at last they have a name to live and are dead.—*Monday Club Sermons.*

Ananias and Sapphira.

I. The sin of Ananias and Sapphira.—It is expressly stated to have been "lying unto the Holy Ghost" (v. 3). It will be observed that in vers. 3 and 4 the personality and Deity of the Spirit are asserted in an incidental way. Peter varies the charge of lying to the Spirit in the third verse to lying to God in the fourth. 1. *Their act was gratuitous.*—In the community of goods which prevailed in the infant Church the rights of property were not obliterated; there was no compulsory communism. 2. *It was marked by covetousness.* There is a strange mingling of discordant elements in their act. They loved the praise of men, and were unwilling to be held in less consideration than Barnabas. But they loved money quite as well, even better. Zeal and faith of some sort led them to profess the name of Christ, but beneath their profession lurked a hateful lust for influence and greed of money. 3. *Unbelief* also entered into and aggravated their guilt. This had a twofold aspect. Obviously, they distrusted God. We can imagine that the failure of the sustentation-fund was the subject of anxious debate between them. "Suppose this community of goods should become exhausted, what then? Is it not our duty to retain some security against the contingencies of the future?" They feared to endanger their comforts beyond recall; a portion of their property would be safest in their own hands. Moreover, there appears to have been a worse feature than distrust of God in their act. There was the feeling, latent, unconfessed mayhap, that they would not and could not be detected in their deed. 4. *The sin was preconcerted.* They "agreed together" to deceive the Church and the Spirit in the Church. The plan was concocted deliberately and dispassionately. No doubt they spent much time and thought in working out a device which should save appearances with the Church and gratify their avarice. Together they contrived the pious fraud, and they executed it together. This fact intensifies the criminality of their conduct. 5. *The devil's agency in the sin.* "Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie unto the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?" Covetousness and unbelief prompted the deceit, we might be disposed to say. But the apostle saw deeper. He saw that the devil had been joined by this guilty couple. Whether consciously or unconsciously, this wretched pair was assisted by the devil in the attempt to impose upon the Spirit of God. The device which they adopted exposed them to his assaults. Had they been honest with themselves, with the Church, and, above all, with God, they had been kept from the snare of the fowler. Instead, they helped him weave and spread the net in which themselves were taken. Poor victims!

II. **Their Punishment**—*it was instantaneous.* As their sin challenged both the omniscience and justice of

God, He at once vindicated the holiness and majesty of His character. Instantly His wrath streamed forth and consumed the guilty couple.

III. **The lessons taught** by this solemn incident are many—a few of which only may be designated. 1. And mark well the Divine abhorrence of prevarication. 2. The certainty of the exposure of hypocrisy. God will unmask the hypocrite. 3. Religious enthusiasm without grace is dangerous. People run fearful risks when they profess more than their spiritual strength can carry.—*W. G. Moorehead, D.D.*

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 12—16.

A Page from the Church's Life; or, the Calm before a Storm.

I. **The miraculous activity of the apostles.**—I. *Its scene.* (1) Solomon's porch, in the Temple (see on iii. 11). In spite of the Sanhedrim's prohibitory menaces the apostles had returned to their accustomed post, thus carrying out their own intimation (iv. 19, 20), and exhibiting praiseworthy faith and fortitude. (2) The streets. Wherever the apostles were expected to come the sick were by friends carried out in couches and laid in the way, that at least Peter's shadow might fall upon them. 2. *Its form.* (1) Generally, signs and wonders (see ii. 22). (2) Particularly, works of healing, wonders of mercy as distinguished from miracles of judgment like those performed on Ananias and Sapphira. This special activity in healing shown by the apostles was a manifest answer to the Church's prayer (iv. 30). 3. *Its subjects.* The people—the outside public as opposed to the inside brethren. The miracle of judgment took place within the Church; the deeds of mercy were performed among the unbelievers. 4. *Its result.* It impressed the people towards the new cause, and gained accessions from their ranks to the Church community.

II. **The rapid growth of the Church.**—1. *Multitudes were added to the Lord.* This was not what the Sanhedrists expected. Doubtless Annas and his colleagues supposed the apostles, with their followers, would be overawed by the display or authority which had been made. Little knew they that the apostles had on their sides, at their backs, and within their souls a higher authority and stronger power than that of the Sanhedrim (Rom. viii. 31). Nor were the Church's accessions flowing in in smaller, but larger numbers than before; and these composed not of women merely, who might be regarded as sentimental and impulsive, but of men also, who were less easily moved by feeling than by judgment. "Men *and women* to make amends for Ananias and Sapphira," writes Stier, who likewise adds, "it must, of course, be understood that when married couples were among these believers, their children were included in the bond of union and were looked upon as hallowed." 2. *Through the preaching of the word.* It cannot be inferred that the apostles only worked miracles, and did not teach. Nor is it reasonable to hold that what attracted the multitudes was the exhibition of supernatural power rather than the unfolding of Christian wisdom. It is not the sign that converts, but the thing signified. The Holy Ghost applies not miracles but truth to the heart and conscience (see John xvi. 13, 14). 3. *In spite of the judgment pronounced on Ananias and Sapphira.* At first this appeared to exercise a deterrent influence upon the crowds. Ultimately the word of God prevailed, and drew them over to the apostles and to the Lord in large companies.

Learn.—1. That no opposition will hinder a true minister from his sacred calling. 2. That nothing should be allowed to break the unity of a Christian congregation. 3. That faithful ministers and united Churches will always command the respect of outside beholders. 4. That so long as a Church is alive with the life of the Holy Spirit it will grow. 5. That it is a mistake to fancy Christian discipline will frighten people from joining a Church.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 12-14. *The Palmy Days of the Primitive Church.*—Then the Christian disciples were—

I. **United among themselves,** which they have never been since.

II. **Magnified by the people.**—Whereas, alas! now they are too often despised.

III. **Increased from without.**—Instead of which there has often been a falling away from within.

Ver. 14. *Four Causes of Joy in a Christian Church.*

I. **When the preaching of the gospel results in making believers.**—That shows the truth is being preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

II. **When those who believe do not stand aloof in isolation from their Christian brethren,** but connect themselves with the fellowship of the saints. This is what is meant by being added to the Lord.

III. **When the number of the Church's converts is large.**—No doubt one soul is infinitely valuable; but special gladness attends the ingathering of multitudes.

IV. **When the Church's converts include persons of both sexes.**—Within the Church there is a place for both men and women. Each has services to render which the other cannot perform. A cause of regret it is when either of them stand aloof in hostility or indifference towards Christianity.

Ver. 15. *Peter's Shadow.*

I. **It is not affirmed** in the narrative **that Peter's shadow wrought miracles,** though Paul's handkerchiefs and aprons did (xix. 12).—That Peter's shadow could effect cures may have been only a notion of the people, not of Peter or of Luke.

II. If Peter's shadow wrought miracles, **it was only instrumentally,** as was the case with the hem of Christ's garment (Matt. xx. 21) and the handkerchiefs and aprons of Paul.—Any instrument will do to work a miracle with when it is used by Him who can work equally well with or without an instrument.

III. If Peter's shadow wrought miracles, **the credit was due neither to the shadow nor to Peter,** but to God, "who alone doeth great wonders" (Psalm cxxxvi. 4), and to Christ, from whom the healing virtue proceeded.

IV. If Peter's shadow wrought miracles, **how much more could Peter's Master,** the Risen Christ, do the same!

Note on Peter's Shadow.—"We need find no stumbling-block in the fact of Peter's *shadow* having been believed to be (or, as is surely implied, having been) the medium of working miracles. Cannot the 'Creator Spirit' work with any instruments or with none, as pleases Him? And what is a hand or a voice more than a shadow, except that the analogy of the ordinary instrument is a greater help to faith in the recipient? Where faith, as apparently here, did not need this help, the less likely medium was adopted" (Alford). "Those who take offence at the healing virtue of Peter's shadow and of Paul's sweatband (xix. 12) understand not the humane and condescending gentleness of God, who deals with all who seek His help according to each one's understanding. The shadow, indeed, wrought not the healing, and had any one trusted in the overshadowing of a mere man he would assuredly have been punished by the spirit-trying apostle; but the healing was wrought by the power of God, which the sick sought in Peter, who looked upon them as he did upon the lame man (iii. 4), and gave them what he had, according to their faith" (Besser).

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 17-32.

Annas upon the Move; or, the Bursting of the Storm.

I. **The high priest and the angel of the Lord.**—The high priest's action against the apostles was: 1. *Dictated by evil motives.* (1) Indignation. If not grieved at the miraculous activity of the apostles in healing (which they probably were) he and his associates felt annoyed at the persistence of the apostles in teaching doctrines which they, the high priest and his colleagues, did not believe. Most men are intolerant of beliefs to which they cannot themselves subscribe. No matter how excellent in character and beneficent in action other people may be, unless these swear by their superiors' Shibboleths, they are disliked, if not oppressed, for their non-conformity. The Christian Church, to the amazement of the world, has often followed in the steps of the Jewish Sanhedrim! (2) Jealousy. The high priest and his associates were offended at the growing influence of the apostles and the cause they represented. Few things are harder to bear with equanimity than the popularity of rivals and much more of opponents. The increase of the apostles in public esteem meant the decline of the Sanhedrists in national favour. 2. *Concurred in by his associates.* "Those that were with him" were not his colleagues in the Sanhedrim afterwards mentioned as the council (ver. 21), but his co-religionists, belonging to the sect of the Sadducees. Evil-doers never want allies. The difficulty has ever been to find fellow-helpers in good. 3. *Observed by an unseen eye.* The Lord noticed the angry feelings of the high priest, his rising indignation and jealousy, the secret confabulations between him and his associates, the order issued for the arrest of the apostles, the execution of that order by the officers of the Sanhedrim, and the consignment of the servants of Jesus to the public ward. "All things are naked and manifest unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Heb. iv. 13; compare i. 24; Rev. ii. 18, 23). 4. *Counterworked by an invisible agent.* "An angel of the Lord," celestial intelligences being all subject to the exalted Christ (1 Peter iii. 22; Rev. xxii. 16), visited the prison by night at his King's command (Heb. i. 14), opened its doors, as he or another (xii. 7) afterwards did to Peter, and having fetched them out commanded them to resume teaching in the temple. When Christ and His battalions take the field against confederacies of evil, whether human or angelic, these are sure to be overthrown and their projects scattered to the winds (Psalm ii. 4, 5).

II. **The high priest and the senate of Israel.**—Having effected the arrest of the apostles, the high priest and his confederates convened a meeting of the Sanhedrim or High Ecclesiastical Council. 1. *When?* At daybreak, about 6 a.m., before which hour a meeting of the court could not be held,—about the time when the apostles had resumed their public exhortations in the temple.

2. *Why?* To try the prisoners who on the preceding night had been committed to the cells, and were now to be fetched from confinement and placed at the bar. 3. *In what spirit?* With a firm determination to put down the nuisance of teaching in the temple porch about Jesus and the resurrection. Thousands of civic and ecclesiastical rulers since then have attempted to do the like, and with as little success. Upon the whole the world's potentates (and sometimes also the Church's rulers) do not relish preaching that talks about Jesus and the resurrection.

III. **The high priest and his apparitors.**—1. *The bootless errand.* Commissioned to fetch the apostles, the officers of the Sanhedrim repaired to the prison house and found it shut, with the warders at their posts. Having opened its massive gates and penetrated to the interior, to their astonishment they discovered no man within. However they had escaped the prisoners were gone. 2. *The perplexed judges.* When the officers returned with their tale, the high priest, the

captain of the temple, and the chief priests were filled with terror. "Thus conscience doth make cowards of us all." They could not tell what to make of it. What the upshot of this incident might be they could not predict. Not for an instant dreamt they of treachery on the part of the gaolers; they discerned that it was a miracle by which they were confronted, and they feared. 3. *The startling announcement.* Whilst pondering the situation, they became further dismayed by the exciting news, reported by a messenger, that the men wanted had resumed their old work of preaching in the temple. This must have strongly confirmed the Sanhedrists' suspicion that the escape from prison had been effected by supernatural means. Prisoners who had attained liberty by treachery would hardly have returned to their accustomed haunts. The fact that the apostles were again preaching in the temple indicated they had some superior authority at their backs. 4. *The second apprehension.* The captain of the temple and the officers of the Sanhedrim, having renewed endeavours to arrest the preachers, used no violence on this occasion because of secret alarms for their own safety, the people being on the side of the apostles. Nor was violence required, since the apostles offered no resistance—in this following both the teaching (Matt. v. 39) and example (John xviii. 8) of their Master.

IV. **The high priest and the apostles.**—1 *The accusation.* Set before the council, the apostles were charged by the president, in the name of his colleagues, with three crimes: (1) With having disobeyed the instructions given by the court at a previous sederunt. A grave offence had the court's orders been just, and dangerous considering the men who composed (iv. 5, 6) the court, and the temper in which these then were (ver. 17). (2) With having filled Jerusalem with their teaching, an indirect admission of, and unwilling testimony to, the growing popularity of the new religion, as well as of the unwearied assiduity of its teachers in promulgating their tenets. (3) With seeking to fix on them, the Sanhedrists, the guilt of their Master's murder. This was putting into words what the councillors' own hearts kept whispering. Conscience is ill to silence even in the worst and most ignorant of men; how much more in men who are good (after a fashion) and enlightened? 2. *The defence.* Offered by Peter and the apostles, or by him on their behalf and with their concurrence. (1) A great principle restated. That it was their (the apostles' and every one's) duty to obey God rather than man. Of this principle they had reminded the court on a former occasion (iv. 19), and now satisfy themselves with its repetition. About the second and third charges, which, being true, needed no defence, they are silent, confining their remarks to the one which, though also true, required justification. And the justification they offered was short, simple, sufficient, and unanswerable. (2) A great story rehearsed, in four parts. *First*, that they had slain Jesus by hanging Him on a tree—they, the Jewish nation in general, and the Sanhedrists in particular. Peter and his fellow-apostles had manifestly lost nothing of their boldness and plain-speaking since last they stood before their accusers. *Second*, that the God of their fathers had raised up Jesus from the dead (once more the obnoxious doctrine !), and exalted Him to the right hand of the Majesty on high (a claim for divine dignity to the man they had slain !). *Third*, that Christ had been exalted as Prince and Saviour, from which it could be gathered that they had totally misconceived His character and mistaken His person. *Fourth*, that the grand object contemplated by His exaltation was that He might give repentance unto Israel (them and the people) and remission of sins. A strong pressing home of guilt on His accusers. (3) A great claim reasserted. That they, the accused, were witnesses of these facts and doctrines complained of—witnesses appointed and put forth by Him, and for Him, and therefore His witnesses responsible to Him alone. Yea, going beyond this, that the Holy Ghost jointly witnessed with them, since, having been given to them by God and dwelling in

them, He spoke and acted through them in the words they uttered and the miracles they wrought.

Learn.—1. That "the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them" (Psalm xxxiv. 7). 2. That "He who sitteth in the heavens" laughs at His enemies and has them "in derision" (Psalm ii. 4). 3. That the doubts of the chief priests as to whereunto this (Christianity) would grow have been largely answered—the faith planted by the apostles intends to grow till it fills the whole earth (Luke xiii. 21). 4. That nothing can release from responsibility to God (Eccl. xii. 13). 5. That Christ will pardon even His greatest enemies if they repent.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 17. *Misdirected Indignation.*

I. **Against the publication of the truth,** rather than against the dissemination of error.

II. **Against well doing,** instead of against evil doing.

III. **Against good men,** and not against bad.

IV. **Against other people's supposed wickedness,** and not against one's own real sins.

Ver. 19. *Ministering Spirits.*—The angels of God are represented in Scripture, and in this instance appear—

I. **As the friends of the righteous.**—Shown by the service rendered to the apostles.

II. **As watchers in the night.**—Proved by the observation taken of the apostles' incarceration.

III. **As rescuers from trouble.**—Seen in the opening of the prison doors, and liberation of the prisoners.

IV. **As directors in the way of duty.**—Exemplified by the order given to the liberated apostles.

V. **As messengers of the heavenly life to the world.**—Suggested by the commission put into the hands of the apostles.

VI. **As conveyers to the heavenly life and eternal joy.**—Evinced by the interest taken in the gospel of life.—*Compiled from Lange.*

Ver. 20. *The Preacher's Commission.*

I. His **authority.**—The divine commandment—"Go ye!"

II. His **vocation.**—To "speak," not to write, but to proclaim with the voice.

III. His **sphere.**—The temple; or, in New Testament times the Christian Church.

IV. His **theme.**—All the words of this life—the gospel, the whole gospel, and nothing but the gospel.

V. His **audience.**—"The people," to believers and unbelievers; to the former for edification, to the latter for conversion.

Ver. 23. *The World's Veto upon Preaching.*

1. **Unreasonable.**—To expect men to keep silence who have been commanded by Christ to speak, who know what they speak to be true, and who feel themselves impelled to speak by the inner voice of conscience.

II. **Unjust.**—To command men to desist from preaching is to invade the domain of conscience which belongs alone to Christ, and is therefore in the highest degree culpable and reprehensible.

III. **Unkind.**—To impose silence upon men who offer mankind the highest conceivable blessing (repentance and remission of sins) on the easiest possible terms (faith in and obedience to Jesus Christ) is surely the opposite of benevolent.

IV. **Unsuccessful.**—Those who attempt to put down preaching never really succeed. So long as Christ lives and reigns they never will succeed. All interdicts upon the gospel break down. The more men are punished for preaching, the hotter grows their zeal to persist in the forbidden work.

Ver. 29. *Obedience to God and Man.*

I. **It is possible to obey man rather than God**—which is sin. Unfortunately this is often done, when inclination and supposed self-interest side with man's orders rather than with God's.

II. **It is proper to obey God rather than man**—which is duty. Proper in the sense of right, when God's orders and man's come into collision, man being a creature who is himself under authority to God.

III. **It is practicable to obey man as well as God**—which is both desirable and dutiful, when man's orders are not countermanded by God's.

The Power of the Civil Magistrate.

I. Its **source.**—God (Rom. xiii. 1). Civil government a natural institution and divine ordinance.

II. Its **sphere.**—Civil affairs, or men considered solely as citizens. Things temporal and material, social and political.

III. Its **limitations.**—1. Into the domain of conscience, and that signifies into the realm of religion it dare not intrude. 2. Even in its own sphere it is forbidden to enjoin anything which contravenes the law of God. 3. The power of the sword, or the infliction of pains and penalties, is permissible solely within its own specific province.

IV. Its **guide.**—1. The light of the natural conscience. 2. The teachings of revelation so far as these bear on the duties of magistrates and citizens.

Ver. 32. *The Witness of the Holy Ghost.*

I. **The subject of His witness.**—"These things." The facts of Christ's death, resurrection, and exaltation, and the doctrines founded on and connected with them.

II. **The medium of His witness.**—"Those who obey Him," the Holy Ghost, by believing the gospel; whom He thereupon inhabits, and through whom He delivers His testimony.

III. **The object of His witness.**—The unbelieving world who, by beholding the faith of Christians and listening to their testimony, are frequently brought to believe.

The Gift of the Holy Ghost.

I. **The Author of this gift.**—God, the Father, from whom the Holy Ghost proceedeth. No contradiction to ii. 33.

II. **The recipients of this gift.**—Those who obey God, who commands men to repent and believe upon His Son.

III. **The nature of this gift.**—An inhabitation of the repenting and believing heart by the gracious influences of the Divine Spirit.

IV. **The object of this gift.**—To enable those who receive it to witness for Jesus Christ.

Vers. 17-32. *The Fortunes of the Twelve.*

I. **Incarcerated by the Sanhedrim.**—A signal honour to suffer affliction for Christ's sake.

II. **Delivered by an angel.**—"Are they not all ministering spirits?" etc.

III. **Honoured by the people.**—These at this time heard the apostles gladly. Popular favour not always a good sign. Here, however, it was.

IV. **Supported by the Holy Spirit.**—A proof that they were obeying His directions.

Vers. 17-32. *The Sanhedrim and the College of the Apostles.*

In considering the lessons to be drawn from this history we see—

I. **How God overrules persecution and opposition for the good of His Church.**—It seemed indeed a dark hour for the cause of Christ when all of the apostles were shut up in the common prison, and left, apparently, in the power of their bitterest enemies.

II. **This history shows us rationalism confounded.**—Just when rationalism thought to put down the supernatural, lo! it appears in a new manifestation before them. There was evidently a power working for these apostles which prison-walls, bolts, bars, and guards of soldiers could not restrain. The perplexity of the

council is further increased when one came saying, "Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people." It was this conduct, as much as the strangeness of their deliverance, that impressed the senate. Then, as often since, men were made to see that there is a hidden, spiritual force about the gospel which cannot be accounted for, save on the ground that the life of Christ is in it.

III. **We can also learn from this that the enemies of the gospel are made to fear and respect those who are fearless in proclaiming it.**

IV. **Finally, we have in this history Peter's address to the Sanhedrim.**—It is the jewel of which all the rest is only the casket. As a defence nothing could be more admirable and to the point than the words of Peter. The specifications in the indictment against the apostles were two: first, that they had disobeyed the lawful authority in continuing to preach after they had been strictly charged to speak no more in the name of Jesus; second, that by their preaching they were stirring up the people to avenge the crucifixion of Jesus upon the Sanhedrim. To the first Peter replies, "We ought to obey God rather than men." This was their justification for the disobedience charged. In answer to the second he fearlessly tells the Sanhedrim their guilt, and charges upon them the death of Jesus. It is most significant that in the defence which Peter makes, as indeed in all apostolic preaching, special prominence is given to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The apostle well knew that the larger portion of the Sanhedrim was of the sect of the Sadducees, yet he does not hesitate in his testimony. There are three great indestructible facts that have remained all through the ages as witnesses to the reality of the resurrection. The first is the testimony of the apostles; the second is the Christian Church; the third is the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The proof which they furnish is conclusive, and we may rest assured that our holy faith, so glorious in the hopes which it inspires and so wonderful in the destiny which it opens for sinful men, is founded upon the ROCK.—*S. J. Niccolls, D.D.*

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 33-42.

Gamaliel and his Colleagues; or, a Friend at Court.

I. **The person of Gamaliel.**—1. *His name.* Borne by more than one celebrated scribe of the first and second centuries after Christ, this name—meaning "Benefit of God" (Numb. i. 10, ii. 20, vii. 54)—belonged first to Rabbi Gamaliel, the elder Hillel's grandson; Gamaliel the younger flourished about 80-118 A.D. The former, in all probability, the individual referred to by Luke. 2. *His profession.* (1) A member of the Sanhedrim—"one in the council"; hardly its president (the Talmud). (2) A Pharisee, one of the straitest sects of religionists in Jerusalem, who differed from the Sadducees in holding the doctrine of a resurrection, and outdid these in extravagant adherence to the letter of the Mosaic Law. (3) A scribe or doctor of the law, virtually a professor of theology like his grandfather Hillel and his father Simon (said to be, but hardly likely, the Simeon of Luke ii. 25), whom he succeeded. He is reported to have had one thousand scholars, of whom five hundred studied the law, and five hundred Greek wisdom (Talmud)—a statement which, if it could be depended on, would shed an interesting light on Paul's knowledge of the Greek poets. (See Riehm's *Handwörterbuch des Biblischen Altertums*, art. *Gamaliel*). 3. *His renown.* "Had in reputation among all the people," also among his colleagues, for his zeal as a Pharisee, his learning as a teacher, and his charity as a man. In corroboration of the first may be mentioned that when he died men said reverence for the law, purity, and continence had perished; the best certificates of the second

were his brilliant scholars, Onkelos the Targumist and Saul of Tarsus (xxii. 3); the third his counsel to the Sanhedrists attested. 4. *His history.* According to Christian tradition he embraced Christianity, and, along with his son Ahib and Nicodemus, was baptised by Peter and John, the Clementine Recognitions even affirming that at this time he was a secret disciple. This statement, however, Jewish tradition declines to verify, making him die a Pharisee eighteen years before the destruction of Jerusalem.

II. **The advice of Gamaliel.**—1. *His recommendations.* Two things he urged upon his colleagues. (1) Caution. To "take heed to themselves with regard to the apostles what they intended to do." Always commendable, even in a right course, circumspection and prudence are specially desirable when the path inviting entrance is dubious and dangerous, not to say wrong. To look well before one leaps is a safe maxim. (2) Tolerance. To hold their hands and let the apostles alone. If they could not help their prisoners' cause, at least they should not hinder it. "Neither punish them for what they have done nor restrain them for the future. Connive at them—let them take their course—*let not our hand be upon them*" (Henry). This, the least the truth has a right to expect and receive at the hands of men. 2. *His arguments.* Also two: one for each recommendation. (1) One for the caution, this, drawn from past experience, that possibly need would not arise for action in the matter, as the present movement would most likely run the course of other popular agitations which in former times had suddenly sprung up, flourished for a season, and eventually subsided. One such had been the insurrection of Theudas. (*Note.* This Theudas was not the revolutionary of that name in the reign of Claudius, and under the procuratorship of Cuspius Fadus A.D. 44, ten or twelve years after this speech of Gamaliel (Jos., *Ant.*, XX. v. 1), but either another of the same name, which was common, who had figured in the public gaze shortly before; or the Judas, who, after Herod's death, led a robber band against the palace of Sepphoris in Galilee (Jos., *Ant.*, XVII. x. 5), Judas, according to Matt. x. 3; Luke vi. 16, being interchangeable with Thaddeus or Theudas; or the Simon (Jos., *Ant.*, XVII. x. 6), one of Herod's slaves, who got himself proclaimed king, burnt down the royal palace at Jericho, with others of the king's houses throughout the land, but eventually was captured and beheaded—it being supposed (Sonntag, see Hackett) that Theudas was a title Simon had assumed on pretending to royal dignity). Another of these abortive insurrections was that headed by Judas of Galilee (Jos., *Ant.*, XX. v. 2; *Wars*, II. viii. 1), called also a Gaulonite—*i.e.*, an inhabitant of the district east of Galilee (Jos., *Ant.*, XVIII. i. 1), who, in the days of the taxing, or enrolment—*i.e.*, registration of persons and property with a view to taxation, conducted under Cyrenius (Luke ii. 2), raised a revolt against Rome which attracted numerous supporters, but terminated in failure, he himself getting killed and his followers dispersed. One of these followers is believed (but without foundation) to have been Simon the Canaanite, or Simon Zelotes, the apostle. (2) For the tolerance this, derived from reflection, that "resistance was either needless or hopeless" (Plumptre), that the movement, if of men, would sooner or later collapse, while if of God, it would defy all attempts at overthrow, while those who opposed it would be guilty of fighting against God. If the first part of this argument sprang from timidity, the second was the outcome of sober judgment. If God was behind the apostles it would be fruitless and dangerous to stand before them. 3. *His motives.* Various have been suggested. (1) A secret conviction that the movement was of God, though as yet not prepared to act on this conviction and espouse it boldly. According to this view (which, however, is pure conjecture), Gamaliel was a secret disciple like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, probably one of "the great company of priests" who soon after "became obedient to the faith" (vi. 7). (2) A latent

sympathy with the apostle's doctrine concerning Jesus, arising from the fact of his being a Pharisee, and therefore a believer in the resurrection, and from the probable circumstance of His having sat among the doctors whom Jesus, when a boy, questioned in the temple (Luke ii. 46). (3) A perceptible leaning to the sentiments of his two colleagues, Nicodemus who once advised that Christ should be let alone (John vii. 50, 51), and Joseph of Arimathea, who consented not to the counsel and deed of Caiaphas (Luke xxiii. 51). (4) Discernment to perceive that if the movement was purely fanatical, it would not be suppressed but only rendered more violent by opposition.

III. **The success of Gamaliel.**—His advice prevailed. 1. *To all appearance unanimously.* At least no opposition was offered to his cautious counsel. Having a majority in their favour, his sentiments were accepted without a division, and became the finding of the court. Yet 2. *Not altogether wholly.* Though persuaded to depart from their murderous intention (ver. 33) and to spare their prisoners' lives, his colleagues could not appease their rage without inflicting on the apostles some punishment. Perhaps, also, they felt that something must be done on the one hand to justify their interference with the apostles' liberty, and on the other hand to express their displeasure at the apostles' disobedience. Accordingly they beat or scourged the apostles as Christ had been (John xix. 1), and as Paul afterwards was scourged on five occasions (2 Cor. xi. 24). The scourge was a whip of two lashes, "knotted with bones or heavy indented circles of bronze, or terminated by hooks, in which case it was aptly denominated a scorpion" (quoted by Hackett). Still, 3. *To all intents effectually.* Charged not to speak in the name of Jesus—a useless rehearsal of a useless interdict which they could not obey (iv. 20), the apostles were forthwith dismissed, no doubt reluctantly, their judges inwardly feeling they would rather have incarcerated permanently, or killed off finally such obnoxious persons as the apostles were supposed to be, but yet really so that they "departed from the presence of the council," and on their part triumphantly, rejoicing they had been counted worthy to suffer dishonour for the name of Him whom they served, in whom they believed, and of whom they witnessed, and permanently so that "every day in the temple and at home they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus as the Christ."

Learn.—1. That God can raise up champions to speak for His people and defend His cause in the most unlikely places and at the most unlikely times. Examples: Moses at the court of Pharaoh; Elijah in the days of Ahab; John the Baptist in the reign of Herod. Luther, Latimer, Knox. 2. That good men generally carry with them an influence for good which weighs with and tells upon their contemporaries. Witness Samuel and Daniel in Old Testament times; Nicodemus and Gamaliel in the Sanhedrim. 3. That God's servants may always comfort themselves with the reflection that His cause is invincible. Emblem: the bush burning yet not consumed. 4. That those who fight against God are engaged in a losing battle (Isa. xxvii. 4). 5. That God's servants and Christ's followers may suffer wrong, and yet the cause for which they suffer win the day. 6. That to suffer for righteousness' sake is the highest honour a Christian can enjoy on earth (Matt. v. 10; 1 Peter iv. 16). 7. That always and everywhere Christians should publish the name of Jesus as the Christ, or Anointed King and Saviour of mankind.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 36. *The World's Somebodies.*—Are not unfrequently.—1. Pretentious nobodies. 2. Worthless impostors. 3. Arrogant deceivers. 4. Disastrous leaders.

Vers. 38, 39. *Gamaliel's counsel.*

I. The **good advice** it contained. 1. To abstain from injuring the apostles or hindering the cause they

advocated. This was practically a dissuasive against persecution. 2. To wait with patience for the decision which Providence would ultimately give on this as on every other movement. "Time tries all." 3. To beware of doing anything that might seem like fighting against God.

II. The **doubtful doctrine** it preached. 1. That the goodness of a cause may always be judged by its success. 2. That men should regulate their conduct by the bearing it will have upon their own interests. 3. That man's responsibilities towards the cause of God and Christ are discharged by simply letting it alone.

Ver. 39. *Fighting against God.*

I. An **old sin.**
II. A **common practice.**
III. A **hopeless enterprise.**
IV. A **perilous warfare.**
V. A **heinous wickedness.**

Vers. 35-39. *Gamaliel's Counsel.*

I. A **convenient** counsel for the spiritually idle and for the politicians of the world.

II. A **true** counsel in opposition to senseless zeal.

III. A **half counsel,** when it concerns us to recognise, decide, and act at once.—*Beck in Lange.*

Vers. 38, 39. *Of men or of God; or, the Origin of Christianity.*

I. **Christianity must be either of men or of God.**—Either it is a creation or evolution of the human mind or a production and revelation of the divine Spirit. Either one, it may be the best, of ordinary nature religions, like those of paganism which it supplanted, like Buddhism, Confucianism, and Mohammedanism, or a distinctly supernatural religion, as Christ (John vii. 16) and His apostles affirmed that it was, and as its adherents believed it to be. No middle alternative is possible.

II. **If Christianity be of men it will assuredly come to nought.**—It may seem for a time to be possessed of vitality, to manifest growth and to be productive of beneficial results, but these appearances will only be temporary. It will not succeed in lifting men much higher than other nature religions; it will not extend its dominion over a much greater territory than these; it will not exhibit qualities of permanence beyond what are displayed by these.

III. **Thus far Christianity has not come to nought.**—It has survived the assaults of paganism, and even overthrown paganism wherever it has spread. It has resisted the still more dangerous onsets of philosophy and science, and in a large measure Christianised these. It has stood up against the combinations of world empires, and reduced these, in name at least, to subjection beneath the sceptre of Christ. It has maintained its vitality and influence notwithstanding the corruptions of its purity that have arisen within its own burdens and from the midst of its own adherents. It has met the deepest spiritual wants of the individual soul and of the world in a way that no other religion has done. It has extended its sway to almost every country under heaven. After nineteen centuries it evinces no sign of decrepitude and decay. Other religions are waxing old and vanishing away; it is with the passing years increasing in vigour and acceptance.

IV. **Hence Christianity can only be of heavenly origin.**—This a necessary inference from the propositions laid down by Gamaliel. "By its fruits ye shall know it." These are such as can be explained only on the hypothesis of its divine origin. This renders it certain that Christianity will prove itself to be successful—*i.e.*, serving the ends of a religion—*i.e.*, saving; universal, ultimately embracing the globe; and permanent, enduring till the close of time.

V. **No combination of forces can hinder Christianity from eventually accomplishing its mission.**—"Ye will not be able to overthrow it," said Gamaliel. Gamaliel was right. If

God be for it who can be against it? Who can fight successfully against God? "No weapon that is formed against it shall prosper"; "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Lessons.—1. The claims which Christianity as a supernatural religion has on the minds and hearts of men. 2. The duty of Christians doing everything to further its triumph. 3. The folly of attempting to overthrow or even hinder it.

Ver. 40. *The Way of the Holy Cross.*

I. **Threatening** (iv. 21).
II. **Imprisonment** (v. 18).
III. **Scourging** (v. 40).
IV. **Martyrdom** (vii. 60).

Ver. 41. *Suffering Shame for the Name.*

I. **Comfort** in it. That what one suffers for is Christ's name (1 Peter iv. 14).

II. **Honour** in it. That by means of suffering one can help on the triumph of that name.

III. **Glory** in it. Since if one suffers with Christ here, he shall reign with Christ hereafter (2 Tim. ii. 12).

Four Classes in the School of Suffering.

I. **Obliged** to suffer.
II. **Willing** to suffer.
III. **Able** to suffer.
IV. **Permitted** to suffer.—*Hartman in Lange.*

CHAPTER VI.

Dissension in the Church—the Rise of a New Order of Church Officials.

§ 1. The Church's first Strife allayed; or, the Institution of the Diaconate (vers. 1-7).

§ 2. The Ministry of Stephen; or, the rising of a Bright Particular Star in the Church's Firmament (vers. 8-15).

CRITICAL REMARKS.

Ver. 1. **In those days** should be *in these days*,—*i.e.*, shortly before Stephen's martyrdom which did not long antedate Saul's conversion in A.D. 37. Hence the events recorded in the present chapter may be set down as having taken place in A.D. 35 or 36. It is satisfactory to know that while Baur denies, Zeller, and Weizsäcker admit that the ensuing narrative concerning Stephen proceeds upon undeniably historical ground. **Was multiplied.**—Better, *was multiplying*, or becoming numerous, through the teaching and preaching spoken of in ver. 42. **Grecians.**—Not Greeks, but *Hellenists* or Greek-speaking Jews of the Diaspora (ix. 29, xi. 20), as distinguished from the **Hebrews** or Palestinian Jews (Phil. iii. 5), who talked in Syro-Chaldaic or Aramæan. **Were** (habitually) **neglected.**—Or *overlooked*, the imperfect hinting at the frequency of the occurrence, though it is not clear whether the complaint was well founded or only imaginary. **The daily ministrations** were not of private benefactions (Wendt) but of public alms from the funds already mentioned (ii. 45, iv. 35), either of food or of money.

Ver. 2. **The twelve** must have included Matthias (i. 26), whose apostleship is thus placed beyond dispute as valid, at least in the judgment of both his colleagues and the Church. **The multitude of the disciples.**—Of those resident in Jerusalem, since many must by this time have left the city. **Not reason.**—οὐκ ἀρεστον, properly = *non placet*, not pleasing, or not fit, becoming, suitable. **Leave.**—In the sense of "forsaking," "deserting," "discontinuing." **Serve** or *minister to* **tables.**—The apostles had seemingly at first undertaken this work, acting "not merely as a teaching college, judicial bench, court of representatives, but also as an administrative authority; specially arranging, distributing, and superintending the feedings" (Holtzmann).

Ver. 3. **Wherefore, brethren,** or according to some MSS., *but, brethren,* **look ye out.**—If the selection was made by the congregation, the appointment proceeded from the apostles. **Of honest report.**—Lit. *attested* persons—*i.e.*, of good report (compare Luke iv. 22 ; 1 Tim. v. 10). For **Holy Ghost** read *Spirit.*

Ver. 4. **But we will give ourselves continually to prayer.**—The idea is that of steadfast perseverance.

Ver. 5. On the names of the deacons see "Homiletical Analysis." That all the seven were Hellenists arose not from the circumstance that they were intended solely to look after the Hellenist widows' interests—of which there is no hint in the narrative ; but probably from a desire to avoid anything that might look like favouring the Hebrew widows (Holtzmann). The statement that Nicolas was **a proselyte** suggests that all the others were Jews.

Ver. 6. They, the apostles **laid their hands** on them, the deacons.—The first mention in Acts, but not the last (xiii. 3), of this ceremony which occurred in the Old Testament ; in the consecration of the Levites (Numb. viii. 10), and in the appointment of Joshua (Numb. xxvii. 23) and afterwards in the New in the ordination of ministers (1 Tim. iv. 14 ; Heb. vi. 2).

Ver. 7. **Increased and multiplied.**—The tenses (imperfect) indicating gradual and continuous growth, might be rendered *kept on increasing and multiplying.* **A great company of the priests.**—Not merely persons of Levitical descent (Zöckler), but real sacerdotal persons, priests proper, who must then have been numerous, considering the number, 4,289, that returned from Babylon (Ezra ii. 36, 38). **Obedient to the faith.**—A genuine Pauline expression (see Rom. i. 5).

Ver. 8. **Faith.**—According to the best texts should be *grace* (iv. 33) ; the change having probably been made to correspond with ver. 5.

Ver. 9. **The synagogue which is called,** etc., should be *of the Libertines and of the Cyrenians and of,* etc. The Rabbis credited Jerusalem with 480 synagogues, but Talmudic information is not perfectly reliable. The Libertines, Cyrenians, and Alexandrians may have attended one synagogue (Holtzmann, Hausrath, Zöckler, Plumptre), and the Cilicians along with the Asians another ; but the simplest view is to repeat "some of," etc., before each proper name, and to count as many synagogues as there are names (Meyer, De Wette, Hackett). The **Libertini** were Jews who had been slaves at Rome, having been deported thither after Pompey's war, but on obtaining their freedom had returned to Jerusalem. Tacitus (*Ann.*, ii. 85) speaks of 4,000 of such Jewish freedmen as having been banished to Sardinia. From this class Stephen may have sprung. The **Cyrenians** were Jews from Cyrene (ii. 10), of the population of which island the fourth part were Jews. The **Alexandrians.**—From the city of that name, of which the fifth part was Jewish. To the synagogue of **Cilicia** Saul of Tarsus may have belonged (vii. 58). **Asia,** being distinguished from Cilicia, cannot mean the whole of Asia Minor, but must be restricted to Proconsular Asia, as in ii. 9, xvi. 6, xix. 10, 22, 26, 27, etc. (Holtzmann) ; though Ramsay (*The Church in the Roman Empire,* p. 150) thinks the use of the term here "is quite consistent with either the Roman (the narrower) or the popular (the wider) sense."

Ver. 11. **Suborned.**—*I.e.*, secretly instructed, putting the charge into their mouths (compare Matt. xxvi. 59, 60). **Blasphemous words.**—Compare Matt. xxvi. 65.

Ver. 12. **The elders and the Scribes.**—The classes from which the Sanhedrim was taken.

Ver. 13. **Set up.**—Introduced and placed before the council (Hackett). **False witnesses.**—No extravagant exaggeration of Luke, contradicted by the actual facts of the case (Baur, Zeller, Overbeck), since, according to chap. vii. Stephen had made no such assault upon the Law and the Temple as that with which he was charged (Zöckler). It is noticeable that the adjective **blasphemous** is now in the best texts omitted as an insertion from ver. 11.

Ver. 14. **This Jesus of Nazareth.**—In the witnesses' mouths an expression of contempt. **Shall destroy this place.**—The temple, in a room or chamber of which the court may have been sitting. Based probably on a reminiscence of Christ's words in John ii. 19, which Stephen may have quoted. **The customs which Moses delivered us.**—Compare xvi. 21, xxi. 21 ; meaning the ceremonial ordinances.

Ver. 15. **All that sat in the council.** Baur finds in the statement that the scene with reference to Stephen was laid before the council a desire to institute a parallel between Stephen's trial and that of Christ ; but no sufficient reason can be given why the accuracy of Luke's narrative should be challenged. Weizsäcker admits that Stephen was put upon his trial, and, as the result, stoned to death (see on vii. 59). **The face of an angel.**—Signifying more than that Stephen's countenance was illumined by a radiant serenity produced by the fulness of the Spirit which dwelt within him (Holtzmann). At the least the expression points to a supernatural lustre like that with which the face of Moses shone on descending from Sinai (Exod. xxxiv. 29-35 ; 2 Cor. iii. 13). According to Old Testament conceptions angels were superterrestrial beings, who, in order to be seen by men, were able to assume bodily forms corresponding to their rank. Since all in the council beheld Stephen's face, it is clear that the historian is not dealing with a vision, but depicting an external phenomenon.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 1—7.

The Institution of the Diaconate; or, the Church's First Strife allayed.

I. **The occasion of its institution.**—1. *The rapid increase of the Church's members.* It was certainly gratifying that, notwithstanding the persecutions directed against the apostles, their labours in propagating the gospel were attended by conspicuous success. The remarkable influx of disciples which took place under their preaching would most likely have called for assistance of some sort in the organisation of the Christian community. The special form of assistance they did solicit was dictated by the state of matters now to be mentioned. 2. *The unexpected rise of dissension among the Church's members.* (1) The opposing parties in the Church were the Palestinian, or Hebrew (*i.e.*, Syro-Chaldaic, or Aramaic) speaking, and the Grecian, or Greek-speaking Jews. Though both of one blood, they were nevertheless divided by speech, and as a consequence by habits of thought and social customs. The rivalry, and even jealousy between them, the Hebrew or Conservative party, who adhered with greater closeness and tenacity to the law and traditions of Mosaism, and the Grecian (Hellenists) or Liberal party, who had been influenced by the broader culture and laxer notions of the empire generally, perpetuated itself for long years in the Christian Church, and was a source of much strife during the early centuries of our era. (2) The cause of their dissension was the habitual neglect (whether studied or accidental, real or imaginary, is not stated) of the Grecian widows in the daily distribution of food or money. It is not likely that the apostles or their helpers deliberately arranged thus to set a mark of inferiority upon the Greek-speaking Christians; but one can readily perceive how widows of foreign origin might not be so well known as those who resided in Palestine and Jerusalem, and how, being foreigners, they might have greater difficulty in making their wants known and getting them attended to. In any case it is not hard to understand how the Grecian Christians should feel somewhat sensitive over what had the appearance of a studied neglect.

II. **The mode of its institution.**—1. *The apostolic decision concerning themselves.* (1) To withdraw from the business of dispensing the Church's alms. Not because they resented the suspicion of unfairness implied in the complaints of the Greek-speaking Jews (or Christians). The complaint may have been just, and (whether it was just or not) the apostles may have seen that some different arrangement, as, *e.g.*, the distribution of the Church's alms by responsible officials—would be required in order to restore confidence and prevent the recurrence of similar mistakes or complaints. Not because they deemed the service of tables too mean an occupation for persons of their capacity and dignity. It may be taken for granted that the apostles were not actuated in their procedure by personal vanity or self-esteem, but because they considered themselves to have been called to a higher form of ministry with which this lower interfered, to the extent of threatening to withdraw them altogether from it. In their estimation preaching was a more exalted form of work than acting as Church almoners, distributing the bread of life, a more urgent labour than doling out, even to poor widows, loaves and fishes or the wherewithal to purchase them. And because this latter was work for which the Church had an ample supply of competent workers within her ranks. (2) To reserve themselves for the more spiritual labours of the apostolate—praying and preaching. By-and-by they would need assistants in these duties also; but in the meantime these claimed their whole time and attention. N.B.—The position of pre-eminence among ministerial duties here assigned to praying and preaching should be noted by those who think that in modern times these should be reduced to a minimum. Praying and preaching

are twin gospel ministries that never should, and cannot be dissociated except to the detriment of both. 2. *The apostolic direction to the Church members.* (1) What it was. To "look out from among themselves seven men of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom," whom the apostles might appoint over the business of serving the Church's tables. In which direction should be noted: *First*, the proper work of the diaconate. "To serve tables," to distribute the Church's alms, and care generally for the poor. This, as the cases of Stephen and Philip showed, excluded not the exercise, where possessed, of the gift of preaching, praying, or working miracles. *Secondly*, the requisite qualifications for the diaconate. Approved character. The deacons (seven in number, most likely because no more were required; but see "Hints on ver. 5") were to be of "good report"—*i.e.*, of recognised Christian standing and worth (compare 1 Tim. iii. 8-10). Eminent piety. "Full of the Spirit"—*i.e.*, of the Holy Spirit, which would be known by the fruits of the Spirit appearing in their lives (Matt. vii. 20). Practical sagacity. "Full of wisdom," which probably meant that insight into truth, discernment of character, and knowledge of how to act, which resulted from being inspired and led by the Holy Ghost. *Thirdly*, the body to elect the diaconate. The congregation of believers. Neither their leaders, the apostles, nor a committee of their number, but the whole assembly of the Church members—all who chose to take part in the proceedings, which would likely be the majority of those residing in Jerusalem. The apostles' language expressly recognises the Church as the elective board. *Fourthly*, the source of authority for the diaconate. This the apostles as distinctly reserved for themselves. If the congregation selected, they appointed; if the congregation called, they ordained. (2) How it was received. "The saying pleased the whole multitude." This showed the wisdom by which the apostles had been guided in proposing their motion; the confidence with which they were regarded by the believing community, no one attempting or desiring to dissent; and the spirit of unity which still prevailed and could triumph over the incipient stirrings of discord. Happy the Church whose pastors are guided by the Chief Shepherd, whose counsels are accepted by their congregations, and whose people are actuated by a spirit of love and concord! (3) How it was carried out. *First*, the election of the seven. "They chose Stephen," etc. (see "Hints"). *Secondly*, the presentation of the seven. To infer that the election was conducted in the absence of the apostles would not be safe. *Thirdly*, the ordination of the seven. The apostles, having prayed, "laid their hands upon them." In this act the brethren did not join, showing that the authorisation of the new officers proceeded not from them. The laying on of hands—first mentioned in connection with the blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh (Gen. xlviii. 10-14), of frequent occurrence in Mosaic ritual (Lev. iii. 2, xvi. 21; Numb. viii. 12), and used in appointing Joshua to succeed Moses (Numb. xxvii. 18)—became the customary form in the New Testament Church of Dedication to a sacred office (xiii. 3, 1 Tim. iv. 14). "It was a symbol of the impartation of the gifts and graces" which those dedicated "needed to qualify them for the office," and was "of the nature of a prayer that God would bestow the necessary gifts rather than a pledge that these were actually conferred" (Hackett).

III. **The result of its institution.**—By setting free the apostles to attend to higher duties important consequences followed. 1. *A wide extension of the gospel.* "The word of God increased." The area over which it spread enlarged. The influence it wielded deepened. 2. *A large increase of disciples.* Their number multiplied in Jerusalem greatly. Christ promised, if He were lifted up, to draw all men unto Himself (John xii. 32); and wherever the gospel is openly, courageously, affectionately, and faithfully proclaimed, it seldom fails to secure adherents. 3. *A great accession from the priesthood.* This must have been a numerous body at the time to which this chapter refers, since, according to Ezra

(ii. 36-38), it was 4,289 strong on returning from Babylon. The coming over to Christianity of so considerable a company of priests, of whom none had ever followed Christ, marked a signal advance in Christianity. Plumptre suggests that their conversion may have been due to the preaching of Stephen, who anticipated Paul in announcing the passing away of the temple worship, which had probably become a weariness to the flesh and an intolerable burden to the spirit of the more earnest, at least of the priests, who, accordingly, responded to the fascination of a simpler and more spiritual worship.

Learn.—1. That Christians ought to be, but are not always, above quarrelling (1 Cor. iii. 3; Gal. v. 20; Phil. ii. 3). 2. That oversight may occur in the best-regulated congregations. 3. That Christian ministers and people should ever study the things that make for peace (Rom. xiv. 19). 4. That nothing should be allowed to hinder a Christian minister from his specific work of preaching and praying. 5. That Christian congregations have a right to elect their own office-bearers. 6. That those who hold office in the Christian Church should be above suspicion. 7. That the word of God cannot be bound (2 Tim. ii. 9).

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 1. *Murmuring in the Primitive Church.*

I. The **occasion** of it.—It sprang out of the multiplying of the disciples. This teaches—1. That *increase of numbers does not always mean increase of happiness*, increase of devotion, increase of spiritual life, but has often brought increase of trouble and discontent alone. Undiluted joy, uninterrupted success, is not to be the portion of God's people while tabernacling here below. 2. That *the presence of supernatural gifts*, the power of working miracles and speaking with tongues, *did not raise the spiritual level of individual believers* above that we find in the Church of the present day. What a comfort to God's servant striving to do his duty is the study of this sixth chapter of the Acts! The apostles themselves did not escape the accusation of favouritism. 3. That *the primitive Church was no ideal communion* but a society with failings and weaknesses and discontent, exactly like those which exist in the Church of our own times.

II. The **ground** of it.—That which lay at the basis of this murmuring was "a racial question," or perhaps it should be said those "social and linguistic differences" which "had found place in the Church." "The bitter dissensions which racial and linguistic differences have made in the Church of every age are here depicted in miniature. The quarrels between the East and West, between Greeks and Latins, between Latins and Teutons, between Teuton and Celt, between Roman Catholic and Protestant, between the whites and negroes, between European Christians and Hindoo converts—the scandalous scenes still enacted round the Holy Place at Jerusalem, where peace is kept between nominal Christians only by the intervention of Mahometan soldiers—all turn upon the same points and embody the same principles.

III. The **removal** of it.—The difficulty which had arisen was solved by laying down the following principles: 1. That *there are diversities of functions and of work in the Christian Church.* There is a ministry of the word and there is a serving of tables. 2. That *one class should not absorb every function;* for if it does, the highest function of all, the ministry of the word and prayer, will inevitably suffer. 3. That *the Church of Christ should ever have the power to organise herself* in the face of new departures, while at the same time she proclaims the absolute necessity and the perpetual obligation of the Christian ministry in her midst.—*G. T. Stokes, D.D.*

Dissension in the Church.—1. *Old.* Dating from Apostolic, yea, even from Pentecostal times. 2. *Common.* Having shown itself in almost every Christian community since. 3. *Unbecoming.* All sin is; this especially so as breaking out among those who should love as brethren. 4. *Hurtful.* As again all sin is, but this in particular as marring the beauty, destroying the peace, and hindering the usefulness of the Church.

Ver. 2. *Serving Tables; or, the Church's Care of the Poor.*—Of Christian service this is

I. A **necessary** form.—Considering that God hath chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith (James ii. 5), that Christ esteems them as His brethren (Matt. xxv. 40), and that kindness to the poor has been specially enjoined on Christ's disciples (xx. 35, Gal. vi. 10; Eph. iv. 28).

II. An **honourable** form.—Though not to be placed on a level with preaching, yet to be highly esteemed as one requiring the most exalted gifts and conferring the most enduring benefits (1 Tim. v. 10).

III. A **difficult** form.—Calling for much wisdom and tenderness, so as to avoid giving offence by either neglecting or hurting the sensibilities of the recipients of the Church's bounty (Rom. xii. 8).

IV. A **profitable** form.—Since Christ will reward all such service as done to Himself (Matt. xxv. 40).

Vers. 1, 2. *Blots in a Church.*

I. When **nominal adherents** multiply faster than true disciples.

II. When **a spirit of discord** and division breaks out among its members.

III. When the **poor are neglected** and the rich only attended to.

IV. When **ministers have no time to preach** because of being absorbed in secular business.

V. When **the spirit of prayer dies out** of both pulpit and pew.

Ver. 4. *Praying and preaching.*

I. **Praying without preaching.**—An imperfect if not a presumptuous ministry. Christ having ordained the preaching of the gospel as a means of its propagation (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20; Luke xxiv. 47). This form of worship cannot be discontinued without sin. A word for those who would dispense with the sermon in church services or reduce it to the smallest dimensions.

II. **Preaching without praying.**—An unprofitable exercise. The same Lord who commanded His disciples to preach also taught them to pray (Matt. vi. 9; Luke xi. 1), and said, "Without Me ye can do nothing" (John xv. 5). A hint to those who forget that the ends of the ministry cannot be reached by human wisdom or eloquence alone.

III. **Praying and preaching.**—The true ideal of an acceptable ministry. What Christ hath joined let none of His followers put asunder (1 Tim. ii. 1-8).

Ver. 5. *The First Christian Deacons.*

I. **Their number.** — Seven. Not likely either: 1. Because the congregations in Jerusalem were seven in number, and each selected a man; or 2. Because the number of believers was now seven thousand, and one was chosen for each thousand; or 3. Because of the sacredness of the number seven; or 4. Because there were already different elements in the Church, Hebrews (3), Hellenists (3), Proselytes (1), that required to be provided for; or 5. Because Jerusalem was divided into seven districts; or 6. Because there were seven archangels; or 7. Because the gifts of the Holy Spirit were sevenfold; or 8. Because among the Libertini of Rome "there was a distinct guild or collegium known as the Septemviri Epulones or Seven Stewards, whose business it was to arrange for the banquets held in honour of the gods which were more or less analogous to the Christian *agapæ*, on certain set days" (Plumptre); but 9. Probably because, for some reason not stated, seven was considered by the apostles *the number required for the work.*

II. **Their names.**—All Greek. But not therefore all belonging to Hellenistic

Jews, since Palestinian Jews with foreign names were not rare (see i. 23). 1. *Stephen.* An uncommon name appearing in few inscriptions, but found in the burial place of the Empress Livia as the designation of a *libertinus* or freedman, a goldsmith, and an *immunis—i.e.*, one exempted from the religious obligations of his trade guild. In addition the name is found "on a tablet in the museum of the Collegio Romano." Wherefore it has been conjectured that "in the proto-martyr of the Church . . . we have one of the earliest representatives of Roman Christianity" (Plumptre). His character is given in words afterwards used of Barnabas (xi. 24). 2. *Philip.* Subsequently styled an Evangelist (xxi. 8), and employed to preach the gospel to the city of Samaria (viii. 5) and to the eunuch (viii. 26). A tradition, preserved by Epiphanius, places Philip as well as Stephen among the Seventy. The fact that, when Paul arrived at Cæsarea (xx. 8), Philip had four fully grown daughters renders it probable that at the date of his election he was married. 3. *Procorus.* 4. *Nicanor.* 5. *Simon.* 6. *Parmenas.* Of these four, nothing being known, nothing need be surmised. Christ can be as well served by obscure as by famous men. If Stephen acquired the glory of being the first martyr perhaps they, like Philip, had the honour of long service, and unlike him had the merit of serving without distinction. 7. *Nicolas.* What Luke records of him is that he was a proselyte of Antioch, and therefore the first Gentile named as having been admitted to the Christian Church; what Luke does not record is that he was the founder of the sect of the Nicolaitanes (Rev. ii. 6, 15)—a supposition not hastily to be credited, though attested by Irenaeus (I. xxvi. 3; III. xi. 1), Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* II. xx. 118; III. 4), and Hippolytus (vii. 36), and accepted by some moderns (Zöckler and others). The statement that Nicolas was a proselyte may imply that the others were of Jewish birth.

III. **Their duties.**—1. Principally to attend to the administration of the Church's benevolence, and generally to care for the poor. 2. In addition to evangelise, if they possessed the gifts for such work—as was shown by both Stephen and Philip.

Note.—That the seven men, though not expressly named "deacons," were the forerunners of the ecclesiastical officers who afterwards bore that title (1 Tim. iii. 8), is apparent. Though nothing is said by Peter about their being constituted a new order of Church rulers, it need not be doubted that the Church came to recognise them as such on the ground of this transaction. Since the days of Cyprian this opinion has prevailed. That the seven are not like the later deacons subordinated to the presbyters is no valid objection (Holtzmann), because the organisation of the Church at this time may not have been complete. That the seven formed a special order of officials created for a special purpose (Weizsäcker) may be true without the inference being correct that the order was not designed to be permanent. That funds for the poor were at a later period entrusted to the hands of the elders (xi. 30) does not prove that the diaconate gradually developed into the presbyterate (Vitringa, Böhmer, Lange, Ritschl, Wendt, Lechler), but merely that the elders, as the spiritual rulers of the Church, received the money from those who brought it. The actual distribution may have been carried out by deacons. The notion that the seven were the predecessors of both bishops (ἐπίσκοποι) and deacons (διάκονοι), and that neither of these constituted a preaching or teaching order, but were merely finance officers (Hatch, Harnack), is not in accordance with Scripture (1 Tim. iii. 1-12; 2 Tim. ii. 24).

Vers. 1-5. *The Seven Chosen.*

I. **The unique functions of the Church.**—It must be assumed that, in the rise of the Christian Church, a new power obtained among men. Baptised

with this new "power," the Church confronted the world with the fact of the unity of the race. The wonderful works of God were confined to no peculiar peoples; they meant the Church for the world. In addition to this was the new principle as to social life. The poor should share, equally with the rich, the gospel benefits. Says Mr. Lecky: "No achievements of the Christian Church are more truly great than those which it has effected in the sphere of charity."

II. **The choice of "the seven."**—That the best men cannot always please is evidenced by the text. In their distribution of charity the apostles failed. They were accused of neglecting the Grecians in their zeal for the Hebrew converts. There are two important truths involved in that election, claiming special notice. Thus, firstly, the responsibilities inhering in the Church-membership. It was not an apostolic appointment. Not even Peter could choose; the election was the act of the multitude. Secondly, the wisdom of the Church is evidenced in their choice. Instead of further murmuring there had come a profound peace—a peace built on no compromise.

III. **The characteristics of "the seven."**—They must be men of "good report." There is no disputing the fact that, in the apostolic estimate, the truest religion makes men of the best and most honest report. No office—of bishop or evangelist or deacon—can give a good report to a dishonest man. Character is greater than office-bearing. Again, "the seven" must be "full of the Spirit and of wisdom." In this demand lay hidden the secret of their spiritual power.

IV. **The model character of the diaconate.**—It is a natural sequence of the choice of "the seven" that it should be supplemented by a character equal to the highest ideal. Stephen met the fullest requirements.—*Monday Club Sermons.*

Ver. 7. *The Progress of the Church.*

I. **How it is effected.**—By the preaching of the word. 1. In ever-enlarging fulness. 2. In ever-widening circles. 3. By ever-increasing agents. 4. With ever-deepening earnestness.

II. **How it is revealed.**—By the multiplication of disciples. 1. Not of merely nominal adherents, which are not always a source of strength. 2. But of genuine believers, whose hearts have been touched by grace.

III. **How it is consolidated.**—By obedience to the faith. 1. By the submission of the whole being to the Lord of faith, Christ. 2. By the consecration of every power to the life and work of faith. 3. By regulating every step in accordance with the principle of faith.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 8—15.

The Ministry of Stephen; or, the Rising of a Bright Particular Star.

I. **The miracles and preaching of Stephen.**—1. *His miracles were great.* (1) In origin, proceeding from the grace (rather than faith) of which he was full—grace here being the supernatural endowment conferred on him by the Holy Ghost. (2) In efficiency, being remarkable for the indications they gave of divine power. (3) In number, it being most likely they were neither few nor small, but numerous and striking. (4) In impressiveness, having in all probability arrested the attention and awed the hearts of those in whose presence they were done. What they were is not told—an indication that Luke was not composing a romance but writing a history. 2. *His preaching was irresistible.* (1) For the wisdom (knowledge of divine truth) and spiritual insight (discernment of its applicability to souls) which it displayed, and (compare Luke xxi. 15), (2) for the Holy Spirit who was behind that wisdom and that insight as their source, inspiration, and power (compare Mark xiii. 11). No interpreter of

Scripture can be placed alongside of the Holy Ghost for either clearness or force of exposition (1 Cor. ii. 13).

II. **The opponents and revilers of Stephen.**—1. His *opponents.* Certain parties from the various synagogues in the metropolis, of which, according to the Rabbis, there were then 480. (1) Their designations. Libertines: freed men who had been slaves, their fathers having been sold as bondmen to Rome after Pompey's expedition against Judæa in B.C. 53. Cyrenians: belonging to the city of Cyrene in Lybia, North Africa, of whose population a fourth part were Jews (Jos., *Ant.*, XIV. vii., 2), the rest being derived from the Lacedemonians (*Wars*, II. xvi., 4). From this class came Simon the Cyrenian (Luke xxiii. 26), with his two sons, Alexander and Rufus (Mark xv. 21). Cyrenians attended Pentecost (ii. 10), and preached to the Greek-speaking Jews at Antioch (xi. 20), while Lucius of Cyrene was among the prophets and teachers associated with the Church in that city (xiii. 1). Alexandrians: Jews from Alexandria in Egypt, the second city in the empire, and a principal seat of Hellenic learning and culture. Numbering one hundred thousand, they occupied a quarter of the city by themselves, were governed by an ethnarch of their own (*i.e.*, enjoyed Home Rule), and had high privileges conferred upon them by Ptolemy Philadelphus. There Philo at that time resided. From Alexandria in former times (B.C. 280) had come the Septuagint or Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. Cilicians: from the south-east of Asia Minor, where many Jews were settled, Antiochus the Great having established a colony there. Among those attached to their synagogue would no doubt be Saul of Tarsus (ix. 11). Asians: from the pro-consular province or geographical division of Asia Minor, which included Mysia, Lydia, and Caria, and had Ephesus as its capital. Asian Jews appear at a later stage in the history of Paul (xxi. 27). (2) Their disputation. They discussed with Stephen the teaching he promulgated, which, in addition to the doctrine of Jesus and the resurrection, embraced that of the passing away of the Old Testament temple-worship, for the permanence of which they as patriots and disciples of Moses jealously contended. (3) Their defeat. They could not resist the wisdom and spirit with which he spoke. Not his equals in either Biblical learning or sacred eloquence, they could not reply to his arguments, or deny his conclusions, being inwardly convinced of the truth of both. (4) Their duplicity. To avenge themselves of their victorious adversary they secretly instructed witnesses to appear against him with a trumped-up accusation, the terms of which they had previously concerted. 2. His *revilers.* These wretched instruments of his opponents' treachery, were without question, "lewd fellows of the baser sort," creatures without consciences—

> "Fellows by the hand of nature mark'd
> Quoted and sign'd to do a deed of shame"—
> Shakespeare, *King John*, Act IV., Sc. 2.

who for a consideration would lend themselves to any "bloody villainy," and would not hesitate to swear away the lives of the innocent. Such monsters of wickedness had appeared against the Saviour (Matt. xxvi. 59).

III. **The arrest and indictment of Stephen.**—1. His *arrest.* (1) Moved by his defeated opponents. A poor answer to give another's arguments to shut him up in prison or charge him with a crime he has not committed. But people who fail in logic frequently resort to law, endeavouring to reach by force or fraud what they have not been able to gain by honesty and reason. (2) Effected by the populace, the elders, and the Scribes. It is never difficult to inflame the mob, whose inconstancy is as proverbial as that of the wind. If the elders and the Scribes were ablaze already against the new sect and its leaders, hitherto the people had sided with the Christians (v. 22). Now, however, their patriotic fears

had been stirred by the slanders poured into their ears. (3) Followed by a speedy trial. Having seized him either in his house or most likely in the temple while teaching they hurried him off, as they had hurried Christ, not to prison but to judgment—haling him before the council or Sanhedrim which probably had arranged to meet for despatch of business, so important was the occasion that had arisen. 2. His *indictment.* (1) Technically correct. Consisting of two counts which were really one. *First*, that he had spoken blasphemous words against Moses and *against* God. *Secondly*, and in this lay the blasphemy, that he had uttered words against the temple and the law, saying that Jesus of Nazareth would destroy the temple and change the customs which Moses had delivered to the nations. Like the similar impeachment preferred against Christ (Matt. xxvi. 61, 63; John v. 18) which had rested on words actually used by Him; these accusations against Stephen may have been based on sentences which had escaped his lips. Yet were they (2) Essentially incorrect. Stephen indeed had, ostensibly, and in the letter, spoken against the Hebrew Lawgiver and the Jewish temple in so far as he had taught, that the Christian was superior to the Mosaic dispensation, that the days of sacrificial worship were numbered, that the gospel was designed to supersede the law, that observance of the Levitical ritual was henceforth to be no condition of justification, and that worship was no more to be limited to Jerusalem, but might be freely, if spiritually, offered anywhere. Yet in so teaching Stephen had neither blasphemed God nor contemned Moses, inasmuch as Christ was the prophet like unto himself (Moses), whom the Lawgiver foretold, and the system of worship inaugurated by Christ was in reality a carrying forward into fulfilment of all that had been prefigured and pre-signified by the Mosaic dispensation. That Stephen's accusers felt secretly conscious of distorting his words has been argued from the anti-climax which reveals itself in their indictment. First, before his arrest they accuse the eloquent deacon of blaspheming Moses and God—a palpable exaggeration. Next, in the council they drop the term of blasphemy and limit their charge to speaking against the temple and the law. Lastly, confronted with the accused, they water down their language to this, that they had heard him repeat some statement about Jesus of Nazareth's intention to destroy the temple and change its customs.

IV. **The attitude and appearance of Stephen.**—1. His *attitude.* One of unresisting meekness. With perfect calmness he listened to the charges preferred against him. Like his master, he opened not his mouth, answered not a word till invited to speak. Conscious of no crime, he was in no haste to defend himself. 2. His *appearance.* One of unearthly beauty. "All who sat in the council," his accusers and his judges, "fastening their eyes upon him," in expectation of what he would reply to the grave indictment to which he had listened, "saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." The radiance was one which never shone on sea or land, was more than the serene and dignified lustre, solar light it has been named, wherewith the soul in moments of crisis, when conscious of innocence, illuminates the countenance; it was the shine of supernatural glory, reflected back from the face of the Risen Christ on whom he gazed (vii. 55)—like the light which rayed forth from the countenance of Moses when he descended from the Mount (Exod. xxxiv. 29, 30, 35)—attesting to those who beheld it, his innocence.

Learn.—1. The secret of true ministerial influence—being filled with grace and power, with wisdom and the Holy Spirit. 2. The triumphant career which lies before the gospel—its enemies will not be able for ever to resist its progress, dispute its truth, or prevent its sway. 3. The certainty that all faithful preachers of the gospel will excite against themselves hostility,—all whose interests the gospel threatens will array themselves against it. 4. The falsehood of all such

charges against the gospel as that it is revolutionary and destructive, whereas it works its changes by slow degrees and destroys nothing but sin. 5. The glory that will even here irradiate and hereafter crown every faithful servant of Christ.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 8. *The Biography of Stephen.*

I. A **devout Christian.**—Full of faith and of the Holy Spirit.

II. A **trusted Deacon.**—The first elected to the office.

III. An **eloquent Preacher.**—His opponents could not resist the wisdom with which he spake,

IV. A **glorified Prisoner.**—His face shone as it had been the face of an angel.

V. A **blessed Martyr.**—"They stoned Stephen," etc. (vii. 59).

Ver. 15. *The Face of an Angel.*—"Dante, describing the angels whom he met in the *Paradiso*, impresses us with their external glory and their spiritual effulgence. Invariably he makes the former a result of the latter. With closer faithfulness to physical science than he dreamed, and building better than he knew he sings (*Paradiso*, Canto ix., 13-19).

> 'Another of those splendours
> Approach me, and its will to pleasure me
> It signifies by brightening outwardly,
> As one delighted to do good;
> Became a thing transplendent in my sight,
> As a fine ruby smitten by the sun.'"——

Joseph Cook's Monday Lectures, Second Series, p. 148.

Stephen's illuminated Face.—"He had been accused of blaspheming Moses, and lo! the clearness of the face of Moses, a reflection of God's glory (vii. 2), was to be seen on him and vindicated him. A morning beam of the heavenly splendour, in which the teachers of righteousness will eternally shine (Dan. xii. 3), surrounded him; and well might he have been regarded as an angel, since, as the angels always behold the face of God, and reflect His glory, so was it granted to him in this hour of witness for encouragement to look, first into the opened mystery of God's historical glory upon the earth, and then into the opened heaven, and to see Jesus standing at the right hand of God (vii. 55)."—*Besser.*

Ver. 8-15. *The Opponents of Stephen.*

I. **Devout Jews.**—They were Stephen's countrymen and fellow-worshippers, believers in the same God, disciples of the same lawgiver, probably members of the same synagogue. Three arguments which should have caused them to befriend rather than hate Stephen.

II. **Defeated controversialists.**—They could not resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which Stephen spake. This should have cautioned them against opposing one who obviously possessed clearer insight than themselves, and one with whom their inmost convictions sided.

III. **Unscrupulous calumniators.**—They suborned men who said (no doubt what Stephen's adversaries told them) that Stephen had spoken blasphemous words against Moses and against God—Moses first and God second—which was not true.

IV. **Murderous conspirators.**—Their object in moving the elders and the Scribes was to bring upon their foe the wrath of the Sanhedrim, which they knew would mean arrestment, imprisonment, and perhaps death.

Stephen the Deacon.

I. The **central figure** of this whole section is St. Stephen. He is introduced into the narrative with the same startling suddenness which we may note in the cases of Barnabas and Elijah. He runs a rapid course, flings all, apostles and every one else, into the shade for a time, and then disappears," exemplifying the saying of inspiration,

"The first shall be last, and the last first."

II. The union of the words **grace and power** is significant. "It was not the intellect, or the eloquence, or the activity of St. Stephen which made him powerful among the people and crowned his labours with success. It was his abundant grace. Eloquence and learning, active days and laborious nights, are good and necessary things. But these will be utterly useless and ineffective apart from Christ and the power of His grace. To this busy age these words convey a useful warning that the best organisations and schemes will be useless to produce Stephen's power, unless Stephen's grace be found there as well."

III. "This passage is a **prophecy and picture** of the future in another aspect. The fulness of grace in Stephen wrought powerfully amongst the people. It was the savour of life unto life in some. But in others it was a savour of death unto death, and provoked them to evil deeds, for they suborned men who said, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God."

IV. These words, even through their falsehood, afford "a glimpse into the character of **St. Stephen's preaching.** A false accusation need not be necessarily altogether false." "In order to be effective" it must have "some basis of truth. St. Stephen was ripening for heaven more rapidly than the apostles themselves. He was learning more rapidly than St. Peter himself the true spiritual meaning of the Christian scheme. He had taught, in no unambiguous language, the universal character of the gospel and the catholic mission of the Church."

V. "We learn how **religious zeal** can overthrow religion and work out the purpose of evil. Religious zeal, mere party spirit taking the place of real religion, led the Hellenists to suborn men and falsely accuse St. Stephen. They made an idol of the system of Judaism, and forgot its spirit. They worshipped their idol so much that they were ready to break the commandments of God for its sake. How true to life has our own age found this prophetic picture!"—*G. T. Stokes, D.D.*

CHAPTER VII.

THE CHURCH BEGINS HER MARTYR ROLL—THE MURDER OF STEPHEN.

§ 1. The Apology of Stephen ; or, a Vindication of Christianity (vers. 1-53).
§ 2. The Progenitor of Israel ; or, the History of Abraham (vers. 2-8).
§ 3. The Last of the Patriarchs ; or, Joseph a Type of Christ (vers. 9-16).
§ 4. The Founder of the Nation ; or, the Biography of Moses—in three chapters (vers. 17-44).
§ 5. From Joshua to Jesus ; or, the Downward Course of Israel (vers. 45-53).
§ 6. The Martyrdom of Stephen ; or, the First Taste of Blood (vers. 54-60).

CRITICAL REMARKS.

Ver. 1. The high priest's question, **Are these things so?** analogous to that put to Christ (Matt. xxvi. 62), was equivalent to a modern "Guilty or not guilty?"

Ver. 2. Concerning what Stephen **said** in reply, Luke's information may have been derived either from Paul, who probably was present on the occasion (xxvi. 10), and afterwards in his own speeches and writings reproduced the martyr's language (compare ver. 48 with xvi. 24, and ver. 53 with Gal. iii. 19), or from records of it preserved by the Church at Jerusalem. **The God of glory.**—*I.e.*, who manifested His presence by means of the glory (Exod. xvi. 7, 10, xxiv. 16, 17, xxxiii. 18, 22, xl. 34, 35; Lev. ix. 6, 23; Numb. xiv. 10, 21, 22)—*i.e.*, of the Shechinah or luminous appearance which shone between the Cherubim (Psalm lxxx. 1). **Before he dwelt in Charran,** or *Haran.*—Carræ in North-West Mesopotamia, about twenty-five miles from Edessa, one of the supposed sites of Ur of the Chaldees, which, however, is now almost unanimously found in Hur, the most important of the early capitals of Chaldæa, the present-day Mugheir, at no great distance from the mouth and six miles to the west of the Euphrates. That Stephen's statement does not contradict Genesis (xii. 1), which places the call of Abraham at Haran (Holtzmann) may be inferred from these facts—(1) that Gen. xv. 7 and Neh. ix. 7 both represent Ur of the Chaldees as the locality in which Abraham received Jehovah's call, and (2) that with these both Josephus and Philo agree. There is nothing unreasonable in supposing the call to have been given twice, first in Ur and again in Haran.

Ver. 4. **When his father was dead.**—If Abraham was Terah's firstborn (Gen. xi. 26), and seventy-five when he departed from Haran (Gen. xii. 4), then Terah could only have been one hundred and forty-five years old at his death, whereas, according to Gen. xi. 32, Terah was two hundred and five when he died, and must have survived Abraham's departure from Haran by sixty years; but if Abraham was Terah's youngest son, and born in Terah's one hundred and thirtieth year, which, according to the Hebrew narrative, is not impossible, then as Abraham was seventy-five years old when he migrated from Haran, Terah must have been two hundred and five when he died—which agrees with Stephen's narrative. For **he removed** the best texts read *(God) removed him.*

Ver. 5. **None inheritance in it.**—Not contradicted by Abraham's purchase of the field and cave at Machpelah (Gen. xxiii. 9-11), which were meant for "a possession" of a burying place but not for an inheritance in the strict sense of the term.

Ver. 6. **Four hundred years.**—If Stephen included in these four centuries the whole period of sojourning, bondage, and oppression, exactly as Jehovah did in Genesis (xv. 13), this seems to be at variance with Paul's reckoning of the interval between the Abrahamic promise and the Mosaic law as *four hundred and thirty* years (Gal. iii. 17), which interval again is represented in Exodus (xii. 40) as "the sojourning of Israel who dwelt in Egypt." Assuming that four hundred may have been a round number for four hundred and thirty, the difficulty remains how to harmonise the statements of Stephen and Paul. If, according to Paul, the interval from Abraham to Moses was four hundred and thirty years, then, inasmuch as Isaac was born twenty-five years after the promise was first given, and was sixty years old at the birth of Jacob, who was one hundred and thirty years of age when he stood before Pharaoh, then $430 - (25 + 60 + 130) = 215$, which leaves only two hundred and fifteen for the years of exile, bondage, and oppression. Either, therefore, Stephen, following the LXX. version of Exod. xii. 40, which inserts "in the land of Canaan" after "in the land of Egypt, designed his four hundred years to embrace the same period as Paul's four hundred and thirty indicate—a view supported by Josephus (*Ant.*, II. xv. 2), or he followed Gen.

xv. 13, and understood the four hundred to refer to the Egyptian sojourn, bondage, and oppression, in which case he is again supported by Josephus (*Ant.*, II. ix. 1; *Wars*, V. ix. 4), who gives both views, but not by Paul. It would remove all appearance of contrariety if Gen. xv. 13 signified by "a land not theirs," Canaan as well as Egypt; if this cannot be done, then at the worst Paul and Stephen must be held to have followed different traditions.

Ver. 7. **They shall come forth and serve Me in this place.**—"They shall come hither again" of Gen. xv. 16 is replaced by "and serve Me in this place," suggested by rather than borrowed from Exod. iii. 12, in which the words are "ye shall serve God upon this mountain." Stephen, unintentionally mixing up the passages in Genesis and Exodus, may not have been hindered by the Spirit, because the sentiment he expressed was correct; or under the Spirit's guidance he may have selected the new clause suggested by Exodus to explain the import of the one in Genesis.

Ver. 8. **The covenant of circumcision.**—*I.e.*, of which circumcision was the sign. See Rom. iv. 11. **The twelve patriarchs.**—*I.e.*, the twelve sons of Jacob as the founders of the tribes or heads of the families of Israel. The term also applied to Abraham (Heb. vii. 4) and to David (ii. 29).

Ver. 9. **Moved with envy,** or *jealousy*, they, the patriarchs, sold Joseph **into Egypt**—*i.e.*. to be carried thither. Stephen condenses the Genesis narrative.

Ver. 10. The **Pharaoh** under whom Joseph rose to power was the last of the Hyksos or Shepherd kings, Apophis, who, not being himself a native Egyptian, might feel disposed to favour the Hebrew stranger who had in so remarkable a manner interpreted his dreams and saved the country.

Ver. 11. **A dearth over all the land of Egypt and Canaan.**—Brugsch, Sayce, and others find this dearth in a famine, which, according to an inscription from a nobleman's tomb at Eileythia in Southern Egypt, prevailed in the land for several years, and during which the dead man (Baba), according to the inscription, "distributed corn to the city each year of famine." Baba, the nobleman in question, is supposed to have lived shortly before the establishment of the eighteenth dynasty. Counting four hundred and thirty years back from B.C. 1325, when Menephtah II. ascended the Egyptian throne, gives the reign of Apophis as the commencement of the exile according to Stephen, as the date of the promise according to Paul. (But see above on ver. 6.)

Ver. 14. **Threescore and fifteen souls.**—So the LXX. in Gen. xlvi. 27; but the Hebrew text of Gen. xlvi. 27; Exod. i. 5, and Deut. x. 22 gives *threescore and ten* as the number of souls that went down into Egypt—*i.e.*, the sixty-six of Gen. xlvi. 26 with four (Jacob, Joseph, Ephraim, and Manasseh) added. The additional five were probably Joseph's grandsons, counted by the LXX. as among his sons. Stephen, a Hellenist, most likely followed the LXX. without deeming it necessary to correct what after all was no mis-statement, if "sons" be taken in the wider sense of descendants.

Ver. 16. **Carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money.**—Two historical inaccuracies are commonly discovered here: 1. That Jacob and the fathers were all buried at Sychem, or Shechem, Abraham's earliest settlement in Canaan (Gen. xii. 6, 7); whereas Jacob was interred at Hebron (Gen. l. 13), and only Joseph's bones were laid in Sychem (Josh. xxiv. 32), Scripture being silent as to where those of the other fathers were deposited. 2. That Abraham purchased a sepulchre at Shechem from the sons of Emmor, or Hamor, for a sum of money, or for a price in silver; whereas the tomb Abraham bought was at Hebron, while the seller was Ephron the Hittite (Gen. xxiii. 16), and Jacob's purchase was of a field at Shechem (Gen. xxxiii. 19), in which afterwards Joseph's bones were interred (Josh. xxiv. 32). As to the first part of Stephen's statement that Jacob and the fathers were all carried over into Shechem and laid in a tomb, nothing can invalidate that. If Stephen must be understood as asserting that all were laid in the same tomb, that was not so, since Jacob was buried at Hebron and Joseph at Sychem, unless it can be shown that Joseph's bones were subsequently reinterred in the patriarchal vault at Hebron—a hypothesis not impossible, certainly, but still not capable of proof. If, further, Stephen purposed to affirm that Abraham bought a tomb at Shechem, this can only be harmonised with Genesis by maintaining that the tomb at Shechem was purchased twice—once by Abraham and afterwards by Jacob, which is not a likely supposition. The suggestion that Abraham has been either substituted in the text for Jacob, or inserted in the text which originally had no nominative to the verb "purchased," is rendered inadmissible by all existing MSS. having Abraham. Yet if Jacob were inserted every difficulty would not vanish. It would still remain impossible to maintain that Jacob was interred at Shechem. Could Stephen himself be recalled, it might be possible to solve this problem; in his absence it must be given up, at least till additional data be forthcoming. On the ground of this unsolved problem it would be rash to challenge the inspiration of either Stephen or Luke.

Ver. 18. **Another king which knew not Joseph.**—This was Aahmes, the first monarch of the eighteenth dynasty, "a prince of great force of character, brave, active, energetic, liberal, beloved by his subjects" (Rawlinson, *The Story of the Nations—Egypt*, p. 152).

Ver. 19. **Dealt subtilly with our kindred,** or *race.*—With Aahmes the new policy towards the Israelites may have begun, but the author of the cruel decree appears to have been Seti I., while Rameses II. was the Pharaoh of the Oppression, and Meneptah II. the Pharaoh of the Exodus. **They cast out.**—Pharaoh's object in the oppression appears to have been to render the lives of the Israelites so miserable that they would rather cast out their offspring than see them grow up to experience such woe as themselves endured. If *he* be read instead of *they*, then the well-known decree (Exod. i. 16-22) is that to which Stephen alludes.

Ver. 22. **Learned.**—Better, *trained* or *instructed.*

Ver. 24. **Suffer wrong,** *injured*, by beating (Exod. ii. 11). The wrongdoer may have been one of Pharaoh's taskmasters. A bas-relief recovered from the Nile Valley exhibits one of these standing over a gang of slaves, whip in hand, and saying as he lashes them, "To your work, O slaves: ye are idle!"

Ver. 25. **He supposed** should be *he was supposing*, meaning that was his habitual mood of mind at this period. **Would deliver them** should be *gives them deliverance* or salvation; the present tense signifying either that the deliverance was at hand or was beginning with the blow then struck.

Ver. 29. **Madian,** or *Midian.*—In the south-east of the Sinaitic peninsula.

Ver. 30. **Mount Sinai.**—Exodus (iii. 1) gives, as the scene of this Divine manifestation, Horeb, which was probably the name of the range, Sinai being the designation of the particular peak (Robinson, Eadie), though others regard Sinai as the range and Horeb as the peak. Whether Sinai, the mountain of the Law, was Jebel Serbal (Burckhardt, Lepsius, and Ebers), or Ras-es-Sufsafeh (Robinson, Stanley, Porter), or Jebel Musa (Wilson, Sandie), travellers are not decided. Josephus (*Ant.*, II. xi. 1) and Paul (Gal. iv. 25) locate it in Arabia, which Sayce thinks to a writer of the first century would mean Arabia Petræa. Wherefore he looks for Sinai not in the peninsula, but among the ranges of Mount Seir in the neighbourhood of Kadesh Barnea (see *The Higher Criticism and the Monuments*, pp. 263-373).

In vers. 32 and 33 the order of the Hebrew text is transposed.

Ver. 35. **A deliverer,** or *redeemer*, λυτρωτήν.—A latent allusion to the work of Christ.

Ver. 36. **After that he had showed** should be *having done* or *wrought.*

Ver. 37. **The Lord your** are omitted in best MSS. **Like unto me** might be rendered *as he raised up me.*

Ver. 38. **The Church.**—The use of ἐκκλησία—a term employed by the LXX. (Deut. xviii. 16, xxiii. 1; Psalm xxvi. 12)—for the congregation of Israel warrants the inference that Stephen at least regarded the Hebrew nation as a church and the new assembly of believers as its representative under the Christian dispensation.

Ver. 41. **They made a calf** is one word in the original. The calf, or bullock, was selected in imitation of the Egyptians, who worshipped an ox, Apis at Memphis and Mnevis at Heliopolis.

Ver. 42. **In the book of the prophets.**—The quotation is from Amos v. 25-27. The interrogation, **Have ye offered unto Me?** etc., is much used by the higher criticism to prove that the sacrificial system of the so-styled priest code had no existence in the time of Moses; but the prophet's meaning is not that the Israelites did not offer sacrifices to Jehovah in the wilderness, but that, though they did, their hearts ran after their idolatries—the worship of Moloch and the Star Rephan—so that Jehovah rejected their insincere service.

Ver. 43. **The tabernacle of Moloch and the star of your god Remphan.**—The Hebrew might be rendered *Siccuth your king and Chiun* (or the shrine of) *your images, the star of your god* (R.V.), Siccuth being in this case the name of one idol which the Hebrews worshipped as their king, and Chiun the name of another, believed to have been the planet Saturn, of which the name among the Syrians and Arabians was Kēwān. Stephen, however, followed the LXX., who understood *Siccuth* as equivalent to "tabernacle"—*i.e.*, the portable tent in which the idol's image was carried—and for "your king" substituted, with some ancient MSS., Moloch, the idol meant; while for "Chiun your images" they read "the star of your god Rephan," which Kircher believes to be Koptic for Saturn, and Schrader regards as a corruption from Kewan. That the LXX. failed to intelligibly translate the second Hebrew clause was of small moment to Stephen. The words, "the star of the god," showed that God had given the Israelites up to worship the host of heaven. The substitution of **Babylon** for Damascus in the Hebrew and the LXX. is explainable by the fact that Babylon had long been associated in Jewish history with the exile.

Ver. 44. **The tabernacle of the testimony in the wilderness** was so called because it contained the Ark in which the two tables of the Decalogue were kept (Numb. ix. 15, xvii. 23).

Ver. 45. **Our fathers that came after** should be simply *our fathers.* **Jesus** is *Joshua*, as in Heb. iv. 8. **Into** (lit. in) **the possession of the Gentiles.**—Meaning that the Ark was brought in to remain *in the possession of the nations—i.e.*, in their land. The R.V. reads, "When they entered on the possession of the nations"; lit. "at" or "in" their taking possession of (the land of) the nations.

Ver. 46. **Tabernacle** should be "habitation," permanent abode, like "house" in ver. 47.

Ver. 48. The **prophet** was Isaiah (lxvi. 1, 2).

Ver. 52. **Which of the prophets,** etc., echoed the words of Christ (Matt. v. 12, xxiii. 31; Luke xiii. 34).

Ver. 53. **By the disposition of the angels** is better rendered in the R.V., *as it was ordained by angels*, or *as ordinances of angels*; lit. unto ordinances of angels. Compare Gal. iii. 19 and Heb. ii. 2.

Ver. 54. **Cut to the heart.**—See on ver. 33. The word describes a keener pang than "pricked" in ii. 37. **Gnashed on him with their teeth.**—Lit. *snapped their teeth against him*, like ferocious animals. The phrase only occurs here. The Sanhedrists "had passed beyond articulate speech into the inarticulate utterances of animal ferocity" (Plumptre).

Ver. 58. **They stoned Stephen.**—An illegal and tumultuous proceeding, as the Jews at this time had not the power of inflicting capital punishment without the authority of the Romans (John xviii. 31); most probably to be explained, like the murder of James (xii. 2), by supposing that it took place in an interregnum, perhaps about A.D. 37, after the removal of Pilate, and before the arrival of his successor (Renan, Hausrath).

Ver. 60. The words **fell asleep** suggest the Christian view of death (xiii. 36; 1 Cor. xv. 18, etc.).

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Veeses 1—53.

The Apology of Stephen; or, a Vindication of Christianity.

I. **To whom it was addressed.**—1. *The Jewish Sanhedrim*, consisting of Annas, Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and perhaps also Gamaliel, Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathea, if the last two had not by this time withdrawn from the conclave. The court that had already condemned the apostles (v. 27) was little likely to give a fair hearing to the eloquent deacon. 2. *The Jewish people generally.* Through their official representatives, with whom at this moment they were acting in sympathy and concert. 3. *All whom in after ages it might concern.* Though this presumably entered not into Stephen's, it without doubt formed part of the Holy Spirit's mind.

II. **In what spirit it was spoken.**—1. *With affection.* Hinted at by the term "brethren" with which Stephen saluted his judges and accusers. A sign of goodness as well as greatness on the part of Stephen that he disowned not kinship with the truculent adversaries who were then thirsting for his blood. 2. *With reverence.* Not forgetting the respect due to the elders of his people, he courteously addressed them as "fathers." No man ever injures his cause by rendering honour to whom honour is due.

III. **Of what statements it was composed.**—1. *A historical retrospect.* The drama of Israel's career was opened out in three successive acts. (1) The age of the Patriarchs before Moses (vers. 2-16); or the age of the promise, rehearsing the story of Abraham's call by the God of Glory first from Mesopotamia (Ur of the Chaldees) and afterwards from Haran, to go into the Land of Canaan. This call the patriarch obeyed, only to find that God, who had promised to bestow Canaan for possession, on himself and on his seed after him, when as yet he had no child, actually gave him in it none inheritance. Rather God predicted that before his descendants should come into their heritage they should be bondmen in a strange land for four hundred years. At the same time, in pledge that the promise would be fulfilled and the land kept for its appointed heirs, the God of glory gave to the patriarch the covenant of circumcision, which was handed on from sire to son, till in Jacob's days events began to move in the direction of bringing together the heirs and the inheritance. Joseph, his father's favourite son, was sold into Egypt by his envious brethren, who also by a singular combination of circumstances some time later, in a season of famine, repaired thither to find the brother they had evil entreated governor over all the land. At his invitation Jacob, with his kindred, numbering threescore and fifteen souls, went down into Egypt, where they died and left behind them children, in what was soon to

become for them a house of bondage. With that closed the first act in the drama. (2) The age of Moses (vers. 17-46); or, the age of the law, sketching the career of Moses in three periods of forty years. "Three generations rolled over him," writes Emil Zittel (*Die Entstehung der Bibel*, p. 40). "Three times he lived through the holy number of forty years; as son of Egyptian wisdom, as shepherd of the wilderness, as emancipator of his people." Of these periods the first began during the currency of Israel's oppression, and, embracing the lawgiver's birth and education in the house of Pharaoh, ended with his flight into Midian (vers. 17-29). The second closed with the appearance to him in the Wilderness of Sinai, of an angel of God, and his subsequent departure into Egypt to lead forth his people from captivity, which he successfully accomplished (vers. 30-36). The third opened with the Exodus, included the wilderness wanderings, and terminated with the entrance into Canaan under Joshua (vers. 37-45). (3) The Age of the Prophets; or, the Age of the Temple (vers. 46-53), telling the brief but simple tale of David's proposal to find a habitation for the God of Jacob, and of Solomon's building Him a house, in which indeed Jehovah was formally worshipped, while outside His prophets were disobeyed and persecuted. 2. *An implied representation.* Of the history of Jesus, which had its obvious parallel and prefigurement in the just recited career of the nation. (1) Like Joseph whom his brethren sold for envy, but whom Jehovah delivered and appointed to be their preserver, Christ—though Stephen leaves this unexpressed—had been rejected by them, yea even sold into the hands of His enemies and put to death, raised up by God, exalted to the highest throne in heaven, made Lord of all and sent to be their Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sins. (2) Like Moses, whom his countrymen understood not and resisted, but who afterwards led them forth to liberty, Christ had come unto His own, who likewise knew Him not, but thrust Him from them, and was coming again to offer them emancipation from sin and death. (3) Like the men who in the wilderness preferred the tabernacle of Moloch to that Jehovah had caused to be constructed for them, and like their descendants who desecrated the temple by carrying on within its sacred precincts, in defiance of the warnings of Jehovah's prophets, heathen orgies instead of the legitimate Jehovah worship, so had they defiled, desecrated, and despised the true tabernacle and temple of Jehovah, even Jesus of Nazareth, and preferred to Him the lifeless stones of the material edifice, and the meaningless service of an effete ritual.

IV. **With what arguments it was charged.**—1. *Against supposing that the true worship of Jehovah was bound up with the law.* This could not be: (1) Because the God of Glory had appeared unto the father of the nation in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran (ver. 2). If a theophany or Divine manifestation be the basis of all acceptable worship, as the law itself says (Exod. xxii. 24), then clearly such worship did not originate at Sinai but at Ur of the Chaldees, and not with Moses but with Abraham. (2) Because the promise of a Messiah, admittedly the kernel of Mosaism, was given to Abraham when as yet he had no child and therefore no descendants on whom to enjoin the law (ver. 5). (3) Because the covenant of circumcision in which all Israelites gloried as of the essence of their law was not of Moses but of Abraham (ver. 8; compare John vii. 22). (4) Because the presence of God with His people to protect and deliver them, which was what pious Jews understood by salvation, did not begin with His coming down to talk with them at Sinai, but had been enjoyed by Joseph in Egypt (ver. 10), and by Joseph's father and brethren through him (vers. 14, 15). 2. *Against supposing that the true worship of Jehovah was bound up with Moses.* This it could not be: (1) Because when Moses first offered himself to his countrymen, in Jehovah's name, as a deliverer, they would not receive him but thrust him from them (vers. 23-29). (2) Because Moses himself, who had been

miraculously called and strengthened to effect their temporal deliverance, had distinctly pointed them to a greater prophet than himself, even to Jesus, though Stephen leaves this supplementary thought unspoken (vers. 30-37). (3) Because though Moses had been the medium of conveying to Israel the "living oracles," or oracles of life received from Jehovah, he could not secure Israel's obedience to these, even at the moment when Israel was encamped in Jehovah's presence (vers. 38-41). 3. *Against supposing that the true worship of Jehovah was bound up with the temple.* This once more was impossible: (1) Because in the wilderness the tabernacle, which was the shadow of the temple, could not retain the allegiance of the people to Jehovah. Instead of offering to Jehovah slain beasts and sacrifices at the tabernacle door, they took up the tent of Moloch and carried about the star of the god Remphan (vers. 42, 43). (2) Because the temple was never meant to be anything more than an emblem of Jehovah's true habitation, as saith the prophet, "The heaven is My throne," etc. (vers. 46-50). (3) Because the existence of the temple could not keep Israel's fathers from resisting the Holy Ghost and murdering Jehovah's prophets (vers. 51, 52). 4. *Against supposing that the true worship of Jehovah was bound up with them.* They had certainly been honoured above all peoples, had received the law as ordained by—*i.e.*, as it were, at the hands of angels, had listened to the voices of Jehovah's prophets showing before the coming of the Righteous One—*i.e.*, of Messiah—and had enjoyed the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit upon their hearts, and yet to what had all these gracious privileges led? They had not kept the law except in the letter, and not always that; they had not believed in Jehovah's prophets but persecuted and killed them, the last and greatest of them having been the righteous One of whom they had just been the betrayers and murderers; and they had not yielded to but resisted the Holy Ghost. Was it not then idle to assert or suppose that they were the representatives of the true Jehovah-worship? Such was the spirit of Stephen's address.

V. **To what results it conducted.**—1. *For his hearers.* (1) Conviction of guilt. They were cut to the heart, pierced to the quick, sawn asunder with inward pain because of inability to deny the truth of Stephen's charges. (2) Rage against their prisoner, at whom they snarled and snapped with their teeth like angry wolves, impatient to devour their prey, because his cutting invective, penetrating to their consciences, had brought their guilt to remembrance. 2. *For himself.* A violent death and a martyr's crown—a large recompense for a short service; a brief shame followed by a long fame; a little loss and then an eternal gain (see on vers. 54-60).

Learn.—1. That an eloquent and able defence is not always followed by a verdict of acquital. 2. That it does not always conduce to one's personal safety to tell the truth. 3. That judges are not always open to the force of sound reasoning. 4. That opponents defeated in argument are seldom merciful. 5. That the sins of one age are often repeated in the next.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 1-53. *The Speech of Stephen.*

I. A masterpiece of **sacred eloquence.**

II. A witness to **the truth of Old Testament history.**

III. A testimony to **the sustaining power of religion.**

IV. A proof of **the reality of divine inspiration.**

V. A noble **vindication of Jesus Christ.**

VI. A striking **anticipation of Pauline universalism.**

NOTE.—*On the Historical Credibility of this Speech.*—That this speech was not really uttered by Stephen, but freely composed by a late author (Baur,

Zeller Weizsäcker, Holtzmann, and others) has been argued on the following grounds: 1. "That it takes so little notice of the special accusation against which Stephen defends himself" (Baur, *Paul, his Life and Work*, vol. i., p. 44). But in this Stephen only showed how entirely absorbed he was in vindicating his Master rather than in excusing himself. Besides, that his speech should have this appearance is a powerful indirect testimony to its genuineness, since its composer, had it not been Stephen, would have been sure to have avoided this appearance of incongruity. 2. *That it contains historical inaccuracies*, as, *e.g.*, about the call of Abraham (ver. 2), the burial of the patriarchs (ver. 16), and the duration of the Egyptian bondage (ver. 6). But the so-called inaccuracies are susceptible of reasonable explanation; and, even if they were not, could only be urged against the inspiration of the speech, and not against its genuineness. If the composer of the speech could err, so also might Stephen, assuming that he was not inspired. 3. *That it discovers verbal and material points of contact with the discourses of Peter and Paul* (Overbeck, Weizsäcker, *Supernatural Religion*, iii., 145-178); but exactly this is what one should have expected from Stephen, who was the contemporary of these men, and believed the same facts and doctrines as they did. 4. *That it goes far beyond the standpoint of Paul* in teaching the spirituality of worship (vers. 38, 48), and seems rather to belong to later Christian Alexandrinism (Holtzmann); but this is an altogether unwarranted assertion, since Paul quite as clearly teaches that God can be rightly worshipped only in the Spirit (xvii. 24; Eph. ii. 21, 22; Phil. iii. 3). 5. *That the riotous proceeding against Stephen renders it "improbable there was any transaction at all before the Sanhedrim"* (Baur, i. 56). This, however, is simply turning criticism into ridicule; as if the Jewish Sanhedrim never overstepped its legitimate powers, and was always a law-abiding court. Credat Judæus! 6. That *there is nothing to prevent the supposition that the historian put this speech into Stephen's mouth* (Baur, i. 56). But inasmuch as the speech is admitted to have "well suited the character of Stephen," and to be "correctly stamped with his declared religious views," it is much easier to suppose that Stephen himself delivered it than that Luke or another composed it. 7. That *there is difficulty in understanding how the speech would or could be taken down in court.* But even if Paul did not make notes of it at the time (Baumgarten), the memories of some who heard of it might not be unequal to the task of its preservation. Examples of remarkable memories are not wanting either in ancient or in modern times.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 2—8.

The Progenitor of Israel; or, the History of Abraham.

I. **The honours he received.**—1. *An overpowering revelation.* (1) Of what? Of the glory of God. "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham." This remarkable expression, "the God of glory," which occurs only here in the New and but once in the Old Testament (Psalm xxix. 3), nevertheless has its roots in and receives explanation from the latter. Without question it points back to the transaction at Sinai (Exod. xvi. 7, 10, xxiv. 16), and identifies the divine Being whose external and symbolic form, an ethereal luminous essence, appeared in the cloud upon the mountain summit (Exod. xxiv. 17), and afterwards filled the tabernacle (Exod. xl. 34), as the same who had revealed Himself to the son of Terah. Whether He appeared in a similar fashion as at Sinai cannot be decided, although Stephen's language and sundry notices in Genesis (xv. 17, xvii. 22) almost warrant an affirmative answer. In any case, it does not seem possible to reduce this theophany to a mere subjective impression on the patriarch's mind.

(2) Where? In Mesopotamia, or the region between the two rivers Tigris and Euphrates; not, however, in the northern district, but in the south, "in the land of the Chaldeans"—*i.e.*, in Ur (Gen. xv. 7), now identified as Mugheir (see "Critical Remarks"). (3) When? "Before he dwelt in Haran," and whilst his father was yet alive. The statement of Stephen does not contradict but supplements that of Genesis (xii. 1), which appears to say, but does not necessarily mean, that the order to depart from his father's house was only given to the patriarch in Haran. Haran was not Abraham's country or land of his nativity, but the land of the Chaldees was (Gen. xi. 28). 2. *An imperative command.* (1) To get out from his land and from his kindred, or, in other words, to become a pilgrim. Hard as the summons was, it was obediently complied with. Abraham's pilgrimage commenced at Ur, and reached its first stage at Haran. Five years later, on his father's (Terah's) death, it entered on its second and final stage. (2) To betake himself to a new country, the land of Canaan, wherein they, his descendants, were then dwelling; a land which God would show him, a mitigation of the preceding hardship, since a pilgrim under God's leading must always be safe, and can never come to grief. That Abraham yielded obedience to this command was a signal proof of faith (Heb. xi. 8). 3. *A gracious promise.*—(1) Of a land for a possession, the land of Canaan above-mentioned. Broad acres have ever been a coveted and cherished inheritance. But God, the supreme owner of the soil, distributes them to whomsoever He will. If this promise was broken to the hand and foot, it was kept to the heart and spirit (see below). (2) Of a son for an heir. Offspring, especially among the Hebrews, has ever been a much-prized blessing. No one man likes to be succeeded by a stranger, and far less to leave his wealth to a servant. Yet just this was the prospect which Abraham at the moment had before him (Gen. xv. 2). Like land, children are the gift of God (Psalm cxxvii. 3). (3) Of a nation for descendants. Most men count themselves happy when they can found a family; but God promised Abraham that his offspring should ultimately develop into a people (Gen. xiii. 16), which, after sojourning in a strange land (Egypt) in a state of bondage for four hundred years, should be emancipated from their thraldom and conducted to their inheritance. 4. *A solemn covenant.* One would have thought a promise from God's lips would have been sufficient guarantee for the bestowment of the above-named blessings: and, so far as God's creature is concerned, that is all he can at any time expect to receive; but, marvellous condescension! God has frequently been pleased to add to His spoken word a visible pledge or seal—in Noah's case the rainbow (Gen. ix. 12-17), in Abraham's circumcision (Gen. xvii. 10-14), the import of which was that Israel after the flesh should be a separated, purged, and consecrated people.

II. **The virtues he displayed.**—1. *Faith.* He believed in God, credited the revelation which had been given him, accepted the invitation proffered him, relied on the promise made to him, and assented to the covenant which had been struck with him. Had faith been awanting—such faith as is the substance of things hoped for (Heb. xi. 1) and reposes on God's word (John iii. 33)—nothing of a spiritual sort could have followed. 2. *Obedience.* He promptly, cheerfully, and faithfully performed that which God had commanded. First, he went out from Ur along with Terah his father, Sarah his sister-wife, and Lot his nephew (Gen. xi. 31); and afterwards, when Terah was dead, removing from Haran, he migrated southwards to Canaan. 3. *Patience.* Though on arriving in Canaan it looked as if the promise were about to fail, as if he were to obtain neither the inheritance nor the heir, yet he quietly adhered to the word which had been spoken (Rom. iv. 20; Heb. vi. 15). Nor did he abandon hope when God talked about four hundred years of servitude for his posterity, but calmly rested in God and waited for the fulfilment of what had been promised. 4. *Insight.*

He could see that Jehovah's promise was larger than any immediate or earthly fulfilment could realise—that the seed was One higher than a child of his loins, even One in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed (John viii. 56), and that the land was something more desirable than an earthly inheritance like Canaan, was a better country, even an heavenly (Heb. xi. 10).

III. **The rewards he obtained.**—1. *God's promise was fulfilled.* He got his son and heir—"Abraham begat Isaac." His son's descendants grew into a family—"Isaac begat Jacob, and Jacob the twelve patriarchs." Their households (threescore and fifteen souls, ver. 14) multiplied into a nation. The nation eventually entered on the occupation of the land (ver. 45). 2. *His own horn was exalted.* He became the ancestor of the Jewish people, the progenitor of the Messiah, the father of the faithful, the world-renowned pattern of believers.

Learn.—1. The sovereignty of God in dispensing His favours. 2. The wisdom of man in walking by faith. 3. The certainty that believers will, ultimately, inherit the promises.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 2. *The God of Glory.*—The fitness of this designation will appear when it is considered that—

I. **God's dwelling-place** is glorious. Heaven (Deut. xxvi. 15); eternity (Isa. lvii. 15); both of which are the habitation of His holiness and His glory (Isa. lxiii. 15); and in both of which are glory and honour (1 Chron. xvi. 27.

II. **His character** is glorious. In holiness (Exod. xv. 11); in power (Exod. xv. 6; Isa. lxiii. 12; 2 Thess. i. 9); in grace (Eph. i. 6). Or, summing up all His attributes His Name is glorious (1 Chron. xxix. 13; Psalm lxxii. 19).

III. **His works** are glorious. The creation of the material universe (Psalm xix. 1). His providential government of earth (Isa. lxiii. 14; Psalm cxx. 3, cxlv. 11; Matt. vi. 13) His redemption of a lost world (Psalm xcviii. 2; Isa. lii. 10; Eph. i. 3; 2 Tim. i. 9).

IV. **His word** is glorious. Twice at least is the gospel so designated (2 Cor. iv. 4; 1 Tim. i. 11).

V. **His Church** is glorious. The company of redeemed ones will yet be presented before Him as a glorious Church without spot or wrinkle (Eph. v. 27).

VI. **His final appearing** will be glorious. Christ, the image of God, will one day be manifested in glory (Col. iii. 4; Titus ii. 13).

Ver. 5. *God's Promises to His People.*

I. **Often broken in the letter but kept in the spirit.**—As it was with the promise of Canaan to Abraham.

II. **Though long delayed in fulfilment, never cancelled.**—As it was with the promise of a son to Abraham.

III. **Sometimes denied to the promisees but granted to their children.**—As it was with the inheritance which Abraham obtained not, though his seed did.

Vers. 2-5. *The History of a Called Sinner.*

I. **The divine.**—In Abraham's case this consists of two parts: first, the vision; and, secondly, the command. 1. *The vision.* The God of glory appeared. Here was (1) the *divine* suddenly appearing in the midst of the *human*, (2) the *true* in the midst of the *untrue*; (3) the *heavenly* in the midst of the *earthly*; (4) the *real* in the midst of the *unreal.* So is it with every genuine conversion; there may not be the actual vision; there may not be the glory which appeared to Abraham in Ur, and to Saul on his way to Damascus; but in all cases it is God breaking in upon man and man's idolatry; the light of the knowledge of the glory flashing into a soul; the light dispelling the darkness; the true dispersing the untrue; the heavenly supplanting the earthly. This is conversion. It is God coming *near*; coming *in*! 2. *The command.* Get thee out,—go to the land I shall

point to. It thus consists of two parts: calling *out from*, and calling *in to*. It is a Divine command, urgent and explicit.

II. **The human.**—This consists of four parts. 1. *The obedience.* "He came out of the land of the Chaldeans." He hesitated not, but rose up and obeyed. 2. *The pilgrimage.* He is not led into Canaan at once. 3. *The tribulation.* In Abraham's case it was considerable. Lot's worldliness, that was a trial; the destruction of Lot's family, and of Sodom, that was a trial; the death of Sarah, that was a trial. He had many a sorrow. 4. *The inheritance at last.* Not Babylon, nor Egypt, but the land flowing with milk and honey. Thus our whole life here is one of faith, from first to last. Get thee out, is God's message to each worldling.—*H. Bonar, D.D.*

Ver. 6. *A great Prophecy and its Fulfilment.*

I. **The prophecy.**—1. That Abraham should have a seed, when as yet he had no child. 2. That that seed should grow into a people, of which no reasonable prospect existed. 3. That that people should be enslaved for a period of four hundred years. 4. That the nation which enslaved them should be visited with severe punishment. 5. That this punishment should result in their emancipation. 6. That when emancipated they should serve God in the land of Canaan.

II. **The fulfilment.**—1. The seed predicted appeared when Isaac was born. 2. The people arose when the patriarchs began to multiply in the days of Jacob. 3. The captivity commenced to realise itself when the seventy souls comprising Jacob's family went down into Egypt. 4. The punishment threatened against their oppressors took the form of a series of plagues upon the land of Egypt. 5. The emancipation came to pass when Moses led his brethren from the house of bondage. 6. The foretold service of Jehovah was set up when Israel was established in Canaan.

Lessons.—1. The ability of God to predict and to fulfil. 2. The argument from fulfilled prophecy in support of inspiration.

Ver. 8. *The Twelve Patriarchs.*

I. **Descendants of distinguished men.**

II. **Not above cherishing sinful feelings.**

III. **Perpetrators of a hideous crime.**

IV. **Subjects of a great mercy** (ver. 13).

Ver. 2-8. *The experiences of a soul* —illustrated in the case of Abraham.

I. **A glorious vision.**—God. Not impossible to see God by the eye of faith. God still, by His Spirit and through His gospel, reveals Himself to men's souls. In this inshining of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ lies the beginning of the soul's new life.

II. **A hard precept.**—"Get thee out of thy country," etc. When God makes Himself known to a human soul in the manner above described, it is for the purpose of detaching that soul from its earthly surroundings, separating it from its mundane attachments, leading it forth from its terrestrial relationships, and causing it to start upon a nobler spiritual career

III. **A magnificent promise.** That God would conduct him (Abraham) to another and better land, and bestow it on himself and his posterity. Similarly, God never enjoins a soul to enter on a heavenward career without extending to that soul a like assurance of help and guidance towards that ideal state after which it aspires. To the soul that "comes" God will "shew."

IV. **A splendid faith.**—"Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans." Without that response to the divine precept and promise Abraham had never set his foot upon the upward way. Spiritual life on the soul's side begins with personal acts of trust and obedience. The soul that cannot sur-

render to God in hearty confidence and prompt submission lacks the capability of being redeemed.

V. **A sore disappointment.**—Though Abraham obeyed, God gave him none inheritance in the land. The reason was, that God had provided for him something better. God never intended to put him off with a few acres of material soil, but had prepared for him a city in a better country, even an heavenly. The disappointment was required to prepare him for this city. Neither does God engage that gracious souls shall not be disappointed if they seek their inheritance on earth; but he does engage that "all things shall work together for their good," and that they shall have an inheritance among the saints in light (Col. i. 12).

VI. **A sufficient consolation.**—The covenant of circumcision which formed Abraham's descendants into a people was a pledge that the land for the people would not be wanting, but would arrive in due time. So to Christian souls is God's covenant of grace, signed and sealed by the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, ample guarantee that the heavenly inheritance will not fail.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 9—16.

The Last of the Patriarchs; or, Joseph a type of Christ.

I. **The victim of a terrible crime.**—Joseph was sold into Egypt, for twenty pieces of silver (Gen. xxxvii. 28). So was Christ betrayed to the chief priests for thirty pieces of silver (Matt. xxvi. 15). The former crime was—1. *Perpetrated by Joseph's brethren.* And so was Christ's betrayal by those who were His own kinsmen according to the flesh (John i. 11), and in particular by one of His own disciples (Matt. xxvi. 14). 2. *Instigated by fraternal jealousy.* Joseph's brethren were envious of the place which Joseph had in their father's affection, and of the greatness which Joseph's dreams foreshadowed (Gen. xxxvii. 4, 5). So the real root of men's opposition to Christ was His essential goodness and greatness, which they hated. 3. *Followed by unmerited afflictions.* These, in excruciating forms of slander, accusation and imprisoment were all without being deserved, experienced by Joseph in Egypt (Gen. xxxix.). The like and worse were without cause, in after years, meted out to Joseph's antitype Jesus (Matt. xxvi., xxvii.).

II. **The subject of a marvellous interposition.**—God worked in his behalf, and gave him three things which again had their counterpart in the experience of Christ. 1. *Consolation in his troubles.* Such as arises to a good man from the enjoyment of God's favour and fellowship (Psalm xci. 15): "God was with him" (compare Gen. xxxix. 21). The same support was extended to Christ in His tribulation (John xvi. 32). 2. *Deliverance from his troubles.* "God delivered him out of all his afflictions." So Christ was delivered from death and the grave. A like favour promised to the righteous (Psalm xxxiv. 19). As Joseph escaped out of his afflictions in Egypt, so will the Christian be released from his, if not here, at least hereafter (Rev. vii. 16, 17). 3. *Promotion after his troubles.* God "gave him favour and wisdom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and made him governor over Egypt and all his house (Gen. xli. 40, 41). In like manner Christ was exalted after His humiliation (ii. 33, v. 31; Phil. ii. 9); and so to Christians is promised after life's trials a share in Christ's throne (2 Tim. ii. 12; Rev. iiii. 21), a crown of life (James i. 12), an exceeding even an eternal weight of glory (2 Cor. iv. 17).

III. **The instrument of a wondrous deliverance.**—1. *The subjects of this deliverance* were Joseph's brethren, who had sold him into bondage, with their families; and so is Christ's salvation intended for those who sold Him to death, and for their children (ii. 39). 2. *The nature of this deliverance* was a rescue

from famine which entailed sore affliction, and might have ended in death—a type of the peril, spiritual hunger, from which Christ proposed and still proposes to save men. 3. *The terms of this deliverance* were free. Joseph exacted no conditions from his brethren or father beyond this, that they should accept his kindness and live upon his bounty; and no conditions different does Christ impose on sinful men.

Learn.—1. That a man's foes are often those of his own household (Matt. x. 36). 2. That God never forsakes them that trust in Him (Josh. i. 5; 1 Sam. xii. 22; Heb. xiii. 5). 3. That all things work together for good to them that love God (Rom. viii. 28). 4. That sinful men are seldom requited according to their deserts (Psalm ciii. 10). 5. That Old Testament history was full of God and Christ (ver. 38, x. 43; 1 Cor. x. 4; 1 Peter i. 11).

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 9-14. *The Portion of God's People.*

I. **Affliction.**—Of various sorts and sizes, of differing severity and continuance (John xvi. 33).

II. **Consolation.**—From God and Christ, whose companionship the saints will or may always enjoy (Matt. xxviii. 30; Heb. xiii. 5).

III. **Promotion.**—Out of their afflictions (Psalm xxxiv. 19) and into places of honour (1 Sam. ii. 30).

IV. **Usefulness.**—In their day and generation, to the Church and to the world (Matt. v. 14-16).

V. **Renown.**—Their names being often held in remembrance by posterity (Psalm cxii. 6).

Ver. 9. *Egypt a Type of the World.*

I. **In its attractions.**—1. *A land of luxury.* "'Take thy fill, eat the fat, and drink the sweet,' was her seductive song. The means of subsistence were inconceivably abundant. The very soil teemed with life" (Baldwin Brown). 2. *A land of civilisation.* Egypt "was full of the wisdom of this world, the wisdom of the understanding, which prostitutes itself eagerly to the uses of a sensual and earthly life" (*Ibid.*). Such the world is still to them whose main ambition is learning. 3. *A land of promise.* It promised food, learning, safety, comfort, honour to Joseph's brethren; and the like attractions does the world hold out to its devotees.

II. **In its deceptions.**—1. *A land of spiritual barrenness.* In all its multitudes of gods there was none that Joseph's brethren could worship; in its elaborate ritual nothing to feed the faith of the chosen family. With a similar soul dearth is the world struck, as they who live in it find. 2. *A land of moral deterioration.* As all Egypt's civilisation could not keep her people from sinking down to lower depths of sensuality and vice, in which Israel must have shared, so neither can the culture of the present-day world prevent those who have nothing else to live upon from undergoing a similar experience. 3. *A land of intolerable bondage.* Whereas Joseph's brethren expected to find in Egypt shelter, comfort, and honour, they were not long settled on its fat soil before they discovered it to be a house of galling oppression. A true type of what the world always proves to them who try to live for it as well as in it.

III. **In its fortunes.**—As old Egypt was invaded, broken up, and its power destroyed, and God's Israel rescued from its grasp, so will it be with the present evil world, whose power indeed has been already broken, and from whose servitude the children of God will be eventually delivered (Gal. i. 4).

Ver. 10. *God's Presence with His People.*

I. **Real,** though unseen.

II. **Constant,** though not always felt.

III. **Beneficent,** though not always believed to be so.

IV. **Efficient,** though this is often doubted.

The Pharaohs mentioned in Scripture.

I. **Abraham's Pharaoh** (Gen. xii. 14-20).—Probably Amenemhat III. of the twelfth dynasty, B.C. 2300.

II. **Joseph's Pharaoh** (Gen. xl.).—Most likely Apophis, the last of the shepherd kings, who reigned B.C. 2266-1700.

III. **The Pharaoh who knew not Joseph** (Exod. i. 8).—Aahmes of the eighteenth dynasty, B.C. 1700.

IV. **The Pharaoh who commanded the first-born to be cast into the river** (Exod. i. 22).—Seti I. of the nineteenth dynasty, B.C. 1366.

V. **The Pharaoh of the oppression,** who sought to slay Moses (Exod. ii. 23).—Rameses II., B.C. 1350.

VI. **The Pharaoh of the Exodus** (Exod. xiv. 5-31).—Menephtah II., B.C. 1300.

VII. **The Pharaoh whose daughter Solomon married** (1 Kings iii. 1).—Pinetem II., the last of the twenty-first dynasty, B.C. 1033.

VIII. **The Pharaoh who invaded Judah** in the reign of Rehoboam (2 Chron. xii. 2).—Shishak, Sheshank I., of the twenty-second dynasty, B.C. 966.

IX. **The Pharaoh of Hezekiah's time** (2 Kings xviii. 21, xix. 9).—Tirhakah, the Ethiopian, of the twenty-first dynasty, B.C. 693.

X. **The Pharaoh against whom Josiah warred** (2 Kings xxiii. 29, 30; 2 Chron. xxxv. 20-24).—Necho, Naki, of the twenty-sixth dynasty, B.C. 612.

XI. **Pharaoh, the ally of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah** (Jer. xxxvii. 4-7; Ezek. xvii. 15-17).—Hophra, the second successor of Necho; Uahabra, or Apries, B.C. 591.

Ver. 12. *Corn in Egypt; or, Good News from a Far Country.*—The tidings brought to Jacob may be used to illustrate the good news of the Gospel. Jacob's tidings were—

I. **Timely.**—Corn in Egypt! This was heard of when Jacob's household was famishing (ver. 11). So Christ, the Bread of Life, came when the world was on the eve of perishing. So the gospel comes to sinners in a destitute and lost condition.

II. **Unexpected.**—Corn in Egypt! Though the famine was there as well as in Canaan. So the salvation of the gospel arose in a quarter the most unlooked for, and proceeded forth, as it were, from the very humanity which required to be redeemed. So often the good news reaches sinners in places and at times where and when they least anticipate.

III. **Joyful.**—Corn in Egypt! 1. *Not in a distant country, but close at hand.* So the gospel is nigh to men, the word of faith which the apostles preached, requiring no painful journey to obtain its provisions but only the exercise of faith. 2. *Not a small supply but an abundant store.* All countries sought to Egypt for corn. So the gospel contains "enough for each, enough for all, enough for evermore." 3. *Not on hard conditions but on easy terms.* At least for Joseph's brethren. So the gospel's heavenly corn is without money and without price.

IV. **Certain.**—Corn in Egypt. If before they started from Hebron Joseph's brethren had doubts, when they arrived in Joseph's presence they had none. So will no one question the truthfulness of the gospel news who will repair to Christ's presence in search of a supply for his soul's needs.

Ver. 16. *Buried in Canaan.*—Jacob in the field of Machpelah (Gen. l. 13) and Joseph at Shechem (Josh. xxiv. 32), or the dead hand grasping its inheritance.

I. **An act of filial piety.**—1. On the part of Joseph towards his father Jacob in fulfilling his dying request. 2. On the part of the children of Israel in remembering Joseph's last injunction.

II. **An act of lively faith.**—On the part of both Jacob and Joseph. 1. In clinging to the inheritance God had promised them. 2. In predicting the

return of Israel to Canaan. 3. In wishing to have their dust laid in its sacred soil.

III. **An act of prophetic meaning.**—It seemed to say that those whose dust was laid in Canaan's soil at their own request anticipated a time when not only their descendants should come over but themselves should arise to take possession of its acres. It was their way of hinting at a future resurrection.

Ver. 9-19. *Joseph's brethren.* These ancient patriarchs are here presented in three aspects.

I. **As perpetrators of a hideous crime.**—The sale of their brother into bondage in Egypt. The feeling which gave rise to this unnatural deed was the seemingly small and harmless one of *envy at their brother's foreshadowed greatness,* combined, as the Genesis story shows, with jealousy on account of the paternal favour he enjoyed. From this they passed to *hatred of their brother's conspicuous goodness,* which silently rebuked their wicked lives, and constrained him to report at home their ill behaviour. The next and final step was easy for those who were already murderers at heart (1 John iii. 15). At the first convenient opportunity the object of their envy and hatred was *deprived of his liberty and sold* to a company of Midianite merchants who carried him down to Egypt. The lesson is to guard against the entrance of envy into the heart, since once admitted to the bosom none can predict to what enormities it may impel its victims.

II. **As sufferers of severe retribution.**—It is not often that Nemesis so soon overtakes evil doers as it did them. Hardly had they returned to their homes than they began to be *pressed by the straits of famine,* which Scripture constantly represents as one of God's ministers of judgment on rebellious lands and peoples (2 Sam. xxiv. 13; Jer. xxix. 18; Ezek. v. 16). On visiting Egypt in search of corn they *saw their wicked plans defeated.* The dismay which seized their spirits when they beheld their long dead brother, as they supposed, seated on the throne and clothed with imperial power, is aptly pictured in the Hebrew narrative which says, that "they were troubled at his presence." Nor did vengeance close with them, but was *entailed on their descendants,* who, in after years, were subtilly dealt with, evil entreated, and finally enslaved in the land into which their fathers had sold Joseph.

III. **As recipients of undeserved mercies.**—There are few instances in which mercy is not mixed with judgment. Joseph's brethren experienced kindnesses beyond their merits. *At the hand of God* who preserved them alive, when He might have justly left them to starve for their inhumanity to their brother. *At the hand of Joseph* who treated them with clemency and rewarded them with love, inviting them to Egypt and caring for their wants throughout the years of famine, when he might have exacted vengeance for their former cruelty to him. *At the hand of their descendants* who carried their dead bodies into Canaan and buried them in Abraham's tomb, when they might have been left to rot in the sepulchres of Egypt.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 17—44.

The Founder of the Nation; or, the Biography of Moses in Three Chapters.

I. **From one to forty** (ver. 20-22).—1. *Born in an evil time.* When the oppression of his countrymen was so cruel that either Hebrew parents cast out their children to perish rather than see them live to experience the bitter servitude under which themselves had groaned, or Hebrew children were cast out by Pharaoh's order to the end that they might not live. This latter interpretation accords best with the Old Testament narrative (Exod. i. 22). 2. *Exposed to a cruel fate.* Brought forth in an hour of sorrow, with no better prospect before him than either to be strangled by a midwife's cord or thrown into the river,

Moses was for three months, on account of his extreme beauty, secretly nourished in the house of his father Amram; but at length, when concealment was no longer possible, in an ark of bulrushes, daubed with slime and pitch, he was laid by his mother in the flags by the Nile side (Exod. ii. 3). The writer to the Hebrews cites the conduct of Moses' parents as an instance of faith (Heb. xi. 23). 3. *Rescued by a strange providence.* By accident it seemed, though in fact by the overruling hand of God, the daughter of Pharaoh—the very king whose decree had caused his exposure—having with her maidens come to the river side to wash, found him, "took him up" out of the water, and "nourished him as her own son"—*i.e.*, adopted him. (See Exod. ii. 5-10.) Josephus says this daughter of Pharaoh was named Thermuthis. She was the sister of Rameses II. or daughter of Seti I. (See "Critical Remarks.") 4. *Educated in a king's court.* Probably like Rameses himself, Moses was for some years "left in the house of the women and of the royal concubines, after the manner of the maidens of the palace" (Brugsch, *Egypt under the Pharaohs*, ii. 39), where he received the nurture and training requisite to fit him for the higher studies and more arduous exercises of youth and manhood. Tradition speaks of him as having studied "mathematics, natural philosophy, engineering, warfare, grammar, and medicine," while Josephus (*Ant.*, II. x. 1) places to his credit a successfully conducted campaign against the Ethiopians. With this accords Stephen's statement that Moses "was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in his words and works" (ver. 22).

II. **From forty to eighty** (vers. 23-29).—1. *A patriotic inspiration.* "To visit his brethren, the children of Israel"—to visit in the sense of sympathising with and succouring them (compare Luke i. 68, vii. 16; Acts xv. 14). Whether special means were taken under God by Moses or his mother to keep alive the knowledge of his kinship with the down-trodden Hebrews is not recorded, but, on reaching man's estate, the sense of that kinship having asserted itself, he refused any longer to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter (Heb. xi. 24). 2. *A chivalrous interference.* Having paid a visit to the brickfields, with which up to this time he may have been comparatively unacquainted, he beheld what the monuments tell us was a frequent scene—one of his brethren suffering wrong or enduring blows at the taskmaster's hand; and, his patriotic blood leaping within his veins, he warded off the blows, laid the ruthless slave-driver lifeless at his feet, and, thinking that nobody saw, buried him in the sand (Exod. ii. 12). 3. *A mistaken supposition.* He imagined his countrymen would have understood how God had called him to deliver them, but they did not. The blow that day struck was premature. The people were not ready to rise, and he was not yet qualified to lead. Forty years more of suffering for them, and of discipline for him, were needed before the great bell of liberty would ring in Egypt's land. Men are often in a hurry; God never is. Men often strike before the iron is hot; God never does. 4. *An angry response.* The day after, when he would have parted two of his quarrelling countrymen, saying, "Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?" (compare Gen. xiii. 8), he that did the wrong thrust him away, saying, "Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? wouldst thou kill me as thou didst the Egyptian yesterday?" Wrongdoers always resent the interference of third parties—a clear proof they are in the wrong. 5. *A precipitate flight.* Having discovered through the choleric questions of his countrymen that his offer of himself as a deliverer was premature, and that his deed of yesterday was known, he saw that thenceforward Egypt would be no place of safety for him, and accordingly betook himself to Midian (see "Critical Remarks"). 6. *An obscure life.* There, having met with Jethro the shepherd priest of the land, who granted him Zipporah to wife, he forgot his early patriotic ambitions in the humdrum occupation of feeding sheep, and in conjugal felicity (Exod. ii. 16-22).

III. **From eighty to one hundred and twenty** (vers. 30-44).—1. *A great sight.* (1) When? At the close of the second period of forty years, on the death of Rameses II. (Exod. ii. 23). At the opening of the third. At the beginning of the reign of Menephtah II. When the oppression of the people had become intolerable (Exod. ii. 23). When God's time, as distinguished from Moses', had arrived. (2) Where? In the wilderness of Mount Sinai (see "Critical Remarks"), at the back side of the desert, at the mountain of God, even Horeb (Exod. iii. 1). God delights to reveal Himself to His people in solitudes. (3) What? "An angel"—the angel of the Lord, or Jehovah" (Exod. iii. 2)—"appeared to him in a flame of fire in a bush," which burned and yet was not consumed. (4) How? Wherein lay the greatness of the sight? In its unexpectedness, in its supernaturalness, in its impressiveness. 2. *A heavenly voice.* That of Jehovah, who (1) revealed His own character as the covenant God of the Hebrew fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (ver. 32); (2) cautioned Moses against irreverence before the Holy One, whose presence consecrated the very ground whereon He stood (ver. 33); (3) announced that He (Jehovah) had beheld and sympathised with the sufferings and heard the groanings of His people in Egypt (ver. 34); and (4) intimated His intention to deliver them and to despatch Moses into Egypt for that purpose (ver. 34). 3. *An exalted commission.* Considering (1) by whom it was issued—God, the God of glory (ver. 2) and the God of the fathers (ver. 32); (2) to whom it was entrusted—the man whom his countrymen had refused, but whom God had chosen; (3) through whose hand it was to be executed, that of the angel who had appeared to him; and (4) for what it was appointed—that Moses should be to Israel, who had rejected him, both a ruler and a deliverer, or redeemer, and in both (according to Stephen) a type of Christ. 4. *A splendid achievement.* (1) As a liberator he (Moses) brought out the children of Israel from Egypt, having wrought, in his work of emancipation, which began with the Exodus and ended (so far as Moses was concerned) with the forty years of wandering, signs, and wonders (compare ii. 22), first in Egypt (Exod. vii.—xii.), next at the Red Sea (Exod. xiv.), and after that in the wilderness (Exod. xv., xvi., xvii., etc.). (2) As a prophet he foretold to them the coming, in after years, of a prophet like unto, but greater than, himself, even their Messiah, whom in the person of Jesus they had refused to hear. (3) As a lawgiver he conferred upon them "living oracles" received by himself from Jehovah—viz., the whole system of moral and ceremonial precepts composing the law of Moses, here characterised as "living" to describe not their effect, which was not always life-giving because of the corruption of men's hearts (Rom. viii. 3), but their design, which was to impart life to all by whom they should be obeyed (Lev. xviii. 5; Rom. vii. 10). (4) As an architect he gave them the tabernacle of the testimony in the wilderness, which he made according to the pattern he had seen—in the mount of Sinai (Exod. xxv. 9, 40). 5. *A disgraceful requital.* As at the commencement of his illustrious career, so at its close, his countrymen "thrust him from them," declined to obey his instructions, but turned back into Egypt, and (ver. 39) yet Moses, towards the termination of his leadership, thought less of his people's thankfulness to himself than of their deplorable ingratitude to God (Deut. xxxii. 6).

See in Moses: 1. A pattern of true greatness. 2. An example of life's vicissitudes. 3. A type of Jesus Christ.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 17. *The Time of the Promise.*

I. **Fixed by God,** as all times are.

II. **Remembered by God,** who forgets none of His sovereign and gracious appointments.

III. **Honoured by God,** who never

fails to implement a promise He has made, when the time for its fulfilment has arrived.

The Increase of Nations.—Occurs as in Israel.

I. **Always in accordance with Divine providential arrangements** (Job xii. 23; Psalm cvii. 38).

II. **Often in spite of the most adverse circumstances** (Exod. i. 12).

III. **Never beyond the limits prescribed by God** (Acts xvii. 26).

Vers. 20-39. *The Story of Moses.*

I. **The son of a Hebrew mother.**—No imaginary or legendary character but a real historical personage. Distinguished in infancy by remarkable beauty, which His parents regarded as an omen of future greatness (Exod. ii. 2; Heb. xi. 23). Exposed to a cruel fate—cast out into the Nile, placed in an ark of bulrushes by the river's brink. Compare the story of Sargina I. of Babylon. See below.

II. **The foundling of an Egyptian princess.**—In the providence of God this led to the preservation of Moses' life and his education in such a way as to fit him for his subsequent calling and career. The All-wise knows the best schools in which to train those whom He intends afterwards to employ as His instruments.

III. **The kinsman of slaves.**—The feeling of nationality cannot easily be eradicated from the human heart. Out of this rises love of country, patriotism, sense of brotherhood. When it first began to stir in Moses cannot be told; at the age of forty it was too strong to be suppressed (Heb. xi. 24).

IV. **The liberator of his people.**—Though not exactly in his time, yet in God's time, he was honoured to lead his down-trodden countrymen from the house of bondage (Heb. xi. 27).

V. **The founder of a nation.**—Having conducted his followers to Sinai, he there formed them into a people, with a regularly organised community, with laws and statutes for the regulation of their civil and religious affairs.

VI. **The prophet of a new religion.**—He imparted to them the terms on which alone they could be regarded as Jehovah's people, or Jehovah could consider Himself their God—gave them the ten commandments and the multifarious ordinances of the ceremonial or Levitical law.

NOTE.—Legend of the infancy of Sargina I., of Babylon, who lived about fifteen or sixteen centuries before the Christian era—*i.e.*, not long before the birth of Moses. 1. I am Sargina, the great king; the king of Agani. 2. My mother knew not my father: my family were the rulers of the land. 3. My city was the city of Atzu-pirani, which is on the banks of the river Euphrates. 4. My mother conceived me: in a secret place she brought me forth. 5. She placed me in an ark of bulrushes: with bitumen she closed me up. 6. She threw me into the river, which did not enter into the ark to me. 7. The river carried me: to the dwelling of Akki, the water-carrier, it brought me. 8. Akki, the water-carrier, in his goodness of heart lifted me up from the river. 9. Akki, the water-carrier, brought me up as his own son. 10. Akki, the water-carrier, placed me with a tribe of Foresters. 11. Of this tribe of Foresters, Ishtar made me king. 12. And for . . . years I reigned over them.—*Records of the Past*, v. 3, first series.

Ver. 31. *The Burning Bush* (Exod. iii. 2).

I. **A supernatural phenomenon.**—Revealed by two things: (1) the fact that the bush, though burning, was not consumed; and (2) the voice which proceeded from its midst.

II. **An impressive spectacle.**—It caused Moses to tremble. Chiefly (1) Before the Divine presence (ver. 32) and (2) At the Divine communications (ver. 33).

III. **A suggestive symbol.**—(1) Of the holiness of God, which burns against every manifestation of sin; (Heb. xii. 29) (the flame). (2) Of the imperishability of the Church of God

which may be cast into the fire but cannot be destroyed (Isa. xliii. 2) (the bush).

Ver. 33. *Holy Ground.*

I. Where God manifests His presence.

II. Where God reveals His character.

III. Where God makes known His will.

IV. Where God communes with His people.

V. Where God is worshipped by believing hearts.

Ver. 35. *The Angel in the Bush.*—That this was no created spirit but the angel of Jehovah, or Jehovah Himself, is clearly taught by Stephen, who besides calling Him the Lord (ver. 31) represents Him as—

I. **Assuming the Divine name.**—"I am the God of thy fathers" (ver. 32).

II. **Claiming Divine worship.**—"Loose the shoes from thy feet" (ver. 33).

III. **Exercising Divine attributes.**—"I have seen," "I have heard" (Omniscience); "I have come down," "I will send" (Omnipotence) (ver. 34).

IV. **Speaking Divine words.**—Imparting living oracles unto Moses (ver. 38).

Ver. 37. *A Prophet like unto Moses.*—See on iii. 22.

Ver. 38. *The Church in the Wilderness: a Type of The Christian Church on Earth.*—In respect of—

I. **Its origin.**—Called out of Egypt, the then symbol of the world; redeemed from the house of bondage which was emblematical of man's natural condition.

II. **Its position.**—In the wilderness; a fitting picture of the spiritually barren world through which the Church of Christ has to journey.

III. **In its privileges.**—Manifold and high. 1. *The divine presence.* The angel of the Lord—which also the Church of the New Testament enjoys (Matt. xviii. 20, xxviii. 20). 2. *A divinely qualified teacher.* Moses with whom the angel spake at Mount Sinai—which, too, the Christian Church has in the indwelling Holy Spirit (John xvi. 13; 1 John ii. 20, 27), and in the apostles and prophets, pastors and teachers (1 Cor. xii. 28; Eph. iv. 11), bestowed upon it by its exalted Head. 3. *A divine revelation.* The "living oracles" delivered to Moses—which again the gospel Church possesses in the words of Christ and His apostles preserved in the New Testament records (Heb. v. 12). 4. *A divine institution.*—The tabernacle—which once more has its counterpart in the Christian sanctuary, congregation, or Church.

IV. **In its business.**—Which was twofold. 1. *To witness for Jehovah in the then world.* Israel Jehovah's witnesses (Isa. xliii. 10); the apostles Christ's witnesses (v. 32); and Christians generally expected to be living epistles of Christ (2 Cor. iii. 3). 2. *To overcome its adversaries on the way to Canaan.* So Christians have a constant warfare to maintain against innumerable foes (Eph. vi. 10-17; 1 Tim. vi. 12; 2 Tim. ii. 3).

V. **In its imperfection.**—The Church in the wilderness was guilty of not a few heinous sins—disobedience to its leader, Moses, hankering after Egypt, apostasy from Jehovah; all which have their equivalents in the faults of the people of Christ.

VI. **In its discipline.**—The Church in the wilderness was chastised for its sins, first by judicial visitations, such as the fiery serpents, next by powerful adversaries like the Moabites and Midianites, which were raised up against them, after that by spiritual hardening, so that they plunged into deeper idolatry, and lastly by exile and captivity in Babylon. So the Church of to-day, either as a whole or in its individual members, is not left without chastisement for its shortcomings and backslidings, its transgressions and iniquities. It, too, has its providential visitations by which its numbers are reduced, its open and secret opponents by which its progress is hindered, its seasons of spiritual decline, in which it

lapses from the faith, its removals into exile and captivity, where it sighs and cries for the liberty it once enjoyed.

VII. **In its goal.**—Canaan, which in a heavenly form is the destination of the New Testament Church.

Vers. 39-43. *The Apostasy of Israel.*

I. **Its occasion.**—The absence of Moses. When the Christian Church reposes with too much dependence on its visible leaders it is prone to withdraw its confidence from its invisible Head.

II. **Its form.**—A lapsing into the idolatry of Egypt, which led to the people's making, or Aaron making at their request, an image of the famous calf or bull worshipped in Egypt, either the bull Apis at Memphis, or the bull Mnevis at Heliopolis. How deeply ingrained in them this calf or bull worship had been appears from the circumstance that centuries after their settlement in Canaan they, in times of spiritual declension, reverted to it (1 Kings xii. 28; 2 Kings xi. 29). So when the New Testament Israel loses sight of its invisible Head it is prone to revert to its old sins (2 Peter i. 9).

III. **Its punishment.**—1. *Withdrawal of Divine restraint.* Joined to their idols they were left alone (Hosea iv. 17). Forsaken by them, God in turn forsook them (2 Chron. xv. 2). Having given up Jehovah He gave up them, so that they sank into deeper and more shameless idolatries. Instead of offering unto Jehovah slain beasts and sacrifices during the forty years of wilderness wandering as they should have done, they carried about the tabernacle of Moloch, a small portable tent in which was enshrined the image of the idol and a model of the planet Saturn, to which, according to Diodorus Siculus, horrid child sacrifices were offered at Carthage. So when God, in punishment for sin, withdraws restraining grace from His people, they commonly plunge into viler and more heinous wickedness than they had before committed, sin being thus avenged by liberty to sin. 2. *Infliction of positive pains.* The Israelites, through that very tendency to apostatise so early manifested by them, were ultimately driven into exile beyond Babylon; and so will they who persevere in forsaking the living God be eventually punished with perpetual banishment from His holy presence (Rom. ii. 8; 2 Thess. i. 9).

Ver. 44. *The Tabernacle of the Testimony in the Wilderness.*

I. **An actual historic building.**—Necessary now to insist on this since the higher critics have imagined and keep on asserting that the Mosaic tabernacle never had a veritable existence at all, but was only a fictional structure, fashioned after the model of the temple but on a smaller scale, and projected into the prehistoric wilderness as a convenient free space on which it might be fictionally erected without risk of colliding with historical and well-authenticated facts—which might be troublesome. But in addition to the theory of a fictional tabernacle being attended with numberless insuperable difficulties—such as, the unlikelihood of a post-exilic fiction-monger entering into minute details of construction like those given in Exodus; the improbability of a late author, who had never himself been in the wilderness, furnishing so accurate a representation of the geographical situation as archæological research shows the Mosaic account to be; the inconceivability of any honest writer stating that the tabernacle had been made by Moses after a pattern shown to him by Jehovah in the Mount, when in point of fact it was never made at all, but only imagined by the writer himself, who took the first or second temple for his model; the falsification of Pentateuchal history which must ensue if the tabernacle of Moses never was an actual building; the contradiction to statements in the historical and prophetical books which must be made if the fiction theory is correct; in addition to these the actual historic character of the tabernacle is

vouched for by both Stephen and the writer to the Hebrews (viii. 2, 5, ix. 2, 3, 6, 8, 11, 21, xiii. 10). See an article by the present writer, entitled "The Tabernacle and the Temple" in *The Theological Monthly*, April 1891.

II. **A divinely sketched building.**—If Moses was the constructor of the tabernacle (and in this sense may be styled its architect) its true designer was God. This introduces into the religion of ancient Israel that which is so keenly objected to, but without which no religion can be of permanent value or saving power—viz., the supernatural element. If Christianity is not "of God" in the highest sense of that expression, it will not succeed permanently in binding the consciences of men.

III. **A provisional building.**—It was intended for the temporary accommodation of the Ark during the period of the wilderness wanderings, and until a permanent habitation could be secured for it in the place which Jehovah should choose. Hence it was in due course superseded by the Temple of Solomon, which in turn has been displaced by the Christian Church.

IV. **A symbolic building.**—1. *Of the Divine fellowship with Israel.* (1) The Holy of Holies with its Ark of the Covenant, its Glory burning between the cherubim, its mercy seat, its tables of testimony, etc. (Heb. ix. 2-5), was an emblem of the divine presence, the divine majesty, the divine character, and the divine conditions of fellowship between Jehovah and Israel. (2) The holy place, with its altar of incense, its seven-branched candlestick, and its tables of shew bread, was an emblem of what that fellowship consisted in—spiritual acceptance, spiritual illumination, and spiritual nourishment of the believing worshipper by Jehovah on the one side, and on the other spiritual adoration of God (the incense), spiritual shining for God (the lamps), and spiritual consecration to God (the loaves). (3) The outer court, with its altar of burnt offering and laver, was an emblem of the only way in which such fellowship with Jehovah could be reached—viz., by atonement (the altar) and regeneration (the laver). 2. *Of the Divine fellowship with believers in the Christian Church.* This thought is elaborated and fully wrought out in the Epistle to the Hebrews (ix. x).

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 45—53.

From Joshua to Jesus; or, the Downward Course of Israel.

I. **Joshua and the conquest.**—1. *The clearing out of the nations from Canaan.* (1) Effected instrumentally by the swords of Joshua and his warriors. Stephen does not hint that the extermination of the Canaanites was a horrible impiety; this is mostly done by tender-hearted "moderns" who see nothing wrong in shooting down "inferior races" when they happen to be possessed of desirable lands. (2) Sanctioned providentially and even commanded verbally by God Himself (Deut. vii. 1, 2, xxxii. 49), so that Stephen represents the nations as having been thrust out by God before the face of the fathers of Israel. That God had a perfect right to eject the degraded Canaanites from their land, and to do so in whatever way He chose, no one can dispute. That He selected Joshua and his warriors for this purpose could not render the action wrong on God's part, and was ample justification for Joshua. 2. *The entering in of Israel into their possession.* This took place under the leadership of Joshua, who in conducting Israel to Canaan served as an eminent type of Christ. In taking over the soil the Israelites did nothing different from what has been going on ever since in the providence of God. Degenerate nations retire, go down, and become extinct before or are absorbed in superior peoples who are better able to occupy the land. 3. *The establishment in Canaan of Jehovah's worship.* Stephen clearly believed that Moses had made a tabernacle in the wilderness, and that Joshua had fetched

it into Canaan, setting it up first at Gilgal (Josh. iv. 18, 19), and latterly at Shiloh (Josh. xviii. 1, xix. 51). In so doing Israel under Joshua began her national history well. Had she adhered to Jehovah and His tabernacle her subsequent fortunes, and perhaps the history of the world, would have been different.

II. **David and the monarchy.**—Two things noted. 1. *Concerning David's character.* That he found favour in the sight of God, and was a man after God's own heart (xiii. 22; 1 Sam. xiii. 14), who delighted to do Jehovah's will (Psalm xl. 8). This does not imply that David never fell into sin. 2. *Concerning David's request.* To be allowed to find a habitation for the God of Jacob. This request, though denied him, was pronounced good and accepted as an evidence of his piety (1 Chron. xxii. 7, 8). In David's days Israel's national glory reached its zenith. In the next reign it began to decline.

III. **Solomon and the temple.**—1. *The honour conferred upon David's son.* He was permitted to carry out his father's project and erect a house for the worship of Jehovah (1 Kings vi., viii.). A signal honour of which in his latter days he became unmindful (1 Kings xi. 1-13). Eminent service in and to the Church is no certain guarantee against apostasy. For the notion that Stephen intended "to declare that Solomon built the temple without warrant, in place of the tabernacle" (Weizsäcker), there is not the shadow of foundation. 2. *The silence preserved about his reign.* It is significant that Stephen adds nothing more about David's son; as if he desired to convey the impression that nothing more to Solomon's advantage or Israel's could be said. Possibly this was so. Nevertheless, *Nihil nisi bonum de mortuis* is an excellent maxim.

IV. **Isaiah and Jehovah.**—1. *The decline in religion after Solomon.* Notwithstanding the magnificence of the temple worship, and perhaps partly because of its magnificence, it began to degenerate—drifting first into mere external ritual, and latterly terminating in shameful and shameless idolatry (see Isa. i. 11-15, ii. 8). 2. *The lofty doctrine of the prophets.* That Jehovah was not a local divinity, but the sovereign of the universe; that He could not be confined to any material edifice, however imposing, since heaven was His throne and the earth His footstool; and that He could not be served by any mere bodily performance or visible ceremonial, but only by the true homage of the heart. 3. *The evil fortunes of the prophets.* The people, stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart, resisted the Holy Ghost who spake in them (2 Sam. xxiii. 2; 2 Peter i. 21), and persecuted them, sometimes even unto death (Matt. xxiii. 29-35).

V. **Jesus and His contemporaries.**—1. *Their exalted privileges.* (1) They had received the law, as it was ordained by angels, or as the ordinance of angels (Psalm lxviii. 17). (2) They had been honoured by the coming to them of the righteous One (John i. 11). 2. *Their heinous sins.* (1) They had not kept the law (John vii. 19). (2) They had betrayed and murdered the righteous One (ii. 23).

Learn.—1. The powerlessness of mere external privilege to save. 2. The heredity that shows itself in sin as well as in piety. 3. The criminality of those who know the truth, and do not walk in accordance therewith.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 44-47. *Four Old Testament Typical Persons.*

I. **Moses.**—As 1. Deliverer. 2. Mediator. 3. Lawgiver.

II. **Joshua.**—As 1. Captain. 2. Conqueror. 3. Consolidator.

III. **David.**—As 1. Shepherd. 2. King.

IV. **Solomon.**—As 1. Builder of the Temple. 2. As Prince of Peace.

Ver. 47. *The House and its Dwellers.*

I. **The house.**—There was on earth once a house which Jehovah called His own. Though the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands, yet

He chose for Himself a local habitation, and built for Himself a place of special abode. For many an age it was simply a tent, of stakes, and boards, and curtains; in after ages it was a palace, of marble, and gold, and cedar, and brass; but whether it was named Jehovah's tent or Jehovah's temple, it was still the place of His habitation.

II. **The dwellers.**—They of old were Israel. To them pertained the house, and the altar, and the mercy seat, and the glory.

III. **The blessedness.**—"Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house." This blessedness is both negative and positive. It arises out of that which we are freed from, and that which we gain. 1. *The negative.* On entering the house of God, we are delivered from the dangers which beset all who remain outside. 2. *The positive.* (1) *Love.* Jehovah's house is specially the abode of love. It was love that thought of such a house for us; it was love that planned it, and love that built it. It is love too that fills it, and provides all its excellences. (2) *Companionship.* It is not into a cell we enter—a prison, a desert, a place of isolation. It is into a home, a well-replenished habitation, a well-peopled city. Israel's temple was such, to which the tribes went up. Much of life's happiness is derived from the fellowship of heart with heart, and the communion of saints is no small portion of our joy, even here. Here, on earth, companionship is imperfect, and is sometimes a hindrance, a vexation. Not so hereafter, in the "house not made with hands," the city of habitation, the eternal tabernacle. (3) *Service.* "They *serve* Him day and night in His temple." "His servants shall serve Him." It is to *serve*, as well as to *reign*, that we are called. Such service is, in all its parts, blessedness. David knew the blessedness of service in his day. (4) *Glory.* At present it is not glory, save in anticipation.—*H. Bonar, D.D.*

Vers. 48-50. *The Greatness and Majesty of God.*

I. **The throne of His glory.**—Heaven. A throne. 1. *Resplendent.*—Filled with His presence. 2. *Exalted.*—High above this world (Psalm ciii. 19). 3. *Powerful.*—Wielding authority over all created things.

II. **The footstool of His feet.**—The earth. As such: 1. The work of His hands (Isa. xlviii. 13). 2. Under His rule (Psalm cx. 1). 3. Destined to share His glory (Isa. lx. 13).

III. **The place of His rest.**—1. *The temple which Solomon built*, symbolically (Psalm cxxxii. 14). 2. *The universe*, which He himself built, really.

Learn.—1. The reverence due to God (Eccl. v. 2). 2. The hopefulness of earth's future (Isa. lx. 13). 3. The spirituality of divine worship (John iv. 21-24).

Vers. 51-53. *A Terrible Indictment.*

I. **Jehovah's law broken.**—And that by men who had received it at the hands of angels.

II. **Jehovah's prophets murdered.**—And that by the men they had come to instruct.

III. **Jehovah's Son slain.**—And that by those who should have been His protectors.

IV. **Jehovah's Spirit resisted.**—And that by the men who had been pledged to obey.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 54—60.

The Martyrdom of Stephen; or, the First Taste of Blood.

I. **Stephen's last look into heaven** (ver. 55).—1. *Where he stood.* (1) In the council chamber. Baur was greatly exercised to understand "how Stephen could have seen the heavens opened in the room in which, doubtless, the sitting of the Sanhedrim was held;" but the eye of faith can see heaven from any spot on earth. Moses beheld it from the land of Egypt (Heb. xi. 27), Isaiah from the temple

(Isa. vi. 1), Ezekiel from the banks of the Chebar (Ezek. i. 1), Peter from the house top (Acts x. 11), John from Patmos (Rev. iv. 1). (2) Confronted by infuriated foes who gnashed upon him with their teeth. No external circumstances can dim faith's eye, or prevent it from looking within the veil. Varied as were the situations of those just mentioned, all alike gazed on things unseen (Heb. xi. 1). 2. *How he looked.* (1) His internal condition. Filled with the Holy Ghost. As water rises to its level, so does the Holy Spirit of which water is an emblem. As fire and flame ascend to the skies, so does the Holy Spirit, of which these are symbols, ever soar heavenward. The Spirit, which is "God's breath in man," habitually "returns to its (place of) birth" (George Herbert). The Holy Ghost, descending from above and entering the human soul, instinctively impels it to look above. (2) His external manner. With steadfast gaze, like that with which the apostles followed the departing Christ (i. 10), he fixed his eyes upon the scene which unfolded itself before his mental vision. There is no need to ask whether he saw the sky through the chamber window. The upward glance was only a symbol of the inward look. 3. *What he saw.* (1) The glory of God. The luminous symbol of the divine presence which Abraham beheld in Ur (ver. 2), Moses upon Sinai (Exod. xxxiii. 23), and Ezekiel at Chebar (Ezek. i. 28), which filled first the tabernacle (Exod. xl. 34), and afterwards the temple (1 Kings viii. 11), which shone round the shepherds (Luke ii. 9), and appeared upon the transfiguration mount (Luke ix. 32). (2) Jesus standing on the right hand of God. As if He had risen to protect or receive His servant, say some, though it is doubtful whether any special significance should be attached to Christ's attitude. The point of importance is that Stephen, on the eve of martyrdom, enjoyed a vision of the glorified Christ. Saul (ix. 17), and John (Rev. i. 13), had similar visions, though neither of these occurred at death (see "Hints on ver. 55").

II. **Stephen's last testimony for Christ** (ver. 56).—1. *Introduced by a note of exclamation.* "Behold!" as if he meant to say: "This from a dying man receive as certain," or to call attention to its supreme importance as his last word of testimony that would fall upon their ears. 2. *Continued by a startling declaration.* (1) That he was looking into heaven—"I see the heavens opened," those heavens out of which Christ affirmed He had come (John iii. 13; vi. 38), and into which His disciples had beheld Him depart (i. 11); which heavens, therefore, were a reality, and not merely a fiction of the mind (John xiv. 2), and nearer to them than they had ever imagined. (2) That in heaven He beheld Jesus—I see "the Son of Man," referring to Him by this name that there might be no mistake as to whom he meant—the personage they knew so well, who, when He stood where Stephen then stood, had called Himself by this designation (Matt. xxvi. 64)—no mistake as to His identity, and none as to His continued existence in a bodily form, and therefore none as to His resurrection. (3) That the Jesus whom he saw was standing on the right hand of God. Perhaps a circumstance full of comfort for the dying deacon, as if it indicated that Christ had risen from His throne in holy eagerness, either to support and protect, or to receive and welcome His courageous servant (but see above), certainly a statement fitted to alarm those who remembered that Jesus of Nazareth had used similar speech concerning Himself (Mark xiv. 62), and had even spoken about coming with great power and glory (Mark xiii. 26), fitted to suggest that the Son of man, whom they had crucified, had already started up, and was on the move to avenge His death. 3. *Interrupted by a fierce demonstration.* (1) By an angry shout, crying out, most likely, that he should be silenced and put to death, as the people had before cried out against his Master (Matt. xxvii. 23; John xix. 12), and afterwards against Paul (xxii. 22, 23). (2) By a suggestive action, stopping their ears, as if they could not listen without holy horror to what

they regarded as blasphemy. (Compare Zech. vii. 11.) 4. *Followed by a murderous infliction.* The assault which ensued was—(1) Sudden. "They rushed upon him," under the impulse of blind and unreflecting fury, feeling, perhaps, with regard to the thought that was in their hearts, that "'twere well it were done quickly" (*Macbeth*, i. 7). (2) Unanimous—"with one accord"—a striking contrast to the "one accord" of the disciples (ii. 46), a unity of hate and sin rather than of love and grace. (3) Violent. "They cast him out of the city," as the inhabitants of Nazareth had once done to Christ (Luke iv. 29), "and they stoned him," as the men of Jerusalem had more than once threatened to do to Christ (John x. 31, xi. 8). (4) Illegal. At this time the Jews possessed not the power of inflicting capital punishment. (See "Critical Remarks.") Yet (5) Deliberate. "The witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul." This accorded with the Hebrew law, which required the accusers to begin the work of lapidation (Deut. xiii. 10, xvii. 7). Many who shudder at breaking the letter of the law have no scruples at violating its spirit.

III. **Stephen's last cry for himself** (ver. 59).—Uttered—1. *With perfect calmness of spirit.* Recognising that his end was come he quietly prepared to receive the lethal missiles. No cry for mercy from his enemies escaped his lips, no fluster or fear appeared in his countenance, speech, or manner. With absolute composure he resigned himself to die—in this furnishing a bright example to Christians. (Compare the fortitude of Paul, xxi. 13, xxv. 11.) 2. *With unfaltering trust in Christ.* Addressing Him as Lord Jesus, Stephen intimated in the hearing of his executioners his faith in Christ's divinity (Lord) and ability to save (Jesus). Such faith has enabled multitudes since Stephen's day to die in peace. Nothing else will impart the calm which Stephen displayed. 3. *With certain hope of felicity.* As Christ, following the example of the Psalmist (Psalm xxxi. 5), had commended His spirit to the Father's hand (Luke xxiii. 46), so Stephen now commends his spirit to the hands of Christ. A proper model for the dying Christian. So the dying Huss was often heard to repeat the words: "Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit"; and was followed by his fellow-martyr Jerome of Prague (Neander's *Church History*, vol. ix., pp. 536, 549, Bohn's Edition). Since Christ is in glory, the soul that His hands receive must be blessed indeed.

IV. **Stephen's last prayer for his enemies** (ver. 60).—1. *Its manner.* (1) With reverent humility—"he kneeled down." As Solomon did when invoking Jehovah's presence to come into the temple (2 Chron. vi. 13); as Daniel when he prayed towards Jerusalem (Dan. vi. 10); as Christ in Gethsemane (Luke xxii. 41); as Peter when raising Dorcas (ix. 40); as Paul at Miletus (xx. 36) and at Tyre (xxi. 5). Kneeling most suitable when the soul is charged with deep emotion. Stephen "stood when he prayed for himself: he kneeled when he prayed for his enemies" (*Trapp*). (2) With fervent supplication—"he cried with a loud voice," thus marking the intensity of his desire. Although noise in devotion is not always to be mistaken for spiritual ardour (1 Kings xix. 28), and although feeling may sometimes be too deep for utterance (1 Sam. i. 13), yet as a rule suppliants, who are in earnest, cry aloud and spare not (Psalm cxlii. 1; Matt. xx. 31). 2. *Its burden.* That the sin of his executioners and murderers might not be laid to their charge. A prayer modelled after Christ's on the Cross (Luke xxiii. 34). Such a prayer as had never been offered till Christ set the example (contrast the prayer of Zechariah, 2 Chron. xxiv. 21), and such a prayer as has no parallel outside the Christian Church, though within such parallels are not wanting. John Huss, the Bohemian Reformer, when the order was given to kindle the flames around him, only uttered these words: "Lord Jesus! I endure with humility this cruel death for Thy sake; and I pray Thee to pardon all my enemies" (Waddington's *Church History*, p. 595).

3. *Its effect.* What impression Stephen's prayer produced upon his enemies cannot be told, though, it may be surmised, that one at least never forgot it, and that Augustine's remark is true, "If Stephen had not prayed the Church would not have possessed Paul." As to Stephen himself, his devotions calmed his spirit and enabled him to fall asleep. And what a falling asleep it was! "He fell asleep among flints and awoke among jewels" (*Besser*). The same writer adds: "Stephen means a garland or crown. When his mother named her child so she little thought of an imperishable crown of honour; but Stephen's spiritual mother, the Holy Church, honours the first bearer of her martyr crown by celebrating his memory on the day after Christmas, according to the motto 'yesterday was Christ born upon the earth, that to-day Stephen might be born in heaven'" (*Besser*).

"Foremost and nearest to His throne,
By perfect robes of triumph known,
And likest Him in look and tone
The holy Stephen kneels,
With steadfast gaze, as when the sky
Flew open to his fainting eye,
Which, like a fading lamp flash'd high
Seeing what death conceals."—*Keble.*

Conclusion.—They who would share with Stephen the glory of wearing that immortal crown must 1. Look by faith into that opened heaven into which he gazed; 2. Contemplate with believing adoration that exalted Christ whom he beheld; 3. Testify by their lives, as he did by his, to the Saviour in whom they trust; 4. Commit themselves to Christ as he did when they come to die; and 5. Fall asleep as he did, breathing forth forgiveness upon all.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 56. *The opened Heavens.*

I. **For the glory of God to shine through.**

II. **For the grace of God to come through.**

III. **For the spirit of man to pass through.**—1. By the exercise of faith. 2. In the offering up of prayer. 3. At the hour of dissolution.

Ver. 58. *Changed Stones.*—The stones cast by the world against Christ's witnesses are changed.

I. Into **monuments** of shame for the enemies of the truth.

II. Into **jewels** in the crowns of the glorified martyrs.

III. Into the **seed** of new life for the Church of Christ.—*Gerok.*

The young Man named Saul.

I. **His early biography.**—1. His *birthplace.* Tarsus in Cilicia (ix. 11, xxi. 39, xxii. 3). 2. His *parentage.* The son of a tent-maker, or worker in hair cloth (xviii. 3). That Paul had a sister is mentioned by Luke (xxiii. 16); that he had a brother (2 Cor. viii. 16-24) whom he afterwards converted to Christianity (Hausrath) is, to say the least, doubtful. 3. His *citizenship.* Roman, obtained by birth (xvi. 37, xxii. 28). 4. His *education.* Brought up at the feet of Gamaliel (xxii. 3, xxvi. 4). 5. His *religion.* A pharisee and the son of a pharisee (xxii. 3, xxiii. 6, xxvi. 5; Phil. iii. 5; Gal. i. 14). 6. His *nationality.* A Hebrew of the Hebrews (2 Cor. xi. 22; Phil. iii. 5); of the tribe of Benjamin (Phil. iii. 5).

II. **His first appearance in history.**—1. *An accomplice in murder.* "The witnesses laid down their clothes at his feet." 2. *A ferocious persecutor.* "He laid waste the Church," etc. (viii. 3). 3. *A commissioned assassin.* Breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, he asked and

obtained letters from the high priest empowering him to hunt them down at Damascus (ix. 1).

III. **His remarkable conversion** (see "Homiletical Analysis on ix. 1-9").—1. His *journey* to Damascus. 2. His sudden *arrestment.* 3. His *vision* of the exalted Christ. 4. His complete and instantaneous *surrender.*

IV. **His subsequent career.**—1. As *a missionary of the cross.* His three journeys, the first with Barnabas (xiii., xiv.), the second with Silas (xvi. —xviii. 22), the third with Timothy (xviii. 23-xxi. 17). 2. As *a founder of churches.* In Asia Minor and on the shores of Europe. 3. As *a writer of epistles.* Certainly four—Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians and Galatians—proceeded from his pen; most likely other eight—Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus—possibly also Hebrews.

V. **His martyr death.**—His career. 1. *Opened* by assisting at the murder of Stephen, and 2. *Closed* by himself being slain.

Ver. 59. *Stephen's Three Crowns.*

I. **The fair crown of grace** with which the Lord adorned him in his life and work.

II. **The bloody crown of thorns** which he wore after his Saviour in suffering and death.

III. **The heavenly crown of glory** which was reserved in eternity for the faithful martyr.

Stephen's Prayer for Himself.

I. **The doctrines it contained.**—1. The divinity of Christ. 2. The existence of man's spirit. 3. Future immortality. 4. The efficacy of prayer.

II. **The spirit it exemplified.**—1. Devout adoration. 2. Humble resignation. 3. Hopeful expectation.

III. **The lessons it taught.**—1. How to pray. 2. How to die.

Ver. 60. *Stephen's Prayer for his Enemies.*

I. **Sin** is always, in the first instance at least, **charged to or laid to the account of its perpetrators.**—God can by no means clear the guilty (Exod. xxxiv. 7).

II. Sin, however, may **in certain instances not be charged to its perpetrators.** Forgiveness is not impossible (Psalm cxxx. 4).

III. If sin is not to be charged to its perpetrator's account, **it is the Lord who must grant the requisite discharge.**—God alone can forgive sins (Mark ii. 7), but Christ is God, and Christ by His death and resurrection has rendered it possible for sin to be forgiven (Rom. iii. 25, 26).

IV. The followers of Jesus Christ may and should **pray for the forgiveness of sins to others** than themselves, even for their enemies. Christ commanded them to do so (Matt. v. 44; Luke vi. 28), and exemplified His own command (Luke xxiii. 34).

The Sleep of Stephen.

I. **Rested** him from his labours (Rev. xiv. 13).

II. **Released** him from his sufferings (Rev. vii. 14).

III. **Introduced** him to heaven (2 Cor. v. 1).

IV. **Crowned** him with glory (Rev. ii. 10).

Vers. 54-60. *The First Christian Martyr.*

I. **The call of Stephen was to martyrdom.**—Neither he nor the Church knew the honour which awaited him. The office of the first deacons was humble. They were to "serve tables," a labour too secular and secondary for apostles. Stephen illustrates the truth that the humblest service leads to the highest. We do not want so much men for large places as men to enlarge small places. What God wanted of Stephen did not fully appear at the first.

II. **Stephen was called because he was full of the Holy Ghost.**—The power of the Pentecostal baptism was upon him to a degree so extraordinary as to have drawn the attention of the

Church. In the brief description of his gift, the Greek verb expresses a spiritual state. The gift in him was not occasional or transient. He was habitually a man of spiritual power. The presence of this power in him was recognised as a qualification for his official duties. Through the Spirit (1) he had a message. The characteristic of his preaching, in distinction from that of all others of his time, was, that he carried the Christian doctrine to a new development. He went beyond the apostles. They continued to worship in the temple. They honoured the ceremonial law. They did not break with the religious class in the nation. It had not begun fully to appear how revolutionary the gospel was. Stephen made the break. He taught that Christianity was a universal religion. As sin is universal, redeeming grace is for mankind. This is biblical universalism—the universality of guilt and of grace. In his so-called defence we see the character of his preaching. He had nothing to say for himself: he preached Christ. God knows *his* theologians. He chose a deacon. The reason suggested is, that to so pre-eminent a degree he was filled with the Spirit. All true advances of Christian doctrine have been entrusted to spiritual men. The qualification for great teachers, the leaders of revolutions, the qualifications for *all* teachers sent from God, is the gift of the Holy Ghost. Through the Spirit (2) Stephen had the power of a holy face. Those in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel. What is the characteristic of an angel's face? The word suggests softness, purity, spirituality. We apply the adjective "angelic" to womanly sweetness and grace, but the angels of the Bible are *masculine*. Sweetness there may have been in Stephen, purity there must have been; but more than these the council saw, what they associated with the heavenly messengers who appeared to Adam and Eve, to Manoah, to David, to the Prophets—*glory*, spiritual power, the ineffable, Divine light. It riveted them; it awed them. The baptism of the Spirit is an illumination. The face of every new-born soul begins to shine with the light that was never on sea or land. He is transfigured. Through the Holy Spirit (3) Stephen displayed the Divine union of severity and gentleness. His outbreak was terrible: "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears!" uttered with that angelic face. The words might be hastily taken as the utterance of passion. The expression of righteous wrath resembles passion; but, as Jesus never had more absolute control of Himself than when He pronounced His great indictments, so at no point in his argument had Stephen more absolute control of his soul than in his final denunciation. This remarkable association of wrath and love, as elements of the same emotion, is superhuman; it is Divine; it is the manifestation of the fulness of the presence of the Holy Ghost. Through the Spirit (4) Stephen had a vision. He seemed to have a spiritual intimation. He looked up. The earnestness of his gaze was intense. "He, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." The vision was inward. No eye but his saw it. Through the Spirit (5) Stephen was sustained. He triumphed over pain. This power the Spirit gives. Christian martyrs have sung in the flames, and called them beds of roses.

III. **The effects of the martyrdom.**—Stephen's death seemed a calamity. Time alone could show the wisdom of God's large plan. But He makes no mistakes. Notice (1) the effect on the world. He showed the world how a Christian could die. Observe (2) the effect upon the Church. In all ages, persecution has been one of the greatest providential agencies for the spread of the gospel. Again, notice (3) the effect on the apostles. They remained in Jerusalem. Their position must have been of great danger, responsi-

bilility, distress. They did not flee; they stayed at their posts. The influence of their constancy upon the Christians, and also upon their enemies, must have been very great. Observe (4) the effect upon the devout Jews. Of this class were the men who bore Stephen to his burial. They were not Christians, but favourably disposed toward Christianity. The persecution tested them. At the peril of their lives they paid the murdered man the reverence of burial. They were led to take an open stand. We see, finally (5), the effect on Saul. Upon him the impression was deep. His reference to the part he had had in the murder, when he was in his trance at Damascus, shows it. One of the goads against which, from that time, he kicked in vain, was then buried in his heart. The immediate result was to infuriate him. He became exceeding mad. Our great intellectual changes are unconscious. They are parts of a larger movement, which is vital. The movement of the life is secret, involuntary, slow, like the growth of trees, like the coming on of summer. We argue against the truth. We triumph in the debate. But an influence has been let into our lives which gently lifts us, loosens us from our old moorings, and shifts us unconsciously to the opposite side of the stream. We find ourselves there. This process of vital movement, this set of the soul, may have taken place with Saul. Stephen may have been, probably he was, his spiritual father. The truth, which could only be answered by stones, lived on invulnerable. It took root in him.—*Monday Club Sermons.*

The First Christian Martyr.—Stephen had grown up into Christ in all things. His energy had been prodigiously effective. The whole city had been put into commotion. Bad men were passionately agreed. This deacon stood straight across their path. How might they be rid of him? When it came to speaking, there was really little to be said—to them. Need we talk to a storm? Do we choose words for wolves? It does not appear that Stephen even hoped to move that high-priest. As to what he really did intend, there has been a long debate. But he was probably speaking to the future, thinking aloud, building better than he knew. Providence was taking care of his speech. It was given him in that same hour. So the ideas have no shackles on. The truth has made him free. With a Gentile largeness and liberty of interpretation he expounds the Scriptures. What would be the effect of such discourse upon priests and scribes and elders may readily be anticipated. He has only to look into their angry eyes. But while this tempest rages, and in the midst of it all, there is one still place. It is the martyr's own heart. He is not disturbed. He has no resentments and no fears. It does not seem far to heaven, and it was not far. Jesus, "standing," risen from the throne, is ready to aid His friend, to hear his last words, and to "receive" his spirit. So the sufferer "fell asleep." One witness at least there was of these events whose dreams for many a night they disturbed. Like serpents' fangs they stung his conscience. It is probable that he had already been prominent among "them of Cilicia" "disputing with Stephen." Perhaps to his hearing of the address before the council we may owe the extended report preserved for us. At any rate, with the mob he strode from the "stone chamber" to the city-walls. He was close enough to the actual violence to see the face and hear the voice of the expiring Christian.

I. **We can see how bad men are made to serve the good cause.**—A wise prayer for the devil would be, "Save me from my friends." It was the design of these conspirators to cripple, and if possible to destroy, the infant Church. But it is manifest how they only strengthened and enlarged it. The people had again seen the contrast between piety and pretence. In such a case the charm of real goodness could

not but win friends. It is not safe, indeed, in any case to despise even the humblest virtue. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit." So it proved here. There were men and women who night and day could only think with tears how this brave servant of the truth had been struck down. See, too, how this crime wrought upon the young man Saul. So does a bad purpose blunder and defeat itself. It is like Pharaoh kindling Moses, like Goliath summoning David. A pope makes Luther necessary, and finds Him; King Charles brings Cromwell out; the Georges develop Washington; and a prison gives to the world John Bunyan and his book. At every point, therefore, were the enemies of the gospel made to aid the gospel. They excited popular indignation against their own cruelty. They secured the planting in the mind of Saul of germs of truth "which, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, afterwards developed into the Epistles with which we are now so familiar." "And the more havoc" they made of the Church at Jerusalem the more quickly was the Church established in many distant localities.

II. **We seldom know at the time how much good we may be doing.**—Our opportunity often comes when we are least aware of it. Stephen could not have failed to see that he was fighting a "good fight." It perhaps occurred to him that his death might aid the truth more than his life could have done. But how little he suspected the real culmination of his power! "If Stephen had not prayed, the Church would not have had Paul," Augustine said. There was the tremendous circumstance. Such opportunities we easily fail to meet. They are not likely to be repeated. If we have no mind for them, no heart for them, life creeps on, commonplace, feeble, small. Stephen made no such failure. Though quite unconscious of the sublimity of the hour, he kept on in duty. That once more proved to be the path of glory.

III. We may also learn **that our visions come when we need them.**—"He saw heaven opened, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." To troubled, weary Christians the fear will sometimes arise that the Redeemer has forgotten them. "Carest Thou not that we perish?" is apt to be the cry of unbelief in storms and perils. But in the nick of time comfort comes. There is "grace to help in time of need." Jacob, solitary, absent from home, laying his head upon a stone at Jabbok, has a vision of God and receives the promise.

IV. **It is clear that such dying as Stephen's is possible only as the fruit of such living as his.**—Thus far in the brief Christian history death had often served as a dreadful warning. In utter darkness Judas, an apostle, had gone to "his own place." Ananias and Sapphira had met their sudden doom. Now, however, in contrast with such dismal dying, comes this martyr's victory. If we would "die the death of the righteous," we must be careful to live the righteous life. We need envy no man's triumph, whether in death or in life, as if it were luck instead of labour. "Do men gather grapes of thorns?" Whoever meets occasions, furnishing what is needed, only discloses the completeness of former preparations of mind and heart. For those who have a little of Stephen's grace, Stephen's Lord will lead the way to Stephen's victory.—*H. A. Edson, D.D.*

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHURCH PASSES BEYOND THE BOUNDS OF JUDÆA—MOVING TOWARDS THE GENTILES.

§ 1. The Fires of Persecution rekindled; or, Evil overruled for Good (vers. 1-4).
§ 2. Philip the Deacon in Samaria; or, the Gospel spreading (vers. 5-8).
§ 3. The Accession of Simon Magus; or, the Reception of a doubtful convert (vers. 9-13).
§ 4. The Mission of Peter and John; or, the Confirmation of the Saints (vers. 14-17, 25?).
§ 5. The Two Simons; or, the Detection of a Hypocrite (vers. 18-24).
§ 6. The Conversion of the Eunuch; or, the Gospel carried into Ethiopia (vers. 26-40).

CRITICAL REMARKS.

Ver. 1. **Consenting.**—Compare xxii. 20; Luke xi. 48; Rom. i. 32. Luke had probably often heard this remark from Paul. **At that time.**—Lit., *on that day*—viz., of Stephen's murder, which had been the signal for an outbreak of hostility against the Christians. **All.**—Not to be taken as if none but the Twelve remained in Jerusalem.

Ver. 2. **Devout men.**—Pious Jews (compare John xix. 38, 39), not Christians, who would have been designated "disciples" or "brethren" (see on ii. 5).

Ver. 3. **Made havoc of.**—Or, *kept on laying waste*; the imperfect denoting continuous action.

Ver. 4. **Went everywhere.**—Should be "went about"—*i.e.*, from place to place (compare xi. 19).

Ver. 5. **Philip.**—Not the apostle, but the deacon (vi. 4). **The city of Samaria**—according to the best MSS.—signifies that the capital built by Omri (1 Kings xvi. 24), and renamed Sebaste by Herod the Great (Jos., *Ant.*, XX. vi. 2), was the place to which Philip went; if with some MSS. the article before city be omitted, then Samaria would mean the province of that name, and the city might be Sychar, the Sichem of the Old Testament (John iv. 5).

Ver. 6. **The people.**—Better, *the multitudes—i.e.*, of the city.

Ver. 7. **For unclean spirits,** etc.—Should be rendered either "For *from* many of those who had unclean spirits, they—*i.e.*, the spirits—went forth crying with a loud voice," the genitive πολλῶν being dependent on the ἐξ in the verb compare xvi. 39; Matt. x. 14 (De Wette, Meyer); or "For from many of those having (*sc.* them—*i.e.*, unclean spirits) unclean spirits crying with a loud voice went forth (Bengel, Kuinoel). But the best texts (ℵ A B C) read πολλοὶ ἐξήρχοντο; in which case the verse should be translated; "for many of those who had unclean spirits crying with a loud voice went forth"; the writer having probably, when he commenced the sentence, intended to say "were healed," instead of which he changes the construction, and sets down "went forth," as if the "unclean spirits" were the nominative (Alford, Holtzmann). It has been remarked (Bengel) that in the Acts the term "demons" is never used of "the possessed," although in Luke it occurs more frequently than in the other gospels; and the inference drawn that after the death of Christ the malady of possession was weaker (compare 1 John iii. 8; Col. ii. 15; Heb. ii. 14).

Ver. 9. **Simon.**—Not the Cyprian Jew of that name whom, according to Josephus (*Ant.*, XX. vii. 2), Felix afterwards employed to persuade Drusilla to leave for him her husband. King Azizus of Emesa (De Wette, Neander, Hilgenfeld, Alford), but, according to Justin Martyr (*Apol.*, i. 56; *Dial.*, 120), a Samaritan magician out of Gitthon (Zeller, Holtzmann, Zöckler). **The people.**—Should be, *the nation*, τὸ ἔθνος, because Simon's bewitchery was not confined to the city population.

Ver. 10. **The great power of God,** in the best MSS., is *the power of God which is called great—i.e.*, because it is so (Hackett), rather than because it is not so (De Wette). Noticeable that this was the people's estimate of Simon. In the term "Great" has been found either Gnostic emanation doctrine (Overbeck), or a transliteration of the Samaritan word Magala, Revealer (Klostermann, Wendt).

Ver. 11. **Of long time.**—The dative for the ordinary accusative as in xiii. 20; John ii. 20; Rom. xvi. 25. Simon's influence may have reached back to a period shortly after our Lord's visit to Samaria (John iv. 39-42).

Ver. 13. **Wondered**, or *was amazed* at Philip's **miracles and signs**.—Rather, *signs and great powers—i.e.*, deeds of power, as previously the crowd had been amazed at his (Simon's) sorceries (ver. 9).

Ver. 14. **Sent.**—The mission of the two apostles, Peter and John, is not said to have had as its motive the imparting of the Holy Spirit to the Samaritans (Holtzmann), although this was undoubtedly a consequence which flowed from their mission.

Ver. 15. **Prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost.**—Not the ordinary converting influences of the Spirit, which they must already have received, since they had believed, but those miraculous endowments which had been conferred upon the Pentecostal believers (ii. 4).

Ver. 16. **As yet He was fallen upon none of them.**—Contrast the case of Cornelius and his household, upon whom the Spirit fell before baptism (x. 44—48); and compare that of John's disciples in Ephesus, who were first baptised, and afterwards endowed with the Holy Ghost (xix. 1-6).

Ver. 17. **Then laid they**, the apostles, **their hands on them, and they**, the Samaritans, **received the Holy Ghost.**—That none but the apostles had the power of imparting the Spirit, and that this was the reason why the preaching of Philip did not secure this endowment for the Samaritans (Hofmann), cannot be maintained in face of ix. 17 and 1 Tim. iv. 14. Still less can the non-descent of the Holy Ghost in this case be ascribed to a difference between Philip's preaching and that of the apostles (Neander). Possibly the reason lay in this, that as the Samaritans were half-heathen, it was the purpose of the Holy Ghost to mark their reception into the Church (which their endowment with His miraculous gifts attested) by a formal act through the hands of the apostles, which would carry with it all the weight of authorisation. There is no ground for thinking that the Spirit intended here to institute a new rite corresponding to Confirmation.

Ver. 18. **And when Simon saw.**—Most likely through hearing the baptised speak with tongues. **He offered them money.**—From Simon's name and proposal arose the expression "Simony" for the purchase of spiritual offices. *Inde Simoniæ vocabulum* (Bengel).

Ver. 19. **To me also.**—*I.e.*, "as well as to you"; not "as well as to others," "since no example of such transfer was known to him" (Hackett).

Ver. 20. **Thy money perish with thee.**—Lit., *thy silver with thyself be for destruction.* Neither an implication nor a prediction, but a strongly expressed negation. **May be purchased.**—The verb in Greek being active, the clause should be translated, "because thou didst think to acquire," etc.

Ver. 21. **In this matter.**—Or, *in this word—i.e.*, doctrine or gospel which we preach (Olshausen, Neander, Lange, Zöckler, Hackett).

Ver. 22. For **God** the best authorities read *Lord*, as in ver. 24, signifying the exalted Christ. **If perhaps.**—Taken in connection with John xx. 23, these words show "how completely the apostles themselves referred the forgiveness of sins to, and left it in the sovereign power of God, and not to their own delegated power of absolution" (Alford).

Ver. 23. **Art in the** or *wilt become* **gall** or *a gall root* **of bitterness.**—As in Rom. iii. 14; Eph. iv. 31; and Heb. xii. 15. **And in the bond** or *a bond* **of iniquity.**—As in Isa. lviii. 6.

Ver. 24. **Pray ye to the Lord for me.**—Compare the language of Pharaoh to Moses (Exod. viii. 28, ix. 28, x. 17).

Ver. 25. The imperfects **returned** or *kept returning*, and **preached** or *kept preaching*, show that the evangelistic activity of the home-returning apostles was not confined to isolated acts of preaching but was continued all along the route.

Ver. 26. For **the** read *an* before **angel. Towards the south.**—κατὰ μεσημβρίαν might be rendered, but not so well, *at noon* (compare xxii. 6). **Gaza**, the modern *Guzzeh*, was one of the five cities of the Philistines at the southern boundary of Canaan (Gen. x. 19), about an hour's journey from the Mediterranean. Originally belonging to Judah (Josh. xv. 47) it was subsequently captured by the Philistines (1 Sam. vi. 17; Judges xvi. 1). Gaza "is an important place still, though no vestige of the ancient city remains. It stands on an isolated mound one hundred and eighty feet above the sea, from which it is about two miles distant, and is surrounded by gardens; it is said to have still a population of eighteen thousand" (*Palestine*, by Rev. A. Henderson, M.A., p. 167). **Which**, better *this* or *it* or *the same*, **is desert**; but whether Gaza (Lekebush) or the road is meant, and whether the clause was spoken by the angel (Holtzmann, Zöckler, Alford, Hackett, and others), or by Luke (Bengel Olshausen, Winer, De Wette, and others), is doubtful, though perhaps it is more correct to regard the clause as the angel's direction to follow the desert or unfrequented road to Gaza. Robinson (*Biblical Researches*, ii. 514) mentions several routes from Jerusalem to Gaza, the most frequented being by Ramleh, another by Bethshemesh, and a third by Eleutheropolis. A fourth went by Hebron and across the plain, passing through the southern part of Judæa, which in Luke (i. 80) is called "the desert."

Ver. 27. **A man of Ethiopia.**—Or an Ethiopian, but whether a native or only a resident cannot be inferred from this clause, though the former is the more probable. **An eunuch.**—

Not a term of office, but a description of bodily condition (see Tacit., *Ann.*, vi. 31 : *ademptæ virilitatis.* **Of great authority.**—An official or ruler; in this case a courtier and statesman. According to Oriental custom to employ such persons in high offices of state. **Candace.**—Not a personal, but a dynastic name, like Pharaoh and Cæsar. Strabo and Dio mention a queen of Ethiopia of this name in the twenty-second or twenty-third year of the reign of Augustus Cæsar; while Pliny (*Nat. Hist.*, vi. 35), states that a Candace ruled in Ethiopia in his day. **The Ethiopians** inhabited the region in the Nile Valley south of Egypt—Meroe, a fertile island, formed by two branches of the Nile, being a portion of their territory, The word for **treasure**, γάζα, is Persian, and occurs in the LXX. (Ezra v. 17, vi. 1; Esther iv. 7). **To worship.**—Heathen proselytes (John xii. 20) as well as foreign Jews were accustomed to perform pilgrimages to Jerusalem for this purpose.

Ver. 32. **The place,** or passage, **of the Scripture**—*i.e.*, of the Old Testament—**which he read,** or was reading, the verb being imperfect, **was this.**—The citation, from Isa. liii. 7, 8, follows the LXX., and differs from the Hebrew which gives in the 8th verse—"By (or, from) oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation who *among them* considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living?" or "and his life who shall recount?" etc. (R.V.).

Ver. 37. Of the A.V. is omitted from the R.V. in accordance with the best authorities, ℵ A. B.

Ver. 39.—The Alexandrian MS. (A) reads "The Holy Spirit of the Lord fell on the eunuch but an angel of the Lord caught away Philip." The other codices read as in the text. That Philip's disappearance was not a natural occurrence, such as an impulsive and hasty withdrawal, but a supernatural removal (compare 1 Kings xviii. 12; 2 Kings ii. 16), effected by the Spirit, was obviously the view of the historian.

Ver. 40. **Azotus.**—Or, Ashdod, originally a seat of the Anakim (Josh. xi. 22), became one of the five chief cities of the Philistines (Josh. xiii. 4; 1 Sam. vi. 17), and the principal seat of the Dagon worship (1 Sam. v. 1; Macc. x. 83, xi. 4). It was handed over to the tribe of Judah at the conquest (Josh. xv. 46), but did not continue long in their possession, and after the exile appeared among Israel's foes (Neh. iv. 7). It is represented by the present day *Esdud*, a miserable Mohammedan village, two miles south of Jamnia, and half an hour's journey from the sea. Philostratus mentions that Apollonius of Tyana was found one day at noon in Rome before the tribunal of Domitian and at evening in Puteoli. **Cæsarea.**—Six hundred furlongs distant from Jerusalem, built by Herod the Great on a site before called Strato's Tower, named Cæsarea Sebaste, and inaugurated with great pomp and splendour in the twenty-eighth year of his reign, B.C. 12 (Jos., *Ant.*, XV. ix. 6). As the official residence of the Herodian kings and Roman governors, it soon became the most important city in Palestine, as well as its chief port. Paul visited Cæsarea more than once (ix. 30, xviii. 22, xxi. 8-16, xxii. 23-35, xxiv.—xxvi.). In the third century it became the seat of a bishopric and of a public school in which afterwards Origen taught. Eusebius was born in Cæsarea in the fourth century. At the present time "by the sea shore, midway between the Nahr-er-Zerka and the Nahr-Mef-jir, a vast expanse of ground is covered with the almost indistinguishable *débris* of Herod's once splendid city."—*Picturesque Palestine*, iii., 126).

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 1—4.

The Fires of Persecution rekindled; or, Evil overruled for Good.

I. **The torch that lighted the flame.**—This was undoubtedly Stephen's murder. Like a spark falling into a powder magazine it kindled a fierce conflagration. Like the first taste of blood to a tiger, it awoke the dormant appetite for persecution which until now had slumbered in the bosoms of the high-priest and his confederates. The words "on that day" indicate that Stephen's executioners proceeded straight from the scene of his martyrdom and commenced their diabolical work of persecuting Stephen's friends.

II. **The miscreant who carried the torch.**—There can be little room for question that the person to whom this notoriety belonged was Saul, who at that time was consenting unto Stephen's death (ver. 1; compare xxii. 20), who, in fact, had been a prominent actor in carrying out the murder of the good deacon (vii. 58), and who, though not acting without the authority, or, at least, connivance, of the Sanhedrim, was, on his own confession afterwards made (xxvi. 9, 10), the moving spirit in this anti-Christian crusade.

III. **The fury with which the flame blazed.**—It entered into every house where a "disciple" or "brother" resided. It spared neither man nor woman

who bore the hated name of Christian. It stopped not at the spoiling of their goods, when they had any, but attacked their persons, violently dragging them from their homes and consigning them to prison (ver. 3, xxvi. 10; compare Heb. x. 33, 34; James ii. 6, 7). How it happened that the apostles were excepted from this persecution is not explained, and this has been regarded by some expositors (Zeller, Schneckenburger, and others) as a difficulty; but it need not be assumed either that they had dropped into temporary obscurity through having been eclipsed by the brilliant deacon, or that they were not harassed like their humbler brethren, though probably the veneration in which they were still held by the populace in general prevented the Sanhedrim from resorting to extreme measures against them.

IV. **The alarm which the fire created.**—It scattered the disciples from the city; caused, if not all at least a considerable number, perhaps the majority of those against whom the persecution was directed, to flee for safety beyond the bounds of Jerusalem and even of Judæa (see xi. 19). This statement, however, has, like the former, been challenged as improbable (Zeller) on the ground that so long as the apostles remained in the city it is not likely that all their followers would flee. And assuredly if all fled, what is stated in ver. 3 about Saul would be impossible. The probability, therefore, is that "all" in ver. 1 refers principally to the leading personages in the Christian community like Philip (ver. 5), or to the breaking up of the Christian congregations and the dispersion of their members. That the apostles did not retire from their posts in the metropolis, though they might have done so without sin (Matt. x. 23), was only what might have been expected. They were men of a different make from what they had been when they all forsook the Master and fled (Matt. xxvi. 56). That the Spirit directed them to remain in the city and comfort the persecuted Christians who were left (Stier) is not improbable, but cannot be proved. That our Lord before His ascension had commanded them to remain in Jerusalem twelve years, though supported by ancient tradition (Clem. Alex., *Strom.* VI. v. 43), is most likely imagination.

V. **The unexpected good in which it resulted.**—It led to the extension of the Church. "They that were scattered abroad went about preaching the word." Thus it paved the way for the transition of the gospel to the Gentiles. As it were the missionary activity that was carried on in the Judæan provinces and in Samaria formed a bridge for the passage of the heralds of salvation to cross over into regions beyond. So the highest good is oftentimes evolved out of the greatest evil. God can make man's wrath to praise Him (Psalm lxxvi. 10) and cause "all things to work together for good to them that love Him (Rom. viii. 28).

Learn.—1. That one sin commonly leads to another. The murder of Stephen to the persecution of the Church. 2. That they who will live godly must suffer persecution. "The servant is not greater than his master." 3. That it is not always wrong to flee from persecution. Otherwise Christ would not have counselled His disciples, "When persecuted in one city to flee into another" (Matt. x. 23). 4. That more is expected of the Church's leaders than of their followers. A higher degree of Christian virtue should be exhibited by them who are set to rule in the Church. 5. That persecution cannot kill religion. It may destroy those who are religious, but others will arise in their stead. "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church" (Tertullian).

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 1. *The Church which was in Jerusalem.*

I. **Living.**—A dead Church a mis nomer.

II. **Growing.**—Wherever life is there must be progress.

III. **Organised.**—It had apostles, deacons, and private members.

IV. **Persecuted.**—This inevitable if a Church is alive and active.

V. **Missionary.**—The Church that does not propagate the faith is dead.

Ver. 2. *The Burial of Stephen.*

I. **The lifeless body.**—That of Stephen. 1. A good man. 2. An eloquent preacher. 3. A faithful witness. 4. A noble martyr.

II. **The devout pall-bearers.**—Pious Jews, perhaps, rather than Christians, who would probably have been called "brethren" or "disciples," and would not have been permitted to inter their fallen leader. That devout men buried Stephen testified to: 1. Their own goodness. 2. Stephen's innocence. 3. The Sanhedrim's guilt.

III. **The solemn interment.**—No doubt. 1. Hastily, without unnecessary delay; and 2. Plainly, without ostentation or display; but also 3. Reverentially, as was due to the dust of a saint; and 4. Hopefully, in anticipation of a glorious resurrection.

IV. **The sorrowful lamentation.**—"Great." Because of, either: 1. Its outward vehemence; 2. Its inward intensity; or 3. Its wide prevalence.

Vers. 2, 3. *Stephen and Saul.*

I. **The end of Stephen.**—1. In the world's eyes sad. 2. In God's eyes glorious.

II. **The beginning of Saul.**—1. In the world's eyes glorious. 2. In God's eyes sad.

Lesson.—God seeth not as man seeth.

Ver. 3. *The Wolf and his Prey.*

I. **The wolf.**—1. His *name*, Saul. 2. His *race*, of the tribe of Benjamin (Gen. xlix. 27). 3. His *ferocity*, "Haling men and women he committed them to prison." 4. His *diligence*, "entering into every house."

II. **His prey.**—Christ's sheep, "the Church" (xx. 28). 1. A *little* flock (Luke xii. 32). 2. A *feeble* flock (1 Peter v. 10). 3. A *purchased* flock (xx. 28).

Saul and Paul.—The Saul who made havoc of the Church became the Paul who said, "Feed the Church of God." Remember well the identity of the man, if you would understand fully the import of the doctrine. This change in the heart and life of Paul shows—

I. **The marvellous power of the grace of God.**—The marvellousness of this power is not always so *conspicuous*. Every operation of grace is beautiful, but in some cases it is startling and most sublime. Herein let us magnify the grace of God. "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." "Ye who sometime were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." "You that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled." This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. The occurrence of such marvellous instances is most valuable on two grounds: 1. *It inspires hope even for the worst.* Pray on! Hope on! The hardest rocks have been broken. 2. *It renews our sense of the sufficiency of Divine grace.* Great victories gladden nations. Great conversions make the Church joyful. This change in the heart and life of Paul shows—

II. **The difference between sanctifying human energies and destroying them.**—Saul was undoubtedly characterised by peculiar energy; what will *Paul* be? You will find that the Christian apostle retained every natural characteristic of the anti-Christian persecutor. Who so ardent in love, who so unswerving in service, as the apostle Paul? Was he an active sinner, but an indolent saint? How did he himself bear the treatment which he had inflicted upon others? Hear his words, and feel if they do not quicken the flow of your blood: "Are they ministers of Christ? I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft," etc. How a man's sins come back upon him! How sure is the

discipline, and how terrible is the judgment of God! Can a man step easily from the rank of persecutor to the honour of apostle? Never! Hear Paul: "Even this present hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the off-scouring of all things," etc. We feel in reading such words how inexorable is the law—"With what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again." But notice the energy of the *apostle* as being the same as the energy of the *persecutor*. Christianity does not destroy our natural temperament. We become sanctified, not deadened. 1. *Christians will differ in the tone and measure of their service.* He who has had much forgiven will love much. How does an *escaped slave* talk about liberty? So with *preachers.* The memory of their past lives will determine their preaching. Do not bind down all men to the same style. 2. *Is our Christian energy equal to the energy with which we entered upon the service of the world?* When were you kept back from gay engagements by wet, damp, or foggy nights? When did you complain that you could never go to the theatre without paying, or tell the devil that his service was costly? *In the light of such inquiries let us examine our Christian temper and service.* This change in the heart and life of Paul suggests—

III. **The possible greatness of the change which awaits even those who are now in Christ.**—The moral distance between Saul and Paul is immense, but what of the spiritual distance between Paul the *warrior* and Paul the *crowned saint?* It is the distance between earth and heaven.—*J. Parker, D.D.*

HOMILETICAL ANAYSIS.—Verses 5—8.

Philip in Samaria; or, The Gospel Spreading.

I. **The preacher.**—Philip. Not the apostle, as a late Christian tradition, mentioned by Polycrates, Bishop of Ephesus, in A.D. 198 (Eusebius, III. xxxi. 2, V. xxiv. 1), affirms, since he remained in Jerusalem (ver. 1), but the deacon (vi. 5) and evangelist (xxi. 8), who by going down to Samaria—1. *Supplied the place and took up the work of Stephen,* his martyred colleague. Christ's servants dying never want successors. 2. *Counteracted the evil machinations of Stephen's murderers,* and of Saul in particular, who hoped to extinguish the faith to which as yet he was a stranger and of which he knew not the vitality; and 3. *Evidenced his own confidence* in the indestructibility of the gospel, whose preachers and professors might be imprisoned or slain, but whose glorious tidings could not be hindered from flying abroad and one day encircling the earth.

II. **The audience.**—The inhabitants of the city of Samaria or of Sychar, who were—1. *Numerous,* being described as a multitude. 2. *Afflicted,* containing many diseased and demonised persons. 3. *Deluded,* being at the time bewitched by or amazed at Simon's sorceries; and still 4. *Eager,* with one accord giving heed to Philip, perhaps because of having, in a measure, through Christ's preaching ten years before (John iv. 30, 40), been prepared for the reception of the word.

III. **The message.**—1. *Its subject.* The Christ. Philip entertained his hearers neither with diatribes against the magician who had so long bewitched them, nor with denunciations of the Sanhedrim who had opened against the followers of the new faith the fires of persecution, nor with commiserations of themselves who had so much sickness bodily and mental, in their midst, but with what should ever be the preacher's theme (1 Cor. ii. 2), proclamations of the Christ—viz., Jesus—who had suffered on the cross, risen from the grave, and ascended

into heaven. 2. *Its confirmation.* The signs which he did—(1) the works of healing which he performed on the demonised, the palsied, and the lame, attested him a teacher come from God (compare John iii. 2); and (2) the cries of the unclean spirits in coming forth from their victims, not shouts of indignation at being ejected from their human lodging, but vociferous declarations of the Messiahship of Jesus or of the truth of the gospel (compare Mark iii. 11; Luke iv. 41), were a practical endorsement of his words.

IV. **The result.**—Great joy. On account of—1. *The glad tidings come to the city.* The introduction of the gospel with its glorious announcements of a crucified and risen Lord (xiii. 32, 33), of a finished redemption work (John xvii. 4), and of a peace established between God and man on the basis of that work (Eph. ii. 14-18), as well as with its sublime possibilities of salvation (Rom. i. 16), to a heart, to a city, to a country, a cause of rejoicing than which better can not be imagined (Psalm lxxxix. 15). 2. *The wonderful deliverances wrought on its inhabitants.* The healings done upon the bodies of the citizens of Samaria or Sychar were emblematic of the higher healings the gospel could, and in numberless instances did, effect upon their souls. To-day, as in Philip's time, the gospel heals all manner of spiritual disease and emancipates souls from the power of sin and Satan (Col. i. 13), besides indirectly promoting the health of bodies.

Learn.—1. The true work of a preacher—to proclaim Christ. 2. The true prosperity of a city—the prevalence in it of the Gospel.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 5. *The Inhabitants of Samaria.*

I. What they **heard.** Christ proclaimed.

II. What they **saw.** Miracles performed.

III. What they **did.** 1. Listened to the word. 2. Studied the miracles. 3. Rejoiced in the work of Philip.

Ver. 8. *Joy in Samaria.*—Occasioned by four things.

I. **The Gospel preached** in its streets.

II. **Healing brought** to its inhabitants.

III. **Delusions dispelled** from their minds.

IV. **Souls saved** from the power of sin and death.

Vers. 5-8. *Philip's Mission to Samaria.*

I. **The conduct of Philip.**—He—1. Went down to Samaria. 2. Preached Christ to the people. 3. Wrought miracles in the city.

II. **The attention of the Samaritans.**—They: 1. Heard Philip preach. 2. Were seriously affected. 3. Gave heed to what they heard. 4. Believed what was preached.

III. **The effect in the city.**—Great joy. Because of: 1. Joyful tidings heard. 2. Wondrous healings experienced. 3. Numerous conversions made.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 9—13.

The Accession of Simon Magus; or, the Reception of a Doubtful Convert.

I. **The previous history of Simon Magus.**—1. *His profession.* A sorcerer. According to Justin Martyr (*Apol.*, I. xxvi. 56) belonging to the Samaritan village of Gitton. One of those unscrupulous adventurers who by "an advanced knowledge of natural philosophy, especially of chemistry," acquired "a strange power and influence over men's minds," which they "constantly used to further their own selfish ends" (Spence). Others of the same kidney were Elymas, whom Paul encountered at the court of Sergius Paulus in Paphos (xiii. 6), and the vagabond Jews, exorcists, whom he met at Ephesus (xix. 13). To this fraternity

belonged Apollonius, of Tyana, who lived in the time of Christ. A zealous champion of the doctrines of Pythagoras, he was regarded by his contemporaries as a worker of miracles, and claimed for himself insight into futurity. Josephus (*Ant.*, XX. vii. 2) mentions another Simon, also of Cyprus, unless he was identical with the Simon of Samaria, as a magician who persuaded Drusilla to desert her husband and marry Felix (xxiv. 24). That Simon pitched on Samaria as the field of his operations may have been due to the circumstance that it contained a grand heathen temple, which he probably thought would make the city so much the fitter a scene for his magical incantations (see Stokes on Acts, i. 360, note). 2. *His practice.* He bewitched or amazed the people with his sorceries, either imposed on their credulity by sleight of hand, or dazzled their judgment by feats performed through superior knowledge. What the arts practised by him were is not related. Later tradition represents him as having offered to demonstrate his divinity by flying in the air (*Constt. Apost.*, ii. 14, vi. 9), and as having boasted that he could turn himself and others into brute beasts, and even cause statues to speak (*Clem. Hom.*, iv. c. 4; *Recog.*, ii. 9, iii. 6). Whether he had attempted any such legerdemain in Samaria or not is uncertain; but for a long time (most likely for a number of years) he had cast a spell over their minds and secured their attention to his superstitious and hurtful doctrines. He is said to have denied the resurrection of the dead, and only pretended to believe in a future judgment, to have desired to set Gerizim in place of Jerusalem, and to have allegorically expounded the Old Testament so as to support his own views. 3. *His pretension.* He gave out "that himself was some great one." Like Theudas, he boasted that he was somebody (v. 36). According to the *Clementine Homilies* (ii. 22 *ff.*) he gave himself out for the Highest Power, from which he distinguished the Creator of the world as an inferior being, and also claimed to be the Messiah. In this he showed himself a precursor of Antichrist (2 Thess. ii. 4). Exaltation of self is both an old (Gen. iii. 5) and a common (Luke xiv. 11) sin, against which men in general (Jer. ix. 23; Dan. iv. 37), and Christians in particular (Gal. vi. 3), are earnestly warned. 4. *His popularity.* To him the whole population "gave heed from the least to the greatest, saying, 'This man is that power of God which is called great.'" Few things are more incontestable or sad than the gullibility of mankind. "Gullible, however, by fit apparatus, all publics are, and gulled with the most surprising profit" (Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, p. 68). The remarkable thing is that almost any sort of tomfoolery, mountebankism, and charlatanry will do to cheat men. No imposture is too ridiculous to find adherents. No quack is so vulgar that he cannot draw around him admiring fools. Simon is reported to have visited Rome in the time of Claudius, and by means of his jugglery to have established himself so highly in popular favour that the Senate decreed him divine honours, and a statue on the island of the Tiber (Justin Martyr, *Apol.*, I. xxvi, 56); and it is not a little remarkable that in the exact spot indicated by Justin, in 1574, there was dug up a statue with the inscription "Semoni Sanco Deo Fidio," though whether this statue was the one referred to by Justin, or another to a Sabine deity, critics are not agreed.

II. **The circumstances which led to Simon's conversion.**—1. *The preaching of Philip.* It is clear from the narrative that Simon himself must have been amongst Philip's listeners, since it is stated that he himself also "believed Philip preaching good tidings," etc. (vers. 12, 13). "Faith cometh by hearing" (Rom. x. 17). Faith that is not based upon the word of God either read or preached lacks a solid foundation, and will ultimately prove unstable and unreal. 2. *The faith of the people.* The example of the Samaritans operated contagiously on Simon. Observing them falling away from himself and rallying round Philip, he followed in their wake. The event showed he had not been savingly impressed

by what he saw and heard, but only superficially stirred. Nevertheless the popular attitude towards Philip appears to have awakened in him something that resembled faith. A similar phenomenon is not unknown in modern religious movements, which draw in and sweep along with them many who are only superficially stirred, not permanently converted. 3. *The baptism of the believers.* Both men and women avowed the sincerity of their conversion by submitting to the initiatory rite of the Christian religion; and this also must have had its effect upon Simon, and led him to reflect that a greater power than that wielded by himself had arrived upon the scene.

III. **The evidence of Simon's (supposed) conversion.**—1. *His profession of faith.* He "believed." This the first requirement in a disciple. Whatever else may be demanded of Christians, they must repose personal credit in the testimony concerning Christ, and personal trust in Christ Himself. 2. *His submission to baptism.* In the case of an adult who believes for the first time, this also is indispensable (Mark xvi. 16; Acts ii. 38), though it does not show Infant Baptism to be either unscriptural or unreasonable (see on ii. 39). 3. *His adherence to Philip.* "He continued with" the deacon and those associated with him; in modern phraseology, he joined the Church, or connected himself with the main body of believers. This a third mark of conversion. "The fellowship of saints" all Christ's followers are expected to cultivate. The Christian life (under certain circumstances) may be successfully maintained in isolation; but in no case without difficulty. 4. *His admiration of Philip's miracles.* The works of healing wrought by Philip appeared to convince him that what he only pretended to wield, and what the people imagined he wielded, was wielded by Philip in reality—viz., the great power of God. Whether Simon's conversion was genuine or not, it had many of the marks of a true work of grace. *Note in illustration.* —Philetus, a disciple of Hermogenes the conjurer, coming to a dispute with St. James the elder, relied much upon his sophistry; but the apostle preached Christ to him with such powerfulness that Philetus, returning back to his master, told him, "I went forth a conjurer, but am returned a Christian."

Learn.—1. That all professors of religion are not true converts. 2. That the gospel has in it something which attracts even bad men. 3. That nothing can so effectually deliver men from this present evil world, with its snares and delusions, as the gospel of Christ. 4. That faith in Christ should ever be accompanied by public confession. 5. That the best arguments in proof of Christianity are the moral and spiritual miracles it performs.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 12. *A Reformed City.*

The conversion of the Samaritans was brought about—

I. **By the preaching of the gospel,** the good news of salvation.

II. **With the concurrence of the people,** from the least to the greatest.

III. **In spite of the greatest opposition** from the powers of darkness.

IV. **With the most satisfactory results:** numerous baptisms of men and women.

Good Tidings.

I. **Concerning God's kingdom.**—1. That it had come (Matt. iii. 2; Mark i. 13). 2. That it might be entered (Matt. v. 20, vii. 13). 3. That all who entered it should be saved (John x. 9).

II. **Concerning God's Son.**—1. That He had been the bringer-in of the kingdom by His death and resurrection (i. 3). 2. That to Him alone belong the keys of the kingdom (Rev. iii. 7). 3. That in His hand are all the blessings of the kingdom (2 Peter i. 3).

Vers. 9-13. *The Awakening in Samaria.*

I. **The obstacles** which required to be overcome.—1. *The natural indiffer-*

ence of the human heart to religion. This formed the deepest and least movable barrier. 2. *The character of the people.* Half-heathen, ignorant, diseased, demonised, the population was hardly likely to be taken up with the interests of the soul. 3. *The presence in the city of Simon* the sorcerer, who in a manner had pre-engaged their attention and even captivated their hearts, from the least of them to the greatest.

II. **The means** which led to its arising.—1. *The miracles and signs* which Philip did, which convinced the people that a greater power than that of Simon had arrived upon the field. 2. *The preaching of the gospel* of the kingdom and of Jesus Christ. While these were the means, the Holy Spirit was the agent.

III. **The characteristics** which attended it.—1. *Great excitement.* This was inevitable. 2. *Widespread conviction.* The whole town seemed to be turned. 3. *Numerous baptisms.* The magician himself owned the power of the truth, and was baptised. 4. *Universal joy.* The whole city was in raptures of delight.

The Kingdom of Darkness and the Kingdom of Light in Conflict.

I. **The two champions.**—1. Of the kingdom of darkness, *Simon*, the sorcerer, an old and experienced warrior from the army of Satan (ver. 11). 2. Of the kingdom of light, *Philip*, the Christian deacon, a new and untried soldier from the ranks of the faithful (vi. 5).

II. **The selected battle-field.**—1. Locally, the city of Samaria. 2. Spiritually, the souls of its inhabitants. As the kingdom of light, so the kingdom of darkness is within a man.

III. **The trusted weapons.**—1. Those of Simon, *sorcery*, witchcraft, magic, legerdemain, sleight-of-hand, and generally the arts of the conjurer and wizard. 2. Those of Philip, *the gospel* or the good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.

IV. **The varying methods.**—1. Simon relied on the power of *delusion*, or his ability to take advantage of human ignorance and credulity. 2. Philip reposed his confidence alone in *enlightenment* and conviction by the pure force of truth addressed to heart and conscience.

V. **The decisive result.**—1. Simon succeeded for a time in deceiving the people. 2. Philip in the end won them for Christ, and even carried captive (to appearance at least) Simon himself.

Vers. 9, 13, 23. *Simon Magus.*

I. **A successful sorcerer.**
II. **An insincere professor.**
III. **A baptised hypocrite.**
IV. **A detected deceiver.**

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 14—17.

The Mission of Peter and John; or, the Confirmation of the Saints.

I. **The occasion of this mission.**—*The report about Samaria.* The good news could not be kept from spreading. The apostles at headquarters took deep interest in the progress of the cause which for a moment the persecution had seemed to overwhelm. When perhaps the outlook appeared blackest, this information which came to them from Samaria would seem like the breaking forth of a star upon the dark firmament overhead.

II. **The authors of this mission.**—*The Apostles.* These had not left Jerusalem, but remained at their post. Not, as some think, because through Stephen's superior brilliancy they had dropped into obscurity, and so in a manner had become safe from persecution (*Stokes*), but because, like brave men, they felt it incumbent on them rather to face the peril than to flee. (See on ver. 1.)

III. **The agents of this mission.**—*Peter and John*, who appear to have been drawn to one another by common affinities and by perceiving each in the other

the complement of himself, and to have acted in concert after the resurrection (iii. 1; John xx. 4) as well as before (Matt. xxvii. 1; Luke viii. 51).

IV. **The fulfilment of this mission.**—1. *They went down to Samaria.* Ever ready to "doe the next thing," and to execute whatever task was laid upon them, they proceeded to Samaria. Regarding the instructions of their colleagues as an expression of the Spirit's mind, they obeyed. At the same time, their own wisdom and zeal would without doubt concur in the expediency of the journey. 2. *They prayed for the converts.* These had not yet received the seal of the Holy Ghost—*i.e.*, in His miracle-working endowments—though it need not be questioned they had received the Spirit in His ordinary gracious operations. Accordingly the two apostles prayed that this further seal of conversion might be given them. 3. *They laid their hands upon the converts.* The result they expected followed. The converts received the Holy Ghost, and doubtless (though it is not so stated) began to speak with tongues and perhaps work miracles of healing, as afterwards the Spirit-endowed believers in the Christian Church did (1 Cor. xii. 9, 10). The communication of such gifts was of course only symbolically brought about by the imposition of the apostles' hands. Their unseen but real bestower was the glorified Christ. (See "Critical Remarks.")

V. **The termination of this mission**—1. *When?* After they (the apostles) had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, Peter and John neglected no opportunity of either confirming the disciples or making new converts. Neither should their successors in the ministry. 2. *How?* They returned to Jerusalem. Not directly, but preaching by the way to many villages of the Samaritans—thus bringing on themselves the blessedness of them who sow beside all waters (Isa. xxxii. 20).

Lessons.—1. The interest which all should take in the spread of the gospel. 2. The true source of spiritual endowments—the Holy Spirit. 3. The unwearied diligence which Christian preachers should ever show.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 14. *Peter and John; or, the First Apostolic Delegates.*

I. **Their relation to the apostolic college.**—1. Not the *heads*, but ordinary members. If in the Church they were reputed to be pillars (Gal. ii. 9), they yet claimed no supremacy over their colleagues in the apostleship; not even though they had received distinctions above their brethren in the days before the crucifixion (Mark v. 37, ix. 2, xiv. 33), and after the resurrection (John xxi. 15-23). 2. Not the *senders*, but the sent. They manifestly did not regard themselves as invested with authority to command their brethren, but viewed the whole body of the Twelve as of co-ordinate rank. They did not even think of disputing the right of the Twelve to appoint them to such a work as the mission to Samaria.

II. **The reasons for their selection.**—Why these and not a different pair—say Andrew and James—were deputed to execute this work may with some degree of probability be surmised. 1. *Their personal capabilities* were most likely such as to mark them out as leaders; and this inference receives ample confirmation from their writings which have been preserved in the New Testament. 2. *Their spiritual experience* through their close and intimate fellowship with the Master was manifestly such as to qualify them beyond others for the execution of a delicate and responsible task like that of visiting and reporting on the great revival in Samaria. 3. *Their close friendship* of many years' standing fitted them to act as colleagues on this important mission. They had long been accustomed to act in concert. 4. *Their individual temperaments*, on the one hand, of energy and impulse, fortitude

and decision; on the other hand, of love and gentleness, thoughtfulness and sympathy, supplied the two elements that were specially demanded for the contemplated visitation.

III. **The special object of their mission.**—This may be gathered from the context. 1. *To inspect and report upon the awakening in Samaria.* To judge whether it was a genuine work of grace, or only a temporary excitement. 2. If found genuine, *to complete it by receiving the baptised into Church fellowship,* by laying hands upon them and praying for their endowment with the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost.

Vers. 14-18. *The First Church Visitation.*

I. **The occasion.**—I. There is Christian life to be fostered (ver. 14). 2. There is a want in the Church to be supplied (ver. 16).

II. **The visitors.**—1. Peter: apostolic earnestness and zeal. 2. John: evangelical tenderness and mildness.

III. **The functions.**—1. Prayer in the name of the Church (ver. 15). 2. Imposition of hands in the name of God (ver. 17).

IV. **The effects.**—1. The strengthening of the Church (ver. 17). 2. The sifting of the Church (ver. 18).—*Gerok.*

Ver. 17. *Receiving the Holy Ghost.*

I. **A possibility.**—Otherwise Peter would not have promised it (ii. 38).

II. **A necessity.**—Otherwise Peter would not have gone to pray for it.

III. **A certainty.**—Otherwise God's promise would be falsified and Christ's prayer for His people would be unanswered, and the lives of believers would be incomplete.

IV. **A mystery.** — Otherwise we should be able to comprehend it, which we are not.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 18—24.

The Two Simons; or, the Detection of a Hypocrite.

I. **Simon Magus's proposal.**—1. *What suggested it.* The sight which he beheld. The coming down of the Holy Ghost upon those on whom the Apostle's hands were laid. This shows that the recipients of the Holy Ghost must in some external fashion—probably through speaking with tongues or working miracles—have indicated their possession of the heavenly gift. 2. *What accompanied it.* An offer of money. This revealed that Simon had no right conception either of the nature of the miraculous endowment which had been conferred upon the Samaritan believers (and perhaps also upon himself) or of the means which had been used in its bestowment. 3. *What composed it.* A request that the apostles should impart to him, not the Holy Ghost, which possibly along with others he may have received, but the power of conferring the Holy Ghost with His supernatural gifts upon others. Simon recognised in what Peter and John had effected a power that transcended his own, and wished to secure it for himself, that by its means he might stand on a level with the apostles as a *thaumaturge* and be able to recover his lost influence with the people.

II. **Simon Peter's Refusal.** 1. *A terrible denunciation.* "Thy money perish with thee!" Literally, may thy silver with thee be for destruction! (1) The meaning. Hardly an imprecation, which would not have been becoming in a follower of Him who said, "Let your communication be 'Yea, yea; Nay, nay,' for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil" (Matt. v. 37), and who taught His disciples to bless and curse not (Matt. v. 44; Luke vi. 28; Rom. xii. 14). Scarcely even a prediction that Simon was destined to perdition, since he afterwards directs Simon how that awful doom might be averted (ver. 22). But most likely and best, a strong and solemn asseveration that he, Simon, being in such a state of mind would certainly share that destruction which would eventually overtake his money, as all other earthly goods, which in their nature are perishable (Col. ii. 22). "Gold and silver would perish in the end. Equally valueless

and perishable would be the life of an unrighteous man. The corruptible nature of that gold and silver which man prizes so dearly seems to have been ever in Peter's mind, and to have entered continually into his arguments" (Spence). Compare 1 Peter i. 7, 18. (2) The reason. "Because thou hast thought that the gift of God might be purchased," or "to obtain the gift of God with money." The proposal revealed that Simon had not apprehended the true nature of what had taken place. Neither the character of the blessing bestowed—which was a spiritual influence; nor the author of its bestowment—God, and neither Peter nor other man; nor the terms of its bestowment—as a free gift, so that no quantity of gold or silver could purchase it. Compare what is said of wisdom (Job xxviii. 15-19). 2, *An alarming declaration.* "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter." Concerning which also must be noted: (1) The import of it—viz., that Simon had no share either in the word or doctrine of the Gospel which Peter preached, or in the Holy Ghost which God imparted to believers, so that even if apostolic hands had been laid upon him it was wholly in vain, or in the Christian community to which all Spirit-endowed believers belong. This was practically a sentence of excommunication on Simon. It excluded him from the congregation of believing and regenerated men, because his speech disclosed he should never have been reckoned with these. (2) The ground of it. "Thy heart is not right in the sight of of God" or "before God." There was more at fault with Simon than defective understanding. His heart was not straight (compare 2 Kings x. 15, LXX.; 2 Peter ii. 15), not sincere and upright. Crooked, perverse, and corrupt, it was directed towards not spiritual, but earthly things. It thirsted not for eternal life but for temporal power, sought not God's glory, but its own fame. Though it might seem otherwise in men's sight, such was its character in the eyes of God. 3. *A solemn exhortation.* "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness," etc. Setting forth (1) An urgent duty. To repent of his wickedness, since without godly sorrow for past sin moral improvement was impossible. To turn from his wickedness. This also was implied, inasmuch as no repentance could be sincere that did not lead to a changed life. To pray God or the Lord for forgiveness, because even repentance and reformation cannot cancel or atone for past guilt. And such guilt attached to the wicked thought of the heart quite as much as to the evil deed of the hand or sinful word of the mouth (Matt. xv. 19). (2) A fearful uncertainty. "If perhaps the thought of thy heart shall be forgiven thee." Peter could have no doubt that "all manner of sin could" and would be "forgiven unto men" if they repented and believed (Matt. xii. 31), but in this case he appeared uncertain whether the special sin committed did not fall within the category of sins for which no forgiveness can be found either in this life or in that which is to come (Matt. xii. 31, 32; 1 John v. 16). Peter's language shows that the power of absolution conferred on the apostles by Christ (John xx. 23) was not absolute, and could not be exercised in every or any case except conditionally on the repentance and faith of the individual absolved. (3) An appalling argument. Peter justifies his uncertainty as to the possibility of Simon's forgiveness by stating that Simon was "in the gall of bitterness"—*i.e.*, in bitterness, wickedness, hostility, as in gall, "and in the bond of iniquity"—*i.e.*, in unrighteousness as in a chain. Not that he would lapse into such a condition if he did not repent (Stier), but that already he had fallen into and was abiding in it. The gall of noxious reptiles having been considered by the ancients as the seat of their venom, Peter, by the selection of this metaphor, virtually said that Simon was actuated by a spirit of bitter hostility against the Gospel, that the seat of this bitterness was in his corrupt heart, and that this malignity which his evil nature cherished held him fast like a chain, or bond.

III. **Simon Magus's entreaty.** 1. *What was right about it.* (1) It was good that Simon felt alarmed and thought of prayer, rather than magic, as a means of

averting his peril. (2) It was better that he sought the friendly mediation of Peter to make supplication on his behalf, whereas he might have turned upon Peter with cursing and violence. (3) It was best that he directed Peter to lay his prayer before the Lord against whom he had sinned. Even of bad men it is right to take the most charitable view, and these thoughts suggest hope for Simon the Magician. 2. *What was wrong about it.* (1) That he prayed not himself but merely asked (perhaps mockingly) Peter to pray for him. (2) That he only wished to elude the threatened punishment of his wickedness, and had no concern about escaping from the wickedness itself. (3) That he made no mention of feeling sorry for his sin, but only "confessed his fear of punishment, not horror of guilt" (*Bengel*). In all which he resembled Pharaoh, who entreated Moses to intercede with Jehovah for him (Exod. viii. 29, ix. 28, x. 17), and yet afterwards hardened his heart.

IV. **Simon Peter's silence.** It is not said that the apostle complied with the magician's request. The inference is that he did not. 1. *Not because it would have been wrong to pray for another.* Intercessory prayer was practised by Old Testament saints, as Abraham (Gen. xvii. 18, 20, xviii. 23-32), Moses (Exod. viii. 12, 13, 30, 31), Samuel (1 Sam. vii. 5-12), and Elijah (1 Kings xvii. 20-23); was enjoined upon New Testament disciples by Christ (Matt. v. 44), and is still enforced upon believers as a duty (Eph. vi. 18; 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2; James v. 16; 1 John v. 16). 2. *Not because the forgiveness of heinous sin was impossible.* If Simon Magus's wickedness was outside the reach of pardon Peter did not know this, else he would not have urged on Magus to pray for forgiveness. But 3. *Because the conditions of true prayer were wanting.* Simon was not in a proper state of mind to be interceded for, being destitute of both repentance and faith. Peter may have supplicated heaven for his awakening, and perhaps did so in secret; while Simon continued as he was, Peter could not beseech God for the granting of his request. Whether the magician ever repented and reformed cannot be told. Ecclesiastical tradition reports that after his interview with Peter he went back to his old courses like a dog to his vomit, etc. (2 Peter ii. 22), and became a bitter opponent of Christianity.

Learn—1. That many who profess to be converted are still in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. 2. That heaven's gifts—whether in providence or in grace—cannot be purchased for money, but must always be accepted free. 3. That the purchase and sale of spiritualities (usually called Simony) is a heinous sin. 4. That "the heart aye's the past aye, that makes us right or wrong" (Burns). 5. That the first thing to be done with sin is to repent of it, and the second thing to seek its forgiveness. 6. That sinful thoughts and feelings as much require repentance and forgiveness as sinful words and acts. 7. That if Peter could read the heart of Magus, much more can God read the hearts of all.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 18. *Money.*

I. **Rightly viewed.**—God's gift to man. 1. Because the silver and the gold are Mine saith the Lord (Hag. ii. 8). 2. Because no man can possess it except it be given him from above (John iii. 27; James i. 17). 3. Because the ability to earn money comes from God (Deut. viii. 18). 3. Because God can recall it at any moment (Job i. 21).

II. **Wrongly used.**—When employed to purchase the Holy Ghost, or salvation. 1. Because the Holy Ghost, a spiritual gift, cannot be purchased by carnal things. 2. Because the Holy Ghost, a heavenly gift, cannot be purchased by earthly things. 3. Because the Holy Ghost, a free gift, cannot be purchased by anything.

Ver. 21. *A Heart not Right with God.*

I. **When destitute of true faith** (Heb. xi. 6).

II. **When anxious to make gain of godliness** (1 Tim. vi. 5).

III. **When desirous of purchasing salvation.**

IV. **When secretly in love with sin** (Psalm lxvi. 18).

V. **When a veiled enemy of Jesus Christ** (xiii. 10).

Ver. 22. *The Thoughts of the Heart.*

I. **Naturally wicked** (Gen. vi. 5).

II. **Thoroughly understood** (Prov. xv. 11).

III. **All forgivable** (Matt. xii. 31).

IV. **Certainly damnable, if not repented of** (Luke xiii. 3).

Ver. 24. *Intercessory Prayer.*

I. **Commanded** (Matt. v. 44; Eph. vi. 18; 1 Tim. ii. 1; James v. 16).

II. Exemplified. Abraham (Gen. xvii. 18, xix. 23); Moses (Exod. xxxii. 31, 32); David (2 Sam. xxiv. 17); Paul (Rom. i. 9).

III. **Solicited.**—By Pharaoh (Exod. viii. 8, 28); Israelites (Numb. xxi. 7); Jeroboam (1 Kings xiii. 6); Hezekiah (2 Kings xix. 1-4); Zedekiah (Jer. xxxvii. 3).

IV. **Answered.**—For Ishmael (Gen. xvii. 20); Pharaoh (Exod. viii. 12, 13, 30, 31); Miriam (Numb. xii. 13); Aaron (Deut. ix. 20); Peter (xii. 5-12); etc.

V. **Refused.**—To Judah (Jer. vii. 16, xi. 14, xiv. 11) and Simon Magus.

Vers. 14-25. *The Mistakes of Simon.*

I. **He sought to purchase spiritual gifts with money.**—Rich men try to buy the favour of Him whom they have neglected all their lives by great gifts to His cause. Poor men try to do it by some outward service which is not loving sonship. It is the mistake of all who cannot understand that God's offer is so free. So for penitence, which is only a motive to return to God and to receive His pardon, they substitute some penance which is the offering of our pains of mind or body to Him as the condition on which we ask His grace. It makes but little difference whether it is in a grosser or more spiritual form, whether it by the flagellation of our bodies or the torturing of our souls. God gives pardon; He does not sell it. Sin can earn wages, such as they are, but eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ is the gift of God's free grace.

II. **He sought spiritual gifts that he might use them for selfish ends.**—For it is impossible not to suppose that he offered money for money's worth. He had been a magician, and accustomed to receive the pay as well as the praises of the Samaritans. He desired this apostolic power that by its aid he might be both exalted and enriched. Here again, although the form of Simon's sin is exceptionally gross, the spirit of it is not unknown even to our modern world. Simon's sin is that of those who look upon the places of the Christian Church rather as means of support than as opportunities of ministry. But there is a subtler form of this same sin not so easily recognised, nor so easily brought to condemnation. Conceit may move men as well as covetousness. Ambition may be a motive as strong as avarice. They make this same mistake, commit this same sin, who desire to enjoy the dignities of Christian leadership in distinction from simply desiring to do Christian work. But there is a broader application of the principle, to those who desire the benefits of religion without the religion itself. The world is full of men who wish to have the advantage but not the responsibility of spiritual gifts. They would like the peace and joy of believing, but are not willing to accept its restraint and control. Above all, they are willing to be saved from the punishments of sin, but unwilling to be saved from the sin itself. They will join the disciple and be baptised and give their money, as Simon did, and would like all that God has to give them except a new heart; and the old heart is not right in His sight.

III. **He sought to substitute the spiritual gifts of others for his own repentance and prayer.**—And this was

his last mistake, after he had been rebuked for the first two, and so was perhaps the worst and most harmful of all. Peter had turned on this baptised sorcerer with sharp rebuke. God's gift cannot be purchased. Simon's money can find no investment in these spiritual gifts. Worst of all, he has shown that his heart is not right in God's sight; that it is full of wicked thoughts. "Repent of this thy wickedness," he cries to him, "and pray God if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee." There is no sin so great that true repentance and turning to God may not cover it. But still the mind of the disappointed magician does not take in the remedy proposed and its necessity. He would rather pray them to pray God for him than do it himself. He would rather depend on them than on the Lord. "Pray for me," he begs. If they would only pray for him, he might be delivered from these threatened evils. Nor is this a mistake confined to the Samaritan sorcerer. How many people are to-day depending on some other person's goodness to save them, or some other person's prayers to procure their pardon?—how many who practically hope for some miraculous saving power from the intercessions of others, without their own self-abasement before God, or without making supplication for themselves. There are husbands by scores who, having some general knowledge of the gospel, hope to be saved somehow by the godly living and praying of their wives; children, grown up to manhood and to womanhood in Christian homes, who are relying blindly on the power of their parents with God to secure for them deliverance from sin and a part in his salvation; unrenewed and unrepentant persons in all our congregations who hope that the Church will somehow pray them into heaven, if only at the eleventh hour. Perhaps the Church, in some of its branches at least, is not altogether blameless for this attitude on the part of many. Has it not sometimes encouraged them to ask for the prayers of God's people without emphasising the need that their own prayers should first be offered up. No Peter by his prayers, devout and apostolic though they be, can save a Simon who does not repent of his sin and pray for his own pardon and purifying. No Monica can save an Augustine by her prayers till God shall teach the wayward son himself to cry to Him for help. There is but one Mediator between God and man—the man Christ Jesus; and not even He makes repentance unnecessary on the sinner's part. After all, the mistakes of Simon were only the outcome of his mistaken heart. The heart which is not right in the sight of God cannot see anything rightly which relates to God. It does not see itself or Him, or its relation to Him, as it is. The right heart feels its need of that which cannot be procured by money or by its own good works, but only as the gift of God. The right heart recognises that it has no claim upon God's spiritual gifts for its own sake, but only that it may use them in the new spirit it has received of love to God and love to man. The right heart will not depend on any other to make needless for it sincere repentance and humble prayer. —*Monday Club Sermons.*

The Natural Heart.—In meditating upon the story of the Samaritan impostor, and studying our own depraved nature in it, we may remark—

I. **That the natural heart has no knowledge of Divine things.**—We hear a great deal nowadays of the "religious instinct." It is one of the catchwords by which men would do away with the notions of revelation and a new heart. According to some modern teachings, all men have a religious instinct, all have a desire to worship God—nay, all *do* worship God in some honest way, which, as he is a kind God, must be acceptable to him. On analysis, we shall find that this, which is called a religious instinct, is either the action of a guilty conscience or of a poetic fancy. But is this *religion*? Is this knowing and

serving God? Is this intelligent action towards a revealed Maker? Is it a movement of will and affections toward a personal Ruler of the universe? Can such a religion as is found in the "religious instinct," as it is called, satisfy the heart and purify the life? Has it ever done so? Do we find people and nations growing stronger on such diet, more civilised, more attractive? The religious instinct is of no higher character than the eating and drinking instinct, as far as true religion is concerned. One will lead to God as readily as the other. They are both of the earth, earthy. Men are cut off from God by sin, and they can return only by the use of Divine means. Nothing in themselves can be of any avail. The chasm must be bridged from the Divine side. Acceptance of what *God has done* is salvation. What *we* do only helps us downward in sin. That which Simon brought out into full relief by reason of his position and boldness was simply the common character of the natural man. Divine things are treated with low, earthly affections, and, of course, as low, earthly things. Simon in trying to buy God's power was no worse than the many who try to appease God's anger with a penance or a gift. The one tries to buy God's power, the other tries to buy God's pardon.

II. Note, in the second place, **that man's wickedness before God is in the condition of his heart.**—Look at the words used in Simon's case: "Thy heart is not right before God." And then again, "Repent of this thy wickedness, and pray the Lord if perhaps the thought of thy heart shall be forgiven thee." Men have accustomed themselves to posit sin in overt acts, and have failed to explore the pollution of their hearts. Our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount endeavours to correct this fatal error, and shows that the seat of murder and other gross offences is in the heart. He, as a holy God, can receive none to Himself except as the unholy heart is renewed. This fundamental truth is what the poets and philosophers ignore. They would reform man on the basis of the old evil heart. They would make the outer circles of life pure, and leave the core rotten. If, however, they say that the heart of man *is pure*, how then did it ever produce such universal impurity in life? For surely the life must come from the heart. But some will say, "We believe the heart must be renewed, but why cannot man renew it himself? What is renewal except turning the heart from one object of affection to another, from wrong to right, from the false to the true?" In reply, we make our third remark on our text—

III. **That only God's power can renew the heart.**—We accept the definition that renewal is a turning from wrong to right, from the false to the true. But when the affections are in the wrong and the false, how can their own influence take them out? How can love destroy itself? Now, the heart is this love, this love for evil. How can it change *itself* to love for good? Where is the first impetus to come from when that which forms the force of the life is fixed upon evil? Do you take refuge in the thought that there is some element of good in the heart, and that this at last accomplishes the renewal? Then why does it not *always* accomplish it? What is there to make exceptional cases? Any exceptional case destroys your theory, for Nature always works in the same way, and if the good element would produce renewal in one heart, it certainly would in all. But, besides that, how could the good element in the heart overcome the bad unless it had a majority? And if it had a majority, how came the heart ever to go wrong? No; the theory will not bear examination. The evil heart cannot renew itself. God alone can do that.

IV. **The hope of man is in prayer.**—"Pray the Lord," said Peter, "if perhaps the thought of thy heart shall be forgiven thee." Prayer must have penitence as its spirit ("*Repent* there-

fore of this thy wickedness, *and pray* the Lord"). It must have a deep conviction of personal sin. Though Simon apparently did not take the road to pardon and to God, we see in Peter's injunction what the road is. It is *prayer to God.* The heart needs His forgiving grace.—*H. Crosby, D.D.*

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 26—40.

The Conversion of the Eunuch; or, the Gospel carried into Ethiopia.

I. **Occasioned by Providence.**—The preparatory steps which led to this remarkable occurrence were seven. 1. *The Eunuch's adhesion to the Hebrew faith.* An Ethiopian from the upper valley of the Nile, a eunuch of great authority under Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians (Ethiopia being at this time ruled by female sovereigns, of whom Candace was the official title), who had charge of all her treasure, who was her Finance Minister—five clauses descriptive of his extraction, his condition, his dignity, his time, and his office—he had in measure at least renounced his original heathen superstitions, having, like so many others about that period, come to realise their inability to satisfy the wants of the soul. It has been supposed indeed that he was a Jew who had risen to eminence in Ethiopia, as Moses had done in Egypt, Daniel in Babylon, and Mordecai in Shushan (Stokes), chiefly on the ground that had he been a heathen, Cornelius could not have been designated the first Gentile convert. As an argument, however, this is scarcely convincing, since in the Eunuch's case no question arose about terms of admission to the Palestinian Church, while if as stated he was a circumcised pagan, his case was sufficiently distinguished from that of Cornelius, who was certainly an uncircumcised Gentile. The probability, therefore, is that he was an African who, having embraced the Jewish faith, was attached to the temple as a proselyte (compare x. 2, xiii. 16), but whether of the gate (Alford, Renan) or of righteousness (Plumptre) cannot be determined. Neither can it be ascertained how he had been led to such an act of renunciation and acceptance as this his proselyte relation to Judaism implied. Jews, it is known, had for centuries been settled in Ethiopia; and the Greek or Septuagint translation of the Scriptures was at this time widely diffused throughout the world. 2. *The Eunuch's pilgrimage to Jerusalem to worship.* It was the custom for proselytes as well as for foreign Jews to undertake such pilgrimages in order to attend the great annual religious festivals at Jerusalem (ii. 10; John xii. 20); and the Treasurer of Meroë had manifestly been in the Jewish capital, observing one or other of these feasts; most likely a Pentecost, which was usually attended by the largest numbers. That he had done so had no doubt been of God's ordering. 3. *The Eunuch's homeward journey through the desert.* What particular motive the African statesman had for selecting the desert route to Gaza, *viâ* Bethlehem and Hebron, in preference to any of the other roads, as for instance that which led through Ramleh or that which ran by Bethshemesh, cannot be conjectured; but it need not be questioned that God's object in directing him to the choice he made was to secure the quietude necessary for conversation with the messenger of heaven who was about to be despatched to join him. 4. *The Eunuch's meeting with Philip at the moment of his need.* According to the story, while his chariot, "a mode of locomotion at all times almost unknown to Syria and Palestine" (Renan), rolled along upon its homeward way, the distinguished traveller, following a custom then quite common, occupied himself in reading. The book which engaged his attention was that of Esaias the prophet. It is not necessary to suppose (Stier) that he had only for the first time procured a copy of the Scriptures when in the Jewish capital. It is more likely that he had long possessed one, but that, having heard in Jerusalem about the death and resurrection of Jesus, he may have been examining the prophecies to ascertain how far

these had been fulfilled in Christ's person and work (Hackett). Anyhow, he had just arrived at a passage in the narrative for which he felt the need of an interpreter when he encountered Philip, whom, the moment before, he could hardly have expected to find in a solitude like that through which he was passing. But this also was of the Lord. 5. *The Eunuch's occupation at the moment of Philip's appearance.* Not merely reading but reading aloud, which furnished Philip with an opportunity and an excuse for striking in with a query —"Understandest thou what thou readest?"—which perhaps he could not otherwise so readily have done. 6. *The Spirit's direction to Philip to approach the Eunuch.* Although Philip had been sent to the desert road from Samaria—not from Jerusalem (Zeller)—by an angel, he had not been instructed by the angel as to what was the object of his journey. Even when the opulent African appeared, he could not be certain that his mission related to a personage so great without further instructions. These, however, were conveyed to him by a special inspiration: "The Spirit said to him, Go near and join thyself to this chariot"; and with that, of course, all hesitation vanished. It is worth observ- that this is "the first mention in the Acts of that *inner prompting* of the Spirit which is referred to again, probably in xiii. 2, but certainly in x. 19, xvi. 6, 7" (Alford). Such inward guidance is not unknown to Christians yet. 7. *The Eunuch's request to Philip* to ascend his chariot. Had the Eunuch resented Philip's inquiry, which from a worldly or at least modern point of view was not remarkably polite, there had been no conversation and no conversion; but being anxious to understand, and perhaps solicitous about salvation, and obviously humble withal, the distinguished official did not discern any lack of courtesy in Philip's question, or, if he did, he passed it over, and, like one willing to be taught, invited Philip to ascend and sit beside him. And so the providential chain was complete.

II. **Effected by the word.**—If, as already suggested, the Eunuch's conversion from heathenism to Judaism was brought about by a believing study of the Old Testament Scriptures, through the same instrumentality was he now to be led over from Judaism to Christianity. 1. *By the word read.* Or heard. Salvation is not a magical or supernatural transformation to be effected on the soul without intelligent co-operation on its part, but an inward moral and spiritual renewal which can be carried through solely by means of the truth. In accordance with this the Eunuch was engaged in reading the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah when Philip met him. Modern critics, on what seems to the present writer altogether insufficient grounds, have decided that the passage named was not penned by the son of Amos but by an unknown prophet who lived towards the close of the exile; but it is obvious that this was not the view taken either by the Ethiopian treasurer who was groping his way out of heathen darkness, or by Philip the Christian deacon, who at the moment was under the special guidance of the Holy Ghost, or by Luke the evangelist, whom the Holy Ghost employed to record the incident. 2. *By the word understood.* Mere reading without intelligent apprehension can effect nothing. Hence the question of the deacon was directed towards ascertaining whether the Eunuch comprehended the import of what his eye followed and his tongue uttered; and on learning that he did not, immediately the deacon undertook the office of expounding to him the sense of the sacred text. The Eunuch could indeed perceive that the prophet spoke of a suffering servant of Jehovah; what was not apparent was whether that suffering servant should be identified with the prophet himself or with another. That he was neither, but, as the newer critical school asserts, the people of Israel, did not occur to either the Eunuch or the Deacon. Both sought him in an individual, and that individual Philip told his distinguished scholar was Jesus, whose death was foreshadowed in the prophet's language,

which pointed out—(1) the meekness of it on Christ's part—"He was led as a sheep to the slaughter," etc.; (2) the iniquity of it on the part of those by whom it was compassed—"In His humiliation His judgment was taken away," meaning that "through oppression and a judicial sentence he was taken away"—*i.e.*, the rights of justice and humanity were denied Him, or in other words He was judicially murdered; (3) the fruitfulness of it in the number of spiritual descendants secured by means of it to Christ—"Who shall declare His generation?" or "Who shall count the number of His posterity?"—a translation which the Hebrew will support, though another rendering makes it equivalent to the preceding thought—"who shall declare the wickedness of His contemporaries?" and (4) the triumph of it, inasmuch as through it His life was taken away from the earth, not merely by a violent death, but by exaltation to heaven—"for His life is taken from the earth" (Luke's translation is from the LXX., and every clause in ver. 33 has been debated by interpreters; but as all the above renderings are possible, they may be used as representing the course of evangelical instruction through which Philip put the Eunuch). 3. *By the word believed.* As salvation comes not by reading or hearing where understanding is wanting, so neither does it result from understanding where faith does not ensue. The truth concerning Jesus must be accepted as correct, in so far as it is a testimony, and relied on by the heart's trust in so far as it is a means of salvation. Faith in Scripture is always more than intellectual assent. It involves as well cordial reliance on Him of whom the testimony speaks. This faith was unquestionably exhibited by the Eunuch.

III. **Accompanied by confession.**—The particular mode in which the Eunuch avowed his acceptance of Christianity was by submitting to the rite of baptism, concerning which four things may be noticed. 1. *The place where the rite was performed.* Not otherwise indicated than by the circumstance that in its immediate vicinity was "a certain water," it cannot now be identified, although Eusebius and Jerome have decided for Bethsur (Josh. xv. 58; Neh. iii. 16), near Hebron, about twenty miles south of Jerusalem, and two from Hebron, against which stands no improbability; but rather for which may be urged that a fountain named *Ain-Edh-Dhirweh* rises near the town, which still retains the old name in a slightly altered form, *Beit-Sur.* Other sites have been selected, as *Ain-Haniyeh*, about five miles south of Jerusalem, and a *Wady* in the plain near *Tell-el-Hasy.* 2. *The talk before the rite was performed.* Drawing attention to the water by the wayside, the Eunuch expressed a wish to be baptised, from which it has been inferred that Philip must have enlightened him concerning the nature and necessity of baptism. Of this, however, he may have learnt in Jerusalem. Philip's reply must have been something like that contained in ver. 37, though by the best MSS. this is omitted. Yet, if spurious, the insertion must have been as old as Irenæus, who cites the words without misgiving. Meyer thinks they have been culled from some baptismal liturgy, to show that the Eunuch was not baptised without a formal profession of his faith (see "Hints on ver. 37"). 3. *The mode in which the rite was performed.* It is commonly asserted that the words "and they went down both into the water" imply that the Eunuch was immersed; but if "into the water" signifies that the Eunuch was immersed then as Philip went down into the water, in company with the Eunuch, Philip also must have been immersed; while if Philip could have gone down into the water without being immersed, it is obvious that the Eunuch could have done the same. The impromptu character of the baptism suggests something simpler than immersion, most likely sprinkling or pouring. 4. *What happened after the rite was performed.* The Alexandrian text reads, "And the Holy Spirit of the Lord fell on the Eunuch," which may have been inserted to harmonise the incident with theological requirements (see i. 5), or with what was

supposed to have usually occurred after baptism (ii. 38); but the Samaritans were not endowed with the Holy Ghost immediately after baptism (ver. 16), and the gracious indwelling of the Spirit in the heart of a believer is not necessarily connected with baptism (Eph. i. 13). What did occur was that Philip was miraculously caught away by the Spirit of the Lord from the Eunuch's side, as Old Testament prophets had often been supernaturally rapt from the eyes of beholders (1 Kings xviii. 12; 2 Kings ii. 16), as Paul afterwards was caught up into the third heaven (2 Cor. xii. 2, 4), and as the then living believers will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air at His second coming (1 Thess. iv. 17). By that (mysterious) departure the Eunuch's faith could scarcely fail to be confirmed (Bengel), unless indeed it was a purely natural, though sudden and impulsive withdrawal on the part of Philip (Zeller, Hackett, Plumptre, Olshausen, Meyer), in which case its effect upon the Eunuch would rather seem to have been disturbing. But the appended statement that Philip was found at Azotus, or Ashdod, one of the principal cities of the Philistines near the sea-coast, rather points to a miraculous removal (Bengel, Alford, Stier, Spence, Lechler, Holtzmann, Zöckler).

IV. **Followed by joy.**—Though the Eunuch no more beheld the evangelist he went on his way rejoicing, thus showing that the change which had passed upon him was independent of the agent by whose mediation it had been effected. The causes of the chamberlain's rejoicing may be set down as four. 1. *He had found the true object of worship.* This in a manner he had known before, inasmuch as the object of his journey to Jerusalem had been to worship Jehovah, but since meeting with Philip he had learnt that Jehovah had revealed Himself in Jesus Christ, "the image of the invisible God" (Col. i. 15), "the brightness of His Father's glory and the express image of His person" (Heb. i. 3), as the supreme and sole object of adoration. 2. *He had found the key to the Bible.* Before he encountered Philip the Bible which he read had been a dark book to him; after his conversation with Philip he discovered that he had obtained a light which enabled him to peruse its prophecies with understanding. "The golden key to the Psalter" says Bishop Alexander, "lies in the pierced hand." The same key unlocks the mysteries of the law and the prophets. "Moses wrote of Me," said Christ (John v. 46); and of the prophets Peter affirms "The Spirit of Christ was in them" (1 Peter i. 11). 3. *He had found a personal Saviour.* The faith professed by the Eunuch was more than a bare intellectual assent to the truths propounded by Philip. It was a heart reception of Jesus whom Philip had set forth as the Redeemer. It was a trust which reposed on His death as a true atonement for sin, and looked to His resurrection as the source of spiritual life for his soul. It was a faith that might have said "I am crucified with Christ," etc. (Gal. ii. 20). A faith which enabled him to rejoice in Christ Jesus (Phil. iii. 3) as his Saviour and friend. 4. *He had found a blessed gospel for his countrymen.* On his upward journey to Jerusalem he was only treasurer of Candace, the Queen of the Ethiopians; on his downward way he had become a treasurer of the King of kings, and was bearing to his benighted countrymen, in the name of that King, riches more precious than all the wealth of Ethiopia, the joyful tidings that for them, too, had arrived a day of salvation, and a heavenly Saviour who could, and would, rescue them from sin and misery, if only they put their trust in Him. Tradition preserves the Eunuch's name as Indich, and credits him with being the first to preach the gospel in Ethiopia, even converting Queen Candace, after which he departed to India and taught in Ceylon.

Learn.—1. That earnest seekers after God will eventually be guided into the truth concerning God. 2. That the best companion for an anxious inquirer after God and salvation is the Bible. 3. That nothing is so effective for conver-

sion work as the story of the death and resurrection of Christ. 4. That Old Testament Scripture was intended to point the way to Christ. 5. That the ordinance of baptism should not be neglected by professed disciples of Jesus Christ. 6. That the mode of Christian baptism may be by sprinkling or pouring as well as by immersion. 7. That no joy can be compared to the joy of salvation.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 26. *Angels.*

I. **Their nature.**—Spiritual intelligences (Psalm civ. 4).

II. **Their number.**—Practically beyond reckoning (Psalm lxviii. 17; Heb. xii. 22; Rev. v. 11).

III. **Their dignity.**—Superior to man (Psalm viii. 5; 2 Peter ii. 11), they stand in God's presence (Psalm lxviii. 7; Zech. vi. 5; Rev. v. 11; Matt. xviii. 10).

IV. **Their character.**—1. Holy (Dan. iv. 13, 17; Matt. xxv. 31; Rev. xiv. 10). 2. Reverential (Isa. vi. 2). 3. Obedient (Isa. vi. 2; Matt. vi. 10). 4. Powerful (Psalm ciii. 20; 2 Thess. i. 7).

V. **Their employment.**—1. Worshipping God (Neh. ix. 6); Psalm cxlviii. 2; Luke ii. 13; Rev. iv. 8). 2. Doing God's will (Psalm ciii. 21; Matt. vi. 10). 3. Studying the manifold wisdom of God (Eph. iii. 10; 1 Peter i. 12). 4. Rejoicing in the conversion of sinners (Luke xv. 10). 5. Ministering to the heirs of salvation (Heb. i. 14), as, for instance (to mention only cases that occur in the Acts), to the disciples at Christ's ascension (i. 10, 11), to Peter and John (v. 19), to Philip (viii. 26), to Cornelius (x. 7), to Peter (xii. 8), to the Church in the destruction of Herod (xii. 23), to Paul on ship board (xxvii. 23).

Ver. 27. *The Heavenly Treasure.*

I. **Where** it was found. On a solitary way through the desert.

II. The **chest** that contained it. The Scripture with its dark sayings and seals.

III. The **key** which opened it. The preaching of Philip.

IV. The **jewel** which sparkled to him. Christ who died for our sins and rose again for our justification.

V. The **seal** of possession. Granted to him by baptism.

VI. The **joy** which it occasioned. That of forgiveness and salvation.—*Adapted from Gerok.*

Ver. 28. *Bible Reading.*—A duty.

I. **Divinely commanded.**—Even Christians forget this; but see Deut. vi. 6, xvi. 19, xxxi. 11; Josh. i. 8; John v. 39; 2 Peter i. 19.

II. **Greatly neglected.**—Not by the unbelieving world only, but also by the professed followers of Christ.

III. **Highly profitable.**—Imparting light, strength, and joy to such as practise it (Psalm xix. 11; Prov. vi. 23; Rom. xv. 4; 2 Tim. iii. 16).

Ver. 30. *Three Questions about the Bible.*

I. **Readest thou what thou hast?**—1. *Thou hast the Bible*, which is the word of God, and worthy of being read. 2. *It was given thee to be read*, and cannot be neglected without sin. 3. *If not read* it will one day testify against thee.

II. **Understandest thou what thou readest?**—1. It *supposes* that we read the Bible—which is good. 2. It *discloses* to us our natural blindness—which is better. 3. It *excites* us to seek the true interpreter and guide—which is best.

III. **Obeyest thou what thou understandest?**—1. *What is not understood cannot be obeyed.* An extenuation of the sins of the heathen and the ignorant. 2. *What is understood is designed to be obeyed.* Hence arises the responsibility of the enlightened. 3. *If what is understood is not obeyed, it will entail upon the disobedient both loss and guilt.* No duty can be neglected without inflicting hurt upon the disobedient as

well as exposing him to punishment.—*Adapted from Gerok.*

Vers. 28-31. *Four Marvels.*

I. A courtier **reads.**—Here deplore the sad neglect of education on the part of many and the little attention paid to books even by not a few great men.

II. A courtier reads **the Bible.**—Comment upon the melancholy want of religious sentiments in mankind and the inattention paid to the Bible.

III. A courtier **owns himself ignorant of his subject.**—A good sign and a happy omen of coming enlightenment and progress wherever it appears, but one seldom present in those who fill exalted stations in life.

IV. A courtier **applies to a minister of Christ for information** and follows his counsel. The right thing to be done by such as require instruction, but an example too seldom followed.—*Adapted from a well-known incident.*

Vers. 32, 33. *The Sufferings of Jesus.*

I. **Foretold in Scripture.**—The hope and consolation of Israel.

II. **Realised in history.**—The atonement for a world's sin.

III. **Preached in the Gospel.**—The greatest moral force on earth.

IV. **Believed in by a sinner.**—The source of his individual salvation.

Ver. 39. *The Ethiopian Eunuch.*

I. **The character he bore.**—1. A professor of true religion. 2. A man of sincere devotion. 3. A devout lover of the Scriptures.

II. **The change he experienced.**—1. Ministerial in its agent. 2. Personal in its principle. 3. Practical in its influence.

III. **The happiness he obtained.**—A joy of—1. Heartfelt gratitude. 2. Gracious experience. 3. Glorious anticipation.

Lessons.—1. Religion not confined to any class or condition. 2. The insufficiency of a form of godliness without its power. 3. The influence of piety upon its subjects.

The Joyful Traveller on his way Home.

I. **Where did his joy come from?**—He had not brought it with him. It came from what he heard from Philip, or rather from what he read in Isaiah. But how did that statement bring him joy? It told him of a Sin-bearer,—long-predicted, come at length. What he read was as blessed as it was true.

II. **Where should our joy come from?**—From the same testimony to the same finished work. The sinner is not happy. His sin comes between him and joy. That burden must be removed ere he can taste of joy; and it can only be removed by approaching the cross. Why is there so little joy among Christians? 1. *Not because God does not wish them to have it.* It is not forbidden fruit. 2. *Not because joy dishonours Him.* Gloom dishonours God; joy honours Him. 3. *Not because joy is not safe for us to have.* True joy is the safest of all things. It makes a man stedfast and earnest. 4. *Not because God's sovereignty interposes.* 5. *Not because joy was not meant for these days.* 6. *Not because it unnerves us for work.* "The joy of the Lord is our strength." It is joy *from* God; joy *in* God; it is THE JOY OF GOD. To all this we are called. That which we *possess* is full of joy. The present favour and love of God. That which we *hope for* is full of joy.—*H. Bonar, D.D.*

Vers. 26-39. *The Eunuch from Ethiopia; or, Words to Seekers after God.*

I. **God must be sought where He has graciously been pleased to reveal Himself.**—The Eunuch understood this, and sought Jehovah. 1. In the temple at Jerusalem, and, 2. In the sacred Scriptures. And in like manner seekers after God to day must seek Him in Christ, who is the image of the invisible God (2 Cor. iv. 4; Col. i. 15), or, first, in the Scriptures which testify of Christ (John v. 39), and second, in the Christian sanctuary, where believers speak of Christ (1 Cor. i. 2).

II. **Seekers after God are never unobserved by Him whom they seek.**—As Jehovah saw the Eunuch start upon his journey to Jerusalem and again upon his homeward track, and knew exactly all that was in his heart and what he more particularly required, so does He still behold from heaven every soul that is inquiring after Him, whether within or without the pale of Christendom (Prov. xv. 3; Jer. xxxii. 19; Heb. iv. 13).

III. **It is certain that they who seek God with their whole hearts will ultimately find Him.**—That, on the word of Jehovah (Jer. xxix. 13), and of Jesus (Matt. vii. 7). As Jehovah's angel (ver. 26), servant (ver. 26), and Spirit (ver. 29) were all set in motion to secure that the rich treasurer should not fail in his quest, so will God by the same Spirit, and if not by the same minister by the same truth which he taught, and if not by visible angels by the same providence meet the earnest soul who is longing after Him (Isa. lxiv. 5; Matt. v. 4).

IV. **When seekers have found God they should make public acknowledgment of the same.**—Not hiding their joy in their bosoms, but giving it free expression, letting it be known, not only for the honour of God, but for the encouragement of souls in a similar seeking condition.

Vers. 27-29. *Philip and the Eunuch; or, Meetings on the Highway of Life.* Such meetings are—

I. **Often accidental.**—At least to appearance. When Philip arose and went from Samaria, and the Eunuch se this face toward Ethiopia, neither had the least idea of encountering each other. Many meetings are, of course, purposed at least by one of the parties, as, *e.g.*, that of Melchisedek and the King of Sodom with Abraham (Gen. xiv. 17, 18), that of Joseph with his father (Gen. xlvi. 29), that of Moses with Jethro (Exod. xviii. 1-7), that of Saul with Samuel (1 Sam. xiii. 10), and that of the Roman Christians with Paul (xxviii. 15); but probably an equal number are undesigned, like that of Elijah and Obadiah (1 Kings xvi. 7), that of Paul and Aquila (xviii. 2), and others.

II. **Frequently at most unlikely times and places.**—Probably the last place in the world that either Philip or the Eunuch would have expected to meet each other would be the desert road to Gaza. Had intimation been conveyed to them beforehand that they were to cross each other's paths, it is barely likely that either would have pitched upon the Judæan wilderness for the spot, or after the breaking up of the Jewish festival for the time. But the unexpected is that which mostly happens, so little prescient is man of the future.

III. **Always providentially arranged.**—"It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. x. 23). "Man's goings are of the Lord" (Prov. xx. 24). This was signally illustrated in the experiences of both Philip and the Eunuch, who were brought together not by chance but by heavenly guidance.

IV. **Sometimes fraught with momentous consequences.**—As was the meeting of Philip and the Eunuch, to the former of whom it presented a glorious opportunity of preaching the gospel, and of leading a soul into the light, and to the latter an equally glorious opportunity of finding that which he sought, the pearl of great price, even Jesus, and with Him the salvation of his soul.

Lesson.—Be on the outlook for life's chances, study their significance, and endeavour to use them for heaven's purposes.

Vers. 26-40. *Philip the Deacon; or, the Characteristics of a good Evangelist.*—These may be summed up in the motto, *semper paratus*, or, always ready. Ready—

I. **To go where God sends**, whether the order comes through a natural or a supernatural channel, whether through a vision, as with Paul (xvi. 9), or through an angel, as with Philip.

"Here am I, send me" (Isa. vi. 8), should be his constant attitude.

II. **To listen to the promptings of God's Spirit,** which will come to him as they came to Philip and again to Paul (xvi. 7), if only he train himself to recognise them and discipline himself to follow them. It is the Holy Spirit's province to lead the people of God (Rom. viii. 14), and He never fails to guide them who hearken to His counsels.

III. **To take advantage of every opportunity of preaching,** or teaching, **the gospel** that Providence may open, as did Philip when he met the Eunuch, and as did Paul in Ephesus (1 Cor. xvi. 9). The good evangelist will lie in wait for such (2 Tim. iv. 2).

IV. **To expound whatever portion of Scripture is presented to him,** which will require him to be a diligent student of the word of God, as Paul counselled Timothy to be (1 Tim. iv. 13-15). Ignorance of Scripture absolutely inexcusable in one whose office it is to instruct others.

V. **To direct inquiring souls to Jesus Christ,** who is the central theme of Scripture and to bring souls to whom is the end of all preaching. The minister or evangelist that does not know how to point anxious inquirers to Christ has mistaken his calling.

VI. **To assist young converts in making public confession of their faith,** as Philip did, when he administered the rite of baptism to the Eunuch, whose faith might otherwise have wanted confirmation and eventually declined.

VII. **To hide himself behind his Master,** as Philip was taught to do, when he was suddenly caught away by the Spirit so that the Eunuch saw him no more. Evangelists are only instruments in conversion; the sole agent is the Spirit. Hence the glory of any conversion belongs not to the evangelist but to the Spirit. Nor does the convert longer need the instrument, while he must never be parted from the Spirit.

Philip and the Ethiopian.

I. Certain characteristics of his work.—1. *His implicit obedience to the Spirit.* The angel said, "Arise and go." He arose and went. His faith must have been severely tested. He was preaching in a city already deeply roused. A revival was in progress. The joy of the new converts was spreading the spiritual fire. The people of Samaria were in just the condition to receive the gospel, and it seemed as if he was the one appointed messenger to proclaim it to them. The angel that commanded him to go from the revived city into the desert did not disclose the object of his journey. But Philip knew whence the message came, and without question into the desert he went. But some things concerning that guidance may be noted. It is always in perfect accord with the Scriptures. Philip might well be prompt. His work was greater than that of the angel. 2. *His eagerness to impart the gospel.* Those who love souls as Christ did, find opportunities to tell them of Christ's salvation. Whatever openings we see, we must press into. They are abundant. No one lives where souls are still unsaved, where God does not open a way for him to carry the gospel. Take the first step, and God will point out the next. 3. *His usable knowledge of the Scriptures.* Philip had made no immediate preparation for that lesson, but he knew what was in it. He had prepared himself for such emergencies, both by experience and study. He seized the heart of it, and opened its meaning to his hearer. This scholar felt that his teacher was in earnest, and in earnest for him. The teacher's heart was kindled with the presence of the Lord. This is living, potent teaching. The great central theme of it is Jesus Christ, the Saviour of sinners. It is most effective, even with the indifferent and unbelieving. There are many graces and virtues and duties taught in the Bible as essential to Christian character, but the entire revelation of God is pervaded by one life. As the human body has arteries,

veins, muscles, and other organs, but all dependent on the heart's blood, which supplies the life, so the mighty complex system of revealed truth has for its centre Christ.

II. **Some of the Christian labourer's rewards as illustrated in this lesson.** —1. *He finds a heart prepared to receive the truth.* He hungered for a new convert. We cannot always judge who are most likely to receive the truth. Sometimes the message is new to an old man who has heard preaching all his life, and to the earnest teacher on the watch for all opportunities is given the inestimable privilege of leading him to Christ. Philip expected immediate results. It was not his purpose to sow the seed and be content to leave it. He led the Eunuch on from willingness to learn to eagerness to be a recognised disciple of Jesus. He found the way to his pupil's conscience and heart. Such a reward is Divine. We never forget the triumphs of such moments. The pathway of those who turn many to righteousness will be as the shining light in their memories. 2. *He found new evidence of being a co-worker with God.* His interest was quickening in one soul; but he was only one link in the chain of God's mighty purpose to save that soul. The angel, the Holy Spirit, the messenger called aside from a great work, were all intent on one individual. Only occasionally is the curtain lifted for us to view the operations of God's providence to save men; but He has provided for every inquirer complete satisfaction, and for every faithful worker sufficient help. What a reward is the evidence that God makes the efforts of His faithful servant effective! What a fact is always revealed to the unconverted soul in this lesson! God is not willing that any should perish. He has here for once shown His working while the sinner is seeking. His angel is sent on an errand to earth for the sake of one man. His minister is called away from a revival into the desert. A special word from the Holy Spirit directs that minister on his errand. All this is to show to one soul that Jesus has already died to save him. 3. *Philip secured a witness for the gospel.* That which he was so eager to make known would now be proclaimed by another also; for, when a miracle of healing had been wrought in the Eunuch, of course he wanted to confess who had healed him. He who believes he is accepted by Christ, will, of course, want to receive baptism and unite with the followers of Christ. There was no presumption in this. It was not a profession of his religion, but a confession of his faith. To lead another soul into real fellowship with this great company is a heavenly reward. They who strive for it prize it above earthly joys. 4. *Philip filled a life with joy.* The Eunuch went on his way rejoicing. That great desire of his heart was satisfied. But, wherever Philip goes, he leaves a trail of joy behind him. Samaria rejoices in his presence: so did also the desert. He left happy hearts, at peace with God, wherever he went. Could there be a higher reward than this?—*Monday Club Sermons.*

Vers. 27-40. *Philip and the Ethiopian.*

I. **Philip's ready response.**—We know not the exact kind of call which brought him from Samaria way—possibly angelic and supernatural; but as the word may mean any messenger, the message may have come from a vision of the night, or by the voice of a friend, or by the inward and yet real compulsion of a spiritual conviction. At any rate Philip knows, as any level-headed Christian man may know, what duty is and where it lies. And he had, what many of us lack, the grace of promptitude in Christian service. Why go to Africa? 1. Because the marching orders say "Go." 2. And secondarily, because it pays to obey orders—scientifically, archæologically, commercially, socially, historically, and spiritually. Such spontaneous, willing response as Philip's to this call into desolate Gaza is an index

of the healthy, unselfish character of his Christian life. This promptitude of response is not only self-registering as to the quality and quantity of the obedience that is in us, but it is a tremendous advertisement to all lookers-on of the vitality and joy of the gospel itself. To move towards duty-doing with halting steps, as children drag themselves to school in June days, is to lose the zest of service and its reflex influence of soul cheer.

II. **God always matches an obedience with an opportunity.**—This incident is a concrete illustration of the Divine oversight which is constantly mating wings and air, fins and water, in a world of providence and design, and teaches us that when God sends a call he also blazes a path for our feet—a fact of Christian philosophy which the acts of all Christian apostles, ancient and modern, have verified for nineteen centuries. You speak, after long hesitation and fear, to a friend upon the theme of personal religion, and lo! you find him waiting for your word and ripe for your wish. You walk out upon an unfrequented path of Christian endeavour, and discover that the way was already trodden by unseen feet before you. Philip is called into the desert with no apparent purpose. The way is lonely and the country is desolate—when behold! a royal traveller approaches, troubled over the great question of the ages—what to do with Jesus of Nazareth. Here is Philip's opportunity. He takes it, and an arrow of light is sent into upper Egypt from this bow, drawn, as *we* say, at a venture. Obedience is the pivotal thing; God takes care of the rest. This factor of providence in Christian service must not be overlooked, for it will inspire us with courage and a sense of companionship as we go upon out-of-the-way pilgrimages and take up heavy burdens. With this lesson of Divine plan in life and all its ministries, *every* Divine call will have such large possibility as to warrant no delay or selfish balancing of accounts for the triumphs of the desert. We never know along what road God's providences are coming, the way of the desert or the way of the cross, in the desolate border town or in "Jerusalem the Golden," and therefore we must travel all roads.

III. This scene illustrates also **the part which the incidental experiences of life play in the interpretation of the truth.**—We dwell much upon the light which, in the Leyden pastor's phrase, shall break forth from the word itself. The truth does grow clearer the longer we look, and multiplies itself as the stars do in the night sky, as every student of God's Book may testify; but to the rank and file of Christian disciples the sidelights of others' experiences are more illuminating than their own insight. The Ethiopian was in darkness with the roll of prophecy open before him, until Philip poured the light of his own eyes, and the hopes of his own heart, upon this strange vision of Isaiah, when suddenly a meaningless chapter in a familiar prophet glows with "the light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Thus we all grow in knowledge and in grace, more than we think, through the experiences of our neighbours and the insights of our friends. The chance conversations, the familiar conference and prayer meeting, the Bible class, the passing comment, the public providence and the personal sorrow, are all commentators upon the eternal truths. Besides, these incidental helps are unexpected and therefore the most winsome and abiding. We venture to think that Philip here on the highway was more influential with this stranger than he would have been the preceding Sabbath in the synagogue at Jerusalem. He found his man off guard and natural, as a pastor may find his people in their daily perplexities, or the teacher her scholar in his out-of-door naturalness.

IV. **The teachable temper with which this Ethiopian faces new truth.**—He hears strange news in Jerusalem, news which blights the most cherished

hopes of an ancient race. Suspension of judgment, a patient waiting for light, and an earnest spirit of search, these are the characteristics of this treasurer of Candace—characteristics which we need in the nineteenth century as in the first: for each generation has to travel a new path and solve a new problem, and the Ethiopian, rather than the Pharisee, is the type of the world's hope.—*William H. Davis.*

Vers. 26-46. *The Conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch.*

I. **Notice the method of the Holy Spirit with the evangelist Philip.**

II. **We turn now to the Spirit's method with the Ethiopian Eunuch, for further illustration of our subject.**—Here, then, you see the first step in the dealing of the Holy Spirit with the Ethiopian Eunuch. It was to reveal to him the vanity of earthly good as a means of support for the soul; it was to bring the conviction of need, guilt and peril; it was to make him discontented with himself and the world, and to fill his heart with longings for the favour of God and the forgiveness of sin. To this vague yearning for good God has added a deep sense of personal sin, and has led him to the sincere use of means in prayer and the study of His revealed word. In the same way does the Spirit of God now and ever incline sinners to act.

III. **Consider the harmony of these two methods of influence in their final adjustment.**—As the obedient Christian stands waiting on the highway, and as the anxious heathen comes on in his chariot reading the prophet Isaiah, the well-timed plan of God approaches its consummation. The preacher had been brought there to find his audience, the convicted sinner had been brought there to hear. This subject of the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch imparts several practical lessons.

1. *We see by it how important it is that Christians should yield prompt obedience to the impulses of the Spirit of God, and especially to those which impel them to present Christ to the impenitent.* 2. *This lesson shows us the importance of personal guidance for the inquiring and anxious mind.*—Had the eunuch turned from Philip or failed to hear the word of counsel from his lips, he would have lost the saving grace of God. 3. *Our subject also shows us the simplicity of saving faith.* "Believe with thy whole heart," was Philip's word, and the Eunuch answered, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Here is the touchstone of all sincere desire. *What doth hinder?* Nothing but your will stands in the way, and it is your duty to bend that will in an instant submission before God. Mark the blessedness of faith and the joy of pardoned sins as here displayed! See the Eunuch on his way rejoicing with a joy that just begins, and that will go on increasing through eternal ages!—*R. R. Booth, D.D.*

CHAPTER IX.

PREPARATIONS FOR A GENTILE MISSION—THE CALLING OF A NEW APOSTLE.

A. The Conversion of Saul.

§ 1. The Miracle near Damascus; or, the Arrest of the Persecutor (vers. 1-9).
§ 2. The Mission of Ananias; or, the Baptism of Saul (vers. 10-19).
§ 3. Saul at Damascus; or, the Persecutor turned Preacher (vers. 20-25).
§ 4. Saul's First Visit to Jerusalem; or, his Discipleship confirmed (vers. 26-31).

B. The Wanderings of Peter.

§ 5. With the Saints at Lydda; or, the Healing of Eneas (vers. 32-35).
§ 6. Among the Disciples at Joppa; or, the Raising of Dorcas (vers. 36-43).

CRITICAL REMARKS.

Ver. 1. **And** should be *but* directing attention once more to Saul. **Breathing out.**—*Breathing in* better renders the verb ἐμπνέων, threatening and slaughter describing the atmosphere inhaled. That Saul, a Pharisee of the straitest sect (xxvi. 5), went unto **the high-priest**, a Sadducee, revealed the intensity of his rage. Whether the high-priest in question was Annas or Caiaphas, deposed in A.D. 35 (Meyer) or 36 (Olshausen), Jonathan A.D. 36-37, Ananus's son, his successor, or Theophilus, who followed his brother in A.D. 37-38, depends on the year of Saul's conversion, which is uncertain.

Ver. 2. The **letters** asked were not commendatory epistles merely, but legal warrants for search and apprehension. **Damascus.**—In Hebrew, *Dammesek*; in Assyrian, *Dimaski* and *Dimaska*; in Arabic, *Dimeschk-esch-Schâm*, or shortly, *esch-Schâm*. The oldest existing city in the world, the ancient capital of Syria, 145 miles north-east of Jerusalem, then contained a large number of Jews, many of whom were fugitives from persecution (viii. 1-4). Paul's route uncertain (see "Homiletical Analysis"). **To** or *unto* **the synagogues** meant, of course, their presiding officers (Luke viii. 49), and perhaps the elders or presbyters associated with them (Luke vii. 3). **Of this**, rather *the* **way.**—*I.e.*, of the Christian profession, faith, manner of life, etc. Compare xvi. 17, xviii. 25, xix. 9-23, xxii. 4, xxiv. 14-22. This name given by the early Christians to themselves, in remembrance, doubtless, of Christ's words, "I am the Way."

Ver. 3. **He came near** should be *it came to pass*, about noon (xxii. 6), *that he drew nigh*, a Hebraistic form of expression. **A light from** (ἀπό) should be *a light out of* (ἐκ) **heaven.**—This was the "glory" of Jesus (xxii. 6).

Ver. 4. **He fell.**—Probably from the animal on which he rode. Compare xxii. 7. xxvi. 14 represents his companions as having all fallen at the same time.

Ver. 5. **Lord.**—Could not as yet have had in Paul's lips its full significance. Some MSS. write, "of Nazareth," or "the Nazarene," after **Jesus**. The clause, *it is* **hard for thee**, etc., has been inserted here from xxvi. 14.

Ver. 6. All codices begin this verse with *But rise*, as in xxvi. 16. The preceding words, "and he trembling and astonished," etc., have also found their way into the text from the later accounts.

Ver. 7. **Stood speechless,** dumb through terror, contradicts not the statement (xxvi. 14) that Saul's companions all fell to the ground, nor is the phrase **hearing a**, or *the* **voice** or *sound*, inconsistent with the declaration (xxii. 9) that they heard (in the sense of *understood*) not the voice of Him that spake unto him.

Ver. 8. **And when his eyes were opened,** by the lifting up of his eyelids which had shut themselves before the dazzling light, **he saw no man**, not "from whom the voice came" (Bengel), but none of his companions, or *nothing* (R.V.), he was blind. This blindness, while not like that of Elymas (xlii. 11), a punishment, and not intended to symbolise his antecedent spiritual blindness (Calvin, Grotius, Bengel), nevertheless reminds one of the dumbness inflicted on Zacharias (Luke i. 20, 22).

Ver. 10. That **Ananias** (see on v. 1) was one of the Seventy is an unsupported conjecture; that he was a "devout" man Saul afterwards asserts (xxii. 12); that he had previously heard of Saul he himself declares (ver 13). Luke styles him **a disciple**, but leaves unrecorded whether his conversion occurred before or after Pentecost. Not the Ananias mentioned by Josephus

(*Ant.*, XX. ii. 4) as a Jewish merchant, who converted Izates, King of Adiabene, to the faith of Israel.

Ver. 11. **The street which is called Straight.**—This name is still borne by a street in Damascus, which runs westward from the East gate, dividing the Christian from the Jewish quarter. (See *Picturesque Palestine*, vol. ii., p. 175.) "The houses of Ananias and of Judas are still shown" (*Ibid.*, p. 179). "The 'street that is called Straight,' near the Jewish quarter, still merits its ancient name, as it traverses the entire city in a right line" (*Wanderings in the Holy Land*, by Adelia Gates, chap. xv.). **Tarsus.**—First mention of Saul's birthplace. See on ver. 30.

Ver. 12. **In a vision** is omitted in the best MSS. **Putting** his **hand on him** should be *laying the hand*, or *hands, on him*, in token of the benefit about to be conferred. Compare vi. 6, and contrast xii. 1, where a similar phrase denotes the infliction of injury.

Ver. 13. **I have heard.**—Perhaps through letters received from Christians at Jerusalem, or through statements made by Saul's companions.

Ver. 15. **A chosen vessel.**—Lit. *a vessel of choice.* A common Hebrew idiom. **Kings.**—Paul witnessed before the governors of Cyprus (xiii. 7), Achaia (xviii. 12), and Judæa (xxiv. 10, xxv. 6); before Herod Agrippa (xxvi. 12), and probably before Nero (2 Tim. i. 16).

Ver. 16. **I will show him** may signify either by revelation (De Wette), or more likely by experience (Bengel).

Ver. 17. **And Ananias . . . said.**—Ananias's address is more fully reported in xxii. 12-16. **Brother.**—Not by nationality merely (ii. 29, xxi. 1, xxviii. 17), but by grace.

Ver. 18. **As it had been**, but not in reality. **Scales.**—Compare ii. 3, vi. 15. Luke would no doubt derive this information about the sensation Saul experienced from the apostle himself.

Ver. 19. **Certain days.**—Those which followed immediately on his recovery of sight were spent in interconrse with the disciples, but not in learning from them the gospel he afterwards preached (Gal. i. 12).

Ver. 20. **And straightway he preached Christ.**—Not after his return from Arabia (Plumptre), but after his conversion and during or at the end of the certain days. Paul's preaching at this stage was not of an apostolic or missionary character, but merely an argumentative setting forth of the Divinity and Messiahship of Christ.

Ver. 22. The visit to Arabia (Gal. i. 17) is best inserted here (Holtzmann, Zöckler) During it **Saul increased the more in strength,** and on returning to Damascus confounded the Jews there by his preaching.

Ver. 23. Some interpreters (Neander, Meyer, Hackett) find room for the Arabian visit in the **many days** of this verse.

Ver. 24. **The gates** were **watched** by means of a garrison of soldiers (2 Cor. xi. 32). The impression made upon Paul's mind by this, the earliest of his persecutions, may be gathered from his allusion to it long after in his letter to the Corinthians.

Ver. 25. **The** should be *his* **disciples**, Saul having already drawn around himself a body of converts. **Let** him **down by a wall in a basket** should be *let him down through the wall—i.e.*, through the window of a house upon or overhanging the wall (2 Cor. xi. 33), *lowering him in a basket.* That Saul's friends used a basket accorded with the present customs of the country. "It is the sort of vehicle which people employ there now, if they would lower a man into a well or raise him into the upper story of a house" (Hackett).

Ver. 27. **Barnabas** (iv. 36) appears here as the patron of Saul, whom he takes by the hand (not literally, but metaphorically), and introduces to the apostles.

Vers. 28, 29, should read: *And he was with them going in and going out—i.e.*, publicly and privately,—*at Jerusalem preaching boldly in the name of the Lord.* Saul stayed in Jerusalem not more than fifteen days (Gal. i. 18).

Ver. 29. **Grecians,** or Greek-speaking Jews.—These were addressed by Saul probably because he himself was a foreign Jew, or because they may have been present in large numbers in the metropolis attending a feast, but chiefly (might it not be?) because they belonged to the synagogues or synagogue which murdered Stephen (vi. 9). **They went about to kill him.**—Compare xxii. 17-21, in which the motive for his withdrawing from Jerusalem is represented not as the murderous designs of the Jews, but a vision in the temple. But the two accounts are by no means inconsistent.

Ver. 30. **Cæsarea.**—See on viii. 40. **Tarsus.**—Upon the monuments of Shalmanezer II., about the middle of the ninth century B.C., Tarzi (Schrader). The capital of Cilicia (xxi. 39). Founded, according to tradition, by Sennacherib (705-681 B.C.). After the fall of the Assyrian empire it became, under Persian supremacy, the seat of the Syennesian princes of Cilicia. In Alexander's time it was the residence of a Persian satrap, and in that of the Diadochi, an important place of the Seleucidæ. Under the old Cæsars Cilicia was conjoined with Syria; but Hadrian restored it to the dignity of an independent province with Tarsus as its chief town. In the time of Saul Tarsus was the seat of one of the most celebrated schools of philosophy and philology. "Strabo, a contemporary of Saul's, names a whole series of famous teachers out of Tarsus, who all belonged to the first half of the first Christian

century, and says: 'So great zeal for philosophy, and for the circle of all other sciences, have the inhabitants of this town that they have surpassed even Athens and Alexandria, and, indeed, every other place where schools of philosophy and learning exist'" (Langhans, *Biblische Geschichte und Literatur*, ii. 704).

Ver. 32. **Lydda.**—The Old Testament Lod (Neh. vii. 37, xi. 35; 1 Chron. viii. 12), now called Ludd. Described by Josephus (*Ant.*, XX. vi. 2) as a village "not less than a city in largeness." Named Lydda in 1 Macc. xi. 34. After the destruction of Jerusalem it is often mentioned. Besides being the seat of a Christian community, it possessed for some time, like Jabne close by, a Rabbinical school. (See Riehm's *Handwörterbuch des Biblischen Altertums:* art. *Lod.*)

Ver. 35. **Saron**, or *Sharon*, the Plain, meant the north half of the flat end lying along the Mediterranean shore, from Lydda in the south to Carmel in the north. "The whole goodly plain of Sharon is visible—from Mount Carmel on the north down to Lydda, from the eastern hills to the blue sea, now bathed in gold—a wilderness of weeds and thorn brakes, and yet a very paradise of colour and ever varying beauty" (*Picturesque Palestine*, iii., 146).

Ver. 36. **Joppa**, or *Japho* (Jon. i. 3), in Assyrian inscriptions Ja-ap-pu; at the present day, Jaffa or Jâfa, meaning "the beautiful," or, according to another derivation, "the height." A seaport of great antiquity, twelve miles north-west of Lydda, originally allotted to Dan (Josh. xix. 46). Here was landed the timber for the temple in Solomon's time (2 Chron. ii. 16), and in Ezra's (iii. 7). Here Jonah embarked to go to Tarshish (Jon. i. 3), and here Peter received the messengers of Cornelius (x. 5). Tabitha's tomb is still shown. It is popularly identified with the Sebîl of Abû Nabût, who was governor of Joppa at the commencement of the present century. Close to it was discovered, by M. C. Clermont Ganneau, in 1874, the ancient cemetery of Jaffa, containing many rock-cut tombs, the circle of earth including them being known as Ard Dabitha, the land of Dabitha (*Picturesque Palestine*, iii., 143). Herr Schick thinks Tabitha was most likely buried in this cemetery (Palestine Exploration Fund, *Quarterly Statement*, January 1894, p. 14). **Tabitha.**—A Chaldee term signifying "Gazelle." Its Greek equivalent, *Dorcas*, occurs in Xen., *Anab.*, I. v. 2. Whether this amiable lady was a widow or a virgin does not appear from the context. The exact site of her house is now lost (Herr Schick, as above, p. 14).

Ver. 43. **Simon a tanner.**—"The Latin monastery in Joppa is said to occupy the site of Simon's house, but a little Mohammedan mosque or sanctuary by the seaside claims to be the house itself" (*Picturesque Palestine*, iii., 142). "The house itself is a comparatively modern building, with no pretensions to interest or antiquity." "It is close on the seashore, the waves beating against the low wall of its courtyard" (Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 274). Herr Schick thinks the modern building may stand not far from the real site (Palestine Exploration Fund, *Quarterly Statement*, January 1894, p. 14). Peter, by taking up his abode with a brother Christian who was a tanner—the trade being commonly regarded as unclean—took a long step towards ceremonial freedom. The Tübingen critics find one proof for their tendency theory in the name Simon, which was borne both by the apostle and the tanner, as if such a coincidence could not be historical, and another in the correspondence between the story of Dorcas, on the one hand, and those of Lydia (xvi. 15) and Eutychus (xx. 9-12), on the other, for these two require to be combined to constitute an exact Pauline parallel to the Petrine episode.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 1—9.

The Miracle near Damascus; or, the Conversion of Saul.

I. **Saul's journey to Damascus.**—1. The *object* of it. To persecute the followers of Christ, to harry the disciples of the Crucified not out of Palestine merely, but out of the world as well, and with this end in view to bring any of "the way," *i.e.*, of the New Religion (see "Critical Remarks"), he might find, whether men or women, bound to Jerusalem. 2. The *spirit* of it. More than breathing out, Saul was breathing in threatenings and slaughter, inhaling persecution and murder as his soul's and body's atmosphere, feeding upon blood and carnage, stuffing himself full of rage and violence, which might be ready for disgorging upon the unhappy victims of his diabolical crusade, which was meant to be thoroughgoing, sparing neither sex nor age, and sticking at nothing short of imprisonment and death. 3. The *authorisation* of it. Saul carried with him letters from the Jewish high-priest (Annas, or Caiaphas, Jonathan, or Theophilus; see "Critical Remarks"), commending him to the rulers of the various synagogues in Damascus, and empowering him (with their help) to search out

and seize any Nazarenes who might have attached themselves to these places of worship, and to fetch them bound to Jerusalem. The historic credibility of this statement has been vindicated by recalling the circumstance that on the death of Tiberius, in A.D. 37, Damascus passed from the hands of the Romans into those of Hareth, of Petra, who, in order to keep the Jews quiet, made concessions to their autonomy, and every concession was simply a permission to commit further religious violences (Renan, *The Apostles*, p. 155). 4. The *prospect* of it. No emissary of the Inquisition—no Thomas de Torquemada of Spain—ever had a better chance of success. If brilliant reputation, ardent zeal, absolute power, best wishes of friends and contemporaries who were all seized with a passion of hatred against the Christians, could have furthered Saul's expedition, these without exception stood upon his side. 5. The *prosecution* of it. Imagination can easily picture the setting forth from Jerusalem of the Hebrew Claverhouse and his companions, all of them mounted, as the old masters have represented, upon high-mettled and richly caparisoned steeds. The route pursued may have led either by Bethel to Neapolis, then across the Jordan near Scythopolis, thence to Gadara, and on through the Hauran to Damascus; or along the base of Tabor, through the Jordan a few miles above Tiberias, then up by Cæsarea Philippi, and on to Damascus (Conybeare and Howson, vol. i., 81).

II. **Saul's experience near Damascus.**—1. *His inward cogitations.* Though not recorded by Luke, nor afterwards mentioned by Saul himself, these, it has been supposed, were of such sort as unconsciously to prepare for the sudden and unexpected transformation that took place within the persecutor's soul. Stephen's earnest discourse, to which he most likely listened, setting forth the transitory character of the temple worship and its true fulfilment in the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth, must, it is said, have secretly poured a flood of light upon his understanding, from which he could never again escape, and upon which he probably often, and almost unconsciously to himself, pondered; while Stephen's death which he witnessed, and Stephen's prayers which he heard, more than probably helped to drive his half-formed intellectual convictions inward upon his heart and conscience. Indeed, proceed those who hold this view, it is hardly too much to say, that already in the interior of Saul's soul the spiritual revolution had begun, in the shape of acute intellectual and heart impulses which almost unconsciously urged him to recognise that truth and right were on the side of the followers of Jesus, and which he could not resist without a painful sense of doing violence to conscience. A certain countenance is given to this representation by the words addressed to Saul by Christ: "It is hard for thee to kick against the goads"; and there seems no good reason for refusing to recognise in it a measure of truth, provided it is not pressed so far as to deny the objective reality of Christ's appearance to the persecutor; but after all it is doubtful if this was the view taken by Saul himself of the mode of his conversion (compare Weizsäcker, i. 90). 2. *His outward arrestment.* (1) The locality where this occurred was the vicinity of the city. The view of Damascus as seen by one approaching it from the south is described by travellers as of surpassing beauty. "It is true that in the apostle's day there were no cupolas and no minarets. Justinian had not built St. Sophia, and the caliphs had erected no mosques; but the white buildings of the city gleamed then, as they do now, in the centre of a verdant inexhaustible paradise. The Syrian gardens, with their low walls and waterwheels, and careless mixture of fruits and flowers, were the same then as they are now. The same figures would be seen in the green approaches to the town, camels and mules, horses and asses, with Syrian peasants, and Arabs from beyond Palmyra" (*The Life and Epistles of Paul*, by Conybeare and Howson, i., 85, 86). (2) The time of this arrestment was midday (xxii. 6, xxvi. 13). "The birds were silent in the trees, the hush of noon was in the city, the

sun was burning fiercely in the sky, the persecutor's companions were enjoying the cool refreshment of the shade after their journey; and his eyes rested with satisfaction on those walls which were the end of his mission, and contained the victims of his righteous zeal" (Conybeare and Howson, i., 86). (3) The manner of his arrestment was sudden as a flash of lightning. So shall the coming of the Son of man be (Luke xvii. 24). (4) The instrument was "a light out of heaven" (ver 3), "from heaven a great light" (xxii. 6), "a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun" (xxvi. 13) —no mere flash of lightning, but a shining forth of the Divine glory which encompassed the exalted Saviour (ver. 17). (5) The agent was Christ. Saul himself believed this. 3. *His interview with Christ.* (1) That Saul actually beheld the glorified Redeemer may be inferred from Luke's statement that Saul's companions saw no man (ver. 7), and is expressly declared by Ananias (ver. 17, xxii. 14), Barnabas (ver. 27), and Saul himself (1 Cor. ix. 1, xv. 8). It is quite conceivable also that while the dazzling radiance of supernal glory struck Saul's companions at once to the earth, Saul himself may have looked into the light and seen the form of the Redeemer before he fell prostrate on the ground (compare Rev. i. 17). A certain measure of support is obtained for this view from the circumstance that Saul appears in after life to have suffered from weakness or dimness of eyesight (see xiii. 9, xxiii. 1; Gal. iv. 13-35, vi. 11). (2) That Saul heard Christ's voice addressing him in articulate speech is with equal emphasis contained in Luke's narrative, and in Paul's after recitals, and is not inconsistent with the fact that Saul's companions only heard a sound but could not distinguish words (compare John xii. 29). (3) That Saul carried on a conversation with the Risen Redeemer all the accounts affirm. Addressed with a twice repeated "Saul! Saul!" expressive of earnestness, and a penetrating question, indicative of solicitude, "Why persecutest thou Me?" he responded with an inquiry, "Who art Thou, Lord?" which half revealed his suspicion that his interlocutor was Stephen's Lord (vii. 59, 60); and was in turn assured that his suspicion was correct, that the speaker who interrogated him was Jesus of Nazareth, whom he persecuted, after which he was directed to rise and go into the city, where it would be told him what he should do. 4. *His actual conversion.* Indicated in the narrative by his rising from the earth and entering into the city in obedience to Christ's command (ver. 8), it is more distinctly set forth by the question, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (borrowed from chap. xxii. 10), which signalised his surrender—instantaneous, swift, clear, decided, complete, final—to Jesus as his Lord. It meant the shattering of all his former views as a Pharisee, concerning not worldly ambition alone, but the grounds of acceptance and justification before God. It lifted self out of the seat and centre of authority in all his after life, and substituted Christ instead. In this experience lies the essence of conversion.

III. **Saul's entrance into Damascus.**—1. *Helpless.* Different from the fashion in which he had expected to pass beneath the gateway of the city, he was led by the hands of his companions, who must have been astonished at, and perplexed by the change which had come upon their leader. 2. *Blind.* Whereas he had purposed to ferret out with searching glance the hated followers of Jesus he had been so dazzled by the glory that his eyesight was gone, he saw neither man nor thing. 3. *Humbled.* He had intended to root out the Christians from the city, now he must obtain a lodging with one of these (ver. 11). No thoughts now of letters for the high-priest. 4. *Saddened.* The three days of sightless existence in which he neither ate nor drank were emblematic of his spiritual condition. "Only one other space of three days' duration can be mentioned of equal importance in the history of the world." . . . (Conybeare and Howson, i., 90).

Learn.—1. That no soul is beyond the reach of converting grace. 2. That

Christ is often found of them who seek Him not. 3. That Christ observes everything that transpires on the earth. 4. That Christ regards persecution of His followers as equivalent to persecution of Himself. 5. That no conversion is complete which does not place the soul entirely at Christ's command. 6. That the things of the Spirit are not discernible by natural men. 7. That Divine grace is sovereign in the selection of its objects.

Note.—*On the Credibility of the Story of Paul's Conversion.*

I. **It is not denied by any school of critics that such a man as Paul lived** in the opening years of the Christian era, **or that he was converted,** meaning by this that from being a furious and fanatical Pharisee he suddenly became a follower of Christ and a preacher of the Gospel he had previously opposed.

II. **There is nothing à priori impossible,** except on the assumption that the supernatural is impossible, **in the account given** by Luke **in the present narrative,** that what converted Paul was a manifestation to him on the Damascus road of the risen and glorified Christ—a manifestation not internal but external, not to his mind's eye but to his bodily sight.

III. **The account given by Luke is confirmed,** first, by two statements that are represented as having fallen from Paul's own lips in public addresses given by him to his countrymen in Jerusalem (xxii. 6-11), and to Festus and Agrippa in Cæsarea (xxvi. 12-18); and secondly, by three shorter but substantially equivalent statements that occur in two of his acknowledged epistles (1 Cor. ix. 1, xv. 8; Gal. i. 16). Even if the speeches in the Acts should be ascribed to Luke, no one can doubt that the allusions in the letters are to the Damascus miracle.

IV. **The alleged contradictions in the various accounts are not sufficient to invalidate their united testimony.**—Accepting these contradictions in their strongest form, allowing them to be wholly irreconcilable—which, however, they are not—what do they amount to? These—1. That ix. 4 represents *Saul as the only one that fell* to the earth, with which xxii. 7 agrees, whereas xxvi. 14 says that *all fell—i.e.*, Saul's companions as well as himself. 2. That according to ix. 7 the men who journeyed with Saul *heard a voice*, which according to xxii. 9 they *heard not.* 3. That in ix. 15, 17, Saul's call to be an apostle is made known *first by Christ to Ananias, and then by Ananias to Saul,* while in xxvi. 16-18 it is communicated directly *to Saul by Christ Himself.* For the solution of these tremendous (!) difficulties the Critical Remarks and Homiletical Analysis may be consulted. But, conceding for a moment that they could not be satisfactorily removed, is it not simply ridiculous to assert that unimportant variations such as these, which do not in the smallest degree affect the central fact which is affirmed in every one of the narratives, are sufficient to relegate the whole story to the category of legend? On similar principles every history book on earth might be reduced to a collection of fables.

V. **The explanations of the Damascus occurrence which have been offered are so palpably inadequate** that it may be seriously questioned if those who put them forth believe them. 1. The *natural explanations* of the older rationalists and of their present-day followers need only to be mentioned to be set aside. That Christ never died at all but only swooned away on the cross and revived in the sepulchre (Paulus), or if He died continued twenty-seven years on the earth after His resurrection (Bahrdt), and afterwards appeared to Saul, is an interesting speculation of no value whatever as a contribution to theology or Biblical exposition. Scarcely more worthy of consideration is the modern hallucination (Renan), that Saul, when "in a state of great excitement," partly "through the fatigue of his journey," partly through "dangerous fever accompanied by delirium," partly through "remorse as he approached the city where he was to commit the most signal of his misdeeds," was suddenly overtaken by a thunderstorm which

frightened and converted him. 2. The *vision theory* of modern critics, more especially of the Tübingen School (Baur, Zeller, Overbeck, Pfleiderer, Hausrath, Weizsäcker, and others), that Saul's mental conflict with himself concerning the truth of Christianity, his growing conviction that his pharisaic views of religion were wrong, and that the doctrines of the Christians he was persecuting were right, combined perhaps with the remembrance of Stephen's dying utterances and the impressions made upon him by the martyr's apology—that all these things so wrought upon Saul's mind as to raise it into an ecstatic condition which caused it to project its own subjective conceptions outside of itself, so as to make them appear objective realities, when in point of fact they were only images of the mind—this theory is open to serious objection. (1) It is difficult to perceive how a mental vision should have struck the Apostle with bodily blindness. (2) It is more difficult to understand how a vision projected from within could have effected the complete revolution of Paul's character and life implied in his conversion, or how this vision could be said to have caused his conversion, and not rather his conversion to have caused the vision. (3) It is most difficult to realise how a clear-headed man like Paul should have continued, after the excitement had passed, to represent as an outward objective reality what he must have known, on reflection, to be only an inward imagination, or how he could have placed this experience on a level with the "seeings" of the other apostles, and of the five hundred brethren, unless indeed he was sure that they also had seen Christ only in vision.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 2. *Damascus.*

I. **The oldest city in the world.**—Its origin lost in remote antiquity. Known to have been in existence in the days of Abraham. "In the midst of an oasis of verdure rise the shining crenellated walls of a city that was old in the time of Abraham, the steward of whose house was one of its citizens; old when the pyramids were young, old in the dawn of history, and whose beginning no man knoweth with certainty."—*Wanderings in the Holy Land*, by Adelia Gates, chap. xvi.

II. **A city of surpassing beauty.**—"It is one of the few towns of antiquity that have never lost their own splendour and renown. By Oriental writers it is named "The pearl of the Orient, the beautiful as Eden, the fragrant Paradise, the plumage of the Paradise cock, the coloured neck of the ring dove, the neck band of beauty, the gate of the Caaba, the eye of the East, the Eden of the Moslem" (Dr. Wolff in *Riehm's Handwörterbuch des Biblischen Altertums*, art. *Damascus*). "It bursts upon the view of a traveller like a vision of Paradise." "The Damascenes believe that the Garden of Eden was located there, and that the clay of which Adam was formed was taken from the banks of the Abana." When Mohammed saw the city and gardens below in all their enchanting beauty, he turned away saying, "Man can have but one Paradise, my Paradise is fixed above." Buckle, the historian, who "beheld the city from the same place only a fortnight before his death in 1862, exclaimed, "This is indeed worth all the toil and danger it has cost me to come here" (*Picturesque Palestine*, ii., 143, 144). "There may be other views in the world more beautiful; there can hardly be another at once so beautiful and instructive" (Stanley's *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 414i). "Damascus occupies one of those sites which nature seems to have intended for a perennial city; its beauty stands unrivalled, its richness has passed into a proverb, and its supply of water is unlimited, making fountains sparkle in every dwelling."—*Dr. J. L. Porter.*

III. **A historically interesting city.**—1. The probable birthplace of Abraham's servant (Gen. xv. 2). 2. The

limit of Abraham's pursuit of the Eastern Kings (Gen. xiv. 15). 3. A city visited by Elisha (2 Kings viii. 7). 4. Paul's journey to Damascus and the incidents connected therewith (ix.). 5. Paul's subsequent visit to the city (Gal. i. 17).

Ver. 2. *The Way.*—This designation of the Christian religion appropriate, because the Christian religion—

I. **Originated with Him who called Himself "the Way"** (John xiv. 6).

II. **Describes the way of truth, duty, life, and salvation** for all who embrace it.

III. **Is the only religion whose claim to do so infallibly can be established.**

Ver. 4. *Christ's Question to Paul.*

I. **Revealed to Saul Christ's intimate knowledge of Himself.**—Of His name, and doings, and intentions. The doctrine of Christ's Omniscience.

II. **Intimated to Saul Christ's personal existence in heaven.**—The doctrine of Christ's resurrection.

III. **Announced to Saul Christ's sympathy with His persecuted followers.**—The doctrine of Christ's union with His people.

Vers. 5, 6. *The Soul's Questions and Christ's Answers.*

I. **The soul's questions.**—1. *Who art Thou, Lord?* (1) Necessary. Impossible to be evaded by any to whom Christ presents Himself. (2) Important. More momentous inquiry cannot be imagined than whether Christ is what He claims to be. (3) Urgent. Cannot be settled too soon. Danger in delay; advantage in an early decision, provided that be right. (4) Vital. Carrying with it eternal issues of good or evil, life or death. 2. *Lord! what wilt thou have me to do?* The question of one who has decided (1) That Christ is in His person divine, and in His office the Saviour of the world. Both implied in addressing Christ as "Lord." (2) That religion is for him a personal matter of highest interest and immediate concern. This thought conveyed by the pronoun *me.* (3) That salvation can only be found by placing the soul under Christ's direction. Suggested by Saul's asking Christ what he should do to obtain forgiveness for the past and hope for the future.

II. **Christ's answers.**—1. *I am Jesus whom thou persecutest:* it is *hard for thee to kick against the pricks.* That is to say, to the sincere seeker Christ reveals (1) His name, office, and work—all expressed in the designation Jesus, or Saviour. (2) His evil treatment at the hands of unbelieving and sinful men, who in opposing His cause and harassing His people are guilty of persecuting Himself. (3) His secret ally in every honest heart that will consider His claims, the existence of which inward advocate makes it difficult and dangerous for earnest souls to stand aloof and refuse to yield submission to His grace. 2. *Arise and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.* Which signifies—(1) That no truly awakened soul will be left without Divine direction as to the way of peace. (2) That such direction has in every instance been beforehand provided. The office performed by Ananias is now discharged by ministers or the word. (3) That the direction of the word—which is, repent, believe, and be baptised (ii. 38)—if humbly followed will infallibly conduct to peace.

Ver. 6. *Conversion as illustrated by that of Paul.*

I. **Its nature.**—1. There is deep contrition. Knows that he has sinned, and that his sin is aggravated. His conscience is awakened. 2. There is spiritual illumination. With regard to himself and to the Saviour. 3. There is earnest self-surrender. Would go anywhere, would do anything. 4. There is a singular transformation. A new creature.

II. **Its causes.**—1. The agent is God. An act of His omnipotence. 2. The instrument is truth. The truth in the

Bible somehow becomes the truth in the heart. 3. The influence of love. Faith working by love.

III. **Its rules.**—1. As to its subjects it is sovereign. There must be reasons for the selection, but we do not know them. 2. As to its mode it is invincible. The power of the Spirit may be resisted, but cannot be overcome. 3. As to its time it may be sudden. In one sense it is always sudden; in some cases it is remarkably sudden. 4. As to its circumstances it is variable. Sometimes violent, sometimes gentle. 5. There is no need for despair of the conversion of any.—*G. Brooks.*

Ver. 8. *And Saul arose from the Earth.*—"Saul rose another man: he had fallen in death, he rose in life; he had fallen in the midst of things temporal, he rose in the awful consciousness of things eternal; he had fallen a proud, intolerant, persecuting Jew, he rose a humble, broken-hearted, penitent Christian."—Farrar, *The Life and Work of St. Paul*, p. 199.

The Conversion of Paul.

I. **Remarkable** as the conversion—1. **Of a young man** (vii. 56). 2. **Of a self-righteous Pharisee** (xxiii. 6, xxvi. 5. 3. **Of a brilliant scholar** (Gal. i. 11). 4. **Of a blood-thirsty persecutor** (1 Tim. i. 13).

II. **More remarkable,** as the bringing over to Christianity of one who proved himself—1. *An incomparable type of Christian character.* "Christianity got the opportunity in him of showing the world the whole force that was in it" (Stalker). 2. *A great thinker* which Christianity "specially needed at the moment" (*Ibid.*). 3. *The most illustrious missionary* the Church has ever produced or the world has ever seen.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 10—19.

The Mission of Ananias; or, the Baptism of Saul.

The missioner.—1. *His name.* Ananias, like Annas, the Greek form of Hananiah, or "Gracious is Jehovah," borne by the high-priest (iv. 6) and the false disciple (ver. 1), as well as by himself. In his case only did the character of its bearer correspond with its import. 2. *His residence.* Damascus (see on ver. 2, "Hints"); but whether a native or a fugitive who had found shelter there cannot be determined. 3. *His standing.* Not one of the Seventy. A devout man—*i.e.*, a pious Jew (xxii. 12), who waited for the consolation of Israel, he was also a Christian disciple who had found the Messias, the date of his conversion being unknown, though tradition reports that he afterwards became bishop of Damascus and a martyr. 4. *His character.* (1) Of good report among the Jews (xxii. 12). "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches" (Prov. xxii. 1). (2) Intelligent, not only wise unto salvation, but keeping himself acquainted with all that concerned the welfare of the Church (ver. 13). (3) Timid, disposed to shrink from meeting such a ravening wolf as rumour affirmed Saul to be (ver. 14). Brave men often shrink from danger. Yet (4) Courageous, and ready to obey when he clearly understood the Lord's will (ver. 17). *Veniat, veniat verbum Domini*, said one, *et submittemus ei sexcenta si nobis essent colla;* let but the Lord's word come, and we will submit to him six hundred necks if we had them (Trapp). And (5) Sympathetic, uttering words of kindly cheer the moment he entered Saul's presence (ver. 17). 5. *His calling.* Having in a vision been summoned by Christ, as Samuel formerly had been by Jehovah (1 Sam. iii. 4), and having answered as Samuel did, "Here am I, Lord," he was further instructed about the mission on which he was forthwith to be sent. Pure romance is Renan's idea that Paul, having often heard of Ananias, and "of the miraculous powers of new believers over maladies," sent for him, under the conviction that the imposition of his hands would cure him of his disease (*The Apostles*, p. 161).

II. **The mission.**—1. *Its purport.* 1. To repair to Saul's presence without delay. A formidable task for a Damascus Christian; like thrusting one's head into a lions' den or a wolves' lair. Yet that Christ intended this commission to be carried out Ananias must have gathered from the particularity of the instructions given, in which were, first, an order to be prompt, Arise; next, a specification of the street in which Saul would be found, the street called Straight, and of the house in which he lodged, that of Judas; and lastly, the condition of mind and body in which he would be found, as to his mind in the act of prayer and in a state of expectancy, as to his body enfeebled and blind. 2. To put hands upon Saul's eyes, and so restore his sight. Such an act, if not required for the strengthening of Ananias's faith, would serve to deepen Saul's humility in that he should be ministered to by one of the very Christians he had purposed to murder, while it would help him to connect the restoration of his sight with Christ, whose ambassador Ananias was (ver. 12), and thus be an assurance to him that Christ had put away his sin and received him into favour. 2. *Its occasion.* (1) Saul's need of such assurance of Christ's grace and mercy, which was the need that every darkened understanding has to be illumined, every troubled heart has to be appeased, and every unpardoned soul has to be forgiven; while over and above it was the need which arises from the pressure of all these unappeased wants upon an anguish-laden spirit. (2) Saul's preparedness for the reception of these heavenly blessings, which was shown by two things—the prayers he was pouring forth (ver. 11) and the vision he had seen (ver. 12). (3) Saul's selection by Christ to be a chosen vessel to bear His name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel (ver. 15). This Christ told Ananias was the crowning reason why his mission could not be set aside or even delayed. 3. *Its execution.* At first timidly reluctant, as Moses of old had been reluctant to undertake the task of bearding Pharaoh in his palace (Exod. iii. 11), Ananias at last carried through the business entrusted to him, (1) promptly, hesitating nothing after Christ had removed his fears; (2) faithfully, implementing it to the letter; (3) tenderly, saluting the quondam persecutor as Brother Saul; and (4) successfully, laying his hands upon Saul's sightless orbs, so that immediately "there fell from his eyes as it had been scales," "he received sight"—it is preposterous to say that Saul's blindness was only nervous, and that on hearing Ananias's words Saul believed himself cured (Renan: *The Apostles*, p. 161)—his soul was "filled with the Holy Ghost," "he arose" from the dust of despair, "he was baptised," he partook of food, and recovered strength.

Learn.—1. That souls once truly awakened are sooner or later conducted into spiritual peace. 2. That the best occupation for an awakened soul is to keep calling upon God and Christ in prayer. 3. That Christ can always find suitable agents to execute His commissions on earth. 4. That the highest honour Christ can put upon a person is to make him a bearer of Christ's name before his fellow-men. 5. That those who run on Christ's errands should cultivate a spirit of love. 6. That Christ's people should rejoice when they have an opportunity of returning good for evil. 7. That those who come to Jesus Christ enter into light. 8. That the greatest of men may be helped to salvation by the least.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 10. *The Two Ananiases.*

I. **Ananias of Jerusalem.**—1. An insincere disciple. 2. A tool of Satan. 3. A minister of unrighteousness. 4. A warning to evil-doers.

II. **Ananias of Damascus.**—1. A sincere disciple. 2. A messenger of Christ. 3. A servant of righteousness. 4. An example to Christ's followers.

Vers. 10-17. *The Two Visions of Christ.*

I. **Ananias's vision resembled Saul's** in being—1. A supernatural presentation to the soul's eye of the glorified Son of man. 2. Such a presentation that Ananias could recognise and answer the voice of Christ when it addressed him. 3. Such a presentation that when the vision passed the soul's ordinary conciousness retained a recollection of what had transpired in the vision.

II. **Saul's vision differed from that of Ananias** in this respect, that over and above the revelation of Christ to the soul's eye, there was a distinct manifestation of the Saviour's glorified form to the bodily eye (compare xxii. 14). That Saul afterwards regarded Christ's appearance to him on the Damascus road as something more and higher than, and essentially distinct from the "visions and revelations of the Lord" subsequently enjoyed by him, as a phenomenon the same in kind with the appearances of the Forty Days, he showed by—1. *Claiming, on the ground of it, an apostleship equal in validity with that of the Twelve* (1 Cor. ix. 1, xv. 8, 9),—a "sight of Christ" being the specific warranty of apostleship, as distinguished from prophethood, of which "receiving visions" was the seal. 2. *Basing on the reality of it the doctrine of a resurrection of the body* (1 Cor. xv. 14), which he could not have done on a mere vision, since persons who have not risen might appear in vision (Mark ix. 4; Acts xvi. 9).

Ver. 11. *Behold! he prayeth.*—Note four points:—

I. Prayer addressed to Jesus Christ is **one of the first indications of a new life.**

II. Prayer, as a first symptom of the religious life, **is always the result of a spiritual vision of the Son of man.**

III. Prayer which is the first utterance of a new-born soul **is never unobserved by Christ.**

IV. **Neither is it ever left unanswered by Him.**

A Strange Sight.—Saul of Tarsus praying!

I. **A persecutor** of the Christians calling on the Lord of Christians.

II. **A self-righteous Pharisee** supplicating Heaven's mercy.

III. **A learned Rabbi** confessing his ideas of religion had been wrong.

Vers. 13, 14, 17. *Ananias's Theology.*

I. **The divinity of Jesus.**—Lord.

II. **The personality of the Spirit.**

III. **The brotherhood of believers.**

IV. **The Sanctity of Christians.**—Saints.

V. **The essence of religion.**—Calling on the name of Christ.

The Ideal Minister or Missionary.

I. **His fundamental qualification.**—He must be "a chosen vessel." Chosen: 1. *To be a vessel of Divine grace,* to be a recipient of heavenly mercy (Rom. ix. 23)—*i.e.*, he must be a sincere convert to the faith he seeks to preach. 2. *To be a vessel of heavenly truth* (2 Cor. iv. 7), since many sincere converts have small knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

II. **His lofty commission.**—To bear—1. *The grandest theme.* Christ's name. 2. *Before the widest audience.* Jews and Gentles, kings and subjects, princes and peasants—*i.e.*, before humanity.

III. **His severe trials.**—"I will show him how great things he must suffer." Few ministers or missionaries have been or are called upon to endure such hardships as the Apostle (2 Cor. xi. 23-27); yet should none enter on the office who are not prepared (with Christ's aid) to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

IV. **His strong encouragement.**—"For My Name's sake." 1. The *highest* name (Phil. ii. 9). 2. The *worthiest* name (Rev. v. 9, 12). 3. The *most powerful* name (Phil. iv. 13). The *most enduring* name (Psalm lxxii. 17).

Vers. 1-18. *Doctrinal and Practical Lessons.* 1. Jesus is supreme Lord and King in His own right and in the majesty of His power and the glory of His grace, while His enemies indulge their hatred and devise wicked schemes against Him. 2. In the conversion of Saul we have a striking illustration of the sovereignty of Divine grace in the salvation of the chief of sinners, saving them sometimes in the heat and fanaticism of their folly and guilt. How different the entrance of Saul into Damascus from his intentions and expectations! How was he humbled, and yet exalted in moral quality! 3. All the features of the scene show a complete and perfect design on the part of the Lord. Ananias, quite unexpectedly to himself, is made an instrument in the scheme of infinite wisdom, power, and love. The very house and street where Saul was fasting, meditating, and praying, and also all his exercises of mind and heart, were accurately and exactly known to the sovereign and governing Jesus. 4. The resources of Jesus the Lord are infinitely abundant for every emergency. He is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. He can at any moment turn the wrath of men to His own praise. He is mighty to save.—*C. H. Read, D.D.*

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 19—25.

Saul at Damascus; or, the Persecutor turned Preacher.

I. The preaching of the preacher.—1. *When it began.* After "certain days" spent with the disciples at Damascus, but whether immediately after these days (Conybeare and Howson, Hackett, Neander, Meyer, Spence), or after his three years' retirement in Arabia from which he returned to Damascus (Plumptre, Farrar), is uncertain. "Straightway" (ver. 20) appears to favour the former supposition. 2. *How long it continued.* First, till he departed for Arabia (Gal. i. 17), which journey is variously located in Luke's narrative: before the middle of ver. 19 (Pearson); before ver. 20 (Michaelis, Plumptre, Farrar); in the middle of ver. 22 or before it (Alford, Zöckler); at ver. 23, during the "many days" (Neander, Meyer, Lechler, Hackett); between ver. 25 and ver. 26 (Olshausen, Ebrard). Next after he returned from Arabia and before he fled to Jerusalem (ver. 26). 3. *Where it was conducted.* In the Damascus synagogues which his unbelieving countrymen frequented, and with which the disciples had not yet entirely broken. His zeal for the salvation of his kinsmen according to the flesh led him, in the first instance, to seek a hearing from them (compare John i. 41). Besides, it was indispensable that they who knew him best should be able to judge of his conversion. Saul had no idea of being "a disciple secretly for fear of the Jews" (John xix. 38). 4. *The thesis it maintained.* That Christ or Jesus whom their rulers had crucified was the Son of God. Probably his preaching at this stage (*i.e.*, before his Arabian sojourn) consisted of little more than a proclamation of the new-found truth which God had revealed in his soul (Gal. i. 16), and the Damascus vision had burnt in upon his understanding. Afterwards, on returning from Arabia with matured and arranged thoughts, he advanced beyond proclamation to demonstration (ver. 22). 5. *The vigour it displayed.* If it began timidly, mildly, and half apologetically, it gradually waxed bold, fervid, and confident. The more he attained himself to a clear understanding and firm grasp of the new doctrine of Jesus which had been flashed in upon his intellect, heart, and conscience, of the ground on which it rested, and the significance it imported, the more courageously did he push his way into the citadel of his hearers' souls. 6. *The effect it produced.* (1) It filled all who heard him with amazement. And no wonder! Who ever heard before of a conversion so sudden, violent, and unlikely? A Pharisee become a Nazarene! A persecutor turned preacher! And that, too, like a clap of thunder! And for

so little cause—because, as he alleged, he had seen a vision, or (as his opponents would say) he had been dazzled and frightened by a flash of lightning. No doubt the wiseacres laughed, ridiculed, shook their solemn heads, and called him Fanatic! (2) It confounded all their previous notions about both the Scriptures and Jesus. If this new doctrine of the hare-brained Rabbi was correct, then they had completely misunderstood the teaching of their sacred books, and been guilty of a hideous crime—two charges (ignorance of God's word and murder of God's Son) under which the Jews could hardly be expected to sit with comfort. (3) It kindled in their hearts hostile and even murderous designs (ver. 23). It woke up against him the same demon of persecution that had sent Stephen to his death. Possibly Saul was not surprised at this. It was what his new Master had suffered, and what he himself had been preparing for his new Master's friends.

II. **The peril of the preacher.**—1. *The plot of his enemies.* (1) Its deadly purpose—to kill him. Nothing short of his blood would satisfy them. They must have been convinced that Saul was lost to them for ever, that he was no insincere convert, but a recruit to the side of Christianity who would never come back; they must have had a high appreciation of his ability and worth as a religious controversialist and propagandist when they could not afford to permit him to transfer his services to the other side; they must have been poorly off for arguments to answer his preaching when they felt themselves obliged so soon to resort to the persuasive weapons of fire and steel. (2) Its unsleeping vigilance. Night and day they watched the city gates, with the help of a Roman garrison (2 Cor. xi. 32), to apprehend him (compare xxiii. 21). So the wicked sleep not except they have done mischief (Prov. iv. 16), while "their feet are swift to shed blood" (Rom. iii. 15). 2. *The observation of Paul.* He was not so absorbed in preaching as not to become aware of what was going on. Saul, from the first to the last of his career, was a remarkably wide-awake person, who always knew the machinations of his adversaries, and understood the right thing to do. In this case he got to hear about the wicked devices of his foes. 3. *The stratagem of his friends.* Who says that Christians are incapable imbeciles? Under cover of the darkness (having taken him into one of their houses on the city wall), his disciples let him down from the window in a basket (see 2 Cor. xi. 33). "This nightly journey in a basket down over the town wall, whilst underneath perhaps the Jewish spies were waiting to apprehend him and drag him off to be stoned," says Hausrath (*Der Apostel Paulus*, p. 139), "remained with him constantly as a frightful recollection which twenty years after he depicted in a more lively manner than all the other sufferings recounted by him, more especially even than the stoning which he once endured, or than the shipwreck in which he was tossed about a night and a day upon the deep." Having eluded the lines of his would-be captors, he escaped not to Arabia (see Hausrath), but towards Jerusalem, where he abode fifteen days with Peter (Gal. i. 18).

Lessons.—1. When a man preaches or seeks to propagate the faith he once sought to destroy, there is good reason to conclude he is converted. 2. Sudden conversions, though not impossible, are often difficult to understand. 3. If the Scriptures be authority, Jesus of Nazareth was both Israel's Messiah and the world's Redeemer. 4. Zealous preachers of Jesus Christ, if not now murdered, are commonly disliked by the world. 5. God's eye is always upon His faithful servants to watch over them, especially when the eyes of their enemies are watching against them.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 22. *Paul's increase in strength.*

I. **Whence it came.**—1. From the indwelling Spirit (Eph. iii. 16). 2. From acquaintance with the Scriptures (1 John ii. 14). 3. From practice in preaching.

II. **In what it resulted.**—In more efficient service.

III. **What it proved.**—The reality of his conversion.

Ver. 23. *A New Convert's Danger.*

I. Hatred and persecution of the world (ver. 23).

II. Distrust on the part of believers (ver. 26).

III. Spiritual pride of one's own heart.

IV. Contempt of the Church and the ordinary means of Grace.—*Gerok.*

Ver. 25. *Paul's Escape from Damascus.*

I. A **disappointment** to his foes.

II. A **kindness** to his friends.

III. A **mercy** to himself.

IV. A **blessing** to the Church and the world.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 26-30.

Saul's First Visit to Jerusalem; or, his Discipleship confirmed.

I. **Saul's object in visiting Jerusalem** (ver. 26).—1. *To associate himself with the disciples there*, and thus obtain recognition of his standing as a member of the Church. The instinct which impels a disciple to seek after the communion of saints is healthy as well as right; that which leads a believer to dissociate himself from other believers, and to cultivate piety apart, is as unsound as it is wrong, and as hurtful to the individual himself as it is contrary to the mind of Christ (Luke xxii. 32) and the teaching of Christ's apostles (Col. iii. 16; Heb. x. 25; James v. 16; 1 John i. 7). 2. *To make the acquaintance of Peter* (Gal. i. 18). Though implying a recognition of Peter's tacitly allowed supremacy in the Church at Jerusalem, this cannot be cited as an acknowledgment of his primacy, since on a second visit fourteen years later (Gal, ii. 1) Saul (then called Paul) recognises James (the Lord's brother), Cephas, and John equally with Peter as pillars in the Church (Gal ii. 9).

II. **Saul's reception by the disciples at Jerusalem.**—1. *His sincerity was suspected.* Not by one or two of the more timid of the community, but by all. Not by the ordinary membership, but by its leaders, or at least by Peter and James, since the rest of the apostles appear to have at this time been absent from Jerusalem (Gal. i. 19). Nor was their suspicion of him unreasonable. His conversion, of which they had doubtless heard, must have seemed to them beforehand unlikely. Then its miraculous and sudden character must have struck them at least as a reason for caution in accepting it as genuine. And if the larger portion of the three years passed since that occurrence had been spent in retirement in Arabia, their lack of trustworthy information about his manner of life in the interval must be held as having justified their want of forwardness in taking him to their bosoms. "The sudden appearance of Voltaire in a circle of Christians, claiming to be one of them, would have been something like this return of Saul to Jerusalem as a professed disciple" (Hackett). 2. *His conversion was attested.* (1) To whom? To the apostles, or rather to Peter and James, the latter of whom Luke includes among the apostles, using the term in a less strict way than that in which it is commonly employed. Either, as above suggested, the other apostles were absent from Jerusalem, or Saul attended no public meeting of the disciples. (2) By whom? Barnabas, the Levite of Cyprus, who may have been a former acquaintance of Saul's—a not unlikely supposition, since Saul's early occupation as a tent-maker may have brought him into trade relations with the Cyprus farmer, and who apparently had personal knowledge obtained in some way not stated, both of Saul's conversion and of his evangelistic labours at Damascus. (3) How? By declaring how Christ had appeared to him in the way to Damascus, and by certifying that he had preached boldly in Christ's name at Damascus. No one in Jerusalem could have spoken a more powerful

word for Saul than the Brother of Consolation, and none could have spoken a better word than that uttered by him.

III. **Saul's evangelistic activity in Jerusalem.**—1. The *nature* of it. (1) Preaching boldly—not defiantly or vehemently, but confidently and courageously—in the name of the Lord Jesus; and all who preach in or about Christ's name should, and might, exhibit the same mental and spiritual characteristics. (2) Disputing against the Grecian Jews, the party with whom Stephen had argued, and at whose hands he met his death (vi. 9-12), and who were probably most zealous in opposing him. 2. The *continuance* of it. Only fifteen days (Gal. i. 18), the exercise of his ministry having been—not abandoned for want of success or forsaken through weariness, or love of novelty, but—cut short by the murderous designs of his hearers. Whether these listened to him longer than they did to Stephen cannot be told.

IV. **Saul's precipitate flight from Jerusalem.**—1. *Dictated by prudence.* "A prudent man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself" (Prov. xxii. 3). No man is required to make a martyr of himself even for religion, unless he cannot avoid doing so without sin. 2. *Approved by Christ.* This must be inferred from Christ's own dictum (Matt. x. 23). What applied to the Twelve held good of the thirteenth apostle. 3. *Assisted by his friends.* His brethren in the faith, realising how valuable a coadjutor had been sent them, "took steps" to have him conveyed to Cæsarea (see on viii. 40 "Critical Remarks"), and sent forth to Tarsus, his native city (see "Critical Remarks"). 4. *Rejoiced in by the whole Church of Christ since.* What would the Church not have lost had Saul been cut off in the beginning of his glorious career? A heavier blow to Christianity would his fall then have been than his conversion was to Judaism!

Learn.—1. That sudden and more especially violent conversions are always more or less open to suspicion. 2. That there are times when the services of a Christian brother are invaluable. 3. That the soundest evidence of sincerity in religion is patient and courageous perseverance in well doing. 4. That Christianity can hold the field against all opponents. 5. That Christ's servants can hardly expect to be better treated than their Master.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 8-23. *The Progress of Saul's Conversion.*

I. **The first impression.**—The deep feeling of spiritual inability (ver. 8).

II. **The first signs of life.**—"Behold he prayeth" (ver. 11).

III. **The first testimony.** — That Christ is the Son of God (ver. 20).

IV. **The first experience.**—The cross for the sake of Christ (ver. 23).—*Jasper in Lange.*

Ver. 27. *What the Name of Jesus is to a Preacher.*

I. His **theme.**
II. His **authority.**
III. His **power.**
IV. His **aim.**
V. His **protection.**
VI. His **reward.**

Ver. 29. "*They went about to slay him.*"—What the Church and the world would have lost had this plot succeeded.

I. **The Church would have lost**—1. The brightest example of Christianity. 2. The greatest missionary. 3. The most eloquent preacher. And—4. The most influential writer that has ever appeared within her borders.

II. **The world would have lost**—1. Its foremost pioneer of civilisation. 2. Its noblest philanthropist. 3. Its most gifted teacher. 4. Its most influential personality.

Vers. 20-30. *The Marks of True Conversion.*

I. **Joyful confession of Christ** (ver. 20).

II. **Willing endurance of the world's enmity** (ver. 23).

III. **Humble intercourse with believers** (ver. 26).

IV. **Godly conduct in the service of the Lord** (ver. 28)—*Leonhard and Spiegel in Lange*).

Vers. 26-30. *The Qualifications, Work, and Reward of a True Minister*, as exemplified in the case of Paul.

I. **His qualifications.**—Declared not by Paul himself, but by Barnabas. 1. *A personal interview with Christ.* Paul had seen the Lord in the way; and the man who has not had personal dealings in his own soul with Jesus Christ may be an eloquent and even thoughtful lecturer on religion as he understands it, but is not a true minister. 2. *A direct message from Christ.* Christ had spoken to Paul, and therefore Paul had somewhat to communicate to the world. The true business of the preacher is to communicate not his own but Christ's thoughts to his fellow-men. 3. *A proved fitness to speak for Christ.* Paul had shown himself to possess this by his experiment at Damascus; and Christian Churches are specially cautioned against making those bishops, presbyters, or preachers who are not "apt to teach" (1 Tim. iii. 2).

II. **His work.**—1. *Generally and chiefly to preach*, to proclaim the main facts and doctrines of the Gospel of Christ. 2. *Particularly and specially* to confirm and defend the Gospel against all objectors and objections. In other words, he should be both an evangelist and an apologist.

III. **His reward.**—Not his ultimate and final, but his present and immediate recompense. 1. *The opposition of the world.* Here typified by the hostility of the Jews, who first attempted to silence and then to murder Paul. 2. *The sympathy of his brethren.* If at first regarded with suspicion, the true minister will eventually secure the kindly regards and hearty co-operation first of the Barnabases and then of the Peters, and lastly, of the Johns and Jameses, etc., among the brethren. 3. *The protection of God.* The Almighty arm will be his shield and buckler till his work is done. No weapon forged against him will prosper. The devices of his enemies will be outwitted and their counsels turned to folly.

Vers. 19-30. *Saul Preaching Christ.*

I. **For this work he had long preparation.**—Were the Book of Acts our only source of information, we should conclude that the beginning of Paul's work as a preacher followed close upon the end of his career as a persecutor. The interval between his persecuting and his preaching would seem to have been only the three days of his blindness at Damascus. We should then be obliged to explain, as best we might, how he so suddenly gained his wonderful insight into Christian truth in its relations to Judaism. We should have to seek, and should seek in vain, a reasonable explanation of the great revolution in his moral sentiments. The work of the Spirit in regeneration may be instantaneous, but the readjustments of character and convictions are always slow and progressive. Happily, we have another resource. In the Epistle to the Galatians Paul wrote: "But when it pleased God to reveal His Son in me that I might preach Him among the heathen, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood . . . but I went into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus." His preaching was preceded, we may believe, by three years of study and reflection in the solitude of Arabia. St. Paul is not, therefore, to be cited as an instance of a man one day ignorant of Christian truth, and the next day, by means entirely supernatural, the wisest exponent of it. The world, in its love of the wonderful, is too ready to believe in such men. His knowledge of Christ and of Christian truth was in part a revelation, but in part also the result of patient thought and of piety prolonged through studious years. God never works needless miracles. Every

view of Christian truth and duty which Paul attained had a long history behind it, stretching back through those years of meditation in Arabia.

II. **His conviction that Jesus is the Son of God was reached in the face of the greatest obstacles.**—As a Pharisee burning with zeal for the law and its traditions, he looked upon Christ as a dangerous innovator, and upon Christian doctrine as heretical and revolutionary. Salvation by the law-method he advocated with all his heart. That there was any other righteousness than obedience to a ceremonial law he did not for a moment imagine or allow. The sincerity of his intensely religious nature made it the more improbable that his convictions would ever be changed. The sect of the Nazarenes was unnoticed or despised. To him, as to them, the cross was a stumbling-block. No natural bias in favour of Christian truth, then, no motive of self-interest, no social influence, drew him into the number of Christ's disciples. No greater or more improbable change in character and purpose is conceivable than that by which Saul the inquisitor, hurrying men and women to prison and persecuting to the death believers in the Christian way, became the apostle of the cross, "determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." How, then, were these obstacles removed? His own explanation always was, "Christ was seen by me also. . . . It pleased God to reveal His Son in me." In this glorious revelation lay the power which revolutionised his moral sentiments, levelled all obstacles, and brought him to an undying faith in the crucified and risen Son of God.

III. The value of Paul's testimony that Jesus is the son of God is further enhanced by **the motive which prompted him to give it.**—Human testimony is to be measured by the motive to its utterance. And it might be said that he was an impostor, bearing witness to a lie, and setting up claims which he knew to be false. But, whenever men have reflected that imposture always reacts upon him who tries it, that false claims demoralise him who makes them, and have seen in St. Paul's life, not a spiritual declension, but a steady progress in holiness, they have been both unable and unwilling to call him an impostor. Besides, the motive to imposture is wanting. Review the list of selfish motives which impel men to make false claims, and not one of them can be applied to him. It was not pride of intellect; for, with supreme self-denial, Paul resolved to count as nothing all other learning than the knowledge of Christ and of His cross. The love of Christ constrained Him. This was the motive. The grateful desire to make some return for Christ's love to him impelled Paul to labour, to preach, to suffer, "in His name."

IV. **The spiritual power of St. Paul's life greatly augments the value of his testimony.**—Never was there a more powerful life. Or, if we were to admit that St. Paul's power rested in his natural gifts; if we were to enumerate the elements of a strong character—sobriety, sagacity, impartial judgment, courage, hopefulness, and whatever things enter into a powerful personality—and were to find in these a sufficient cause for his pre-eminence as a religious leader—we might then attach no greater value to his testimony than to that of any other wise and truthful man. But the fact is otherwise. Exalt his natural gifts as we will; say that his own personal powers made him "a greater preacher than Chrysostom, a greater reformer than Luther, a greater theologian than Thomas Aquinas"—it yet remains entirely true that the imperishable power of St. Paul's life was derived from Christ. He was consciously dependent. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

V. **His testimony is comprehensive.**—"In the synagogues he proclaimed Jesus, that He is the Son of God." A review of the ministry of St. Paul is

fruitful of practical lessons. 1. He has set before us the superiority of the Christian religion to morality. 2. He has shown us that men may exalt the character of Christ. 3. His ministry rebukes all half-hearted service of the Master.—*Monday Club Sermons.*

Saul Preaching Christ.

I. **There is a public confession of Christ, an unofficial preaching of Him, incumbent upon every one who is converted by His grace.**—Saul is a noble example of this generous testimony for Christ. "Immediately" (R.V.) "he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues that He is the Son of God." Notice in reference to this confession—*First*, it was *prompt.* "Immediately" he entered upon it. There was no unnecessary hesitation, no dalliance with duty, no waiting upon frames and feelings. Love, gratitude, joy, a desire to retrieve the wrongs of the past, a yearning to direct others to the fountain at which his thirst had been assuaged. *Second*, it was *brave.* He did not simply enter his name upon the roll of the disciples. He did not content himself with speaking privately to such of his former acquaintances or associates as he might chance to meet. In the face of friend and foe he made public confession of Jesus his Lord. *Third*, it was *uncompromising.* He did not undertake to strike a balance between his own convictions and the prejudices of his hearers, as so many faint-hearted confessors now do. He "proclaimed Jesus that He is *the Son of God.*"

II. **A higher and official preaching of Christ is incumbent upon those, and those only, who are duly called, qualified, and commissioned to enter upon it.**—This is the preaching which Saul did after his return from Arabia to Damascus. A study of his course in reference to it throws much light upon the prerequisites to the gospel ministry. 1. It must be preceded by a Divine call. None may enter upon it without such vocation. The call of Saul of Tarsus was in many respects extraordinary. 2. It must be preceded by thorough preparation. 3. It must be preceded by orderly commission. Saul was commissioned of God to preach.

III. **The matter, the manner, and the effects of preaching Christ are the same in all ages.**—They are strikingly illustrated in the passage which we study to-day. 1. The *matter* or substance of all gospel preaching is the same. Saul sounds here the key-note of his whole after-ministry. 2. The *manner* of all true gospel preaching is the same. Saul's ministry at Damascus and in Jerusalem affords, in these respects, a faithful representation of his methods everywhere, and an instructive example of the manner in which the minister or teacher should hold forth Christ as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. Saul's preaching was *scriptural.* He confounded the Jews by proving from the Old-Testament Scriptures that Jesus was Christ. Saul's preaching was *fearless.* He preached "boldly" both in Damascus and in Jerusalem. He did not shun to declare the whole counsel of God. Saul's preaching was *humble.* He "preached in the name of the Lord Jesus." He assumed no authority and asserted no superiority of his own. 3. The *effects* of all gospel preaching are the same. The Apostle found in Damascus and at Jerusalem what he did everywhere else: "To the one we are the savour of death unto death, and to the other the savour of life unto life." Finally, the fruits of faithful teaching are gathered after the teacher is gone. Saul has been "brought down to Cæsarea, and sent away to Tarsus," but the Church of God remains; and this Church, for which he has laboured and prayed, and which sorely misses him now that he has gone, nevertheless "has peace, being edified, and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, is multiplied."—*T. D. Witherspoon, D.D.*

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 31—35.

The Miracle at Lydda; or, the Healing of Æneas.

I. **The time.**—1. *At the close of the persecution which arose on the death of Stephen.* This must have continued three years, if the present paragraph chronologically succeeds the preceding. What occasioned the cessation of hostilities against the Christians can only be conjectured. The excitement raised by Gaius's (Caligula's) order to have his image erected in the temple, about A.D. 39 and 40 (Lardner, De Wette), may have diverted the attention of the Jews for a season from the apostles and disciples (Jos., *Ant.*, XVIII. viii. 2-9). 2. *During a period of Church rest and prosperity.* This inevitably followed on the cessation of active measures of hostility against the Christians, and continued for a number of years, say from A.D. 39 to A.D. 44, when a fresh persecution was initiated against the Church by Herod Aprippa (xii. 1). During this interregnum, the work of preaching, going forward in uninterrupted quiet, caused the ranks of believers to be largely augmented—the Holy Ghost constantly bearing witness to the truth. 3. *While Peter was on a visitation tour among the saints.* Whether "quarters" (Kuinoel) or "saints" (Bengel, Meyer, Hackett) be supplied after "all" the sense is the same, that Peter, encouraged presumably by the peace which prevailed, had undertaken a pilgrimage among the Christians in all the districts round about for the purpose of confirming them in the faith, and by evangelising of increasing their number. 4. *When he had come to the town of Lydda.* The Lud of the Old Testament (1 Chron. viii. 12; Ezra ii. 33; Neh. vii. 37, xi. 35) was a village lying between Joppa and Ramleh, on the ancient line of travel between Jerusalem and Cæsarea. It was at the time of Peter's visit the seat of a Rabbinic School, and of a Christian community, established there probably as the result of Philip's labours (viii. 40).

II. **The miracle.**—1. *The patient.* Æneas, probably a Hellenistic Jew, and most likely a disciple. His name has suggested the question whether the fame of Virgil's poem had made the Trojan hero known even in the plains of Palestine (Plumptre). Besser, interpreting his name as "Man of Praise," finds in it a beautiful suggestion of the joyous singer of God's grace who was healed at the Beautiful Gate of the temple (iii. 9). 2. *The malady.* Palsy. A paralysis in the limbs, which had rendered the patient bedridden for eight years. A minuteness of detail characteristic of Luke as a physician (compare iii. 7, ix. 18, xxviii. 8). 3. *The cure.* Made whole. (1) Easily; by a word. (2) Instantly; without delay or lengthened process. (3) Completely. He arose (compare iii. 9) and made his bed (compare John v. 9), doing for himself what others for eight years had been doing for him. (4) Really. Though Renan says that "Peter" only "passed for having cured a paralytic," there is no reason to doubt that he actually did so. 4. *The physician.* Not Peter but Jesus Christ. "In the assonance of the Greek words (Ἰησοῦς ἰᾶταί σε) we may perhaps trace a desire to impress the thought that the very name of Jesus testified that He was the Great Healer. Such a paronomasia has its parallel in the later play upon *Christian* and *Chrestiani* = the good or gracious people (Tertull., *Apoc.*, c. 3), perhaps also in Peter's own language that the Lord is not *Christos* only but *Chrestos* = gracious (1 Peter ii. 3)" (Plumptre). 5. *The prescription.* "Arise and make thy bed." Probably a reminiscence of the way in which Christ was accustomed to proceed in similar cures (Matt. ix. 6; John v. 8).

III. **The result.**—1. *The countryside was affected by the miracle.* "All that dwelt at Lydda and in Sharon"—*i.e.*, the plain extending along the coast from Joppa to Cæsarea, a distance of thirty miles, "saw" the man that had been cured, and were convinced of the reality of the miracle (compare iii. 9). 2. *Most*

of those who saw were by the sight converted. They believed the gospel Peter preached and turned to the Lord. The evidence of their eyesight was too strong to be gainsaid.

Learn.—1. That the edification of the Church proceeds best in the time of peace. 2. That the best propagandists of Christianity are devout Christians. 3. That Christian ministers should avail themselves of every opportunity opened in providence for the prosecution of their sacred calling. 4. That the miracles of moral healing performed by Christianity are a powerful means of attracting men to faith.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 31. *The Church of Jesus Christ.*

I. **Independent of territorial limitations.**—"The Church throughout all Judæa and Galilee and Samaria."

II. **Possessed of spiritual unity.**—"The Church," though existing in different localities.

III. **Susceptible of growth.**—Outwardly its number "was multiplied"; inwardly its religious life "was edified."

IV. **Distinguished by its walk and conversation.**—"Walking in the fear of God and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit."

Ver. 33. *The Healing of Æneas.*

I. **An affecting emblem of the sinful soul.**—1. *Afflicted with a grievous malady.* Sin, which, like a palsy, paralyses the soul's powers. 2. *Of long standing*—not for eight years only, but from birth. 3. *Incurable by human means.* Even if Æneas's malady might have been remedied by ordinary therapeutics, the soul's cannot be removed by any known power or wisdom of man.

II. **A cheering proclamation of the soul's physician.**—1. His *name*, Jesus Christ—*i.e.*, the Heaven-sent Saviour. 2. His *presence*—in the immediate vicinity of every sick soul, so that He can operate at once. 3. His *power*—able to make the soul whole, to heal its destroying malady of sin, to cancel the guilt and break the power of it—and to do this completely.

III. **An authoritative declaration of the soul's duty.**—1. To *believe.* In the revealed physician. In His name and character, His presence and power. 2. To *appropriate* by an act of faith the healing offered. Without this the soul could not arise. 3. To *arise* from its sinful—*i.e.*, guilty and helpless—condition. Practically it is the soul's duty, instantly on believing, to begin to lead a new life.

IV. **A simple illustration of the power of faith.**—The moment he believed, appropriated, and endeavoured, he arose a cured man. So is it always with them who believe and obey the prescription of the soul's physician. They arise from their guilty and condemned condition—no condemnation (Rom. viii. 1). They shake off the fetters of sin's bondage and enter into spiritual liberty.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 36—43.

Among the Disciples at Joppa; or, the Raising of Dorcas.

I. **Dorcas living.**—1. *Her name was beautiful.* Dorcas, in Chaldee *Tabitha*, signifying "Gazelle." The gazelle, or antelope of Judah, celebrated for its slender and agreeable form, its graceful motions, its fiery and beautiful eyes, was not infrequently employed by Hebrews and other Orientals as a type of female loveliness. To Dorcas the name "Gazelle" may have been originally ascribed on account of her personal attractions, though more probably because of the grace and beauty of her character; and pre-eminently beautiful it is when the lovely name is but an index to the lovely soul within, and the beauty of the

person a reflection of that beauty of holiness in which the spirit should aspire continually to be arrayed. 2. *Her character was beautiful.*

> "What is beauty? Not the show
> Of shapely limbs and features. No;
> These are but flowers
> That have their dated hours
> To breathe their momentary sweets and go.
> 'Tis the stainless soul within
> That outshines the fairest skin."

Crown the female figure with every conceivable excellence, till in perfection of external loveliness it may be said of her whose that figure is, as Milton said of Eve—

> "Grace was in all her steps, heaven in her eye:
> In every gesture dignity and love";

or as Shakespeare wrote of one of his heroines:—

> "She looks as clear
> As morning roses newly washed with dew;"

yet, devoid of the inner principle of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and of the unseen graces that cluster round and, in fact, spring from that, she is destitute of the one thing needful to consummate her perfections and constitute her brightest lustre in the sight of God; while with these, on the other hand, she possesses what lends an additional charm to all her other loveliness. So was it with the holy women of old time (1 Peter iii. 5, 6) and with Dorcas of Joppa, who was "a disciple" possessed of that faith which is the root and vital sap of all other Christian virtues and graces. 3. *Her life was beautiful.* As nearly as possible Dorcas realised the primitive idea of feminine loveliness as sketched by both Peter (Eph. iii. 1-4) and Paul (1 Tim. ii. 9, 10). She was "full of good works and alms deeds which she did." Her Christian activity displayed itself specially in the making of coats and garments for poor widows in connection with the Church. Probably purchasing the material with her own savings, she wove it with her own labour, and fashioned it into articles of apparel with her own hands; so that the coats and garments she distributed, besides being valuable gifts of her charity, were substantial tokens of her industry as well. And here arises a hint of what is pre-eminently woman's sphere within the Christian Church, which is hardly that of preaching or ruling, but of teaching the young, ministering to the sick, and caring for the poor.

II. **Dorcas dying.**—1. *Notwithstanding her piety, Dorcas died.* Her beautiful name, lovely character, and useful life proved unable to ward off the attack of the last enemy. Having fallen sick, though Scripture maintains a holy reticence concerning the nature of her ailment, she passed from this mortal scene, most likely leaving behind her no death-bed testimony, but only the memory of her saintly character and life to suggest whither she had gone. 2. *In consequence of her piety Dorcas was much lamented.* Truth in the familiar phrase that one is never missed and one's worth never appreciated till one dies. Whether Dorcas's character and philanthropic labour were known beyond or even throughout the little circle of the Christian community in Joppa before her death cannot be told; but hardly had the vital spark become extinct within her frame than the whole truth concerning her was disclosed. First came the Church members, her fellow-disciples, to mourn for her death, and condole with her bereaved relatives, so proving that human hearts may be bound together by other ties than those of mere earthly relationship; and then arrived the weeping widows, the recipients of her benevolence, who exhibited the coats and garments she had made as a testimony at once to the piety of the deceased and to the gratitude of the living.

III. **Dorcas rising.**—1. *Unexpected on the part of the disciples.* Difficult to think these had any other idea in sending for Peter than simply to receive from him comfort and consolation. As yet the apostles had never restored a dead body to life. Then the attentions bestowed upon the corpse showed it was being prepared for burial. Certainly the early Christians believed in the possibility of a resurrection; but ground scarcely exists for supposing the friends of Dorcas expected her revival. "Perhaps something whispered in the troubled hearts of the disciples, 'If Peter had been here our sister would not have died' . . . but the surpassing consolation with which the Lord intended presently to fill them went beyond their prayers and thoughts" (Besser). 2. *Effected by the apostle.* (1) In solitude. Having entered the death-chamber, Peter put out all whom he found there; in this following the example of Christ in the house of Jairus (Luke viii. 54). (2) By means of prayer. Christ raised the daughter of Jairus by His own power; Peter invoked Christ's aid. (3) With appropriate actions. With a word of command—"Tabitha, arise!" (compare Luke vii. 14, viii. 54; John xi. 43). With a helping hand: "He gave her his hand and lifted her up." 3. *Authenticated in the eyes of the Church.* When she had been recalled to life Peter presented her to the saints and widows waiting without; to those most anxious to believe in her restoration, it may be said, but also to those best qualified to attest its reality and least likely to be imposed upon—to those who had seen her die, washed her corpse, and prepared it for the tomb; and these having seen her, distinctly realised she was alive. 4. *Followed by the happiest results in the general community.* The miracle became "known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord."

Lessons.—1. The great poor law of the Christian Church. The strong should help the weak (Rom. xvi.). 2. The proper sphere of work for woman. Ministries of love. 3. The value of a good name. Better than great riches (Prov. xxii. 1). 4. The mutual sympathy which ought to bind together the various members of the Church (Gal. vi. 2). 5. Tabitha's resurrection a picture of the resurrection of the saints.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 36. *Joppa, a City of—*

I. **High antiquity.**—Reported by ancient geographers to have been built before the Flood. It certainly existed in the days of the conquest of Canaan under Joshua (xix. 46).

II. **Historical renown.**—1. *In pre-Christian times.* (1) Solomon's ships sailed from its harbour to go to Tarshish (1 Kings x. 22). (2) Hiram's timber floats landed at its quay (2 Chron. ii. 16). (3) Ezra's cedar trees received at its port (iii. 7). (4) Jonah embarked at its wharf for Tarshish (Jonah i. 3). 2. *In apostolic times.* (1) The scene of Peter's miracle in raising Dorcas. (2) The place of Peter's vision concerning Cornelius (x. 1). *In modern times.* (1) "The landing-place of pilgrims going to Jerusalem for more than a thousand years—from Arculf in the seventh century to his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales in the nineteenth" (*J. L. Porter*). (2) The object of many sieges, from the days of Pompey (B.C. 63) to those of Napoleon I.

III. **Natural beauty.** — "It is," writes a distinguished traveller, "beautifully situated on a little rounded hill, dipping on the west side into the waves of the Mediterranean, and on the land side encompassed by orchards of orange, lemon, apricot, and other trees, which for luxuriance and beauty are not surpassed in the world."

Full of Good Works. Good works—

I. **Flow from a right principle**—the love of God (John xiv. 15-23; Rom. xiii. 10; 1 John v. 3).

II. **Proceed according to a right rule**—the word of God, the only rule

of faith and practice (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17).

III. **Tend towards a right end**—the glory of God (Rom. xiv. 7, 8; Col. iii. 17-23).

IV. **Should be constantly maintained** (Titus iii. 8).

V. **Will certainly be rewarded** (Rom. ii. 7).

The Variety of Gifts bestowed upon the Christian Church. Four characters, exceedingly diverse.

I. **Paul,** a man singularly gifted, morally and intellectually, with qualities more brilliant than almost ever fell to the lot of man.

II. **Peter,** full of love, a champion of the truth.

III. **Ananias,** one of those disciples of the inward life whose vocation is sympathy, and who by a single word, "Brother," restore light to those that sit in darkness and loneliness.

IV. **Dorcas,** in a humbler, but not less true sphere of Divine goodness, clothing the poor with her own hands. practically loving and benevolent.—*Robertson, of Brighton.*

Vers. 36-42. *Dorcas and Peter.*

I. The character of Dorcas illustrates **the amiableness of female piety.**

II. The conduct of the widows supplies **a beautiful instance of gratitude.**

III. The behaviour of Peter exemplifies that **promptitude in doing good** which ought to characterise Christians.

CHAPTER X.

THE CHURCH'S DOOR OPENED FOR THE GENTILES—ACCESSION OF CONVERTS FROM HEATHENDOM.

§ 1. Cornelius's Vision; or, a Gentile Inquirer directed (vers. 1-8).
§ 2. Peter's Trance; or, the Apostolic Agent instructed (vers. 9-16).
§ 3. Cornelius's Messengers at Joppa; or, the Gentile Proselyte knocking for Admission (vers. 17-23).
§ 4. Peter's Journey to Cæsarea; or, the Candidate's Examination (vers. 24-33).
§ 5. Peter's Sermon to Cornelius; or, the Gospel preached to a Gentile (vers. 34-43).
§ 6. The Descent of the Spirit on Cornelius; or, a Gentile's Reception into the Church (vers. 44-48).

CRITICAL REMARKS.

Ver. 1. **There was.**—Omitted in best MSS. **Centurion.**—ἑκατοντάρχης (xxvii. 1) = ἑκατοντάρχος (xxi. 32; compare Luke vii. 2-6, xxiii. 47). **Italian band,** or *cohort.*—The *legio Italica* of Tacitus (*Hist*, i. 59, 64), raised by Nero (*Dion. Cass*, lv. 24), was not at this time in existence. "An inscription in Gruter informs us that volunteer Italian cohorts served in Syria—*i.e.*, Italian or Roman cohorts who enlisted of their own accord instead of being obliged to perform military service" (Hackett). The number of soldiers in a cohort was usually six hundred, though the term was frequently used for a maniple, which was a third of a cohort (Holtzmann).

Ver. 2. **Devout.**—εὐσεβής, different from εὐλαβεῖς in ii. 5, viii. 2, describes "the special type of devotion that belonged to Gentile converts" (Plumptre), though there is no ground for believing that Cornelius was a proselyte (Olshausen, Neander, Wendt). Against this stand (Zöckler): (1) the word ἀλλόφυλος of another nation, applied by Peter to Cornelius (ver. 28);

(2) the characterisation of Cornelius and his family as belonging to the Gentiles (ver. 34); (3) the great excitement kindled by their reception of the Spirit, and their baptism by Peter (ver. 45, xi. 1 *ff*).

Ver. 3. **Evidently** = openly, so that the vision was not purely subjective (Neander).

Ver. 4. **For a memorial before God.**—Alluding to "that part of the meat offering which is burnt, and whose savour was intended to remind God of the worshipper" (Ewald). It is doubtful, however, if this is not somewhat fanciful.

Ver. 5. **Send men to Joppa,** etc.—Zeller correctly observes (*Die Apostelgeschichte*, p. 181) that this minute acquaintance of the angel with Peter's name and residence with Simon the Tanner shows that Cornelius's vision was not a mere fancy, *ein blosses Phantasiegebilde des Betenders*, but an objective appearance.

Ver. 6. The best MSS. omit the words, **he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do,** as an insertion in accordance with ix. 6 and xi. 14.

Ver. 7. For **unto Cornelius** read *unto him*. **Of them that waited on him continually** may point to similarity of disposition, as in viii. 13 (Zöckler, Holtzmann), as well as to menial service (De Wette, Overbeck).

Ver. 9. **The house-top** was frequently employed for devotion. The roof, almost flat, only sloping enough to let the rain run off, was surrounded by a balustrade as directed by the law (Deut. xxii. 8), and formed thus a terrace which served as a place of retirement (Stapfer's *Palestine in the Time of Christ*, p. 175).

Ver. 10. **Would have eaten** should be *desired to eat*, felt the demands of appetite consequent upon long fasting.

Ver. 11. **And saw** should be *and seeth*. Omit **unto him** after descending. **As it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners and let down to the earth,** according to the R.V. should be *as it were a great sheet let down by four corners upon the earth*—δεδεμένον καὶ being wanting in the best MSS. In the former case the sheet was tied at its four corners with ropes which let it down towards the earth; in the other it was let down by its four corners or ends (to which, however, ropes may have been attached, though this is not stated). The sense is not materially different. Alford, Hackett, Lechler, Plumptre, and others, prefer the first reading; Lachmann, Zöckler, Holtzmann, with Westcott and Hort, whom the R.V. here follows, decide for the second.

Ver. 12. Should read **all manner of,** or simply *all the* **fourfooted beasts** (omitting *and wild beasts*, a clause introduced from xi. 6) **and creeping things of the earth,** with the sanction of the best texts (Tischendorf, Lachmann, Meyer, Westcott and Hort).

Ver. 14. **Common or** should be *common and* **unclean.**—"Common" is the opposite of "holy," hence unholy.

Ver. 16. Substitute *straightway*, εὐθὺς, for **again,** πάλιν. **Thrice.**—For the sake of emphasis. (Compare Dan. vi. 10, 13; 2 Cor. xii. 8.)

Ver. 17. ἐν ἑαυτῷ διηπόρει, **doubted in himself,** or *was much perplexed in himself* (as in ii. 12, v. 24), seems to intimate that Peter's trance was over and Peter himself returned to his ordinary consciousness.

Ver. 19. **The Spirit said unto him.**—Neander thinks that Peter's attention was first arrested by the sound of the men's voices in the court below, and that the Spirit only explained to him the connection between their visit and his meditations. This, however, is incorrect. The numeral **three** is by some codices omitted, while others have *two*; and instead of the present **seek** the participle *seeking*. Westcott and Hort read *men seeking*; Alford, Hackett, and Zöckler *men seek*.

Ver. 21. **Which were sent unto him from Cornelius** should be omitted on the authority of the best MSS.

Ver. 22. **Warned from God,** one word ἐχρηματίσθη, signifies *was divinely instructed*. (Compare Matt. ii. 12, 22.)

Ver. 23. For **Peter went away,** the best authorities read, *he arose and went away*. **The brethren from Joppa** were six in number (xi. 12), the whole company ten.

Ver. 25. **And worshipped.**—Not Peter (Adoravit: non addidit Lucas "eum," Bengel), but God in him, or who sent him. (Compare Gal. iv. 14.)

Ver. 30. **Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house.**—This seems to say that Cornelius had four days previous to Peter's arrival been fasting until a certain hour, probably the sixth, and that thereafter, when engaged in prayer about the ninth hour, he beheld a vision (Alford, Spence, Zöckler, Holtzmann). The best authorities, however, omit the clausule *I was fasting*—but wrongly, as many think (Alford, Meyer, Wendt, Zöckler)—and translate "Four days ago until this hour I was at the ninth hour praying," or literally, *from the fourth day until this hour*, etc., which cannot mean that Cornelius had been praying four days consecutively up to the moment in question, the ninth hour (Neander, De Wette), but must be understood as signifying that on the fourth day preceding he had commenced his devotions (or his fasting), and had continued on that day till the ninth hour.

Ver. 31. **Is** should be *was* **heard**, εἰσηκούσθη, and **are** should be *were* **had in remembrance**, ἐμνήσθησαν. So also in ver. 4 the present tenses should be past.

Ver. 32. **Who when he cometh shall speak unto thee**, as an insertion similar to that in ver. 6, is wanting in the best MSS.

Ver. 33. Substitute *of the Lord—i.e.*, Christ— for **of God.**

Ver. 34. The word for **respecter of persons**, προσωπολήπτης, is found only here in the N.T., though προσωπολημψία occurs in Rom. ii. 11.

Ver. 35. **Accepted with Him.**—Better, *acceptable to him.* Though applied to Cornelius prior to his hearing the gospel, this did not imply that before and without a believing reception of that gospel Cornelius was in an absolute sense justified, forgiven, and accepted (see ver. 43). What is here taught is not *indifferentismus religionum*, but *indifferentia nationum* (Bengel).

Ver. 36. The construction of the next three verses is uncertain. Either (1) **the word** τὸν λόγον (ver. 36) should be connected with "I perceive," καταλαμβάνομαι (ver. 34) and ver. 46 taken as in apposition to vers. 34, 35 (De Wette, Ebrard, Lange, Alford); or (2) τὸν λόγον should be regarded as in apposition to δικαιοσύνην (Ewald, Buttmann, Nösgen, Zöckler); or (3), and perhaps the best way (Kuinoel, Meyer, Wendt, Winer, Overbeck, Lechler, Holtzmann, and others), *the word* (ver. 36) should be construed with **ye know** (ver. 37), the word being described by the three clauses standing in apposition—(*a*) which *God* (or He) sent unto the children of Israel, etc. (ver. 36); (*b*) that word (or, that saying) which was published, or (as in Luke ii. 15) that affair which took place (ver. 37); and (*c*) (the subject of that saying, also in the accusative) Jesus of Nazareth, etc. (ver. 38).

Ver. 39. **Whom also they** (indefinite) **slew and hanged** (rather, having hanged him) **on a tree.**—Speaking to the Gentiles, Peter does not specify the agents as when addressing the Jews (ii. 23, iii. 14, iv. 10, v. 30).

Ver. 41. Bengel, placing the clause "**who did eat and drink with Him**" in a parenthesis, explains it as pointing to the intercourse of the apostles with Christ before His death; it obviously, however, alludes to their fellowship with Him after His resurrection (Luke xxiv. 43; John xxi. 13).

Ver. 42. **Judge of quick and dead.**—Not of the righteous and the wicked merely (Olshausen), but of those who shall be alive at His coming, and of those who shall have fallen asleep (xvii. 31; 2 Tim. iv. 1; 1 Peter iv. 5).

Ver. 47. **Can any man forbid** *the* **water?**—The question suggests what was probably the case, that the primitive practice was to bring the water to the candidate rather than the candidate to the water.

Ver. 48. **He commanded them to be baptised.**—Most likely by another than himself, a practice afterwards followed by Paul (1 Cor. i. 14). Peter only completes by outward form what God has already in inward essence, by communicating the Holy Ghost, effected—viz., the admission of Cornelius and his company to the Christian Church.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 1—8.

Cornelius's Vision; or, a Gentile Inquirer directed.

I. **Cornelius's person.**—1. *His name.* This "may indicate a connection with the great Cornelian *gens* which had been made famous by the Gracchi and by Sylla" (Plumptre). There is no reason to suppose he was the individual mentioned in Luke vii. 5. 2. *His profession.* A soldier. "A centurion of the band called the Italian." The military profession not incompatible with Christianity. Christianity has won numerous converts from the army. Yet modern soldiers too seldom resemble Cornelius. The special cohort commanded by Cornelius may have derived its name from having been either composed of native Italian soldiers, or at least commanded by Italian officers. Another cohort, called the Augustan, is mentioned later (xxvii. 1). The ordinary cohorts stationed at Cæsarea, which consisted of levies from the provinces, were not always reliable (Jos., *Ant.*, XIV. xv. 10; *Wars*, I. xvii. 1). 3. *His rank.* A centurion or captain of a hundred, the sixth part of a cohort and the sixtieth of a legion. 4. *His residence.* Cæsarea, situated on the Mediterranean Sea, was the headquarters of the Roman procurator, and the seat of a Roman garrison. Built by Herod the Great, it was inhabited mostly by Gentiles, though it contained a considerable sprinkling of Jews (see on viii. 40).

II. **Cornelius's character.**—A devout—*i.e.*, pious man, a worshipper of Jehovah, not necessarily a proselyte. The word here used differs from that employed to

describe serious and religious-minded Jews (see "Critical Remarks"). His piety exhibited itself in four ways. 1. *In cherishing the fear of God in his own soul* As the absence of such fear is characteristic of the wicked (Psalm xxxvi. 1; Rom. iii. 18), so does its presence mark the good or righteous man (Psalm ii. 11, ciii. 11; Prov. i. 7; 2 Cor. vii. 1; Eph. v. 21). That Cornelius's fear of God was sincere, was attested by his own domestics (ver. 22). 2. *In seeking the spiritual welfare of his household.* In caring for the religious training of all committed by providence to his care, his family, his slaves, his soldiers; like Abraham (Gen. xviii. 19), Job (i. 5), and David (2 Sam. vi. 20). A proper exemplar in this respect to Christian husbands, fathers, masters, and superiors (Eph. vi. 4, 9). "It is the highest ornament of a house when both the master and the dependants acknowledge and fear God" (Starke). 3. *In practising benevolence towards the poor.* In distributing much alms among the people—*i.e.*, of the Jews (see ver. 42, xxvi. 17, 23, xxviii. 17), though not necessarily to them exclusively. Kindness to the needy (Psalm cxii. 9), a grace enjoined upon Christians (Luke x. 37; John xv. 17; Rom. xii. 10; Gal. v. 13; 1 John iii. 17), as well as a dictate of ordinary humanity. There may have been in Cornelius's philanthropy "something of the service of works," yet was it not on that account to be adjudged as hypocritical. 4. *In habitually maintaining the exercise of prayer.* This was another mark of indwelling grace. A religion that does not prompt men to pray is not a true religion (Rom. xii. 12; Eph. vi. 18; Phil. iv. 6; Col. iv. 2; 1 Thess. v. 17, etc., etc.). Among other matters carried by Cornelius to the throne of grace, it may be assumed, was the new religion which had been brought by Philip to Cæsarea (viii. 40), and concerning which he most likely desired to be guided. N.B.—All the centurions of scripture (xxvii. 3; Matt. viii. 5; Luke vii. 2) are presented in a favourable light.

III. **Cornelius's vision.**—1. *The time.* "About the ninth hour of the day"—*i.e.* somewhere in the course of it (the force of ὡσεί). As this was 3 p.m., one of the hours for temple worship (iii. 1), it has been suggested that Cornelius may have been a proselyte, but this hardly harmonises with subsequent statements (vers. 28, 34, xi. 1, 8, xv. 7; see "Critical Remarks on ver. 2"). The most that can be inferred is that along with his family he had adopted some of the forms of Hebrew worship. 2. *The manner.* Evidently, or openly; meaning clearly and distinctly, not obscurely and faintly, neither in a dream (compare Matt. i. 20, ii. 13), nor in a trance (compare ver. 10, xxii. 17), but with his bodily eyes, "thus asserting the objective truth of the appearance" (Alford). 3. *The appearance.* "An angel of God" (as in viii. 26, xxvii. 23). Cornelius, it should be observed, did not call him an angel of God, but described him as "a man in bright apparel" (ver. 30). Yet Cornelius must have recognised the apparition as an angel, since his messengers used this appellation (ver. 22); which suggests that Cornelius was accustomed to read the Scriptures in his household (Ezek. i. 13, 14; Dan. x. 6). In any case Peter, who had witnessed the Ascension and seen the two men in white apparel (i. 10), had no difficulty in identifying the "man in bright apparel" as a celestial intelligence (xi. 13); and this fact that Cornelius's visitor was from heaven presumably weighed with him and his fellow-apostles in deciding whether right had been done in admitting an uncircumcised Gentile into the Christian Church. That Cornelius saw the angel coming in, and heard him speak, accords with the Biblical representation of these heavenly messengers (v. 19, xii. 8, xxvii. 23). 4. *The impression.* (1) Cornelius having fastened his eyes upon the angel, was afraid, no doubt, at his dazzling appearance. That men should be alarmed at unusual phenomena, and in particular at the presence of the supernatural (Job iv. 15), is an indirect witness to the fall. (2) Having recovered from his fright he inquired the reason of the angel's coming—"What is it, Lord?"

IV. **Cornelius's commendation.**—His prayers and his alms, said the angel, reversing Luke's order, perhaps to show that God regarded chiefly the heart (Lechler), had been—1. *Noticed by God.* The Supreme is an indifferent spectator of nothing, least of all of what is done by them that fear Him (Job xxxiv. 21; Prov. xv. 3; Mal. iii. 16; Heb. iv. 13). 2. *Remembered by God.* Gone up "for a memorial before God;" before God not as a plea in justification but as requests to be kept in mind and answered (see "Critical Remarks"). God forgets nothing but pardoned sin. Never in any instance the supplication of a humble heart (Psalm lxv. 2; Isa. lxv. 24; Matt. vii. 8.)

V. **Cornelius's instruction.**—Given by the angel. 1. *Whom to send for.* "One Simon, who is surnamed Peter." The angel did not attempt to convert Cornelius. Neither had he been sent for that purpose. His mission was to direct Cornelius to send for Peter. 2. *Where to find him.* "He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner in Joppa" (see ix. 43), "whose house is by the seaside." N.B.—God's knowledge of men extends to their names, surnames, residences, trades, etc. 3. *What to do.* "He shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do." (But see "Critical Remarks.")

VI. **Cornelius's obedience.**—1. *Prompt.* Immediately the angel had departed he took steps to carry out the injunctions received. Faith commonly brooks no delay. "Straightway" a familiar word in Faith's vocabulary. 2. *Exact.* He did precisely as the angel had commanded. He sent men to Joppa. Faith never attempts to improve on Divine instructions. As the Lord commands so does faith (Gen. vi. 22). 3. *Prudent.* The messengers were carefully selected—two of his household servants, who, no doubt, like himself, were God-fearing, and a pious soldier who usually waited on himself. Faith never abandons prudence, but looks well to her goings.

Learn.—1. That piety may exist and flourish in any rank and station in life. 2. That God's salvation is nigh them that fear Him. 3. That "more servants wait on man than he'll take knowledge of." 4. That prayers and alms are twin advocates of great influence with God. 5. That God never leaves the meek without guidance. 6, That good men should study to have pious servants about them. 7. That pious households are often visited by angels.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 1. *The Centurion of Cæsarea.*—A Roman from head to foot, Cornelius had still no heart for the Roman gods; he was one of Japhet's children, who in the conquered tents of Shem had himself been conquered by the God of Shem. Certainly he was still a heathen; Jerusalem's desolate temple had not had for him attraction enough to cause him to become a proselyte; had he sought to find peace there, he would have returned from Jerusalem just as unsatisfied as the Treasurer from the East.—Besser, *Bibelstunden: Apostelgeschichte*, III. i. 514).

Cornelius the Centurion.—An example of—

I. **Goodness in high station.**—A Roman soldier of exalted rank, and yet obviously kind to and considerate of his dependants as well as of the poor; two marks of moral excellence not always found among Christians, though they should be (Rom. xii. 13, 16).

II. **Piety outside the pale of the Church.**—A devout man who prayed to God always and gave much alms to the poor, though by birth and education he was a Gentile. God has other sons besides those who are called by His name (Hosea ii. 23; Rom. ix. 25, 26), and Christ other sheep than those who belong to the recognised fold (John x. 16).

III. **An earnest soul seeking after God.**—Though pious, he was yet con-

scious of a want. Though no longer in heathen darkness, he realised he had not yet attained to perfect light. Though delivered in a measure from fear, he was not at rest. For more light, fuller knowledge, deeper peace, his prayers were doubtless directed.

IV. **Meekness instructed by God.**—"The meek will He guide in judgment, and the meek will He teach His way" (Psalm xxv. 9). This promise was signally illustrated in the case of Cornelius.

V. **Faith proving itself by obedience.**—No sooner did the angel command than with military promptitude he obeyed. (Compare Luke vii. 8.)

Ver. 2. *Praying Always.*

I. **Enjoined in Scripture.** — By Christ (Luke xviii. 1) and by Paul (1 Thess. v. 17).

II. **Not impossible.**—Except as a mere external performance or bodily service (Matt. xxvi. 41). As a spiritual exercise (1 Cor. xiv. 15) by no means unattainable, as the cases of the Twelve (vi. 4), of Cornelius, and of Paul (Col. i. 9) prove. The heart may be always in an attitude of prayer, though not every instant conscious of desire.

III. **Eminently reasonable.** — The man who prays always shows himself to be good—*i.e.*, humble and wise.

IV. **Never unprofitable.**—The soul that communes much with God will not only receive much from God (Matt. vii. 8), but will gradually become like God.

Vers. 5, 6. *Simon the Apostle and Simon the Tanner; or, Christian Preachers and Christian Tradesmen.*

I. **Both known to God.**—Their names, callings, and residences.

II. **Both serve God.**—Their callings may be different; their Master is one.

III. **Both advance Christ's kingdom.** The preacher (the apostle) directly by publishing the gospel; the tradesman (the tanner) indirectly by lodging the preacher.

IV. **Both honoured by God.**—Their names stand together in the annals of the Church and on the page of inspiration.

Ver. 7. *A Model House.*

I. **Religious.**—Characterised by the fear of God and sanctified by prayer.

II. **Harmonious.**—Master and servants, doubtless also parents and children, living in concord and love.

III. **Benevolent.**—Mindful of the wants of others; distributing to the necessities of the saints.

IV. **Blessed.** — Visited by angels, God's ministers of salvation.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 1—16.

Peter's Trance; or, the Apostolic Agent prepared.

I. **The circumstances.**—1. *Where?* (1) In Joppa (see ix. 36-43). How Peter came to be in that seaside city has already been related. (2) In the house of Simon the tanner (ver. 6). A good man is near to heaven anywhere and everywhere. (3) On the flat roof of Simon's mansion, whither he had retired for devotion. Since Christ came every place is holy ground. Oriental houses were commonly constructed like Simon's (Mark ii. 4). 2. *When?* (1) On the morrow after Cornelius's vision, after the departure of his messengers and as they were approaching the city. (2) About the sixth hour—*i.e.*, about noon. This also was a favourite hour for prayer with devout Jews (Psalm lv. 17). (3) While Simon's domestics were making ready (ver. 10)—*i.e.*, while they were preparing the midday meal, which in all probability would consist of "fish, locusts baked in flour or honey, onions, and (perhaps) butcher's meat" (Stapfer's *Palestine in the Time of Christ*, p. 189). 3. *How engaged?* In prayer, for which roofs of houses were often used (Matt. x. 27, xxiv. 17; Luke xvii. 31), as being both secluded and safe, in consequence of ordinarily having a balustrade

of three or four feet high running round them (Deut. xxii. 8). It was not surprising that Peter should have a heavenly vision while engaged in prayer (see "Hints on ver. 11"). Glimpses within the veil are most likely to be enjoyed by them who live nearest it. 4. *In what condition?* "Hungry," very (Hackett), and desirous of eating. He had probably partaken of no food since the morning, more especially if the day was one of those (the second and fifth of the week, Monday and Thursday) which were habitually observed as fasts by pious Jews (Stapfer's *Palestine in the Time of Christ*, p. 381). Although Jews often fasted from strange motives, as, *e.g.*, "to secure pleasant dreams, to find the explanation of a dream, or to avert some evil omen" (Stapfer, p. 381), it cannot be supposed that either Cornelius (ver. 30, A.V.), or Peter was similarly actuated. By them, doubtless, abstinence from food, either wholly or in part, was regarded as a valuable, if not necessary, preparation for high spiritual exercises (Psalm xxxv. 13, lxix. 10; Dan. ix. 3; 1 Cor. vii. 5; Acts xiv. 23).

II. **The occurrences.**—1. *The trance.* "He fell into a trance; or *there came upon him an ecstasy* or rapture (= being in the Spirit, Rev. i. 10), by which, as it were, he was carried out of himself and put into a mental state in which he could discern objects beyond the apprehension of man's natural powers (Hackett). Compare xi. 5, xxii. 17; 2 Cor. xii. 3; perhaps also Numb. xxiv. 4 and Ezek. viii. 3. 2. *The sights.* (1) Heaven opened. So it happened to Christ on the occasion of His baptism (Luke iii. 21); to the beloved disciple in Patmos (Rev. iv. 1, xix. 11); and to Stephen in the council chamber (vii. 56). Compare also in the Old Testament the cases of Jacob (Gen. xxviii. 17), Isaiah (vi. 1), Ezekiel (i. 1), and Daniel (iv. 13). (2) A great sheet descending out of it, let down by the four corners upon the earth—*i.e.*, either the sheet, which in form resembled a vessel or receptacle, was fastened to the four corners east, west, south, and north of heaven (Meyer), or the ends of the sheet were fastened to and upheld by ropes let down from heaven (see "Critical Remarks"). (3) The cavity in the sheet filled with "all manner of four-footed beasts and creeping things of the earth and fowls of the heaven." (4) The sheet swaying and moving towards Peter. The words "unto him," though omitted by the best MSS. (see "Critical Remarks"), probably express what Peter beheld (compare xi. 5). (5) The drawing up of the sheet into heaven after a threefold repetition of the scene. (6) Whether Peter saw any personal form or figure is not stated, but seems almost implied in what follows. 3. *The sounds.* (1) Rise, Peter. The apostle may at this moment have been kneeling in prayer, or most likely prostrate in awe and wonder before the vision (compare Rev. i. 17). The mysterious voice, recognised by Peter as that of a heavenly being (compare ver. 4), addressed him by name. Compare the cases of Moses (Exod. iii. 4); Samuel (1 Sam. iii. 10); Saul (ix. 4); and Cornelius (x. 3). (2) Kill and eat. Any of the creatures, without regard to the distinction of clean or unclean, was what the voice intended. That Peter understood this his answer showed: "Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common (unholy) and unclean," or, according to Peter's own version, "Nothing common or unclean hath ever entered into my mouth" (xi. 8). Peter's scrupulous conscientiousness as a Jew caused the commandment to come upon him with a shock of surprise. In the times of the Maccabees (Macc. vi. 18, vii. 1) the Jews suffered death rather than submit to the seeming indignity here proposed. Peter's refusal accorded with his well-known character for impulsiveness (compare John xiii. 8). 3. "What God hath cleansed call, or make, not thou common." Like the former voice this came from heaven, and implied that all meats were originally alike clean, that the distinction of clean and unclean had been of God's making, that henceforth God had abolished all such distinctions, and that the perpetuation or institution of such distinctions was an express

violation of the Divine ordinance. Compare Christ's teaching on defilement (Mark vii. 14-23).

III. **The teachings.**—These were all such as concerned the Church, and in particular—1. *Its universal character.* It was henceforth to embrace all nationalities, not Jews only, but also Gentiles. Ceremonial distinctions were no more to operate as dividing lines between the peoples of the earth. The Church's gates were to stand open continually for the admission of all comers. All souls were in future to be equally precious in God's sight (Rom. i. 14-16, iii. 22, 29, 30; Gal. iii. 28; Eph. ii. 14-22). 2. *Its absolute permanence.* Not even an apostle—and far less a Church council, and least of all a private member—should be at liberty to change its constitution, restrict its freedom, or impose conditions which would deny entrance therein to a heathen. "What God hath cleansed make not thou common." "Three times had the Lord formerly commanded Peter to feed His sheep and lambs: three times He here admonishes Peter to make the door into the sheepfold no narrower than God will have it" (Besser). The Church of Christ in all ages has suffered from the illegal intrusion of man's power into her sacred domain. 3. *Its sole sovereign.* God or His Son Jesus Christ, to whom alone pertains the right of making laws for His kingdom—of admitting to or excluding from the fellowship of His Church (Eph. i. 22).

Lessons.—1. The reality of a supersensible world. 2. The possibility of revelation. 3. The world-wide destiny of the Church. 4. The dignity of human nature. 5. The headship of Christ within and over His own Church.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 11. *Heaven opened.*

I. **Heaven may open to any man.**—To a Jacob (Gen. xxviii. 12), an Ezekiel (i. 1), a Stephen (vii. 56), a Paul (ix. 3), as well as to a Peter—and in any place, on a hillside, a river bank, a council chamber, a public highway, or a housetop.

II. **Heaven mostly opens to them who have prepared themselves for it**—By prayer, meditation, or other suitable exercise. God is mostly found of them who seek Him.

III. **Heaven seldom opens without imparting new revelations**—Either of truth or duty. God has promised to instruct and guide those who wait upon Him in humility and faith.

IV. **Heaven never opens to the spiritually blind.**—"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." The eye must be opened before it can discern visions. "He that is of the truth heareth Him who is the truth."

Ver. 15. *No Difference.*

I. **The one broad level of humanity, in the sight of God, for blessing.**—There are various levels in other respects, various ranks and differences; national, personal, intellectual, educational; but here, in connection with spiritual blessing,—acceptance, favour, and the like, all these disappear.

II. **The rebuke here given to national pride.**—The Jew despised the Samaritan, and the Samaritan the Jew, both despising the Gentile. There was the pride of birth, the pride of descent, the pride of race. Here was God's rebuke to all such pride.

III. **The rebuke given to spiritual pride.**—This spiritual reward is twofold—the personal and the ecclesiastical.

IV. **The open door for all.**—There is no restriction now. God's free love goes out unconditionally—without restriction or qualification—to the lost.—*H. Bonar, D.D.*

Ver. 16. *The Number Three in the New Testament.*—That some special significance, most likely that of *solemn emphasis*, was designed by the threefold repetition of an event becomes apparent from a study of the instances in which this occurs.

I. **In the history of Christ.**—1. The *three temptations* in the wilderness (Matt. iv. 1-11). 2. The *three raisings* of the dead (Matt. ix. 25; Luke vii. 14-16; John xi. 43, 44). 3. The *three prayers* in Gethsemane (Matt. xxvi. 44).

II. **In the history of Peter.**—1. The *three denials* of Christ (Matt. xxvi. 69-75). 2. The *three questions* of the Saviour (John xxi. 15-17). 3. The *three voices* in the vision.

III. **In the history of Paul.**—1. The *three requests* about the thorn (2 Cor. xii. 8). 2. The *three scourgings* (2 Cor. xi. 25). 3. The *three shipwrecks* (2 Cor. xi. 25).

Vers. 9-16. *Peter's Vision on the Housetop; a Mirror for the Heathen Mission.* To show—

I. **Its heavenly origin.**—Appointed by God.

II. **Its immense field.**—The whole world, Jew and Gentile.

III. **Its severe work.**—To make all nations obedient to the faith.

IV. **Its doubts and difficulties.**—The first from within, in the prejudices, fears, and unbelief of Christ's people; the second in the hardness and hostility of the natural heart.

V. **Its Divine promise.**—Of continual assistance and ultimate success.—*Adapted from Gerok in Lange.*

Lessons from Peter's Vision.—In this vision we see the beginning of a great era—the first important breach in the iron partition wall that divided the human race into two hostile ranks. We have here the annexation of the whole Gentile world, without shedding a single drop of blood or wasting a single pennyweight of gunpowder. Peter saw the vision when engaged in prayer on the housetop of Simon the tanner, at Joppa. Prayer is a great revelation, and the stronger the prayer the grander the vision. He who would see the heavens opened must first open the heavens with the key of prayer. Ecstasies and visions are rewards of importunate prayer. Peter prayed from the housetop of a tanner; was there anything strange in that? Undoubtedly. Tanners were looked down upon as the pariahs, the outcasts of Jewish society. For Peter, the orthodox Hebrew, to lodge with a tanner, an outlaw, was the first step out of his miserable narrowness; and we are not surprised to find the tanner's lodger entering the Gentile centurion's house a little later. How striking these coincidences of history! There is as much Divine design in the movements of the centuries as in the formation of the rocks or the clustering of the stars. Cornelius prayed in Cæsarea, and Peter prayed in Joppa. How exquisite these dovetails, these morticings of history, and how marvellously well timed the correspondence! Surely the world is not governed by a fortuitous concourse of blind atoms, but by intelligence and unity of design. The first lesson of this vision of the great sheet is:—

I. **The Divine origin of the Christian gospel.**—Peter "saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth." The gospel did not spring up from the ground; it came down from the upper skies, and it bears innumerable evidences of its Divine origin. If God be not its parent, who is? The angels could not have invented it, for in inventing a false system and labelling it with the Divine name they would have become demons instantly. Demons could not have invented this system, whose main purpose is to destroy the works of the devil. The science of comparative religion proves that Christianity is as much loftier than all other systems as the heavens are loftier than the earth. A religion well adapted for the whole race must have the following elements: 1. An adequate revelation of God. 2. A provision of mercy for the guilty which satisfies the conscience. 3. Power given to lead a new life of virtue and holiness. 4. An ideal pattern of life which men may imitate. 5. A refuge for

man in sorrow and bereavement. 6. Such a revelation of the future life as shall help man to prepare for his duties and destinies. All these important elements are in the Christian gospel, and are not in any other system under heaven. Does not this one fact establish its unquestionable pre-eminence?

II. **The Divine origin of the human race.**—The sheet, with its miscellaneous contents, came down from the heavens, and this suggests the Divine origin of all men. The contents of the sheet, as well as the sheet itself, came down from above. The gospel that gave the world a new conception of God has also given it a better conception of man. It teaches us to say "Our Father," that we may the better be able to say "My brother." In this respect for man as man the gospel stands alone among the great religious systems of the world. Look at man through the eyes of Jesus, and if the man be only a London dock labourer or a Dorset farm labourer, you will be able to see something of the Divine in him. Positivism boasts of its love for the race, and talks of "the parliament of man, the federation of the world." Where has Positivism found its fundamental doctrines? I charge it with being a plagiarist. The doctrines of the brotherhood of man and the oneness of the race are stolen from Christ.

III. **The universality of the gospel.**—Man is the heaven-sent ambassador to man. Cornelius sent for Peter. Why not send an angel to preach to him? The angel would have been the very first to object. Indeed, it was the angel who suggested Peter's name. Methinks the angels know a great deal about us. The angels seek for a man to preach to men. A preacher is never so effective as when he speaks to us in the first person. Cornelius must have a man named Peter to preach the sermon. Why not send troops of angels into the heart of Africa, or to the isles of Polynesia to evangelise those blacks? Thank God He has dignified man by making of him a minister to men. He sent a Divine Man to reveal the gospel, and he commissions man to preach it. When Cornelius fell down at Peter's feet and worshipped him, the apostle instantly cried out, "Stand up; I myself also am a man." Man must neither be worshipped on the one hand nor maligned on the other.—*J. Ossian Davies.*

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 17—23.

Cornelius's Messengers at Joppa; or, the Gentile knocking for Admission.

I. **The arrival of the messengers at Joppa.**—1. *The time of their arrival.* "While Peter doubted in himself what the vision he had seen should mean." A reminder that inspired men often saw and heard, thought and spoke, more than they could immediately understand. As Joppa was thirty Roman, or twenty-seven and a half English miles, from Cæsarea, Cornelius's servants would not require to leave their master's house till the morning after the vision (ver. 9) in order to reach Simon's dwelling about, or shortly after, noon; although it is quite probable that they started the night before the day of their arrival. 2. *Their conduct on arrival.* Like good servants, they carried out their master's instructions with exactness. Having inquired for Simon's house and been directed thither, they stood before the gate, which opened directly into the house or court, where, having called on some one to come out, they respectfully asked if Simon, surnamed Peter, lodged within. How many blunders might be avoided were all messengers equally faithful and minute!

II. **The direction of Peter by the Spirit.**—1. *The announcement.* "Behold (three), men seek thee!" The numeral, omitted by the best codices, was probably inserted from ver. 7 or xi. 11. If, however, it formed part of the communication inwardly whispered to Peter, it sufficiently proved that communi-

cation to be supernatural. The notion that Peter came to know about the presence of the men by hearing their footsteps and voices in the court below (Neander) is contemptuously rejected by critics of the Baur and Zeller school. 2. *The commandment.* "Arise and get thee down, and go with them nothing doubting"—*i.e.*, making no scruples on the ground that they are heathen. This again confirms the supernatural character of the prompting of which Peter was conscious, since, though from the housetop, he might have heard the men calling for him, it is little likely he could either have known them to be three, or guessed what they wanted. 3. *The incitement.* "For I have sent them." Peter having recognised the voice that spake within him to be Christ's or the Spirit's, and having learnt that Christ had sent the messengers, immediately proceeded to grant them an interview.

III. **The conversation of Peter with the messengers.**—1. *Peter's introduction of himself and inquiry at the messengers.* "Behold, I am he whom ye seek" (compare John xviii. 4-8)—an example of frank courtesy; "What is the cause wherefore ye are come?"—a pattern of direct speech (Matt. v. 37). 2. *The reply of the messengers concerning their master.* Announcing (1) his name—Cornelius; (2) his rank—a centurion; (3) his character—a righteous man, a person of rectitude (δίκαιος), one that feareth God (φοβούμενος τόν θεόν), and of good report, or well reported of by all the nation of the Jews (compare on vers. 1, 2), like Ananias (xxii. 12) and Demetrius (3 John 12). That man must be good who is well reported of by his own domestics or servants. (4) His vision—"warned *of God*," or divinely instructed (compare Matt. ii. 12), "by a holy angel"—*i.e.*, through his agency (Peter was instructed by the Spirit), "to send for thee into his house, and to hear words from thee." With this the last vestige of doubt disappeared from Peter's mind. "He called them in and lodged them," as Laban did the messengers of Abraham (Gen. xxiv. 31).

IV. **The journey of Peter to Cæsarea.**—1. *After providing the messengers with hospitable entertainment.* "He called them in and lodged them" over night. Hospitality to strangers a duty practised in Old Testament times (Gen. xviii. 3, xix. 1, xxiv. 31; Exod. ii. 20), and enjoined upon Christians (Rom. xii. 13; 1 Tim. iii. 2, v. 10; Heb. xiii. 2). 2. *With cheerful alacrity.* "On the morrow he arose and went with them," in obedience to God's command, and in accordance with their invitation. 3. *Accompanied by certain brethren from Joppa.* Six in number (xi. 12), they may have escorted the Apostle as his personal friends, or out of a natural desire to see the issue of so remarkable an occurrence.

Learn.—1. The duty of looking for and following the Spirit's guidance. 2. The beauty of Christian courtesy. 3. The excellence of household piety. 4. The value of fidelity in service.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 17. *The Embassy from Cæsarea to Joppa.*—A testimony to—

I. **The poverty of heathenism,** which has nothing that can satisfy the soul.

II. **The power of the gospel,** which can draw towards itself men of all ranks and characters.

III. **The love of God,** who will have all men to be saved.

Vers. 19, 20. *The Offices of the Spirit towards Christ's Servants.*

I. To **inform** their minds.—"Behold three men seek thee!"

II. To **direct** their steps.—"Arise and go with them!"

III. **To find them work.**—"I have sent them!"

Ver. 22. *Cornelius's Certificates of Character* were three.

I. **That of the angel,** which was practically that of God (ver. 4).—Compare the cases of Daniel (x. 11) and

Nathanael (John i. 47). Who would not wish to be possessed of such a testimonial to the genuineness of one's piety? The nearest approach to this is the witness of the Spirit through the word (Rom. viii. 16).

II. **That of his messengers,** who were members of his own household (ver. 7). He whose piety can stand the inspection of those whose eyes are constantly upon him is beyond all question a sincere disciple. Many who are supposed to be saints abroad are known to be the opposite at home.

III. **That of the nation of the Jews,** who might almost be considered his enemies. When a man's foes are compelled to acknowledge his goodness, he must have reached a high point of excellence. Compare the case of the centurion of Capernaum (Luke vii. 4) Even the testimony of one's neighbours is no small guarantee of substantial worth. Compare the cases of Timothy (xvi. 2) and of Demetrius (3 John 12).

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 24—33.

Peter's Arrival at Cæsarea; or, the Gentile Candidate's Examination.

I. **Peter's reception by Cornelius.**—1. *With eager expectancy.* Having entertained no doubt as to the success of his embassy—a remarkable instance of faith—Cornelius had collected his kinsmen and near friends to await the apostle's arrival. Yet so impatient did he feel to look upon the messenger of heaven that he hastened out to meet Peter at the door, as Laban did with Eliezer (Gen. xxiv. 31). 2. *With demonstrations of religious homage.* How much Cornelius designed to express by prostrating himself, Oriental fashion, at Peter's feet (compare 1 Sam. xxv. 24; 2 Kings iv. 37; Esther viii. 3; Mark v. 22; Matt. xxviii. 9) cannot be ascertained. Luke does not say that Cornelius worshipped Peter. Yet Peter obviously regarded this action as at least approaching such reverence as was due to God alone, and rejected it accordingly (ver. 26), as Paul afterwards refused similar worship from the Lystrans (xiv. 15), and as the angel put away from him that of John (Rev. xix. 10). Of course Peter may have attributed more to Cornelius's action than it was meant to convey, and some (Hackett, Stier) prefer to hold this rather than believe that Cornelius, a worshipper of Jehovah, should have been guilty of rendering Divine homage to a man. That he was still under the dominion of his old superstitious ideas about heroes who had been deified, and saw in Peter a superhuman being (Zöckler), is scarcely credible after the plain intimation by the angel that Peter was a man.

II. **Peter's explanation to Cornelius.**—Addressed to the assembled company, but intended principally for the centurion. 1. *The old principle*—that intercourse with Gentiles was regarded by the Jew as unlawful (ver. 28)—was of long standing and widely known. Though professedly grounded on Mosaic law, it had no such foundation in fact. The practice rested on traditional Pharisaism, according to which a Jew must have no relations with a foreigner, and must not enter his house (John xviii. 28). "He was not allowed to sit down at the table of a Gentile; the very sight of the Gentile world was repulsive to a Jew" (Stapfer, *Palestine in the Time of Christ*, p. 128). Compare Josephus (*contra Apion*, ii. 28). "Those foreigners who come to us without submitting to our laws Moses permitted not to have any intimate connections with us." Juvenal (*Satires*, xiv. 103) says of the Jews it was their custom, *non monstrare vias eadem nisi sacra colenti*, not to show the way except to those observing the same sacred rites; while Tacitus (*Hist.*, v. 8) affirms that they cherished against all a hostile hatred, and kept themselves apart in their feasts and couches: *adversus omnes hostile odium, separati epulis discreti cubilibus.* 2. *The new light*—that no man should be called common or unclean—was to a Jew a marvellous discovery,

which probably nothing but a Divine revelation would have enabled him to accept. Hence Peter distinctly traced his acquaintance with it to God's showing, though he did not at the time mention the way in which such showing had taken place. 3. *The explicit declaration* that he had come to Cæsarea immediately on being sent for, "without gainsaying," not because he had forgotten or resolved to ignore, or through his own charity or wisdom had overstepped the bounds of traditional exclusiveness, but solely in consequence of that new light which had been imparted to him—in other words, that his appearance before Cornelius was at once an expression of his faith in God and of his obedience to the heavenly vision (compare xxvi. 19). 4. *The direct question*—for what intent had he been sent for? Peter knew he had been sent for in accordance with instructions given by Jehovah to Cornelius (vers. 20, 22); but as yet Cornelius had offered no explanation of his mission.

III. **Peter's answer from Cornelius.**—In this Cornelius rehearsed the story of how he had been led to send for Peter, mentioning—1. *The time when his vision had appeared to him.* "Four days ago," about "this hour," which was probably about the ninth (ver. 3). The fasting had continued till noon, when during his subsequent devotions the vision burst upon his view, "as it were about the ninth hour." (See "Critical Remarks.") 2. *The condition of his body and mind when the vision came.* "Fasting" and "praying." Even should "fasting" be omitted from the text (see "Critical Remarks"), it was probably included in Cornelius's devotions. Fasting and prayer go well together, bodily abstinence being a suitable preparation for high spiritual exercises (compare ver. 9). Fasting was frequently conjoined with praying by the apostolic Church on occasions of special solemnity and high responsibility (xiii. 2, 3, xiv. 23). 3. *The form which appeared in his vision.* A man, standing before him in bright apparel. A description shown by its liveliness and minuteness to be that of an eyewitness. Compare with this Luke's account (ver. 3), which omits the "Behold!" and says nothing about the angel "standing before" Cornelius. 4. *The address which the man in bright apparel made to him.* (1) Calling him by name, Cornelius! the heavenly visitor; (2) assured him that his prayer had been heard and his alms remembered (see on ver. 4); and (3) directed him to send to Joppa for Simon Peter; at the same time (4) mentioning the house in which Peter lodged (see on vers. 5, 6). 5. *The action which he* (Cornelius) *had then taken.* He had sent for the apostle forthwith, as the business to be done was too important for delay (Eccles. ix. 10). 6. *The gratification with which he welcomed the apostle's arrival.* "Thou hast well done that thou art come" (compare 3 John 6). Peter's arrival gave an indirect guarantee that he should learn more about the mind of God with reference to his salvation (ver. 32, xi. 14). 7. *The readiness of himself and all present to hear what he* (Peter) *had to impart.* "Now then we are all here present," etc. (ver. 33.)

Learn.—That God's messengers—1. Should be prepared for by private and (where practicable) social prayer. 2. Should never intercept for themselves any of the glory that belongs to God. 3. May sometimes learn profitable teaching from those to whom they are sent. 4. Should always be respectfully heard by those to whom they are sent.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 25. *Mistaken Worship.*

I. **Is that which is offered.**—1. *To the wrong object.* The creature instead of the creator, the servant rather than the master, the messenger in place of the sender. 2. *With wrong feelings.* Of humility and reverence, which would have been proper and in place had they been directed to the right object, but, being directed to the wrong

object, were improper and out of place. 3. *In ignorance, though pardonable.* Cornelius having been as yet only imperfectly enlightened, may not have understood that religious homage belonged to God alone.

II. **Should be rejected.**—1. *Promptly.* Peter trifled not a moment with what he saw, but declined the proferred worship. Had he hesitated, or for an instant seemed to appropriate to himself what belonged to God, he would have heen guilty of *lèse-majesté* against the God of heaven whose creature, servant, and messenger he was. 2. *Kindly.* With no rebuke upon his lips he simply bids the prostrate worshipper arise, at the same time assisting him to regain an upright position. 3. *Reasonably.* Peter explained what was wrong in Cornelius's action and what was right in his own by adding, "I myself also am a man!"

Ver. 26. "*I myself also am a man.*"

I. **A man and therefore a creature.**—Hence not a proper object to receive religious homage, which belongs to God alone (Exod. xx. 3; Isa. xlii. 8; Rom. i. 25).

II. **A man and therefore a sinner.**—Hence as much needing forgiveness and salvation as the most benighted and degraded of Adam's race (Rom. iii. 22, x. 12).

III. **A man and therefore a brother.**—Hence such distinctions as divide me from my fellows, putting me above them or them above me in an essentially superior class, are against nature as well as grace (Prov. xxii. 2; Mal. ii. 10; Acts xvii. 26, 29).

IV. **A man and therefore a son of God.**—Having been made in God's image (Gen. i. 27; Acts xvii. 28). Hence in all I do I should remember my exalted origin (Col. i. 10), and do nothing to disgrace my rank.

V. **A man and therefore a possible heir of glory.**—Having been redeemed by Jesus Christ. Hence in all things I should comport myself as one with a high destiny (Eph. iv. 1).

Ver. 29. *A Minister and his Congregation.* (Suitable for entering on a charge.)

I. **No minister should undertake the care of a congregation without being called.**—1. *Invited by the people.* Peter came not before he had been sent for. It is against all Scripture that preachers should thrust themselves upon unwilling people. Under such conditions the most talented ministry can only prove a failure. 2. *Sent by God.* It is doubtful if Cornelius's invitation would have sufficed to carry Peter to Cæsarea had he not already been directed by the Spirit to accompany the messengers (ver. 20). So the true minister will always be careful not to run without being sent, will strive to ascertain whether the outward call of the people concurs with the inward prompting of the Spirit.

II. **To such a combined call every minister should respond.**—1. *Immediately.* As Peter did, without unnecessary delay, considering that the king's business requires haste, and that especially in matters of the soul delays are dangerous. The cry "Come over and help us" (xvi. 9) should always be regarded as urgent. 2. *Cheerfully.* Again like Peter, without offering any objections or expressing any reluctance, or putting any obstacles in the way. The minister who enters on his sacred calling with a grudge or without enthusiasm cannot possibly succeed, and had better change his mind or abandon his calling.

III. **The true business of a minister is not to push his own but his people's interests.**—It goes without saying that these interests must be spiritual. Otherwise the congregation is not a Church of Christ. Hence, every minister should have it clearly understood that those are the interests at which he is to aim—the advancement, not of his hearers' intellectual culture, or of their social status, or of their material enrichment, or of their amusement, but of their spiritual and religious welfare.

IV. **When minister and congregation conjointly recognise and work for this the true ideal of a Christian pastorate is reached.**—But the two must be of one mind. A spiritually minded pastor and an unspiritual congregation, or *vice versâ*, cannot long remain together. One or other must attain superiority. If victory inclines to the spiritual element then prosperity of the highest kind ensues; if to the unspiritual, then decay of the worst sort follows.

Ver. 33. *A Fortunate Journey.* "Thou hast well done that thou art come." That Peter undertook that journey to Cæsarea was—

I. **Well for Peter.**—1. *It proved the reality of his own faith*, which would certainly have been open to suspicion had he not gone to Cæsarea as directed. 2. It *brought him into contact with a pious Gentile*, of the existence of which he might otherwise have remained in doubt. 3. It *helped him to understand the significance of the vision he had received*, which, though explained by the heavenly voice (ver 15), was not all at once apprehended by the Apostle (ver. 17), and was none the worse of the commentary furnished by his interview with Cornelius. 4. It *secured for him a special mark of honour* in being permitted to open the door to the Gentiles, which, but for this journey, he might have missed.

II. **Well for Cornelius.**—1. It *assured him of the truth of his own vision*, of which he might in course of time have become sceptical had Peter not appeared upon the scene. 2. It *afforded him an opportunity of hearing the gospel preached by an apostle*, though probably before this he had listened to it from the lips of Philip (viii. 40). 3. It *led to the salvation of himself and his house*, seeing that they all believed and were endowed with the Holy Ghost (ver. 47). 4. It *ended in their formal reception into the Church*, through their being baptised in the name of Jesus Christ (ver. 48).

III. **Well for the Church.**—Which was thereby—1. *Prevented from sinking back into a narrow-minded and exclusive Jewish sect*, whereas it was intended to be a large and liberal-hearted community, knowing no distinctions of age, sex, culture, or nationality, but embracing mankind in all ages and countries, ranks and conditions of society. 2. *Enabled to overcome a danger which threatened the realisation of this idea*, as was soon shown by the part played by the Cornelius incident in the apostolic council (xv. 7-11). Had Peter not been able to speak as he did in that assembly, the issue of the conference might have been different. 3. *Enlightened as to its true character as a world-embracing institution*, and so in a manner fitted for the more successful prosecution of its work.

IV. **Well for the world.**—Which 1. *Would hardly have been attracted*—at least in great numbers—*to Christianity*, had it been presented to them as a Jewish sect. And 2. *Would have missed the hopes and consolations which the gospel brings.* The world has much reason to thank God for Peter's journey to Cæsarea.

The Picture of a Model (Christian) Congregation.

I. **All present.**—None absent from the stated place of assembly.

II. **All reverent.**—Realising they stand in God's sight—which they do in a special manner when they enter God's house.

III. **All attentive.**—Ready to hear what may be said by the preacher, who, if a true minister, is God's servant and Christ's ambassador.

IV. **All obedient.**—Prepared submissively to accept whatever God might command through His servant.

V. **All believing.**—None professing obedience merely in word or form, but all obeying in reality, receiving the truth into honest hearts and minds.

VI. **All saved.**—All baptised with the Holy Ghost, all sealed with the Spirit.

Vers. 24-33. *Cornelius and Peter.* Cornelius appears here in various aspects.

I. **Waiting for Peter,** as God's ambassador.
II. **Reverencing Peter,** as God's representative.
III. **Talking to Peter,** explaining his desires.
IV. **Listening to Peter,** as **God's** mouthpiece.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 34—48.

Peter's Sermon in Cornelius's House; or, The Gospel preached to the Gentiles.

I. **The audience.**—Cornelius and those assembled with him (vers. 27, 33). 1. *Devout.* Cornelius was so, and so most likely were his kinsmen and his friends around him (ver. 2). 2. *Intelligent.* Already they possessed some acquaintance with the main facts of gospel history (ver. 37). 3. *Serious.* A solemn sense of the Divine presence rested on their spirits (ver. 33). 4. *Humble.* Prepared for the reception of the message, they were ready to accord it obedience. A good model for every congregation when it comes together to listen to the preaching of the Word. (See "Hints on ver. 33.")

II. **The preacher.**—Peter. Having already been honoured to preach the gospel to his kinsmen according to the flesh, homeborn and foreign Jews (ii. 14), he now enjoyed the privilege of publishing the truth in the hearing of a company of Gentiles. This he did—1. *With much solemnity,* as if realising the importance of the occasion—an idea conveyed in the words "Then Peter opened his mouth" (compare viii. 35). 2. *With peculiar tact.* Not reminding them of their heathen origin, or saying aught to impress them with a sense of their inferiority, but crediting them with deep religiousness and even Christian intelligence (compare Paul's treatment of the Athenians: xvii. 22). 3. *With great fulness,* setting forth in an address, of which, doubtless, only an outline has been preserved, the main facts and doctrines of gospel history and teaching (vers. 36-43). 4. *With spiritual power.* Which may be inferred from the fact that all who heard the Word believed and were baptised (ver. 44).

III. **The sermon.**—1. *Its exordium.* A statement which showed the preacher to be no narrow-minded bigot, but possessed of a mind open to receive "light from heaven" whensoever it was graciously vouchsafed; as well as tended to disarm the prejudice of his hearers and ingratiate himself with them. In this respect the fisherman apostle might be profitably followed by preachers of to-day. The truths contained in the statement were two: (1) That God was no respecter of persons. A truth known to holy men of God before Peter's day (2 Sam. xiv. 14; 2 Chron. xix. 7; Job xxxvii. 24), but not understood by Peter till revealed by God through the vision lately given (ver. 28), which reminds us that many truths which have been revealed are not yet fully understood. A truth afterwards insisted on by the apostle (1 Peter i. 17), and by Paul (Rom. ii. 11; Eph. vi. 9; Col. iii. 25), and signifying that God in dealing with men, whether in providence or in grace, in judgment or in mercy, takes no account of such accidents as nationality, birth, rank, wealth, power, or other temporal or material circumstance, but has regard solely to manhood and character. (2) That in every nation piety and goodness were equally acceptable in His sight. What Peter meant by piety and what by goodness he explained. The root of all piety he discovered in the fear of God (Psalm cxi. 10), and the essence of all goodness in working righteousness (1 John iii. 7). Wherever these existed, the individual possessing them, though not justified on their account (ver. 43; Rom. iii. 20), was acceptable in God's sight as one to whom belonged the qualification necessary for admission into the Church of Christ (see "Hints on ver. 35"). 2. *Its contents.* A brief summary of the facts and doctrines of the gospel, embracing—(1) The earthly ministry of Jesus, which began in its complete independence and unrestrained activity after John's ministry had closed; which had been divinely raised up and directed to

the children of Israel, of which the burden had been peace (Eph. ii. 17), and which, commencing in Galilee, had been published throughout all Judea; for which Jesus had been anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power (Luke iv. 18), and which had been exercised in going about and, through the power of God who was with Him, doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil (Matt. iv. 23; Luke iv. 36); the character of which had been witnessed by Peter and his colleagues in the apostleship, and the end of which had been a violent death and hanging on a tree (vers. 36-39). (2) The resurrection of Jesus, which was effected by the power of God on the third day after His crucifixion, and attested by His being openly shown or made manifest, not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God—viz., to the apostles and others of the brethren, "who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead" (vers. 40, 41). (3) The second coming of Jesus to judge the quick and dead (Rom. xiv. 9; 2 Cor. v. 10), to which office He had been ordained of God (xvii. 31; John v. 22), and about which He had Himself commanded them, the apostles, to testify unto the people, the Jews (ver. 42). That the summary of Christian truth here put into Peter's mouth was not a second century embellishment has received most remarkable confirmation, not only from Pliny's letter (A.D. 112), but also from the recently discovered apology of Aristides (A.D. 125), both of which show that Christian Churches so widely apart as Bithynia and Athens accepted the very tenets here set forth. 3. *Its application.* Contained in the statement that, according to the unanimous testimony of Old Testament prophecy, through His name whosoever believed should receive remission of sins (Isa. liii. 11; Zech. xiii. 1).

IV. **The Result.**—1. *All those who heard the word believed.* Though not stated, implied. Cornelius and his companions, without exception, received the word into honest and good hearts (Luke viii. 15). It is certainly a great sermon—great in the best sense—which converts all who hear it. 2. *The Holy Ghost fell on all them who believed.* Upon all Cornelius's household. The supernatural endowment, which descended on them while the apostle was yet speaking, revealed itself in the usual way, exactly as it had done at Pentecost, through speaking with tongues (ver. 46). 3. *Those who received the Holy Ghost were baptised.* Those believers of the circumcision who had come with Peter were profoundly astonished to hear Gentiles speaking with tongues; but they could not resist the apostle's argument when he asked, "Can any man forbid water?" etc.

Learn.—1. The heaven-sent preacher should always speak his Master's message with boldness. 2. The best sermon is that which has most of Christ in it. 3. The Holy Ghost knows no distinction between Jew and Gentile. 4. Those who have received the essence should not be denied the sign of salvation.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 34. *God no Respecter of Persons.*

I. **Expose some false constructions of the text.**—1. It is not true that God does not love one man more than another. He loves with a special affection all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Cain and Abel. 2. It is not true that God does not bestow on one man what He withholds from another. Natural gifts, social advantages, religious privileges, spiritual blessings. 3. It is not true that God does not admit one man to heaven while He excludes another. Some are cast out.

II. **Explain the real meaning of our text.**—1. God does not respect persons on the grounds on which men are treated with partiality by their fellow-men—wealth, birth, genius. His preferences are determined by other

considerations, although these cannot always be ascertained. 2. God does not respect persons as He Himself did under the former dispensation. The Jew has no monopoly of the blessings of the gospel. As Christ died for all men without distinction, so salvation through Him is to be offered to all, and shall be bestowed on all who believe in Him. (1) Rejoice in the impartiality of God. (2) Avail yourselves of the impartiality of God by embracing the common salvation. (3) Imitate the impartiality of God.—*G. Brooks.*

Vers. 34, 35. *God no Respecter of Persons.*

I. **What the proposition does not mean.**—1. That God is indifferent to diversities in human character. 2. That all religions are equally acceptable in God's sight. 3. That belief in Christ is not required for salvation. 4. That all men will eventually be saved.

II. **What the proposition does mean.**—1. That the essence of religion consists in fearing God and working righteousness. 2. That God is indifferent to external distinctions between man and man. 3. That all who possess the inward characteristics of religion are equally well pleasing in God's sight. 4. That all men who are thus religious belong to His Church, irrespective of nationality or other accidental circumstance.

On the Reception of New Truth.—Here is Peter, with the traditional spirit of an Oriental, violating the apparently natural order, and passing at once under a new set of ideas. What is the explanation?

I. **It seems to be in the Nature of religious changes that they shall take place suddenly.**—There may be, there must be, long seasons of preparation for any moral change, but the transition is instantaneous. It is the law of revelation.

II. **His change was due to the fact that he had got sight of larger and more spiritual truths than he had been holding.**—Peter had been used to believing that God was a respecter of persons, but when he caught sight of the fact that God has no partialities, but accepts all men who work righteousness, his truth-loving nature rushed at once toward the greater truth.—*Theodore Munger.*

Ver. 36. *The Lordship of Jesus Christ.*

I. Its **basis.**—His redeeming work.

II. Its **extent.**—All things and persons.

III. Its **purpose.**—Salvation or peace.

IV. Its **perpetuity.**—Till the time of the end.

V. Its **authority.**—Derived from the Father.

Preaching Peace; or, Publishing Good Tidings of Peace.

I. **The Messenger of peace.**—Jesus Christ.

II. **The basis of peace.**—His atoning work.

III. **The terms of peace.**—Faith.

IV. **The blessing of peace.**—Remission of sin.

V. **The fruit of peace.**—Holiness.

Peace to the Far Off and the Near.

I. **What it is.**—It means sometimes friendship or reconciliation; and sometimes the state of soul resulting from these. O man of earth, is this peace yours?

II. **What it is not.**—It is not mere indifference. The frozen lake is calm; but that is not the calm we desire. It is not the security of self-righteousness. That a hollow security. It is not the peace of prosperity, or pleasure, or earthly ease. There is the world's peace.

III. **Where it comes from.**—It does not come from self, or sin, or the flesh or the world. Nor does it come from the law, or our own goodness, or our prayers or religiousness. It comes directly and solely from Jesus Christ; from Himself, and from His cross;

from Him as Jesus, from Him as the Christ.

IV. **How we get it.**—Our text says it is "preached" to us; or more exactly, "the good news of it are brought to us." The pacifying, conscience-purging work is done; and God has sent us His account of it.

V. **What it does for us.**—1. It *purifies.* No peace, no purity. 2. It *liberates.* The possession of this peace is the liberty of the soul. Without peace we are in bondage and darkness. 3. It *satisfies*; it fills the soul; it takes away weariness and emptiness. 4. It *animates.* Till peace takes possession of us we are sluggish in the cause of God. Peace makes us zealous, brave, self-denied; willing to spend and be spent, to do and suffer.—*H. Bonar, D.D.*

Ver. 38. "*Who went about doing good.*"

I. **A significant testimony.**—Spoken by an eyewitness, authenticating the gospel records of the life of Christ.

II. **A deserved eulogy.**—History has preserved the names of individual princes, to whom she gives the title of benefactors: thus are held in memory a Ptolemæus Euërgetes, a Titus, "the joy and delight of all mankind"; but of what "benefactors" (Luke xxii. 25), must not the name and reputation dim and pale before that of the Sovereign of God's kingdom?

III. **A loud call.**—To unswerving faith in Christ as the promised Saviour, the crown and ornament of humanity, God's highest revelation.

IV. **A constant spur.**—To a love which yields itself without condition to such a loving Saviour, and henceforth knows no greater joy than, though at a distance infinite, to follow in his footsteps.—*Oosterzee.*

"*God was with Him.*"

I. **Providentially.**—As with all.

II. **Spiritually.**—As with those who fear Him.

III. **Efficiently.**—As with prophets and apostles working through Him.

IV. **Essentially.**—As with none else, being one with Him in substance and in power, holiness, goodness, and truth.

The History of Jesus of Nazareth.

I. **His Divine mission.**—Sent by God.

II. **His personal qualification.**—1. Anointed with the Holy Ghost. 2. Clothed with supernatural power. 3. Attended by the Divine presence.

III. **His philanthropic career.**—1. Its benevolent character. Doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil. 2. Its extensive circuit. He went about; not restricting Himself to one town or province. 3. Its unwearied continuance. He went about manifestly without cessation.

IV. **His tragic end.**—"Whom they slew and hanged on a tree." A violent, undeserved, substitutionary death.

V. **His triumphant resurrection.**—"Him God raised up." The proofs of His resurrection: eating and drinking with the apostles.

VI. **His sublime exaltation.**—"Ordained to be Judge of quick and dead."

VII. **His culminating glory.**—"Through His name whosever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins."

Ver. 39. *The Death of Christ.*—A study in apologetics.

I. **Its early occurrence.**—After a brief ministry of three (or two) and a half years. Out of a life so short, followed by a death so soon, what great results could be expected to flow? Yet no life or death has moved the world like that of Christ.

II. **Its shameful form.**—Slain and hanged upon a tree, like the vilest of malefactors. Out of an end so ignominious, what hope of posthumous fame could spring? Yet Christ's death has attracted more attention and been more widely and permanently remembered than any other that has occurred.

III. **Its undeserved character.**—For no crime or sin of His own, proved or unproved, but for a life spent in

holy fellowship with God, and in benevolent ministries among men. In this respect standing apart from that of any son of man who has ever died either before or since. Impossible that in such a death no greater significance could be than in that of ordinary mortals.

IV. **Its age-long remembrance.**—When Peter spoke of it to Cornelius it was little more than ten years old. The world had scarcely had time to forget it. But nineteen centuries have rolled away since then, and its memory is still green. In all countries men are thinking and speaking of the decease which was accomplished at Jerusalem. The question therefore rises, what was there about this death of Jesus of Nazareth that makes the world unable or unwilling to forget it?

V. **Its extraordinary influence.**—Christ Himself predicted that if He were lifted up from the earth He would draw all men unto Him (John xii. 32), and let it be accounted for as one will, the fact is true that the death of Christ has ever since it occurred been one of the most potent—conjoined with the resurrection, the most potent—factor in the onward development of human history.

VI. **Its amazing significance.**—In this alone lies the explanation that a death so early, so shameful, so undeserved, so long remembered, so profoundly influential, could have taken place, that it was the death: 1. Of an Incarnate God. 2. In the room of sinful men. 3. As an atonement for their sin. 4. As a means of effecting their sanctification; and 5. In order to secure for them eternal life. It is these considerations which give to Christ's death its unique position and power.

Ver. 41. *Eating and Drinking with the Risen Christ.*

I. **A proof of Christ's resurrection.**

II. **An evidence of believers' salvation.**

III. **A foretaste of the saints' glory.**

Vers. 36, 43. *The Threefold Office of Christ.*

I. **Prophetical.**—Preaching peace.

II. **Priestly.**—Remitting sin.

III. **Kingly.**—Ruling all.

Ver. 43. *His (i.e., Christ's) Name.*

I. **Divinely attested.**—"To Him give all the prophets witness."

II. **Widely published.**—"He commanded us to preach unto the people and to testify."

III. **Highly exalted.**—Raised up and established above every name.

IV. **Certainly saving.**—Procuring forgiveness for all who believe.

V. **Constantly enduring.**—Since the gospel was designed not for one age but for all the ages.

Ver. 43. *The Great Blessing of the Gospel.*

I. Its **nature.**—Remission of sins.

II. Its **channel.**—Through Jesus Christ.

III. Its **recipients.**—All who believe in Him.

IV. Its **condition.**—Faith in Him.

V. Its **certainty.**—Witnessed by the prophets.

Ver. 45. *The Gift of the Holy Ghost.*

I. Its **nature.**—The inhabitation of the soul by the Spirit of God.

II. Its **effect.**—In some, divers gifts; in all, holiness and eternal life.

III. Its **recipients.**—Those who believe and obey the word.

IV. Its **sign.**—Baptism.

Vers. 44-48. *The Conversion of Cornelius.*

I. **Prepared for by his religious condition.**—1. *His character before conversion.* (1) A devout man, who (2) feared God, (3) cared for the godly training of his house, (4) practised philanthropy, and (5) prayed to God always. 2. *His need notwithstanding of conversion.* This may seem to be contradicted by Peter's statement in ver. 34. Explain (1) what ver. 34 does not and (2) what it does mean (see "Hints").

II. **Brought about by a threefold**

instrumentality.—1. *By the providence of God.* Who had (1) brought Cornelius into contact with the Jewish people and their worship; (2) awakened in his heart dissatisfaction with the gods of Rome and eager longing for a purer religion; (3) led him to Cæsarea where he heard the gospel; and (4) sent Peter to Joppa, where he was easily found by Cornelius. 2. *By the ministry of angels.* In his own and Peter's visions. 3. *By the preaching of the word.*

III. **Sealed by the gift of the Holy Ghost.**—1. The *signs.* Tongues. 2. The *significance.* An earnest of the inheritance.

IV. **Attested by baptism.**—The ordinance of Christ to be observed by believers.

Vers. 47, 48. *The Administration of Christian Baptism.*

I. **Hindrances to its reception.**—1. *The absence of faith.* The individual who is not prepared to profess faith in Jesus Christ has no claim whatever to be admitted to baptism. 2. *The presence of open sin.* Though a professed believer, the individual who lives in scandalous sin is in an unfit state for partaking of this holy ordinance. 3. *The want of adequate knowledge.* The person who has not yet attained to a clear understanding of the nature and significance of baptism is not a proper subject for its reception.

II. **Qualifications for its reception.**—1. *The qualification in God's sight.* Endowment with the Holy Ghost. Baptism ideally considered is not a means of imparting the Holy Ghost, but a sign and seal of the Holy Ghost's presence. 2. *The qualification in man's sight.* An outward profession of faith, attested by visible saintship or a corresponding walk and conversation, accompanied, as above stated, with adequate knowledge.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CHURCH AT JERUSALEM AND GENTILE CONVERTS—THE LIBERTY OF GRACE.

§ 1. Peter's Report to the Church at Jerusalem; or, the Admission of the Gentiles vindicated (vers. 1-18).

§ 2. The Origin of the Church at Antioch; or, the Preparation of a Centre for the Gentile Mission (vers. 19-30).

CRITICAL REMARKS.

Ver. 1. **The apostles.**—Peter and John (viii. 14), with James (xii. 2), and possibly the rest of the Twelve. **The brethren.**—The body of disciples.

Ver. 2. **They that were of the circumcision.**—In the first instance all the Judæan disciples who were Jews, afterwards a party in the Church who contended for circumcision as a term of Christian communion (Phil. iii. 3; Col. iv. 11; Titus i. 10).

Ver. 3. **Didst eat with them.**—See on x. 28.

Ver. 4. **Rehearsed** the matter **from the beginning and expounded** it **by order.**—Better, *having begun, expounded* the matter *unto them in order.*

Vers. 5-10.—Peter's account differs from Luke's in only minor details. (See "Homiletical Analysis.")

Ver. 11.—Mentions that Cornelius's ambassadors were **three** in number (x. 19), and ver. 12 that Peter's companions were six (x. 33).

Ver. 13.—Represents Cornelius as calling his mysterious visitor **an angel,** whereas Luke's

account makes the centurion speak of him as a man (x. 30). The word **men**, an insertion from x. 5, should be omitted.

Ver. 14.—Adds an item of the angel's message not before mentioned.

Ver. 15.—The clausule **as I began to speak** contradicts not that in Luke's account "while Peter yet spake" (x. 44), but draws attention to the shortness of the interval which passed before the Holy Ghost descended. **In the beginning** = on the day of Pentecost, about ten years before: see on ver. 26.

Ver. 17. Whether the antecedent to **who believed** πιστεύσασιν is **us** (A. and R.V., Bengel, Meyer), or **them and us** (Alford, Hackett), or **them** only (Plumptre), cannot be decided; but in each case the sense is the same.

Ver. 18. **Glorified God.**—Correct if the reading is ἐδόξασαν (Westcott and Hort, R.V.); if ἐδόξαζον be preferred (A.V., Alford, Hackett), then the rendering should be *kept glorifying God*, a continuous act.

Ver. 19. **Upon the persecution.**—Or, *tribulation*, ἀπὸ τῆς θλίψεως: better, *from* (as an effect of) *the persecution*, **that arose about Stephen**, ἐπὶ Στεφάνῳ—*i.e.*, *on account of*, rather than in the time of Stephen, which would have required ἐπὶ Στεφάνου. **Phenice.**—"The region of palms," a narrow strip of territory about two hundred miles in length, with a varying breadth, never more than thirty-five miles, looking out upon the Mediterranean, having Syria upon the north, the country of the Philistines upon the south, and the range of Lebanon in its rear on the East. Its chief cities were Tyre and Sidon. **Cyprus.**—See on iv. 3-6. **Antioch.**—The capital of the Seleucidæ, situated on the Orontes, sixteen miles from the sea and forty-one from the river's mouth. "The queen of the East, the third metropolis of the world, the residence of the imperial legate of Syria, this vast city of perhaps 500,000 souls . . . was no mere Oriental town with low, flat roofs, and dingy, narrow streets, but a Greek capital, enriched and enlarged by Roman munificence, . . . situated at the point of junction between the chains of Lebanon and Taurus, and containing an immense colony of Jews" (Farrar, *The Life and Work of St. Paul*, p. 288). "In this splendid world-city, where all nationalities of the East and West flowed together, and every stranger instantly was received into citizenship, washed itself out more than anywhere else the strong exclusiveness of the Jewish character. If the synagogues as a whole adhered closely to the law, yet were there many Jews who held friendly intercourse with the heathen, and were even susceptible towards the preaching of Christianity" (Langhans's *Biblische Geschichte und Literatur*, ii. 726).

Ver. 20. **Cyrene.**—See on ii. 10. **Grecians.**—*I.e.*, Greek-speaking Jews; *Greeks* (R.V.). 1. The testimony of the best documents countenances the text, *Grecians*. 2. Internal harmony appears to favour *Greeks*. 3. Some of the oldest versions and a few MSS. support *Greeks*. 4. The majority of critics decide for *Greeks* (Griesbach, Lachmann, Tischendorf, De Wette, Holtzmann, Zöckler, Meyer, Alford). 5. On the other hand, scholars of ability incline to Grecians (Westcott and Hort, Wordsworth, Alexander, Spence). 6. The Sinaitic MSS. affords no certain light, since it reads εὐαγγελιστάς, which is clearly wrong, although it points in the direction of Ἑλληνιστάς, Grecians.

Ver. 22. **Barnabas.**—See on iv. 36.

Ver. 25. **On Tarsus.**—See ix. 30. **To seek Saul.**—They had met last in Jerusalem (ix. 27), where Saul had preached till compelled to flee for his life (ix. 30). How long an interval had passed cannot be exactly computed; but as Paul's second visit to Jerusalem occurred a year after he had come to Antioch (ver. 26)—*i.e.*, in A.D. 44—several (perhaps five; Ramsay thinks ten) years may have elapsed since they had beheld each other in the flesh. During these years the incidents connected with the evangelistic wanderings of Peter (ix. 31-43), the conversion of Cornelius (x., xi. 1-18), and the founding of the Church at Antioch (xi. 19-26), as well as in Syria and Cilicia (xv. 23), may have taken place.

Ver. 26. **Christians.**—Χριστιανοί, the name given to the disciples first in Antioch about ten years after the Ascension. Hardly by the disciples themselves, for whom such titles as "the brethren," "the saints," were enough, or by the Jews, who would scarcely have admitted what the name seemed to imply that Jesus of Nazareth had been the Messiah; but most likely by the pagans, though whether by the Romans (compare Tacitus, *Ann.*, xv. 44), or by the Greeks (Lepsius, Holtzmann), or by the Syrians cannot be ascertained. It may have been given by the populace or by the civic authorities (Renan), and intended as a nickname (Zöckler), since Antioch was fond of nicknames, or simply as a title of distinction, "derived from the watchword of their faith" (Weizsäcker). "In any case the name belongs to popular slang" (Ramsay).

Ver. 27. **Prophets.**—Men endowed with the gift of prophecy (Rom. xii. 6; 1 Cor. xii. 10), who occupied a sort of teaching office in the Church, and were often associated with the regular teaching order (xiii. 1; 1 Cor. xii. 28; Eph. iv. 11).

Ver. 28. **Claudius Cæsar.**—Succeeded Caligula from A.D. 41-54. Schürer (*Jud. Volk.*, i. 474) regards Luke's statement about the famine as unhistorical; but Claudius's reign throughout was remarkable for the frequent famines which occurred in it (Suetonius, *Claudius*, 18;

Tacitus, *Ann.*, xii. 43). One of these Josephus (*Ant.*, XX. v. 2) mentions as specially affecting Judæa and Syria under the procuratorship of Cuspius Fadus, A.D. 45. This date important for arranging the chronology of the Acts. Ramsay dates the famine in A.D. 46.

Ver. 29. **Relief.**—Lit. *for ministry* or service, in anticipation of the impending famine.

Ver. 30. **Elders.**—The first mention of these office bearers in the New Testament. That these office bearers afterwards existed in Jerusalem is subsequently stated (xiv. 23, xv. 2, 4, 6, xxi. 18). That they existed already may be inferred (xv. 2, 4, 6). That Paul's Epistles do not mention elders in Jerusalem (Weizsäcker) is no argument against the truthfulness of the narrative. The complete identity of elders and bishops in the apostolic time follows from such texts as xx. 17; Phil. i. 1; Titus i. 5, 7; 1 Peter v. 1.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 1—18.

Peter's Report to the Church at Jerusalem; or, the Admission of the Gentiles vindicated.

I. **The serious indictment preferred against Peter.**—1. *The occasion.* (1) The tidings that had reached the apostles and brethren in Judæa that the Gentiles also had received the word of God (ver. 1). So remarkable a phenomenon was not likely to remain unknown to the Church leaders in Jerusalem. Nor is it readily conceivable that tidings so glorious should have given rise to dissatisfaction in any right-thinking bosom. Yet such actually appears to have been the case. (2) The return of Peter to the metropolis, which was dictated not by any peremptory summons issued to him by his colleagues to defend before them the action he had taken—an assertion destitute of even the slightest evidence—but by a natural desire to explain what had taken place and his relation thereto (ver. 2). 2. *The movers.* "They that were of the circumcision"—*i.e.*, the Jewish Christians as distinguished from the Gentile (see x. 45)—the party in general and not an inner circle of them more zealous for the rite than their fellows (Lechler). Such a party afterwards arose (Col. iv. 11; Titus i. 10); here its first indications are observed. At this stage the whole Jerusalem Church, being composed of Jews, felt disposed to emphasise the importance and obligation of circumcision. 3. *The gravamen.* Not that the apostle had preached the gospel to the Gentiles—which, in face of Christ's command, could hardly have been pronounced a fault (Matt. xxvii. 19)—or that he had baptised them, and so received them into the Christian Church, but that he had done so without subjecting them to circumcision. As yet the apostles and brethren do not so express their thoughts, but merely charge Peter with having violated (traditional) Mosaism by entering into friendly intercourse, and holding house and table fellowship with the Gentiles (ver. 3).

II. **The triumphant vindication offered by Peter.**—1. *The frankness with which it was given.* Not standing upon his dignity as chief among the apostles (*primus inter pares*), or resenting their interference with what was so unmistakably a work of God, but recognising their right to have their difficulties stated and, if possible, removed, doubtless also appreciating their perplexity concerning what conflicted so strangely with their traditional beliefs, Peter began and expounded the matter in order to them. A Christian of the right spirit—whether a public official or a private member in the Church—will not fail to exhibit the like anxiety, by means of a frank explanation, to remove any offence or stumbling block which his personal behaviour may have placed in the way of his weaker brethren (Rom. xiv., xv). 2. *The fulness with which it was given.* The main particulars of the story were related. (1) The vision he had himself beheld in Joppa (5-10), his own account differing from Luke's only in minor details, such as the omission of all mention of the time when the vision occurred and of the hunger which preceded it, saying nothing about seeing heaven opened, and adding that the sheet appeared to come even unto him, and that it contained "wild beasts" (ver. 6) as well as other animals. (2) The arrival of

Cornelius's messengers, though he did not at all mention the centurion's name, or at that stage in his tale allude to the vision which had prompted the centurion to despatch his embassy (ver. 11). (3) The inward whispering of the Spirit which had directed him to accompany the strange men from Cæsarea (ver. 12), which prompting he obeyed, taking with him six brethren who were then present, having apparently come up to Jerusalem along with him, and to whom he may be pictured as having pointed—"these six brethren also accompanied me." (4) The account Cornelius gave of the angel's appearance in his house with instructions to send men to Joppa for him, Simon, whose surname was Peter, who, the angel said, should tell him words whereby he and all his house should be saved (vers. 13, 14). (5) The descent of the Holy Ghost upon Cornelius and his household almost immediately after he had commenced to speak (the interval between his beginning to preach and the Spirit's coming down seemed so short), and in exactly the same fashion as it had done upon Jewish believers at Pentecost—*i.e.*, with the same manifestations in the form of tongues (ver. 15). (6) The impression the phenomenon had made upon himself. It caused him to remember the word of the Lord (see i. 5) about the difference between John's baptism with water and the Lord's baptism with the Holy Ghost (ver. 16). (7) The process of reasoning he then followed—which was that, if God had bestowed on them, the Gentiles, the same gift of the Holy Ghost as He had conferred on Jewish believers, it was manifest God had received them, the Gentiles, into His Church; and that being the case who was he, Peter, that he should withstand God and keep them out by withholding from them the rite of baptism, which was the sign of their being let in (ver. 17)? 3. *The success with which it was given.* (1) The apostles and brethren held their peace. They could say nothing against it. It was as clearly the doing of God as the healing of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple had been (iv. 14). (2) They glorified God, saying, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." What a pity they did not ever after remain in this mind!

Learn.—1. That misunderstandings will arise among Christian brethren. 2. That all Christian believers are not equally enlightened, or equally free from prejudice, narrow-mindedness and bigotry. 3. That the best way to remove misunderstandings and overcome prejudices among Christians is to come together in friendly conference. 4. That the same story is seldom twice told in the same way and without variation in details. 5. That whom God admits into the Church none have a right to exclude.

Note A.—*The historical credibility of Cornelius's conversion* has been objected to principally on the following grounds: 1. That it had no practical effect on the settlement of the Gentile question. 2. That Paul did not cite it as an argument in the Jerusalem council. 3. That in spite of the silence and glorification of God which followed Peter's explanation (xi. 18) the Jerusalem Christians were not long in reasserting their old demand for the circumcision of non-Jewish believers (xv. 5). 4. That the council felt itself wholly undecided as to the position it ought to maintain on this question of the terms of communion for Gentile members. 5. That Peter's subsequent behaviour at Antioch showed he had never really known of such a conversion as is here reported. (See Baur's *Life and Work of Paul*, i. 81-92; Zeller, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, pp. 183-190; Holtzmann, *Hand Commentar zum Neuen Testament*, Erster Band, p. 366). But—1. Cornelius's conversion was distinctly referred to by Peter, if not by Paul, in his speech at the apostolic council (xv. 7), so that it cannot be truthfully affirmed. Cornelius's conversion was wholly without effect in determining the Gentile question. 2. If Paul did not cite that conversion when addressing the council, he may have deemed it unnecessary to do so after Peter's reference to the same event. Along with this it should be noted that as Paul's address

has not been reported, one cannot be certain that he made no allusion to Peter's action in receiving Cornelius. 3. If circumcision for the Gentiles was again mooted in Jerusalem, that was not surprising considering it was the Pharisees who mooted it (xv. 5). 4. The allegation that the council did not know how to act upon the question is incorrect, since they answered the question to Paul's satisfaction. 5. The wavering of Peter at Antioch (Gal. ii. 12) only showed that he, like many another good man before and since, was inconsistent—not that he had not baptised Cornelius. Lesser difficulties—such as the number of visions connected with the story, the uselessness of sending Cornelius to Peter to hear about the gospel, when he could have learnt all he wanted to know from Philip, and the obvious inaccuracy of the statement (x. 28), since how otherwise could a Gentile be transformed into a Jewish proselyte—scarcely require an answer. The notion that the Cornelius history is a free composition intended to legitimate Paul's Gentile mission by showing that Peter had opened the door to the heathen before him contains this element of truth, that Peter's action in baptising Cornelius without circumcision because the Holy Ghost had, on the same terms, granted the gift of tongues, proved that Paul's procedure in the Gentile Churches was not unauthorised and self-invented, but had the highest possible sanction, that of the Holy Ghost and of Peter. The remainder of the Tübingen theory is an exploded delusion.

Note B.—*The Theology of Peter*, as set forth in the various addresses given by him in the Acts:—

1. In the Upper Room (i. 15-22); 2. On the Day of Pentecost (ii. 14-36); 3. In Solomon's Porch (iii. 12-26); 4. Before the Sanhedrim (iv. 8-12); 5. In the Christian Meeting (v. 3, 4, 8, 9); 6. Before the Sanhedrim (v. 29-32); 7. In Samaria (viii. 20-23); 8. At Lydda (ix. 34); 9. At Joppa (ix. 40); 10. At Cæsarea (x. 24-43).

I. **Peter's doctrine of God.**—1. *The personality of God* is everywhere assumed (i. 24, ii. 29, iii. 13, etc.). His wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. 2. *The sovereignty of God*, both in providence (ii. 23) and in grace (iii. 26), is fearlessly asserted. 3. *The unity of the Godhead* is everywhere clearly taught, as, for instance, when the term God is used absolutely (iii. 18, iv. 10, v. 4, x. 34, etc.). 4. *The trinity of persons in the Godhead*, if not distinctly expressed, is fairly implied in such passages as teach the divinity of Christ and of the Holy Ghost.

II. **Peter's doctrine of Christ.**—1. *His person.* (1) That Jesus of Nazareth was an actual historical personage, a true man, a genuine partaker of flesh and blood humanity, and not a mere semblance thereof, as the later Docetæ taught, Peter presupposes throughout—taking for granted all the details of His earthly history as these have been recorded in the gospel records, if not mentioning His Incarnation implying it when affirming His divinity (see below), alluding to His baptism (x. 38), His philanthropic ministry (x. 38), His sinless character calling Him God's holy and righteous One (iii. 14), affirming His crucifixion (ii. 23, x. 39), His resurrection (ii. 23, 31, iii. 15, v. 40, 41), and His ascension (ii. 33, iii. 21, v. 31), and predicting His future coming as the Judge of quick and dead (x. 42). (2) That Peter regarded Jesus of Nazareth as a pre-existent Divine being, who had been sent and who had come into the world, may be reasonably inferred from such statements as these—"He is Lord of all" (x. 36), "David saith concerning Him, I beheld the Lord always before my face" (ii. 25), and "The Lord saith unto my Lord" (ii. 34), since, even if they refer to the exalted Christ, it cannot be supposed that Christ could have been made a Divine being by the process of resurrection and exaltation if He had not been so before. (3) That Peter considered this exalted Divine human personality as the Messiah of Israel (ii. 36) and the Saviour of the world (iii. 25), is expressly stated. 2. *His*

work. That Peter regarded Christ as Jehovah's servant (iii. 13, 26, iv. 27, 30) who had been commissioned to perform upon the earth a work through which men might receive remission of sins (iii. 19, x. 43), is hardly less apparent than that Peter connected that work with His death upon the cross (ii. 32, 38, iii. 26, iv. 10-12, ix. 43).

III. **Peter's doctrine of the Spirit.**—1. The personality (v. 3), and 2. The divinity (v. 4), are unambiguously asserted.

IV. **Peter's doctrine of Providence.**—Includes the following points: 1. The sovereignty of God in foreordaining whatsoever comes to pass (iv. 28). 2. The freedom of man in accomplishing his own will while all the time he executes the purpose of God (ii. 23, iv. 27). 3. The present and immediate knowledge of all that man thinks and does upon the earth (i. 24, iv. 29). 4. The possibility of interposing, either naturally or supernaturally, in the course of mundane history (iv. 29).

V. **Peter's doctrine of sin.**—On this momentous subject the Apostle taught: 1. That sin in its essence was disobedience to God (iv. 19, v. 29). 2. That thoughts of the heart as well as overt actions or words were included in the category of sin (v. 3, viii. 27). 3. That sin until it was forgiven held men's souls in spiritual bondage (viii. 23). 4. That the sins of men might work out the purposes of God (ii. 23). 5. That sins of the most heinous character were pardonable through Christ's blood (ii. 38, iii. 19, viii. 22, x. 43).

VI. **Peter's doctrine of salvation.**—Contained these tenets: 1. That all men needed salvation, Jew and Gentile alike (ii. 39). 2. That this salvation was attainable only through Jesus Christ (iii. 12). 3. That the only condition of salvation was faith in Christ's name (x. 43).

VII. **Peter's doctrine of the last things.**—This included—1. A second advent of Jesus Christ to be preceded by times of refreshing, and ushering in the times of the restoration of all things (iii. 21). 2. A future resurrection for all men (iv. 2). 3. A solemn assize for quick and dead (x. 42).

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 2. *Ecclesiastical Controversy.*

I. **Frequently arises concerning points of small moment.**—About non-essentials rather than about essentials, about external forms and ceremonies rather than about internal thoughts and dispositions, about the tithing of mint, anise, and cummin, rather than about the weightier matters of the law, judgment, and mercy, and faith (Matt. xxiii. 23). Such was the case here. The contention which arose between the circumcision party and Peter was not about spiritual religion but only about bodily ritual, was not whether Cornelius had been converted, but whether he had been circumcised, was not whether Peter had received him into the Church without the exercise of faith, but whether Peter had dispensed with the corporeal mark of Mosaism. A small affair to make a noise about.

II. **Is seldom settled without strife and angry feeling.**—To the credit of the brethren and of Peter in this instance it was. Peter, by his frank and unvarnished recital of what he had done, and how he had been led to do it, cleared away the misconceptions and disarmed the suspicions of his brethren; they, on the other hand, by their amiable tempers and ready disposition to have their difficulties removed, contributed to a speedy settlement of what might have developed into a prolonged and bitter agitation, A pattern which might be profitably studied by disputants of all sorts.

III. **Would be easily disposed of were both parties always anxious to find out and follow the mind of God.**—It was thus the threatened rupture in Jerusalem was averted. Peter did not oppose his own authority to that of his

brethren, or lecture them on their narrow-mindedness in seeking to impose their antiquated ceremonial on the Gentiles, or plume himself on his superior enlightenment in dispensing with the Mosaic rite, but simply assisted his brethren to see how God in His providence and by His grace had already decided the controversy. His brethren when they perceived this could no longer maintain their favourite views, but humbly and submissively accepted the verdict of heaven, feeling that when God interposed with a decision there was, and ought to be, an end of all controversy.

Ver. 4. *Expository Preaching.* Should be like Peter's discourse to his brethren.

I. **Regular and systematic.**—Going over the contents of revelation in order, so as to present Divine truth in its inherent connection, logical succession, and due proportion.

II. **Clear and emphatic.**—Showing that the speaker has an adequate grasp of his theme, is master of his own thoughts, and can express both with perspicuity and power.

III. **Comprehensive and detailed.**—Neither fragmentary nor trivial. Not leaving great lacunæ, or condescending to over-minute particulars; but presenting a broad view of the truth in all its parts, and with such parts as are more important set forth in prominence.

IV. **Experimental and emotional.**—Not discoursing on the contents of revelation as if these were mere objective truths which had no bearing on either speaker or hearer; but talking of them as if conscious of their vast importance for the inner life of both.

V. **Personal and practical.**—Aimed at the conviction as well as enlightenment of them that hear, at converting their hearts as well as gaining over their judgments.

Ver. 9. *Divine Warnings;* or, "What God hath cleansed make not thou common."

I. **To men in general.**—In particular to philosophers, scientists, statesmen, rulers—not to introduce distinctions of class, rank, wealth, power, etc., between man and man, seeing that God hath made all men of one blood, and therefore equal. The brotherhood of man stands to day in need of emphasis and exposition.

II. **To the Church of Jesus Christ.**—In particular to its office-bearers and spiritual leaders—not to make the household of faith narrower than Christ has made it, not to erect around it fences which Christ has not commanded, not to excommunicate those whom Christ has admitted, not to impose burdens on the consciences of men which Christ has not directed.

III. **To the individual believer.**—In particular to him who is conscious of being a child of God—not to defile with sin and guilt the heart and conscience which Christ by His blood and word has cleansed, not to let down to low and common levels the life which should be lived in the high and pure atmosphere of fellowship with God and Christ.

Ver. 14. *Words of Salvation.* Words setting forth—

I. **The nature and necessity of salvation.**—1. Its *nature.* Deliverance from the curse, power, and pollution of sin. 2. Its *necessity.* All are under condemnation, on account of sin, enthralled by the power of sin, and tainted by the moral pollution of sin.

II. **The source and the means of salvation.**—1. The *source.* Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God. 2. The *means.* Faith in His blood, which signifies reliance on His propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the world.

III. **The recipients and subjects of salvation.**—1. *Believers—i.e.*, such as by faith have put their trust in Him. 2. *Their houses—i.e.*, on their complying with the same condition.

Ver. 16. *Remembering the Word of the Lord.*

I. **A much-neglected duty.**—Not by

the world alone, but also by the Lord's people, who not only know and profess to believe that word, but who have themselves been saved by it, and have been commanded to keep it in remembrance (John xv. 20; Col. iii. 16).

II. **An exceedingly delightful exercise.**—Not for the unbelieving and unspiritual, but for the religious and devout, to whom that word is more precious than thousands of silver and gold (Psalm cxix. 72), and who can truly say, "Thy testimonies also are my delight" (Psalm cxix. 24).

III. **A highly profitable employment.**—Were Christ's words more frequently remembered, they would—1. Save Christ's people from falling into error and sin (Matt. xxvi. 75; Mark xiv. 72; John ii. 22). 2. Comfort them in seasons of despondency and trouble (Luke xxiv. 8). 3. Stimulate them to works of faith and labours of love (xx. 35). 4. Secure for them answers to prayer (John xv. 7). 5. Evidence the sincerity of their discipleship (John viii. 31).

Ver. 17. *Who was I? or, the Impossibility of withstanding God.*—Peter felt that he could not oppose the introduction of Cornelius on four grounds.

I. He was only **a feeble creature**, whereas God was *the Almighty Creator*, and therefore had a right to do according to the counsel of His own will (Dan. iv. 35; Job ix. 12; Isa. xlv. 9; Rom. ix. 20; Eph. i. 11).

II. He was only **a commissioned servant**, whereas God was *the commissioning Sovereign*, and was entitled to expect that His purpose should prevail over the wish of His ambassador.

III. He was only **a recipient of grace**, whereas God was *the dispenser of grace*, and possessed exclusively the right of saying on whom that grace should be bestowed.

IV. He was only **a member of the Church**, whereas God was *the Church's Head*, and reserved to Himself alone the right of defining the terms on which admission to that Church might be secured.

Ver. 18. *Repentance unto Life.*

I. Its **nature.**—A turning of the soul from self and sin towards Christ and holiness—implying a genuine heart renunciation of the soul's old life of selfishness, worldliness, irreligion, immorality, and idolatry, and an equally sincere embracing of the new life of faith, godliness, obedience, and love, which is enjoined by Jesus Christ in the gospel.

II. Its **origin.**—Repentance unto life is a grace—*i.e.*, a heavenly gift, such a quality and disposition of soul as can be inwrought by no natural process, but must be created by the action of the Holy Spirit.

III. Its **necessity.**—Required by all men equally, by Jews as well as Gentiles, and required in the same way as a free gift of grace. None exempt from its obligations.

IV. Its **end.**—Salvation and eternal life. Hence called a saving grace. Wherever it truly exists the soul is passed from condemnation and become an heir of glory.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 19—26.

The Origin of the Church at Antioch; or, the Preparation of a Centre for the approaching Gentile Mission.

I. **The first gospel preachers at Antioch.** 1. *Who they were.* Jewish Christians who had been scattered abroad in consequence of the persecution (or tribulation) that arose on the death of Stephen, A.D. 38. Some of these were foreign Jews, men of Cyprus (see on iv. 36) and Cyrene (see on ii. 10). That Barnabas was among them is not favoured by the narrative (ver. 22), though his connection with Cyprus may have led him to direct the fugitives to carry the glad tidings to his native island. That Mnason of Cyprus (xxi. 16), and Lucius

of Cyrene (xiii. 1), formed two of these pioneer missionaries, though not certain, is by no means improbable. 2. *How they came to Antioch.* (1) The road they pursued was most likely that which ran up the coast of Phœnicia (xv. 3, xxi. 2), passing, doubtless, through its historic towns, Tyre and Sidon, where some years afterwards Christian communities were found by Paul (xxi. 3, xxvii. 3). (2) As to why they betook themselves to Antioch, the importance of that city as the largest in Asia Minor and the third in rank in the Roman Empire—Rome and Alexandria only being larger—would naturally have something to do with attracting them thither. Besides, as the capital of Syria and the residence of the Roman Governors of that province, it had gathered into it people of many nationalities, including a large colony of Jews. Nor is it unlikely that they were influenced by the number of Jewish proselytes who were attached to its synagogues, as well as by the circumstance that already "Antioch had furnished to the Church of Jerusalem one of its most influential members—viz., Nicolas, one of the deacons" (Renan). 3. *When they arrived in the city.* Whether before or after the conversion of Cornelius cannot be deduced from the narrative. The decision depends chiefly on whether xv. 7 teaches, as it appears to do, that Peter was the first to preach to the Gentiles. If so, then the missionaries must have heard before reaching Antioch of Peter's reception of Cornelius into the Church, which would explain their subsequent procedure in that city. 4. *The persons to whom they preached.* (1) On the way to Antioch, to none save only to Jews (ver. 19), whether Hebrew or Greek speaking. This was natural if either Cornelius's conversion had not yet taken place or they had not yet heard of it. (2) On reaching Antioch, to the Greeks or Grecians—it is uncertain which. The reading "Greeks" suggests that either an unauthorised Gentile mission had been undertaken by the missionaries before Cornelius's conversion, if that had not yet taken place, or they had not yet heard of it, or, what is more probable, that having heard of it on reaching Antioch they forthwith began to extend their mission, and that the more gladly since "in a city where pure Jews—Jews, who were proselytes, etc., people fearing God—or half-Jewish Pagans, and pure pagans, lived together, confined preachings, restricted to a group of houses, became impossible" (Renan). The reading "Grecians" leaves the time of the missionaries' arrival in Antioch undecided, and harmonises with the idea that Peter was the opener of the Church's door to the Gentiles—which however he still was on the preceding hypothesis (see Critical Remarks). 5. *The burden of their preaching.* The Lord Jesus—*i.e.*, the facts and doctrines concerning His life, death, resurrection, ascension, and future coming. As much as this seems implied in the use of the term "Lord" along with "Jesus" in defining the subject of their ministry. There can be no ground for thinking that they preached another gospel than that which was preached in Jerusalem and at Cæsarea by Peter, and afterwards at Antioch and throughout Asia Minor by Paul. 6. *The success of their labours.* Not through superior ability, eloquence, industry, or persuasiveness of their own, but solely through the power of the truth, accompanied by the power of Christ operating through His Spirit, "a great number believed and" or, *having believed,* "turned to the Lord"—*i.e.*, avowed themselves to be His disciples. It is not necessary, in order to account for this remarkable awakening, to call in the aid of extraneous circumstances such as the excitement caused in the city by an earthquake which occurred on March 23rd, of the year 37, or the disposition to believe in supernatural matters which had been produced in the people's minds by the pretensions of an impostor, Debborius, who claimed that by means of ridiculous talismans he could prevent the recurrence of such catastrophes (Renan, *The Apostles,* xii.). A faithfully preached gospel in the hands of the Holy Ghost is sufficient to explain the entire phenomenon which appeared at Antioch, the gospel's acknowledged adaptation to the soul's needs

ensuring that it will sooner or later win its way to the hearts of some who hear.

II. **The mission of Barnabas to Antioch.** 1. *The occasion of his mission.* This was the report which had reached Jerusalem concerning the progress of the gospel in that heathen city. If this occurred before Cornelius's conversion, it would doubtless startle the Church leaders, though the statements are quite unwarranted that "notwithstanding the kindly wishes of some of the principal members of the Church in Jerusalem, Peter in particular, the apostolic college continued to be influenced by the meanest ideas," and that "on every occasion when they heard that the good news had been announced to the heathen some of the elders manifested signs of disappointment" (Renan, *The Apostles*, xiii.). If the tidings came to the Church leaders after Cornelius's conversion, as may reasonably be inferred from the narrative, then they would not be taken unawares or at a loss how to act in the crisis that had arisen. 2. *The object of the mission.* It is not supposable that Barnabas was sent to frown upon, or even suspiciously regard, the new movement, but presumably (1) to reconnoitre the situation, and observe the facts, as became prudent Church leaders whose duty it was to do nothing rashly; (2) on ascertaining the genuineness of the awakening, to confirm with suitable counsels and exhortations the young converts, for which by his sincere piety and sympathetic nature he was eminently fitted; and (3) if need were, to assist the evangelists in gathering in the fruits and widening the circuit of their labours, for which task again he was signally qualified, though it does seem going too far to say he was "the most enlightened member of the Church at Jerusalem," and "the chief of the liberal party which desired progress and wished the Church to be open to all" (Renan). 3. *The reason of his mission.* That is, the reason of his selection by the apostles as their delegate; which was most likely: (1) because of his being an eminent disciple of undoubted Christian character, and almost apostolic rank (iv. 36); (2) because, as above stated, he was personally fitted for the work which required to be done at Antioch; and (3) because he was a native of Cyprus, and in all probability known to some of the evangelists who were labouring in Antioch. 4. *The execution of his mission.* On reaching Antioch Barnabas did the business for which he had been commissioned. (1) He investigated the work of grace that had been reported as going on in that city, found it to be genuine, and, like the good man that he was (ver. 24), was glad, though it was a work which he himself had no hand in bringing about. (2) He exhorted the converts, that with full purpose of heart they should cleave unto the Lord—not unto their leaders merely, or to one another, but to the Lord, which would certainly prove the speediest and most efficacious way to secure their growth in grace, their perseverance in religion, and their final salvation. (3) Though not stated, it may be assumed that he aided the brethren in preaching the gospel, it being barely conceivable that Barnabas, through jealousy, or indolence, or indifference, would stand aloof. 5. *The success of his mission.* "Much people was added unto the Lord," by repentance, faith, and baptism. Though, perhaps, the numerous conversions that were effected cannot all be ascribed to him, it need not be doubted that he exercised a powerful influence for good upon those who listened to his preaching; and, without endorsing the verdict that "Christianity has always done injustice to that great man in not placing him in the front rank of her founders" (Renan), it may cheerfully be granted that his name will for ever remain associated with that Church, which, if he did not originate, he at least did much to consolidate and extend.

III. **The appearance of Saul at Antioch.**—1. *How it was brought about.* By Barnabas, who conceived in his noble heart the magnificent idea (Renan) of fetching Saul from Tarsus, and for this purpose went forth to seek him. On

escaping from Jerusalem Saul had betaken himself to his native city (see ix. 30), where he had been living, and without doubt labouring in the gospel ever since. It is to this period that the founding of the Syrian and Cilician Churches (xv. 41; Gal. i. 21) can with most plausibility be ascribed. For the notions that Saul at this time in Tarsus was fretting out his soul in enforced indolence, and that "his false position, his haughtiness, and his exaggerated pretensions were neutralising many of his other and better qualities" (Renan), there is absolutely no foundation. 2. *How long it continued.* "A whole year"—*i.e.*, during A.D 44—the year immediately preceding that of Paul's second journey to Jerusalem, at the time of the famine (ver. 30). "This was," says Renan, "a most brilliant and without doubt the most happy year in the life of Paul," adding that "the prolific originality of these two great men raised the Church of Antioch to a degree of grandeur to which no Christian Church had previously attained." In any case, the spiritual results of that year's evangelism were in some measure traceable in the vigorous missionary Church that was gathered in that city (xiii. 1-3). 3. *How it was used.* As above stated, in helping on the Christian cause in Antioch, in evangelising along with Barnabas and the missionaries already there. No doubt the felt need of additional labourers constituted the motive which impelled Barnabas to think of the Great Tarser; and though once more the imaginative Frenchman's statement is by no means to be hastily subscribed, that "most of the glory which has accrued to the latter is really due to the modest man who excelled him in everything, brought his merits to light, prevented more than once his faults from resulting deplorably to himself and his cause, and the illiberal views of others from exciting him to revolt, and also prevented mean personalities from interfering with the work of God" (Renan, *The Apostles*, xiii.), it may frankly be conceded that no more important service was ever done by Barnabas to the Church of Christ than when recalling the brilliant ability and fervid zeal of Saul he fetched that distinguished man to Antioch. It was one of those small and seemingly unimportant actions which bring large and far-reaching results in their train. Saul's appearance in Antioch made Antioch a missionary centre, and himself the greatest missionary the world has ever seen.

IV. **The coming of Jerusalem prophets to Antioch.**—1. *The alarming prediction.* (1) What it was. That there should be great dearth throughout all the world—literally, over all the inhabited land, meaning Judæa and the surrounding countries, or perhaps the Roman empire. The communication would have been sufficiently distressing at any time and to any people, the horrors of famine, especially when long continued, being well nigh indescribable (compare Deut. xxviii. 53-57; Lev. xxvi. 19-29; 1 Kings xvii. 1-16; 2 Kings vi. 24-29). To the Church at Jerusalem, consisting as it did mostly of poor people, and impoverished as it had been by its communistic experiments, the contemplation of such a visitation was simply alarming; and the suggestion is not without likelihood that the apprehension of this appalling calamity was the cause of the prophetic embassy to the Church at Antioch—"the elders of Jerusalem" had "decided to seek succour from the members of the richer Churches of Syria" (*Renan*). (2) By whom it was spoken. Agabus, of whom nothing is known beyond the fact here recorded that he was one of the prophetic or inspired teachers who were attached to the Church at Jerusalem, and the subsequent statement that in after years he went down to Cæsarea and foretold Paul's impending imprisonment (xxi. 10). Such prophets were also found in the Churches of Antioch (xiii. 1, xv. 32) and Corinth (1 Cor. xii. 28, 29, xiv. 29). That Agabus was a comparatively obscure individual—like Ananias of Damascus (ix. 10)—shows that great services to the Church of God may be rendered by exceedingly humble instruments. (3) On whose authority published. Not that of Agabus himself, but of the Holy Spirit who spoke through him. Not every word uttered by an inspired

teacher was inspired (1 Cor. vii. 6, 12), though this was. Those who speak in God's name should be careful not to mistake their own thoughts for God's, and should never claim for their own pronouncements an authority which belongs only to God. (4) When it came to pass. "In the days of Claudius." No universal dearth is, though several local dearths are, reported as having prevailed during the reign of that Cæsar. Indeed, "the reign of Claudius was afflicted almost every year by partial famines" (Renan). According to Josephus (*Ant.*, XX. ii. 5, v. 2) many of the inhabitants of Judæa were about his time swept away by a famine, which Helena, Queen of Adiabene, a Jewish proselyte then at Jerusalem, relieved by importing corn from Egypt and Cyprus, distributing it among the starving population. If this was the famine referred to by Luke, it occurred in the year 44 A.D. (see "Critical Remarks"). 2. *The generous resolution* "To send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judæa." Generous this proposal was—(1) In the kindness it displayed toward the Mother Church, which was certain, for reasons already explained, to suffer more than Churches in other cities when the famine came (Rom. xv. 1). (2) In the unselfishness it manifested, since, although they themselves would assuredly suffer from the dearth, they thought first of the wants of the poor disciples at Jerusalem (1 Cor. x. 24). (3) In the forethought it evinced—not waiting till the need arose, but taking time by the forelock, and providing beforehand for the coming pressure (2 Cor. viii. 11). (4) In the unanimity with which it was adopted, every member of the Church agreeing with and entering heartily into the proposal (1 Peter iii. 8). (5) In the liberality which it contemplated, each man determining to contribute according to his ability (see 1 Cor. xvi. 2; 2 Cor. viii. 12). 3. *The benevolent donation.* When their generous gift had been collected they despatched it to Jerusalem. (1) Without delay. *Bis dat qui cito dat.* Many acts of kindness lose their fragrance by being too late. (2) By the hands of trusted messengers—Barnabas and Saul. This showed the importance the Church at Antioch attached to their gift and the confidence they reposed in these honoured brethren. (3) To be placed in the hands of the elders of the Church at Jerusalem for judicious distribution among the poor saints.

Learn.—1. The Church's duty to travel abroad with the gospel, to confirm young converts, to evangelise the community in which she is placed, to listen to whatever teaching God may send her from time to time, and to relieve the wants of her poorer members. 2. The Church's strength—the gospel she preaches, "the Lord Jesus," the presence with her of the Lord's hand, the devotion of talented and faithful ministers, the constancy and mutual love of her members.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 20, 21. *The Awakening at Antioch.*

I. The **clamant need** which existed at Antioch for such an awakening. Antioch was a heathen city. 1. *Large.* Crowded with human beings, every one possessed of a nature which had been made for God and Immortality. 2. *Wealthy.* And, therefore, filled with temptations for its inhabitants to serve mammon rather than God. "Temples, aqueducts, baths, basilicas, nothing was wanting at Antioch in what constituted a grand Syrian city of the period. . . . Antioch not only possessed immense edifices of public utility; it had that also which few of the Syrian cities possessed—the noblest specimens of Grecian art, wonderfully beautiful statues, classical works of a delicacy of detail which the age was no longer capable of imitating" (Renan). Wealth seldom favourable to religion (Matt. xix. 24). 3. *Degraded.* In spite of its picturesque site Antioch was little better than another Sodom. "The depravity of certain Levantine cities, dominated by the spirit of in-

trigue, delivered up entirely to low cunning, can scarcely give us a conception of the degree of corruption reached by the human race at Antioch." "It was an inconceivable medley of mountebanks, quacks, buffoons, magicians, miracle mongers, sorcerers, false priests; a city of races, games, dances, processions, fêtes, revels of unbridled luxury, of all the follies of the East, of the most unhealthy superstitions, and of the fanaticism of the orgy" (Renan, *The Apostles*, xii.). 4. *Benighted.* Notwithstanding the Jewish element in its population, it was practically shrouded in spiritual darkness—"having no hope and without God in the world" (Ephes. ii. 12). Devoted to debasing superstitions, "full of the worship of Apollo and the nymphs," it possessed no true light. "Syrian levity, Babylonian charlatanism, and all the impostures of Asia had made it the capital of all lies and the sink of every description of infamy." If ever city needed an awakening, Antioch did.

II. **The simple instrumentality** by which its awakening was brought about. 1. *The arrival in the city of a few wandering preachers*, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, foreign missionaries from the Mediterranean and the North of Africa. It was a momentous day for Antioch when these men presented themselves before its gates. Neither the civic authorities nor the pleasure-loving citizens had the smallest conception of the spiritual dynamite which these men had concealed about their persons. Compare Paul's landing on the shores of Europe and entering Philippi. 2. *The proclamation of a strange doctrine to the people.* For strange it must have been to Jew and Greek to learn that Jesus of Nazareth, who had been crucified by the Romans, was risen from the dead and exalted to the highest seat of authority in heaven—was Israel's Messiah and the world's Saviour. Yet just this simple announcement was the force that awakened Antioch from its spiritual slumber. And just this to-day is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek (Rom. i. 16). 3. *The invisible working of Divine power upon the people's hearts.* For this must be assumed as what is meant by the statement that the hand of the Lord was with the preachers. Without the Spirit's help the most learned and eloquent, even the most scriptural preaching, must prove ineffective so far as the production of spiritual results is concerned.

III. The **glorious result** in which this awakening at Antioch issued. 1. *In the salvation of many souls.* Both Jews and Greeks became converts. This the immediate and grand end of all preaching. It may instruct the understanding, interest the fancy, gratify the taste, stir the emotions, if it does not lead to personal decision for Christ, it is useless. Modern preachers should remember that saved souls, besides being valuable to their individual possessors, constitute a Church's and a city's truest and best wealth. 2. *In the establishment within its walls of a Christian Church.* How much that Christian Church did for Antioch with its teeming population—what light streamed forth from its teachers, what gracious influences were exerted by its members—has not been tabulated in the form of statistics; but the day will declare. Conceive what present-day cities are where no churches have been planted; imagine what Christian cities would become were their churches to be extinguished. Such mental efforts will enable one to understand the power for good which the Church at Antioch exerted on the heathen populace amongst whom it was planted. 3. *In the subsequent origination of a heathen mission.* To assert that had the Church at Antioch not been founded Europe might not have been evangelised, would perhaps be going too far. But certainly if in Antioch a Church had not arisen, it might have been a considerable time longer before the thought of a heathen mission had occurred to the poor

Christians at Jerusalem. Antioch had the fresh zeal, the liberal outlook, the enterprising spirit, and the pecuniary resources which were necessary for originating such a movement as that of attempting to evangelise the Gentile world; and one has reason to bless God that the gospel was preached and a Church planted in Antioch at so early a stage in the history of Christianity.

Ver. 23. *Barnabas at Antioch.*

I. **What he saw.**—The grace of God manifested: 1. In the spiritual awakening which had taken place; and 2. In the number of conversions that had been registered.

II. **How he felt.**—He was glad. Because: 1. The gospel was spreading. 2. His countrymen were believing. 3. Souls were being saved. 4. Christ was being glorified.

III. **What he said.**—"He exhorted them all that with full purpose of heart," etc. A counsel which was—1. Timely, suited to their condition as young disciples. 2. Wise, since their onward progress in religion depended on this. 3. Necessary, since if they fell away they could not be saved.

Cleaving to the Lord, an Address for Present-Day Christians.

I. **Cleave to the Lord's work** as the only and the all-sufficient ground of acceptance and salvation. The Lord's work twofold: external, that accomplished by Himself in the days of His flesh and finished on the cross—a work for man; internal, that wrought in the heart by His Holy Spirit—a work in man. Both of these, the Atoning Blood and the Quickening Spirit, are much in danger of being sacrificed even by Christians under the fascinations of the new or anti-supernatural theology, while by the unbelieving world they are utterly rejected. But without these and a steadfast adherence to these both forgiveness and holiness are unattainable.

II. **Cleave to the Lord's person** as the exclusive source of spiritual life and the supreme object of affection. For religion after all does not consist in adherence to any system of beliefs, even though these should be right, but in allowing these beliefs to influence the heart and life. In other words, conduct, rather than creed, is the ultimate test of piety, adherence to Christ's person rather than to Christ's truth (if this be all) is the surest token of discipleship. Only the Lord to whose person this adherence must be is not the historical Christ, as He is called, the man Jesus of Nazareth, but the crucified risen and exalted Lord of glory, who alone is the source of life and object of love for the believing soul.

III. **Cleave to the Lord's book** as the best directory for faith and practice. Notwithstanding present-day controversies about the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, the divinity of the sacred volume has never been successfully assailed. After all that criticism, higher or lower, has said, or can say, it remains that the Bible stands out pre-eminent over all the writings of men as the loftiest compendium of truth and the safest guide for duty. No book like it can so satisfactorily reply to the questions—What should one believe? and What must one do? in order to properly fulfil his heaven-appointed mission on the earth.

IV. **Cleave to the Lord's people** as the best companions for the heavenward journey. If not possessed of wisdom, or wealth, or power, or social prestige—though even these are not wanting among Christ's followers—they have holiness which always carries about with it a contagion of goodness, and they have spiritual insight, an acquaintance with the secret of the Lord which is invaluable for such as would live well, and they know where they are going, which is more than the men of the world know.

V. **Cleave to the Lord's heaven** as the future and final home. Of this also there are those who would fain deprive the Christian, saying there is no hereafter, nothing beyond the tomb,

no resurrection, and no eternal life. But to him who believes that Jesus died and rose again, and that Jesus lives and reigns to-day upon the throne of the Universe, all these are guaranteed and made sure for evermore.

Ver. 24. *The Piety of Barnabas.*

I. **Its visible flower and fruit.**—Goodness. "Barnabas was a good man." A rare commodity in the world or even in the Church. In Barnabas it was conspicuous and recognised by all. The form it assumed in him was that it must take in all to be genuine —viz., love to the neighbour (Matt. v. 43, xix. 19, xxii. 39; Rom. xiii. 9; Gal. v. 14). Kindly consideration for and tender sympathy with others appear in all that is recorded of this distinguished man—in his cheerful surrender and sale of his property to relieve the necessities of his poorer brethren (iv. 36, 37), in his fraternal mediation between Saul and the apostles (ix. 27), in his kindly counsels to the young converts at Antioch (ver. 23), in his journey to Tarsus to fetch Saul (ver. 25), in his modestly according the first place to his brilliant colleague (xiii. 7, 13, 46), in desiring to cover up the failings of his sister's son, John Mark (xv. 37). In all he appears as a man in whose eyes the claims of others stand first, and those of self second.

II. **Its hidden source and root.**—Faith. "Barnabas was full of faith" —*i.e.*, faith in God and Jesus Christ, in things spiritual and Divine, in heaven and immortality. And without this no man can be good in the highest sense of that term. It is doubtful whether real love to man is possible to him who has not begun to love God, or rather it is not doubtful. Only he who regards man as God's child can attain to that spiritual affection which constitutes true neighbour love (1 John iv. 7-21, v. 1, 2).

III. **Its vital sap and nutriment.**—The Spirit. "Barnabas was full of the Holy Ghost." Such goodness as Barnabas displayed can only spring from a renewed heart (Gal. v. 22; Eph. v. 9), in which the principle of faith has found a lodgment and room to operate (Gal. v. 6). Practical, self-forgetful, philanthropical love is at once the fruit of the Spirit and the work of faith, and the one because the other.

Ver. 26. *A Remarkable Year.*—That of Barnabas and Saul at Antioch. A year of—

I. **Brotherly communion with each other.**—One would like to have overheard the talks those two eminent men of God and servants of Jesus Christ had with one another—the one all aglow with tender human sympathy, the other all ablaze with spiritual enthusiasm; the one with a presence that felt like a soft summer wind, the other with a soul that heaved and throbbed like a burning volcano.

II. **Spiritual fellowship with the Church.**—While appreciating the rare privilege of each other's society, it is obvious these noble men did not disdain communion with ordinary saints. For a whole year they were gathered together with or in the Church. They forsook not the assembling of themselves with Christ's people as the manner of many is. Social worship in the Christian sanctuary is an invaluable privilege which cannot be neglected without suffering spiritual loss.

III. **Ministerial labour for Christ.**—It was a year of unwearied evangelical activity. They taught much people. They relied, it is apparent, more upon the self-evidencing power of the gospel they proclaimed than upon their own eloquence or argument. Their addresses were more didactic than hortatory. They taught the people—imparted to them instruction rather than stirred them with moving appeals. A good model for modern evangelists.

Ver. 26. *The Name "Christian."*

I. **Its origin.**—1. As to place—Antioch. 2. With whom—most likely the heathen population. 3. In what spirit. Probably a spirit of mockery. (See "Critical Remarks.")

II. Its **import.**—1. It was meant to pour contempt upon believers in the Saviour, by designating them Christians or followers of Christ who had been crucified. 2. It is meant to-day to distinguish believers in the Saviour as Christ's people and friends.

III. Its **distinction.** — Originally given as a mark of dishonour, it is now a badge of glorious renown for all who wear it, the name of Christ being the highest either in heaven or on earth.

IV. Its **obligations,**—Now, as at first, it imposes on its bearers certain high responsibilities, which may all be summed up in this that they shall walk worthy of that name by—1. Treading in Christ's footsteps (1 Peter ii. 21; 1 John ii. 6). 2. Breathing Christ's Spirit (Eph. v. 2; 1 John iii. 16; and 3. Maintaining and extending Christ's cause (Matt. xxviii. 18-20).

Vers. 29,30. *Concerning the Collection.*

I. Its **object** was *praiseworthy.*—To assist the poor saints at Jerusalem. Kindness to the poor frequently enjoined upon Christ's followers (Matt. v. 42; Luke xii. 33, xviii. 22; Eph. iv. 28) as an essential ingredient of Christianity (Rom. xii. 13; Gal. vi. 10; James i. 27).

II. Its **character** was *voluntary.* As all charity and almsgiving should be (Rom. xii. 8; 2 Cor. viii. 12). Enforced contributions have no religious value whatever. They may do good, but they are not Christian alms.

III. Its **universality** was undoubted. Every man determined to have a share in the collection. When will all Christ's people be voluntary givers? How the Church's exchequer would overflow!

IV. Its **liberality** was *great.*—Each man contributed according to his ability, as God had prospered him (1 Cor. xvi. 2; 2 Cor. ix. 7).

V. Its **promptness** was *decided.* They acted on their generous impulse at once, without delay or hesitation (2 Cor. viii. 11).

VI. Its **despatch** was *quick.*—It was no sooner collected than it was forwarded to its destination.

VII. Its **application** was *sure.*—Committed to the hands of the Jerusalem elders, it was certain to reach the persons for whom it was intended. All points worthy of imitation by Christian Churches.

CHAPTER XII.

Divine Interpositions on the Church's Behalf—Experiences of Mercy and Judgment.

§ 1. The Days of Unleavened Bread; or, the Persecution of the Church (vers. 1-19).

§ 2. The Death of Herod; or, the Church's Persecutor Punished (vers. 20-25).

CRITICAL REMARKS.

Ver. 1. **About that time** (compare xix. 23).—*I.e.*, before, or about the time of, the arrival of Barnabas and Saul at Jerusalem (xi. 30). The incidents recorded in this chapter seem to have occurred during the stay of these brethren in Jerusalem (ver. 25). As the predicted famine broke out under Cuspius Fadus, who was sent to Judæa after the death of Agrippa —*i.e.*, after August 6th, A.D. 44—the visit of Barnabas and Saul most likely took place before Agrippa's death. **Herod the king.**—Herod Agrippa I. was the son of Aristobulus and Bernice (Jos., *Ant.*, XVII. i. 2; *Wars*, I. xxviii. 1), a nephew of Herod Antipas and grandson of Herod the Great (see further in "Homiletical Analysis"). **To vex certain of the Church.**—Better, "to maltreat certain of (lit., from) the Church," ἀπὸ conveying the idea of proceeding

from, and hence belonging to. **James the brother of John.**—The elder of the two sons of Zebedee (Matt. iv. 21, x. 2), and to be distinguished from James the Less (i. 13), as also from James the brother of our Lord (ver. 17, xv. 13, xxi. 18; Gal. i. 19). James's martyrdom fulfilled our Lord's words in Matt. xx. 23. "It was wonder Herod killed no more, seeing this took so well with the people" (Trapp). That so little is said about this apostle's martyrdom has been explained (Weizsäcker), though wrongly, on the grounds partly of Luke's want of knowledge concerning the incident (which is hardly likely, since he knew both John and Paul), and partly of the unhistorical character of the narrative which, it is said, was composed mainly for the glorification of Peter.

Ver. 3. **It pleased the Jews.**—This remark is assigned, though without cause, to Luke's pragmatism, and pronounced inaccurate (Hausrath, Holtzmann), on the ground that somewhat later the Pharisees in a particular instance sided with the Jewish Christians against the Sadducees (Jos., *Ant.*, XX. ix. 1), as if popular bodies were not proverbially variable in their judgments and actions! The opinion is as likely to be correct (Zeller) that Herod found the murder of James to be not so popular as he at first imagined, and accordingly winked at Peter's liberation from prison!! **The days of unleavened bread.**—The festival of the Passover, so named because of the injunction to remove leaven from the house during its continuance (Exod. xii. 15, xiii. 7).

Ver. 4. For **Easter** read *the Passover*, meaning not the paschal supper (Wieseler), but the whole period of the festival. **To the people.**—To gratify them by the spectacle of his execution.

Ver. 5 **The Church.**—(See on ii. 47, v. 11, viii. 1, xi. 26.) Now a large community which must have assembled in different buildings throughout the city. **Without ceasing.**—Rather, *earnestly*, ἐκτενής, a word of later Greek, signifying "that which is stretched," hence "intent" or "fervent."

Ver. 6. **The same night.**—Emphatic, the night before the day on which Herod contemplated making his exhibition of the Apostle. **Sleeping between two soldiers.**—Two of the quaternion entrusted with his keeping (ver. 4). **Bound with two chains.**—*I.e.*, by one to each soldier. **The keepers** or *guards* **before the door** were the other two soldiers of the company of four. This, the Roman method of imprisonment, *custodia militaris* (which, however, usually fastened the prisoner to only one soldier), as indeed imprisonment of any kind, was unknown to the Mosaic law. The kings were the first to introduce this form of punishment, especially for the chastisement of free-speaking prophets (2 Chron. xvi. 10; Jer. xx. 2, xxxii. 2).

Ver. 7. **The** or *an* **angel of the Lord.**—The various attempts to explain Peter's deliverance on natural grounds are all unsatisfactory (see "Homiletical Analysis). The **light** which shined in the **prison**, lit., *house* (a euphemism), was the usual supernatural radiance or "glory of the Lord" that encompassed angelic visitors to earth (Luke ii. 9, xxiv. 4; Matt. xxviii. 3).

Ver. 8. **Gird thyself**, etc.—Shows Peter had divested himself of his outer coat or tunic and shoes before lying down to sleep.

Ver. 10. **The first and the second ward**, or *watch.*—*I.e.*, the two soldiers stationed at the door of Peter's cell, and two others posted near the **iron gate** which led out to the city. The situation of the prison is unknown.

Ver. 11.—Suggests that until the angel had left him Peter had not **come to himself**, or recovered his ordinary consciousness, lit., *become in himself.* **The expectation of the people of the Jews** reveals that the populace were now against the apostles, and eagerly looking forward to Peter's execution; changed times since iv. 21.

Ver. 12. **Considered** *the thing.*—Better, *having become aware of* τὰ γενόμενα, what had happened. Whether **John whose surname was Mark** was the second evangelist is uncertain, though he is commonly supposed to have been the Mark whom Peter terms his son (1 Peter v. 13), *i.e.*, spiritually, as having been converted through his instrumentality. He was sister's son (rather, cousin) to Barnabas (Col. iv. 10), whom he accompanied on an evangelising tour, after Barnabas had separated from Paul on his account (xv. 37, 39). He had formerly attended these two missionaries as far as Perga, and there deserted them (xiii. 13).

Ver. 13. The Greek name, **Rhoda**, *Rose*, does not prove that the maid who acted as portress was not a Jewess (see on i. 23). The office of doorkeeper among the Jews was commonly assigned to a female (John xviii. 16).

Ver. 14.—Peter must have spoken, perhaps told his name, to cause his voice to be recognised.

Ver. 15.—The doctrine of tutelary angels (see "Homiletical Analysis") is neither affirmed nor denied, but simply cited as a popular opinion (compare Matt. xviii. 10).

Ver. 17. **Went to another place.**—Hardly in the city (Meyer), but outside of it, though not to Rome (Catholic expositors), or Antioch (Kuinoel)—perhaps to Babylonia (Nösgen), or some one of the cities of the Diaspora named in his first epistle (i. 1) (Zöckler). The place of Peter's concealment would no doubt, for prudential reasons, at first be kept secret, and might easily have been unknown to Luke's informant.

Ver. 19. **Put to death.**—Should be *led away—i.e.*, to execution.

Ver. 20. For **And Herod** read *And*, or but, *he—i.e.*, Herod. **Highly displeased.**—θυμομαχῶν, *in a hostile state of mind*, in modern phrase, "contemplating hostilities" (Plumptre), though it is doubtful whether open war against Phœnicia would have been permitted by Rome. Perhaps prohibitory tariffs with shutting of ports and markets were what Agrippa had in view. **Tyre and Sidon.**—The first mention of these Phœnician cities in the Acts. For their antiquity and splendour see Isa. xxiii. 7, 8; Ezek. xxvii., xxviii. **Blastus.**—Judging from his name may have been a Roman, and from the epithet, ὁ ἐπὶ τοῦ κοιτῶνος, præfectus cubiculi, cubicularis, was a chamberlain like Candace's minister (viii. 27), though not like him a eunuch.

Ver. 21. The **set day.**—According to Josephus was August 1st, and the second day of the public games celebrated by Agrippa in honour of Claudius (Jos., *Ant.*, XIX. viii. 2). The **royal apparel.**—Was wholly of silver and of a contexture truly wonderful. The **throne,** or *judgment seat*, had been prepared for him in the theatre.

Ver. 23. For **the** read *an* angel of the Lord. **Smote him . . . eaten of worms . . . gave up the ghost.**—According to Josephus (*Ant.*, XIX. viii. 2), the disease, which was acute disorder of the bowels, smote the king with sudden and violent pain. Forthwith he was carried out of the theatre a dying man; and in five days—*i.e.*, on August 6th, he was dead. Compare the deaths of Joram (2 Chron. xxi. 19), Antiochus Epiphanes (2 Macc. ix. 5-10), and of Herod the Great (Jos., *Ant.*, XVII. vi. 5). As to the nature of this disease by which Agrippa was cut off see "Homiletical Analysis." The suggestion that Herod was poisoned by Blastus, the king's valet, whom the Phœnicians had gained over for this purpose (Renan), is scarcely worthy of consideration, having no plausible support either from Josephus or Luke.

Ver. 24. **But the word of God grew and multiplied.**—An antithesis to the horrible end of the persecuting king. (Compare v. 12 *ff.*, vi. 7, ix. 31.)

Ver. 25. **And Barnabas and Saul returned.**—Not *to*, as some authorities read, but **from Jerusalem.**—Shortly after Herod's death. How long they remained in the metropolis is not stated, but it is not likely to have been long. Alford thinks their arrival should be placed after Herod's death, as "of all the persons whose execution would be pleasing to the Jews Saul would hold the foremost place." **Took with them John, whose surname was Mark.**—See ver. 12, whence the inference has been drawn that Barnabas and Saul, while in the city, belonged to the congregation that assembled in John's mother's house.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 1—19.

The Days of Unleavened Bread; or, the Persecution of the Church.

I. **The imprisonment of Peter.**—1. *When it happened.* (1) "About that time"—*i.e.*, about the time when Barnabas and Saul went up to Jerusalem. (2) In "the days of unleavened bread"—*i.e.*, during the Passover festival, which continued seven days, and was so named because during its currency no leaven was allowed in Jewish houses. (3) Shortly before or after the death of Herod. (4) Hence about the spring, end of March, or beginning of April, A.D. 44. 2. *To whom it was due.* Herod Agrippa the First, that "vile Oriental," as Renan styles him (*The Apostles*, p. 199), Aristobulus's son, and Herod the Great's grandson, who on the accession of Caligula, A.D. 37, received the title of king with the former possessions of Philip and Lysanias (Luke iii. 1), at a later period the tetrarchy of Antipas, and later still, in A.D. 41, from Claudius, Samaria, and Judæa; so that, like his grandfather, he swayed the sceptre of kingly authority all over Palestine, besides possessing a royal residence in Jerusalem with an income of twelve million drachmæ (see "Hints" on ver. 1). 3. *By what motive inspired.* A desire to please the Jews. Anxiety to win the favour of his Jewish subjects had already caused Agrippa I. to unsheath the sword against the Christians, and even to behead the son of Zebedee, James the Just, whose execution tradition (Jerome) places on the 15th Nisan, or the anniversary of the Crucifixion. Combined with this was more than likely a fanatical zeal for the Jewish religion which he personally affected, and which, it has been well said (Renan), inevitably led a weak prince like him to become a persecutor. 4. *In what manner carried out.* Having been arrested, the apostle was securely lodged in the Tower of Antonia on the north-west corner of the Temple—a fortress

originally built by John Hyrcanus for a residence, and subsequently enlarged by Herod the Great "in a magnificent manner." Four quaternions of soldiers—*i.e.*, sixteen warriors were told off to guard the apostle lest an escape or a rescue should be attempted and perhaps effected. Clearly Herod was afraid of the Christians or of the Christians' God, or of both. "Had Peter's captors regarded him as a common every-day criminal, they would have deemed it preposterous that sixteen soldiers or even four at a time should be required to keep him safe. That such unusual precautions were judged necessary is one of those indirect and latent marks of historic truth with which this narrative abounds, and which are even more valuable than direct proofs, because of being undesigned" (Whitelaw, *The Theological Monthly*, No. 24, p. 406). 5. *For what purpose intended.* To keep him securely till the feast was passed, when he should be brought forth before the people and despatched into the other world after James. Agrippa, being a "pious" sovereign who had begun to "attend to his devotions" (Renan, *The Apostles*, p. 200), suffering not a day to pass over his head without its appointed sacrifice (Josephus, *Ant.*, XIX. vii. 3), would not profane the sanctity of the season by an act of bloodshed. Beautiful piety! Besides, the spectacle could be performed with as much effect when the festival had closed and before the congregated crowds dispersed to their homes. Behold, another Solomon arisen in the land! 6. *To what action it led.* It set the Christian community a-praying for their incarcerated leader. Had Agrippa known, that calling in of Heaven's aid on behalf of Peter and against him was ominous. Where is the creature that can stand when God Almighty takes the field against him? "Judged by ordinary standards, the fate of Peter was sealed. The probability of his escaping the headsman's axe was small, if not absolutely *nil*. Nevertheless, as people who had not been initiated into 'modern science,' and in their lack of nineteenth century culture saw no irreconcilable contradiction between the reign of law and answers to prayer, but believed that 'all things were possible with God,' the Jerusalem disciples betook themselves to besieging Heaven with their outcries and their supplications, appealing with exquisite *naïveté* to Him in whose hands were all men's lives, those of kings as well as common men" (*The Theological Monthly*, No. 24, p. 407). 7. *How it affected the prisoner.* "Incarceration was for Peter unfortunately no new experience (iv. 3, v. 18); and although in the present instance grounds existed for apprehending that he would never leave his cell till he was marched forth to die, it does not appear that the prospect filled him with dismay or even disturbed his nocturnal slumbers." "That Peter exhibited such quietness of spirit when on the verge of martyrdom was a proof that he was then a better man than he had been when, after having boastfully exclaimed, 'Lord, I will lay down my life for Thy sake,' to save his skin he first ran away and then denied his Master with oaths and curses" (*Ibid.*, p. 406, 407). See "Hints" on ver. 6.

II. **The deliverance of Peter** (ver. 7).—1. *Brought about in answer to prayer.* Renan, who has scruples about "the angel," and is silent concerning the Church's prayers, for reasons not specified, nevertheless entertains no doubt that Peter was lodged in the Tower of Antonia by command of Agrippa I., and that on the night before the morning fixed for his execution he escaped—in this agreeing with such critics as Zeller, Weizsäcker, and others, who, while rejecting what they style the mythical embellishments of the story, do not question that Peter was both imprisoned and made his escape; but if between these two occurrences, the imprisonment and the escape, it really happened that the Church prayed as above described, it will be hard to convince an ingenuous mind that Peter's deliverance was not something more than a happy coincidence, was not a conspicuous fulfilment of that Scripture which says, "Before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear" (*Ibid.*, pp. 407, 408). 2. *Effected by*

miraculous intervention. Exactly this was Peter's own account of the matter to his friends assembled in the house of John Mark's mother (ver. 17). Luke's report—of the descent of the angel into Peter's cell, of the falling off from Peter's hands of the chains with which he was bound, etc., etc. (vers. 7-11), was probably derived from Peter himself or from John Mark, whom he subsequently met in Rome (2 Tim. iv. 10, 11); and unless his report is to be set aside as utterly unhistorical—and Renan admits "it is so lively and just that it is difficult to find in it any place for prolonged elaboration"—it will need to be conceded that Peter's rescue was brought about by miracle. Other explanations of a naturalistic sort—such as the bursting open of the prison by a flash of lightning or an earthquake (Hegel), as at Philippi (Acts xvi. 26), the bribing of the apostle's guardians by the apostle's friends, or the conniving of the former at Peter's escape through sympathy for him or hatred of his persecutor (Eichhorn, Ewald), or finally some unknown but still natural cause (Renan, Zeller, Weizsäcker, Beyschlag), are insufficient to account for the incident, unless first the credibility of the record be broken down. To challenge the authenticity of this portion of the Acts on the ground that it relates what is supernatural is to beg the question at issue. 3. *Confirmed by the trustworthy character of the narrative.* In addition to those already indicated, the following signs of verisimilitude in the story may be pointed out. (1) The return of Peter to the house of John Mark's mother (ver. 12), a statement which receives explanation from the circumstance that John Mark was one of Peter's spiritual children (1 Peter v. 13). (2) The behaviour of Rhoda (ver. 13), which points to the equal footing upon which bond and free had by this time begun to stand in the early Christian Church (ii. 44, iv. 32; compare Lechler, *Apostolische Zeitalter*, p. 323). (3) The exclamation concerning Peter's angel (ver. 15), which harmonises with the well-known belief, then current among the Jews, that "every true Israelite had specially assigned to him a guardian angel, who, when he appeared in human form, assumed the likeness of the man whom he protected" (Plumptre). (4) Peter's instruction to report what had happened, unto James and the brethren (ver. 17), which is exactly what one would have expected from the prominent position in the Church at that time held, according to both Luke (Acts xv. 13) and Paul (Gal. i. 19, ii. 9), by the brother of our Lord. (5) The excitement among the soldiers when it was discovered that Peter had escaped (ver. 18), which could hardly have arisen had an earthquake happened or had they themselves been privy to his flight. The idea of their pretending an excitement they did not feel is out of the question. (6) The fruitless search of Herod for his prisoner (ver. 19), which shows at least that Peter had been delivered. (7) The execution of the guards for allowing him to escape (ver. 19), which abundantly attests that they had not been able to prevent Peter's release.

Learn.—That Christ's Church and people will certainly suffer persecution. 2. That both have strong encouragement to pray. 3. That it is better to have angels on one's side than soldiers. 4. That Christ is as able as ever to watch over and defend His Church and people. 5. That whatever deliverances are enjoyed by either should be thankfully acknowledged by both.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver 1. *The Persecution of the Church by Agrippa.*

I. **The persecutor.**—Herod Agrippa I. —His character. 1. *A heathen.* Addicted to public games, musical festivities, and gladiatorial combats. 2. *A hypocrite.* If he practised the outward forms of piety it was not because he loved them. Jost (*Geschichte Judenthums*, i. 420) relates that once when

reading in a public service, "One from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee; thou mayest not set a stranger over thee which is not thy brother" (Deut. xvii. 15), Agrippa burst into tears, and that the people cried out, "Be not distressed, Agrippa, thou art our brother." This incident Plumptre cites as an illustration of Herod's "sensitiveness to praise or blame"; if authentic, it may, with as much reason, be interpreted as showing that this "pious sovereign," like other potentates that have lived since, was a skilful actor and knew how to play a part. 3. *A hater of Jesus.* He had inherited the passion of hostility against Jesus from his fathers, one of whom, Herod the Great, had persecuted the child Jesus, and another, Herod Antipas, had beheaded John the Baptist (Besser: *Bibel Stunden*, III. i. 588).

II. **The persecuted.**—The Church in Jerusalem—*i.e.*, the Church—1. *At its headquarters.* Paralysed at the centre, Herod doubtless thought it would become inactive at its extremities. 2. *In its leaders.* These cut off, the king may have reasoned, the followers would be dispersed.

III. **The persecution.**—1. *Its motive.* (1) To gratify his own hatred of the new faith. (2) To ingratiate himself with his Jewish subjects. 2. *Its time.* (1) When the Church was forming for itself a new centre of operations at Antioch—which showed how greatly Herod had miscalculated. (2) When the Church at Jerusalem was becoming distressed on account of the impending famine—which shows how God sometimes allows the trials of His people to multiply when these are least able to bear them. 3. *Its form.* (1) Violent death for James. (2) Unjust imprisonment for Peter. (3) Cruel harassment for the disciples.

Ver. 2. *The Death of James.*

I. **Early.**—About ten years after the Ascension; a testimony to his ripeness in grace (Matt. xx. 23). James died first, John last, of the Twelve.

II. **Violent.**—Probably by decapitation; a fulfilment of the Saviour's promise.

III. **Sudden.**—No reason to believe he either languished long in prison or was put to the trouble of a trial, though Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius of Cæsarea say there were both an accusation and a defence.

IV. **Lonely.**—Hardly likely he had the presence of any friends except God and Jesus Christ to comfort or cheer him at the fatal moment. Yet these, one need not question, would not be absent.

V. **Submissive.**—Not to be doubted that James met his doom without a murmur. Tradition speaks of the fortitude exhibited by him on the way to excution as having led to the conversion of the officer who guarded him (see below).

VI. **Triumphant.**—If the Saviour manifested not His glory to His dying servant as He did to Stephen, He assuredly left not that servant to meet the headsman's axe without the inward supports of His grace; and if the heavens opened not to James's mortal vision in the death hour, unquestionably they would roll back their pearly gates to receive his departing spirit.

VII. **Lamented.**—If uncertain whether he had a burial at the hands of devout men as Stephen had, little question may be entertained that "devout men made great lamentation over him."

VIII. **Remembered.**—Where the precious dust of the slaughtered disciple found a resting-place has not been told. No reason to suppose the Armenian convent within the walls of Jerusalem covers the spot. Yet the existence of such a shrine witnesses to the affectionate regard with which the Christian Church has preserved the recollection of her apostolic martyr.

Note.—Clement and Eusebius report an incident connected with the martyrdom of James, which, if true, lends a pathetic interest to the tale. Struck by the calm fortitude of his prisoner,

the officer who guarded the apostle, or, according to another version, the false witness who had testified against him, was moved to repentance, confessed Christ, and was led forth along with the apostle to be put to death. On the way to the scene of judgment, having asked the apostle to forgive him, he was at once pardoned; the apostle, having paused, looked upon him with a glance of love, embraced him and kissed him, with the words, "Peace be to you!"

James the Brother of John.

I. Honoured in the family to which he belonged.—1. His *father*, Zebedee, a well-to-do fisherman on the sea of Galilee (Matt. iv. 21). 2. His *mother*, Salome, one of the pious women who had cast in their lot with Christ (Matt. xx. 20). 3. His *brother*, John, the beloved disciple who leaned on Jesus's bosom (John xiii. 23).

II. More honoured in the office which he bore.—The apostleship. An office which—1. Admitted him to closest *personal intimacy with Christ* (John xv. 15). 2. Opened up before him *a wide sphere of service for Christ* (John xv. 16). 3. Conferred on him *high privileges from Christ* (Luke v. 10; Mark i. 29, v. 37; Matt. xvii. 1, xxvi. 37).

III. Most honoured in the crown of martyrdom he received.—1. *After a short period of service.* He was called to his reward, not so soon as Stephen, but much earlier than Peter or John. 2. *Probably without much pain.* Not like Stephen stoned to death, but most likely beheaded with a swift and sudden stroke. 3. *Certainly with great glory.* The crown of martyrdom was for him a crown of life (Rev. ii. 10), a crown of righteousness (2 Tim. iv. 8), a crown of glory (1 Peter v. 4).

Ver. 5, 12. *The Prayers of the Church should be*—1. *Addressed to God.* A not unnecessary reminder. 2. *By a united congregation.* United, if not in place, in purpose and heart. 3. *In an earnest spirit.* Not formally, but sincerely, as if the suppliants meant them, which they do not always. 4. *For ministers of the Gospel.* Not excluding all sorts and conditions of men (1 Tim. ii. 1), but specially for ambassadors of the Church's King and Head (Eph. vi. 19). 5. *That they may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men* (2 Thess. iii. 2). If in any measure faithful to their calling, ministers will be exposed to trouble from such. 6. *That their lives may be prolonged.* If not for their sakes, for their Master's and for the sake of their work. If any lives are valuable to a community, those of good ministers of Christ are. And 7. *That their usefulness may be increased.* A true minister desires not personal advantage, fame, or wealth, but growing ability to serve in the Gospel (2 Cor. xii. 14).

Ver. 6. *Sleeping on the Eve of Martyrdom.*—Illustrations: 1. In the beginning of the Marian persecution, writes Froude (*History of England*, v. 488), "Rogers was 'to break the ice,' as Bradford described it. On the morning of the 4th of February (A.D. 1555), the wife of the keeper of Newgate came to his bedside. He was sleeping soundly, and she woke him with difficulty to let him know that he was wanted. 2. Those acquainted with Scottish history will recall the last sleep of the great and good Argyll in Edinburgh prison before he stooped his honoured head to the loaded axe of the maiden. 3. A tradesman of Lyons, of the name of Grivet, was, during the reign of terror in France, sentenced to death, and brought into the cave of the condemned, where were several others who with him were to suffer next morning, and who, on his arrival, pressed round him to sympathise in his fate and fortify him for the stroke he was about to encounter. 'Come and sup with us,' said they, 'this is the last inn in the journey of life; to-morrow we shall arrive at our long home.' Grivet, who was calm and composed, accepted the invitation, supped heartily, and then, retiring to the remotest corner of the cave, buried

himself in the straw and went to sleep. The morning dawned, the other prisoners, tied together, were led away to execution, without Grivet, who was fast asleep, not perceiving anything or being perceived. The door of the cave was locked. On awakening he felt astonished to find himself in perfect solitude. Four days passed without any new prisoners being brought in. During these days he subsisted on provisions which he found scattered about the cave. On the evening of the fourth day he was discovered by the turnkey, who reported his omission to the judges. In a moment of leniency these set the prisoner at liberty" (*Percy Anecdotes*).

Ver. 12. *The Church in Mary's house.*—A study for present-day congregations.

I. **Numerously attended.**—"Many were gathered together." A healthful sign of piety when Christ's disciples forsake not the assembling of themselves together (Heb. x. 25)—a practice greatly declining at the present day. The advantages of social worship are too obvious to require detailed rehearsal. The worshipper frequently forgets that even though he may not himself derive benefit from the services of the Christian sanctuary, he may by his presence impart benefit to his fellow-worshippers. Besides, apart from benefit either given or received, it is the duty of Christ's people in this way to honour their exalted Lord.

II. **Seriously occupied.** — The assembled disciples were "praying." Prayer, though not the sole, yet an important, part of public worship, and should be conducted with intelligence, solemnity, and earnestness. Amongst the objects of a Church's supplications place should be found for all that concerns the welfare of the Church itself, its pastors and teachers, its members and adherents, the progress of the spiritual life among believers, the extension of the gospel in the world.

III. **Delightfully surprised.** — By Peter's appearance in their midst—no doubt an answer to their prayers. So will praying congregations and praying individuals experience similar surprises, if only their prayers be united, believing, and in earnest (Matt. xviii. 19; John xiv. 13; James i. 5).

IV. **Wonderfully instructed.** — By Peter's story of the Lord's dealings with him in prison. So should Christian pastors edify their congregations by occasionally relating their own experiences and always giving their hearers the benefit of those higher views of truth and duty into which they themselves have been led (1 Peter iv. 11).

V. **Suddenly left.**—Peter departed and went into another place. It would certainly be wrong to derive from this an argument against a stationary and in favour of a circulating ministry; but the incident may be used to recall the thought that here the Church's ministers, like the Hebrew priests, are not suffered to continue by reason of death (Heb. vii. 23).

Ver. 13. *A Maid named Rhoda.*

I. **A slave girl and yet a Christian.**—Christianity adapted to the deepest wants of all sorts and conditions of men. Believers of all ranks and degrees may be found within the Church of Jesus Christ.

II. **A servant and yet attending a prayer meeting.**—Many regard the Church's services as only designed for the leisured classes. But Christian devotion oils the wheels of all forms of industry.

III. **A humble individual and yet the bearer of a joyful message.**—It is not the medium through which a communication comes, but the character of the communication itself that imparts to it its chief value. It is not the preacher that saves, but the gospel he preaches. Nor is great talent required for telling the glad tidings of the gospel. A very unimportant person may blow the trump of Jubilee.

IV. **A weak woman, and yet able to do important service in the Church.**—Compare the service rendered to

Naaman the Syrian by the captive maid (2 Kings v. 2, 3). No one too insignificant to work in the Christian vineyard. Many of the noblest deeds are done by feeble folk. Women and children can do acts of high renown when inspired by love for Jesus Christ (John xii. 3; 1 Cor. xvi. 15).

Ver. 17. *The Three Jameses of Scripture; or, Three differing Types of Christian Service.*

I. **James the brother of John,** the first apostolic martyr.—A representative of the Church's confessors. A type of those who serve Christ by suffering—an honour reserved for the few.

II. **James the son of Alpheus,** or James the Little; also one of the Twelve, concerning whose life and labours nothing is known. A representative of those who fill humble and obscure stations in the Church. A type of those who serve Christ without attracting, or perhaps even seeking, the notice and applause of men—an honour bestowed on the many.

III. **James the brother of our Lord,** the president of the Jerusalem Church.—A representative of those who are called to fill public positions in the Church. A type of those who serve Christ by acting as the guides and leaders of their fellows—an honour mostly conferred on persons of special gifts. All sorts of servants are required by Christ to do His work in the Church and in the world.

Vers. 1-17. *Peter's Deliverance.*

I. **We obtain a pleasing view of the deep and tender sense of brotherhood which pervaded the early Christian Church.**—This sense of brotherhood is one of the best gifts which the gospel brought to men. It is indeed the primary, unique element of the human race as a special, distinct creation. As a variety of intelligent creature, intended to carry still higher the proof of God's creative wealth, the fact of its interlaced brotherhood, instinct with a common life, mutual love, and fully-shared joys, was its distinguishing feature. We know what a disastrous blow sin struck this distinguishing principle of human nature—how the members of the one family fell apart; how dissociation came into play, with all its destructive consequences. If reclamation should ever come for the race, if it should ever be started afresh upon a career of honour and blessedness, this principle must be called into life again. It must become the regulative power of human action. Men must be taught not only to know God as a Father, but each other as brothers, if they would attain to their true destiny. How beautifully did the early Church display this elevated, this transforming principle! How closely were they joined together! How constantly they assembled for mutual instruction! How tenderly they loved one another! Out of the fruitful soil of loving brotherhood sprang up the intense concern of the whole Church of Jerusalem for Peter, now in the hands of a relentless enemy. It is the true cement which binds Christians of every name and country together in an indissoluble bond.

II. **We see the Church of Jerusalem in the attitude of prayer for an imperilled brother.**—The Christians of Jerusalem are described as constituting one Church. 1. *It was a praying Church.* When they had returned to the city from the Mount of Olives after witnessing the ascension of the Lord into heaven, they entered into an upper room, and all continued with one accord in prayer. 2. *By the habit of prayer the Church was prepared for trying emergencies.* "While therefore Peter was being kept in prison, prayer was being made of the Church unto God for him." Here was a great emergency. It was a fair, full test of their faith. They had no carnal weapons with which to fight. They had no distinguished friends at court to whom they might appeal. They had no treasures to offer as a ransom for the valuable life. 3. *They prayed in concert.* All hearts were touched, all minds agreed;

not two or three, but the entire Church of Jerusalem. 4. *They prayed unceasingly.* There was no relaxation of energy, no manifestation of doubt, no giving over of entreaty. 5. The prayer was not only unceasing; it was instant, earnest—*intense* perhaps better expresses the meaning of the word. They prayed not coldly, nor over the fields, says John Calvin, but so long as Peter was in the conflict the faithful did what they could to help him, and that without wearisomeness. What a power is this *intensity* in the field of prayer! 6. *They prayed to the point.* It was all for Peter. Self was forgotten. 7. *And to God direct they spoke.* No living man is called on to help; no message is sent to Herod. They cast themselves on God nakedly; they invoke the Divine Power only. The case is urgent, and the mighty Presence alone filled the scene.

III. **The appeal has been made, the Divine Power invoked; let us see the issue.**—*W. C. Craig, D.D.*

Herod and Peter.

I. **God knows all about His children.**—Beyond the bare fact of Peter's arrest, the disciples were in profound ignorance concerning him. The secrets of the Roman prison-house were well kept. But there was One whose seeing and knowing could not be hindered. God kept watch over Peter, knew in what corridor and cell he was confined, knew the names of the guards to whom he was chained, knew just where and when and how to send His angel to visit him. Peter had no occasion to feel solitary or forsaken. His best friend never let him for one moment out of His sight. Our recognised afflictions are not the hardest to bear. The tears we shed in secret, the disappointments of which we never speak, the sorrowful hearts which we hide under smiling faces—these are the things that test and strain the fibre of manhood. It greatly helps us to bear troubles like these, to remember that God knows all about them.

II. **God keeps Himself informed about His children in order to help them.**—His knowledge is not accidental, nor the result of mere curiosity. He has it, and uses it to succour us in our times of extremity. He kept watch over Peter, in order that, when the right time came, He might deliver him from prison. We lose a part—and the best part—of the great truth of Providence by our false accentuation. Providence is Providence—the foreseeing and arranging that precedes helpful doing. No small part of the anxiety that disquiets us arises from our failure to apprehend this gracious method of the Divine working. Men have too mechanical an idea of life. They have a great deal to say about "cause and effect." Our common blessings are supposed to come in what we call the "order of nature." What we call "nature" is only the material form in which God embodies His will and power. The results of physical processes are only the Divine Word "made flesh and dwelling amongst us." What we call "law" is only God's method of working. In proportion as men realise that truth they get towards the heart of things. "The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."

III. **When God helps His children He expects them to help themselves.**—It was easily possible for God, in working a miracle for Peter's deliverance, to have wrought out every item of it. But that is not the Divine method. There were some things which the apostle could do for himself. He could obey the command to "rise up quickly"; he could gird himself and bind on his sandals; he could cast his garment about him, and follow the angel; he could find his own way, when the angel left him, through the well-remembered streets to the house of his friends. What he could not do for himself was done for him; what he could do he must do, or it would not be done. It is an old proverb, but a weighty one, that "God helps those who help themselves." Men have a certain range of natural abilities, inside

of which God does not step to interfere. We come into life equipped for its duties and responsibilities, and are not expected to let our furnishings rust from disuse. In the Divine economy of the universe, there is no provision for idle blood. Prayer is a power, but not such a power as allows men to fold their hands, and expect results which they might secure by the proper use of means within their grasp. We are "workers together with God," and, so long as we are idle, the heavens keep silence. God will never do anything for man that man can do for himself.

IV. **When God moves in behalf of His children no obstacle is too great for Him.**—Humanly judging, how many and what insuperable difficulties stood in the way of Peter's deliverance! The prison was secure against assault; no mob could force its massive gates. The guards were deaf to either bribes or threats. Each one must answer with his life for the safe-keeping of the prisoner. The shrewdest strategist could contrive no plan of escape or rescue that held out the least promise of success. But how easy for God to do that which was impossible for man! He had but to will it, and the keepers were helpless and asleep. And yet how apt men always are to magnify what they call the impossibilities in the way of answers to prayer! They limit the range of their petitions to the things which it seems to them can be done, and have no heart to ask God for what seems too hard for them. Our philosophies of prayer often ignore the fact that Omnipotence is at the head of the universe. We try with the measuring line of human probabilities to determine the sweep of Almightiness. We have nothing to do with probabilities. The hand that holds all worlds is able to work beyond our thought. We must trust God fully. Herod and Peter stand as representatives of two distinct types of humanity. The one, in the world's estimate, was rich, strong, and sovereign; the other was poor, weak, and a prisoner. The contest between them seemed most unequal. But God was on what men called the losing side, and that determined the issue. It is a truth to be remembered. In our schemes of life we give overweight to merely human advantages. Social position, wealth, natural capacity—if we have these, we think that we are equipped for success. We are too hasty in our conclusion. The real question is Is God for us or against us? In Him are all the treasures of wisdom and righteousness. With Him nothing is too hard for us to compass or attain. Apart from Him, our brightest prospects are only dreams, without substance or warrant.—*Monday Club Sermons.*

Vers. 1-19. *The Great Struggle;* or, the powers of light and darkness in conflict.

I. **The contending forces.**—1. *The powers of darkness.* Represented by (1) Herod the King. (2) The Jewish people. (3) The quaternions of soldiers. 2. The armies of light; represented by (1) The angel of the Lord. (2) The praying Church. (3) The servant Rhoda.

II. **The invisible commanders.**—1. Of the powers of darkness, *Satan,* the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience (Eph. ii. 2). 2. Of the armies of light, *the Lord,* the exalted Christ, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks (Rev. ii. 1), and who is a constant presence with His people (Matt. xxiii. 20).

III. **The important prize.**—The life of Peter.—1. *That of his body,* which was now imprisoned, which the arch enemy desired to cut off, but which the Lord of Glory determined to preserve. 2. *That of his soul,* which, on the one hand, was seriously threatened by the persecutions so thickly directed against him, but on the other hand was efficiently supported by the grace so richly manifested toward him.

IV. **The ultimate victory.**—This lay completely on the side of Christ and His heavenly army. 1. *Peter's body*

was delivered from the prison. The purpose of Herod, the expectation of the Jews, the vigilance of the soldiers, were all outwitted. 2. *Peter's soul was also rescued from peril.* Peter, it is known, continued faithful to the end, and eventually obtained the crown of life.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 20—25.

The Death of Herod; or, the Church's Persecutor punished.

I. **The occasion of, and circumstances connected with, Herod's death** (vers. 20-22).—1. The *place where it occurred—Cæsarea* (see on viii. 40). If Luke suggests that Herod's motive for leaving Jerusalem and taking up his quarters in that "city of sumptuous palaces" (Conybeare and Howson, *The Life and Epistles of Paul*, ii. 306) was the disgust felt in consequence of failing in his project to remove Peter, Josephus (*Ant.*, XIX. vii. 3, viii. 2) so far confirms this as to state that while Agrippa "loved to live at Jerusalem," he suddenly, after reigning three years over all Judæa, "came to the city of Cæsarea" with the obvious intention of residing there for a season. 2. The *time when it* happened. Manifestly within a month or two after Peter's deliverance, though the precise date is not specified. The interval between Herod's murder of James, shortly before the Passover of A.D. 44, and God's judgment on Herod, in August A.D. 44, was sufficiently short to show that in the monarch's overthrow the martyr's death was divinely avenged. 3. The *occasion on which it took place.* According to Luke that was the reception of an embassy from the cities of Tyre and Sidon, with which at the time Herod was displeased. The ground of this displeasure, though not stated, may be assumed to have been the commercial rivalry existing between those ancient ports and the newly founded harbour of Cæsarea. In consequence of this the Phœnicians, it may be supposed, had been subjected to prohibitory measures which prevented them from obtaining supplies of corn out of Palestine, and accordingly were aroused to embrace the opportunity afforded them by Agrippa's presence in Cæsarea to approach him with overtures for peace, which were laid before him by a friend of theirs at court—viz., Blastus, the king's chamberlain. According to the story in the Acts Herod died, or at least received his death stroke, on the day when the Phœnician ambassadors were admitted to his presence, and while he himself, arrayed in royal apparel and seated upon his throne, was making to them a bombastical harangue. Josephus agrees with Luke in mentioning that Herod's mortal malady seized him in a crowded assembly; and though the Jewish historian does not mention Herod's quarrel with the Phœnicians or the presence of their ambassadors in the meeting, but ascribes the vast gatherings to a festival which at the time was being held in the city "to make vows for his safety," possibly in honour of his return from Britain which took place that year, A.D. 44, nevertheless he (Josephus) says nothing to contradict Luke's account, while he concurs with the sacred writer in affirming that the special flattery offered to Agrippa was that of calling him a god. According to Luke the people shouted—"The voice of a god and not of a man!" According to Josephus, "his flatterers cried out, one from one place and another from another, though not for his good, that he was a god," adding, "Be thou merciful to us, for although we have hitherto reverenced thee only as a man, yet shall we henceforth own thee as superior to mortal nature." Both forms of utterance may have been used, though Josephus's appears like a paraphrase of Luke's. The result, however, will remain unaffected, even if Luke should be held as having abbreviated the exclamations of the people.

II. **The cause and the reason of Herod's death** (ver. 23). 1. *The cause* was

twofold. (1) The natural, material, instrumental, and visible cause was a violent distemper of the bowels, which the sacred writer describes more particularly by saying "He was eaten of worms." According to Josephus "a severe pain arose in his belly, and began in a most violent manner." "The two accounts considered together," writes Sir Risdon Bennett (*The Diseases of the Bible*, p. 101), "leave scarcely any room for doubt that the cause of death was perforation of the bowels by intestinal worms, inducing ulceration and acute peritonitis," instances of which, he adds, are well known to medical science. "Without doubt," says Leyrer, "one must think of abscesses and worm ulcers (*ulcera verminosa*), out of which, when they break up, maggots creep forth" (quoted by Keil, *Biblische Archæologie*, p. 564). To the same effect speaks Kamphausen in Riehm's *Handwörterbuch*, art. *Krankheiten*):—"It is well known that masses of round worms can break through a place in the bowels which has been rendered thin by suppuration, or even through stoppage of the bowels lead to a horrible death; nor is it less certain that through ulcer holes worms can empty themselves out." (2) The supernatural, immaterial, direct, and invisible cause was the hand of God to which Luke points by writing, "An angel of the Lord smote him." If Josephus does not introduce an angel into his report, it would almost seem as if by his story of the ill-omened bird, the owl, which Herod saw in the theatre (see *Ant.*, XIX. viii. 2), he intended to suggest the direct interposition of Heaven in bringing about Agrippa's death; and, indeed, according to Josephus, Agrippa himself regarded it in this light, and exclaimed when he saw the bird, "I, whom you call a god, am commanded presently to depart this life; while Providence thus reproves the lying words you just now said to me; and I, who was called immortal, am immediately to be carried away by death." 2. *The reason.* "Because he gave not God the glory," writes Luke; which Josephus confirms by saying, "Upon this the king did neither rebuke them nor reject their impious flattery." He, a Jew, to whom it was a foremost article in religion that Jehovah alone was God, and that to set up a creature alongside of Him was blasphemy and worthy of death (Matt. xxvi. 66), had allowed himself to suck in and drink down the adulation of puny mortals, and had actually began to consider himself a superior being, if not a veritable God; and so Jehovah, who is a jealous God (Exod. xx. 5), smote him till he died.

III. **The effect and consequence of Herod's death.**—1. *The people rejoiced.* "When it was known that Agrippa was departed this life, the inhabitants of Cæsarea and Sebaste forgot the kindnesses he had bestowed upon them, and acted the part of his bitterest enemies. . . . They also laid themselves down in public places and celebrated general feastings, with garlands on their heads, and with ointments and libations to Charon, and drinking to one another for joy that the king was dead" (Jos., *Ant.*, XIX. ix. 1). What a commentary—and not selected from the Bible—on the vanity of popular applause, and the insincerity of popular adulation! 2. *The word of God grew and multiplied.* Grew in weight and influence upon the hearts of those who listened to it; grew in the extent and circumference over which it travelled; grew in its power of overcoming difficulties and in making friends. Multiplied itself by multiplying the number of believers, by drawing towards the young Church crowds of men and women who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and cast in their lot with His cause.

Learn.—1. The certainty that God will avenge the blood of His martyrs (Deut. xxxii. 43; Luke xviii. 7). 2. The vanity of attempting to war with God (Isa. xxvii. 4; compare *Iliad*, V. 407, "By no means is he long lived who fights with the immortals"). 3. The wickedness of doing anything to rob God of His glory (Isa. xlii. 8, xlviii. 11). 4. The ultimate triumph of the gospel over all obstacles (Isa. xi. 9; Mark xiii. 10).

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 20-23. *The Sin and Punishment of Herod.*

I. **How the measure of his iniquity was filled up.**—It was pride that did it. 1. He picked a quarrel with his neighbours, the men of Tyre and Sidon. 2. He displayed before them his royal grandeur. 3. He accepted from them their senseless flattery. 4. He glorified himself above them as a god.

II. **How the wickedness of his conduct was punished.**—He who had killed James and would have slain Peter was himself destroyed. 1. The agent in his destruction was no less than an angel. The angel of the Lord who smote Peter on the side for life now smote the guilty Herod in the heart for death. 2. The instrument of Herod's destruction was no more than a worm. The body in the grave is destroyed by worms, but Herod's body putrefied while he was yet alive, and bred the worms which began to feed on it betimes. See (1) what weak and contemptible creatures God can make the instruments of His justice when He pleases; and (2) how God delights to bring down proud men in such a way as is most mortifying, and pours most contempt upon them.—*After M. Henry.*

Herod's Death.

I. **A proud man humbled.**

II. **A wicked man punished.**

III. **A powerful man weakened.**

Vers. 1-23. *God alone King.* Proved :—

I. **In the early death of James.**

II. **In the miraculous deliverance of Peter.**

III. **In the horrible end of Herod.**—*Gerok.*

Vers. 2-23. *The Deaths of James and of Herod.*

I. (The apostle died) **by the violence of man,** (the king) **by the visitation of God.**

II. (The apostle), **mature in grace;** (the king), **ripe in sin.**

III. (The apostle,) **lamented by his brethren;** (the king) **execrated by his subjects.**

IV. (The apostle,) **to ascend to glory;** (the king) **to go to his own place.**

Ver. 24. *The Progress of the Gospel in Apostolic Times.*

I. **The opposition it encountered.**—From—1. Jewish prejudices. 2. Heathen superstitions. 3. Human learning. 4. Satanic influence.

II. **The success it achieved.**—1. It was widely published. 2. Its influence was extensive. 3. Its converts were multiplied.

III. **The causes which enabled it to overcome opposition and attain success.**—1. The power of the Spirit. 2. The zeal of its preachers. 3. The holy lives of its disciples. 4. The unity of the Church. 5. The persecutions it suffered.

Ver. 24. *The Progress of the Kingdom of God.*

I. **It has its origin in a seed.**—"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed" (Matt. xiii. 31, 32). That seed is the truth of the gospel, which is: 1. *Divine.* Being the word of God (Luke viii. 11; 1 Peter i. 23; 1 John iii. 9). 2. *Vital.* Otherwise it would not spring up (Mark iv. 27) and operate (Heb. iv. 12). 3. *Small.* Only a word, a gospel, a message of glad tidings, not a philosophy or a science, or elaborated system of truth.

II. **It advances by growth.**—Like the seed which extracts nutriment from the soil, the kingdom of God absorbs into itself that which makes it expand by attracting through the power of the gospel souls from the outside world.

III. **It lives by reproduction.**—As the seed multiplies according to its kind, so do believers who constitute the Church, as it were, reproduce themselves in other believers who are

added to the congregation of the faithful.

Ver. 25. *The Home Coming of the Messengers.*

I. **After a mission well executed.**

II. **With a fresh recruit to their ranks.**

III. **In readiness for further service.**

The History of John Mark.

I. **His family connections.**—1. *The son of a pious mother.* Mary was a disciple. In this respect Mark resembled Timothy (xvi. i.). While grace does not run in the blood, there is an antecedent presumption that the piety of parents will reappear in their offspring. Mothers especially have an innate tendency to transmit their characters to their sons. How much pious mothers have in this way benefited both the Church and the world may be inferred from the annals of both, but will never be known till the day reveals. 2. *The cousin of Barnabas* (Col. iv. 10). Not sister's son, in which case his father may have been the father of Barnabas; but cousin, so that his father and Barnabas's may have been brothers, if the cousinship did not come through his mother. In any case, it was to Mark's advantage that he stood so closely related to the Son of Consolation.

II. **His excellent character.**—1. *Fundamentally good.* Like his mother he was a Christian disciple, having probably been converted by Peter, who afterwards affectionately regarded him as his son (1 Peter v. 13), though of course the term "son," as applied by Peter to Mark, may have referred to the service rendered by Mark to Peter. and this Mark may not have been John Mark, but either an actual son of the apostle's (Bengel), or Mark the evangelist (Eusebius). 2. *Constitutionally timid.* As much as this may be feasibly inferred from his desertion of Paul and Barnabas at Perga (xiii. 13), on account probably of the hardships and dangers of the way. Grace does not all at once revolutionise a man's natural temperament. Indeed, many good Christians have to struggle against constitutional infirmities all their lives. 3. *Ultimately steadfast.* This shines out conspicuously in his subsequent career. None reading of his after labours can doubt that Mark overcame his youthful indecision and became a splendid soldier of the cross. Youthful faults and indiscretions should not be allowed to hinder future usefulness or progress. Neither should they be used by others to disparage later merit.

III. **His honourable career.**—1. *An attendant of Paul and Barnabas* on their first missionary journey (xiii. 5). Decidedly a good beginning, though it speedily came to a termination, for which he should not now be too severely judged. *A colleague of Barnabas,* after he and Paul had parted (xv. 37, 39). Barnabas must have discerned in him elements of good notwithstanding his former lack of fortitude. 3. *A companion of Paul* in his imprisonment at Rome (Col. iv. 10, 11; 2 Tim. iv. 11; Philemon 24); so that even Paul had come to recognise his true nobility of soul and to set a high value on his ministerial and friendly assistance. A lesson that old saints should not be too severe in judging the faults of young Christians.

PART II.

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST AMONG THE GENTILES; OR, ITS PROGRESS FROM ANTIOCH TO ROME—THE ACTS OF PAUL.

CHAPTERS xiii.-xxviii.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY (PAUL AND BARNABAS)—COMMENCED.

§ 1. Barnabas and Saul at Antioch; or, the Departure of the First Gentile Missionaries (vers. 1-3).
§ 2. The Conversion of Sergius Paulus; or, the Gospel in Cyprus (vers. 4-12).
§ 3. A Sabbath Day in Pisidian Antioch; or, Paul's Sermon in the Synagogue (vers. 13-43).
§ 4. A Second Sabbath in Pisidian Antioch; or, the Gospel carried to the Gentiles (vers. 44-52).

CRITICAL REMARKS.

Ver. 1. **In the Church that was at Antioch.**—Better *at* or *in Antioch*, *in* or *throughout*, or *for the benefit of the Church*, κατά having all these different meanings. **Certain** should be omitted. **Prophets** (see on ii. 17) **and teachers** (1 Cor. xii. 28).—Named together (Rom. xii. 6; Eph. iv. 11), yet not the same, though both functions might be united in one person—as, *e.g.*, in Paul (Gal. ii. 2; 2 Cor. xii. 1) and John (Rev. i. 1, 9). **Barnabas,** named first, appears to have held at Antioch a position corresponding to that of Peter at Jerusalem (Holtzmann). Along with him **Simeon** and **Lucius** were prophets. **Manaen and Saul.**—Most likely teachers (Holtzmann). **Brought up with.**—σύντροφος. Might mean educated along with (2 Macc. ix. 29), but better rendered *collactaneus*, nourished at the same breast (Xen., *Mem.*, ii. 3, 4).

Ver. 2. **Ministered** refers to the rites of Christian worship, as prayer, exhortation, and fasting (Rom. xv. 27). **They** may signify the prophets and teachers, or the congregation or church in general. **The Holy Ghost said.**—Perhaps, as in xi. 28, xx. 23, through the lips of the prophets, or by the still small voice whispering to each of the leaders, as in viii. 29. **The work whereunto I have called them.**—Though not stated, doubtless understood by all to be that of carrying the gospel to the heathen (xiv. 26, xv. 38), as had already been intimated to Saul at his conversion (ix. 15).

Ver. 3. **Fasted and prayed.**—Compare x. 30, xiv. 23, which show that the two were frequently practised in conjunction by both individuals and the Church. This fast was special, in preparation for the ordination of the missionaries. **They**—*i.e.*, the prophets and teachers—**laid their hands on them,** without the co-operation of the Church members (against Overbeck). **They**—*i.e.*, the Church—sent them—the missionaries—away—rather, *gave them leave to depart*, *i.e.*, "released them from their regular duties and bade them 'God-speed'" (Ramsay). In ver. 4 they are represented as having been **sent forth by the Holy Ghost.**

Ver. 4. **Seleucia.**—"Civitas potens, sæpta muris neque in barbarum corrupta sed conditoris Seleucia retinens" (Tac., *An.*, vi. 42). The port of Antioch, three miles west of the city and two hours' journey from the mouth of the Orontes, was founded almost contemporaneously with Antioch, B.C. 300, by King Seleucus I. (Nicanor). The harbour is mentioned according to Luke's custom, xiv. 25, xvi. 11, xviii. 18 (Ramsay).

Ver. 5. **Minister.**—*Attendant*, or assistant; in what capacity is not told.

Ver. 6. The best MSS. read *the whole island.* They probably made "a complete tour of the Jewish communities in the island, preaching in each synagogue" (Ramsay).

Ver. 7. **The deputy of the country** should be proconsul, ἀνθύπατος. Long supposed that Luke had here erred in designating the governor of Cyprus proconsul, but now recognised that Luke is correct (see explanation in "Homiletical Analysis"). **Bar-jesus** = son of Jesus, or = *Barjesuvan*, son of readiness (Klostermann, Ramsay who for Elymas would read Ἕτοιμος).

Ver. 8. **Elymas.**—Arabic for "wise" (like Turkish *Ulemah*), and interpreted by Luke as

equivalent to sorcerer or magician. Note.—The above story of Elymas is supposed (Baur, Zeller, Holtzmann, and others) to have been influenced by the parallel narrations about Simon Magus (viii. 20-24) and Ananias and Sapphira (v. 1-10); but see "Hints" on ver. 8.

Ver. 9. **Saul, who also** is called **Paul.**—That from this point onward in the narrative the apostle ceases to be designated Saul, and is always called Paul, has been explained by the hypothesis that the apostle, either from Sergius Paulus, or his friends, received, or himself adopted, the Roman title Paul in commemoration of the proconsul's conversion (Jerome, Augustine, Bengel, Olshausen, Meyer, Ewald); but against this stand these considerations: 1. That Luke introduces the change of name before the conversion is recorded. 2. That while customary for a pupil to adopt the name of a teacher, it was not usual for a teacher to appropriate the name of a pupil. 3. That if Paul actually did assume the governor's name, it might at least look as if he attached more importance to the conversion of a distinguished than to that of an obscure person. Wherefore the more probable theory is that the apostle originally had the two names—Saul among the Jews, and Paul among the Gentiles (compare John Mark, xii. 25; Jesus Justus, Col. iv. 11)—and that, as hitherto, while preaching to the Jews his Jewish name was used, so henceforth, when evangelising among the Gentiles, his Gentile designation should be employed (Weizsäcker, Holtzmann, Wendt, Lechler, Hackett, Spence, Ramsay). The notion that Saul assumed the name Paul to express his personal humility is unlikely; the suggestion that Luke at this point began to use memoirs in which the apostle was called Paul (Alford) is little better. Still less correct is the hypothesis that Luke only invented the name from Paul's connection with Sergius (Baur, Zeller, Hausrath). The derivation of the name Paul from the Hebrew פלא = mirabilis, wonderful, in allusion to the miracle wrought by the apostle (Otto, Zöckler), appears somewhat fanciful.

Ver. 12. Read *the proconsul* instead of **the deputy** as above. **Believed.**—Baur, entirely without reason, thinks the conversion of the proconsul has "only a very slight degree of probability."

Ver. 13. **Paul and his company.**—Note the two changes—first of Saul's name, which is henceforth Paul, and next of Paul's position in the mission as leader rather than as follower, as principal rather than as subordinate. οἱ περὶ Παῦλον (compare αἱ περὶ Μάρθαν καὶ Μαριάμ, Textus Receptus). The phrase perhaps hints that Paul had other unnamed companions besides Barnabas and John. Instead of **loosed from** read *having set sail from*; and for *departing from them*, **having withdrawn from them.** For the reasons which caused John Mark to return to Jerusalem, see "Homiletical Analysis."

Ver. 14. **They** now signifies Paul and Barnabas without John. **Antioch of Pisidia.**—So named by Strabo. "The chief city of inner Pisidia, a Roman colony, a strong fortress, the centre of military and civil administration in the southern parts of the vast province called by the Romans Galatia" (Ramsay).

Ver. 15. **The law and the prophets.**—The higher critics say this should have been *the prophets and the law.* Christ agrees with Luke (Matt. xxii. 40). **Men** and **Brethren**, *Brethren* (R.V.), "Gentlemen, Brethren" (Ramsay).

Ver. 16. **Then Paul stood up.**—Dr. Murphy thinks Paul found the occasion for his chronological exordium in the lessons which he heard read in the synagogue, and that these were—the Parasha, Exod. x. 13-16, xii. 40, 41, xiii. 3-16, and the Haphtara, Jer. xlvi. 13-28 (see *The Homiletical Quarterly*, Oct. 1877, pp. 490, 491). Others (Farrar, Plumptre, Ramsay), think the passages read were Deut. i. and Isa. i. Baur (*Paul, His Life and Works*, i., pp. 104 *ff*) objects to the credibility of this speech on the grounds (1) of its resemblance to the speeches of Peter, and (2) of its lack of a truly Pauline character. But (1) why should Paul not have been as well acquainted with the history of his people as Peter—both being Jews? and (2) how can the speech be un-Pauline when on Baur's own admission it contains the doctrine of justification by faith? (vers. 38, 39).

Ver. 18. **Suffered He their manners in the wilderness.**—ἐτροποφόρησεν, the reading of the best MSS., though some ancient authorities read ἐτροφοφόρησεν, meaning "carried them as a nurse"—*i.e.*, sustained them and cared for them. "Both readings occur in the LXX. rendering of Deut. i. 31, to which passage reference is evidently made here. . . . But there can be no reason for questioning the genuineness of the reading of the text" (Westcott and Hort, *The New Testament in Greek*, ii., Appendix, 94, 95).

Ver. 19. **The seven nations** are named in Deut. vii. 1. **Divided their land to them by lot** should according to the best MSS. be **gave** them **their land for an inheritance**, the verb κατεκληρονόμησεν being substituted for κατεκληροδότησεν. The former verb occurs only here, and is a translation of Deut. iii. 28 (see Josh. xiv. 1-5).

Ver. 20. **After that,** or *these things*, signifies after the conquest and occupation. **About the space of four hundred and fifty years.**—This undoubtedly implies that the interval of the Judges was 450 years, which agrees with the chronology of Josephus (*Ant.*, VIII. ii. 1, X. viii. 5), who gives 592 years as the time that elapsed between the Exodus and the building of Solomon's temple. Deducting 4 years of Solomon's own reign, 40 of David's, 40 of Saul's, 25 for the leadership of Joshua, and 40 in the wilderness—*i.e.*, 4 + 40 + 40 + 25 +

40 = 149, the remainder is 443 (592 - 149), sufficiently close an approximation for Paul to put 450 years as the period of the Judges. This, however, does not harmonise with the statement (1 Kings viii.) that the building of the Temple began in the 480th year after the Exodus, which would give only 480 - 149 = 331 years for the era of the Judges—a discrepancy which cannot easily be removed. A better reading, which connects *about four hundred and fifty years* with the preceding verse (R.V.), appears to obviate the difficulty by making the number 450 signify the space of time between the giving of the land for an inheritance and the occupation of the land at the conquest—which space is thus made up—from the birth of Isaac, when it may be assumed the promise was given, to the birth of Jacob, 60 years; from Jacob's birth to his descent into Egypt, 130 years; the sojourn in Egypt, 215 years; from the Exodus to the settlement in Canaan, 47 years = in all 452 years. If this reading (Westcott and Hort) be adopted, the next clause will read, "And after these things He gave them judges until Samuel the prophet."

Ver. 21. **A man of the tribe of Benjamin,** to which Paul also belonged (Phil. iii. 5). **Forty years.**—The duration of Saul's reign is not mentioned in the Old Testament, which only states that Ishbosheth, his youngest son (1 Chron. viii. 33), was forty years at the time of Saul's death (1 Sam. ii. 10), and that Saul himself was a young man when he ascended the throne (2 Sam. ix. 2). Josephus (*Ant.*, VI. xiv. 9) speaks of Saul as having reigned eighteen years before and twenty-two years after Samuel's death.

Ver. 22. **I have found David the** son **of Jesse a man after Mine own heart, which shall fulfil,** or *who shall do,* **all My will,** or *wills.*—The first clause is cited from Psalm lxxxix. 20, which has "My servant," and omits "the son of Jesse"; the second is taken from 1 Sam. xiii. 14, where David in comparison with Saul is described as one who was faithful to Jehovah's commandments and ordinances. The third clause found in Isa. xliv. 28, with reference to Cyrus, may be held as included in the words "My servant," spoken of David. Alford thinks these citations form "a strong presumption that we have Paul's speeches verbatim as delivered by him, and no subsequent general statement of what he said, in which case the citations would have been corrected by the sacred text"; though Plumptre arrives at the opposite conclusion, that "it is possible we have, as it were, but the *précis* of a fuller statement." Schwanbeck speaks of an old biography of Barnabas, Olshausen of a special missionary report drawn up by Barnabas and Saul, Bleek of an independent document, Zöckler of an old separate account by an unknown author as the original source of Luke's information.

Vers. 23, 24. The **promise** was made not to David only, but to the fathers (ver. 32). The names of **Jesus** and **John** were widely known among the Jews of the Dispersion. **His coming** meant His *entrance* upon His public ministry.

Ver. 25. **Fulfilled** should be *was fulfilling.* **Whom think ye that I am?**—Better, *what suppose ye me to be?* The question, not found in the gospel accounts of John's ministry, is yet virtually implied in Matt. iii. 11; John i. 20, 21. The rendering, *He whom ye suppose me to be I am not* (Calvin, Luther, Grotius, Kuinoel, Holtzmann), is not so good. **But behold,** etc. are John's words in Luke iii. 16.

Ver. 27. **Because they knew Him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets.**—The inhabitants of Jerusalem and their rulers failed to recognise who Christ was because they misunderstood their own prophetic Scriptures.

Ver. 28. **No cause of death in Him.**—The Sanhedrim pronounced Jesus guilty of blasphemy, which involved a capital sentence (Matt. xxvi. 66), but they were unable to establish the accusation except by extorting a declaration from His own lips (Matt. xxvi. 60). In all other respects His judges were constrained to acknowledge His innocence (Matt. xxvii. 24; Luke xxiii. 22).

Ver. 29. **They laid Him in a tomb.**—His disciples—in particular Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea (John xix. 30)—did. Paul did not deem it needful to discriminate the individuals by whom the interment of Christ was carried out; yet the statement is literally accurate, since Nicodemus and Joseph were both rulers.

Ver. 31. **Them which came up with Him from Galilee** were the apostles.

Ver. 33. **The second psalm** is the preferable reading, *the first psalm,* found in Western MSS., having been probably inserted as a correction by a Western scribe who had been accustomed to read the first and second psalms as one (Westcott and Hort, *The New Testament in Greek,* ii. 95, Appendix), or who regarded the first psalm merely as an introduction to the rest. The allusion in the psalm is (here as in Heb. i. 51) not to the incarnation, but to the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus (compare Rom. i. 4).

Vers. 34-37. **The sure mercies of David** should be *the holy things of David, the sure—i.e.,* I will give to you the holy things of David (which have been promised, Isa. lv. 3, and) which are sure; one of which holy and sure things was the promise that God's **Holy One** should **not see corruption,** a promise which could not apply to David, who, after having **served his own generation by the will of God,** or *after having in his own generation served the will of God,* **fell on sleep,** or *by the will of God fell on sleep,* **and was laid unto his fathers**—an expression generally distinguished from burial, and implying the existence of the soul

in a future state (Gen. xxv. 8, xxxv. 29; 2 Kings xxii. 20)—and saw corruption. Christ who had been raised from the dead saw no corruption (compare ii. 25-33).

Ver. 41. **Behold, ye despisers**, etc.—Taken from Hab. i. 5, where it is used with reference to an approaching Chaldean invasion, this citation follows very closely the LXX., but agrees essentially with the Hebrew. For "among the nations" in Hebrew the LXX. read "despisers," and for "wonder marvellously," "wonder and perish." Paul followed the Septuagint, either because it was best known, or because it was sufficiently accurate for his purpose, or, because he believed it to correctly render the spirit of the ancient prediction.

Ver. 42. The more correct reading of this verse is given in the R.V.: "*And as they*, Paul and Barnabas (Hackett, Lechler) rather than the congregation (Alford), *went*," or were going, "*out, they*," the rulers probably (Hackett and Lechler), rather than the congregation (Alford), "*besought that these words might be spoken to them the next Sabbath day*," εἰς τὸ μεταξὺ σάββατον, not during the middle of the week, but on (lit. *unto*, as the limit) the Sabbath between the days, as ver. 44 shows.

Ver. 43. For **congregation** read *synagogue*. **The Jews and religious proselytes** represented two distinct classes.

Ver. 45. **Contradicting and blaspheming.**—The best MSS. omit "contradicting" (Lachmann, Westcott and Hort); but as it is neither superfluous nor Hebraistic (Hackett), and defines more exactly the nature of the opposition (Zöckler), it may be retained.

Ver. 46. **It was necessary.**—Compare Luke xxiv. 47; Rom. i. 16, ii. 10.

Ver. 47. **I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles.**—This citation from Isa. xlix. 6 (LXX.) represented the apostolic mission as a continuation of Christ's (see Luke ii. 32).

Ver. 48. **Ordained to eternal life.**—τεταγμένοι εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον. Cannot be rendered—those who believed were appointed to eternal life, or those who were disposed, *i.e.*, inclined, to eternal life believed. The words mean what they say—"as many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Calvin, Kuinoel, Olshausen, Meyer, Winer, De Wette, Hackett, Spence, and others)—the "ordained to eternal life" being those who are "chosen" (Eph. i. 4), and "foreordained" (Rom. viii. 29), though it need not be doubted that this Divine "choosing," "electing," "foreordaining," does not destroy, but is compatible with and realises itself through the complete freedom of the human will.

Ver. 49. Implies a certain lapse of time; how long, uncertain.

Ver. 50. **The devout and honourable women**, or *devout, honourable women—i.e.*, devout women of honourable estate (R.V.)—were Gentile females who had embraced Judaism (see on xvii. 4). The influence here attributed to women "is in perfect accord with the manners of the country. In Athens, or an Ionian city, it would have been impossible" (Ramsay). **The chief men of the city** were probably their husbands or kinsmen.

Ver. 51. **Shook off the dust of their feet** (compare xviii. 6), as directed by Christ (Matt. x. 14), for a testimony against their persecutors (Luke ix. 5).

Ver. 52. **The disciples**—*i.e.*, at Antioch—**were filled with joy**, notwithstanding the persecution which raged against them (xiv. 22).

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 1—3.

The Church at Antioch; or, the Designation and Dispatch of the First Missionaries.

I. **The names of the missionaries.**—1. *Barnabas.* Originally called Joses. Styled Barnabas, meaning Son of Consolation or of Exhortation, either from his sympathy or from his eloquence, or perhaps from both. A native of Cyprus, a Levite, who stood high in the esteem of the Church at Jerusalem on account of his self-sacrificing liberality, and who had lately arrived in Antioch on a mission from the mother Church in the metropolis (iv. 36, 37, xi. 22, which see). 2. *Saul*, a native of Tarsus, a scholar of Gamaliel, a participator in the murder of Stephen, a persecutor of Christians, a convert of Jesus, a powerful evangelist, recently introduced to the Church at Antioch by Barnabas (vii. 58, viii. 1-3, ix., xi. 25, 26, which see).

II. **Their standing in the Church at Antioch.**—1. *Their offices.* Prophets and teachers. All prophets were teachers, though all teachers were not prophets. A prophet was one who authoritatively uttered Divine communications, whereas a teacher was one who had the gift of teaching and explaining what the prophet uttered (see 1 Cor. xii. 28; Eph. iv. 11). Both offices were held by Barnabas and Saul, though Saul and Manaen it has been thought (Besser) were designed to be regarded as teachers; Barnabas, Simeon, and Lucius as prophets (see

"Critical Remarks"). 2. *Their colleagues.* (1) Simeon, called Niger, and so distinguished from both Simon Peter and Simon the Canaanite. Otherwise unknown, though probably a Jew who received the Roman appellation from the Gentiles. Whether a native of Africa who had become a proselyte (Alford) cannot be told. (2) Lucius of Cyrene. Supposed by some to have been the writer of the Acts (see i. 1), and by others with greater likelihood Lucius, Paul's kinsman (Rom. xvi. 21). On the place of his birth see ii. 10. (3) Manaen =Menahem (2 Kings xv. 14) occurs only here. Whether he had simply been brought up with, *i.e.*, educated along with, Herod the tetrarch, a son of Herod the Great, an uncle of Herod Agrippa, the murderer of John the Baptist (Matt. xiv. 11), and the derider of our Lord (Luke xxiii. 11), or nursed with him at the same breast, cannot be decided by expositors. The former notion (Calvin, Grotius, Baumgarten, and others) derives support from the circumstance that it was "common for persons of rank to associate other children with their own for the purpose of sharing their amusements and studies, and by their example serving to excite them to greater emulation" (Hackett); the latter (Kuinoel, Olshausen, Tholuck, and others) might have easily occurred if Manaen's mother had been Herod's nurse. And this is not unlikely if Manaen's father or grandfather was the Essene prophet mentioned by Josephus (*Ant.*, XV. x. 5), who in the early youth of Herod the Great foretold his future elevation to the throne.

III. **Their call to be missionaries.**—1. *To whom given.* (1) Without question inwardly to the missionaries themselves. The narrative (ver. 2) seems to indicate that Barnabas and Saul had already become conscious of an inward prompting to undertake a Gentile mission. Without this it might have been difficult to persuade them to undertake so arduous an enterprise; with this their path of duty would be immeasurably clearer. No man should enter on the office of a minister or missionary without an inward conviction that he is called of God (Heb. v. 4). (2) As certainly in outward form to the Church, without whose authorisation the evangelists should not proceed. The work of carrying the gospel into regions beyond may be executed by private individuals, but the duty of sending the gospel into all the world rests with the Church in its corporate capacity. Hence ambassadors should be sent abroad in its name and with its sanction. Nor should private individuals readily regard themselves as called to be ministers or missionaries, if they cannot obtain the concurrence of the Church. 2. *When given.* While they, the prophets and teachers, ministered to the Lord and fasted. Whether by themselves or in company with the members of the Church is not stated; but this may be inferred, that either the whole body of the Church or its leaders were at this time seeking heavenly light and guidance on this very point, the carrying of the gospel into regions beyond. When God desires to stir His people up to enter on some "forward movement" for the glory of His name and the extension of His cause and kingdom, He usually pours out upon them the Spirit of grace and supplication. 3. *By whom given.* By the Holy Ghost, the invisible but ever-present and Divine representative of Jesus Christ, whom Christ promised to send as His Church's teacher and guide after He Himself had withdrawn His bodily presence (John xiv. 16, 17, xv. 26, xvi. 7-14). The same Spirit still must call forth the Church's ministers and missionaries. 4. *In what form given.* (1) To the missionaries themselves, probably, in a clear presentation to their minds of the claims of the heathen world, and a strong conviction wrought within their hearts that they should yield to those claims by going forth as messengers of the cross. (2) To the Church by a still small voice, probably, which simultaneously spoke in each prophet's and teacher's heart, and seemed to say, "Separate now for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them"—the work not

being mentioned because it was understood, either as having formed the subject of their thoughts and the object of their prayers, or as being universally recognised in the Church that the Spirit's office was to organise and extend the kingdom of Christ.

IV. **Their ordination to the missionary office.**—1. *By whom ordained.* (1) By the whole body of the Church. Whoever the agent, the act was that of the entire Christian community. (2) By the prophets and teachers. Whether others besides these participated in the solemnities of the occasion, not being stated, will be differently replied to by different readers and interpreters. 2. *How ordained.* (1) By fasting and prayer. In these religious services the entire body of Christian people may have taken, and probably did take, part. (2) By laying on of hands. This symbolical rite was most likely performed by the Church's leaders, the prophets and teachers; but whether by all or only by representatives cannot be decided. 3. *To what ordained.* Not to the work of the ministry, since Paul was a minister already (Gal. i. 1), nor to the apostleship (Lightfoot), since "the apostle was always appointed by God, not by the Church" (Ramsay), but to the special business of carrying the gospel to the Gentiles. The mission-field, the high place of honour in the Christian Church, calls for men of the clearest intellect, the largest heart, and the bravest spirit—in short, for men of the type of Barnabas and Saul.

V. **Their departure from Antioch.**—Simply told, "they," the Christians at Antioch, "sent them," Barnabas and Saul, away (see Critical Remarks). 1. *On a holy errand.* To carry the light of truth and life into darkened understandings and benighted hearts, to proclaim the message of salvation to a lost and ruined world, to bring all nations to the obedience of the faith (Rom. i. 5). An errand more sublime imagination cannot well conceive. 2. *With fervent prayers.* Commending them to heaven for protection on their journeys, for assistance in their labours, for success in their enterprise. 3. *In hope of a triumphant return.* Looking forward doubtless to the time when those who were setting forth would come back with tidings of what great things God had done by their hands (compare Psalm cxxvi. 6), which they did (xiv. 27).

Learn.—1. That a Church may consist of different congregations. 2. That in the Church exist various orders of office-bearers. 3. That the presiding personality in the Church of Jesus Christ is the Holy Spirit. 4. That no one can legitimately exercise office in the Church without the Spirit's call. 5. That fasting and prayer prepare the human soul for the Spirit's communications. 6. That the Church of Christ should ever regard itself as a great missionary society. 7. That the Church should follow with its prayers those who represent it in mission-fields.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 1-3. *The Church at Antioch a True Church.*

I. Its **chief president** was the Holy Ghost.

II. Its **ministers** were various.—Prophets, teachers, missionaries (possibly elders had not yet been appointed, though already they existed in Jerusalem) (xi. 30).

III. Its **membership** was mixed—not confined to one class, but composed of Jews and Gentiles.

IV. Its **doctrine** was evangelical, consisting of the tenets of the gospel.

V. Its **worship** was scriptural—fasting and prayer.

VI. Its **spirit** was missionary—it sent forth the first evangelists to the heathen.

Vers. 2, 3. *The Indispensable Requirements of a True Minister or Missionary.*

I. A **call** from the Holy Ghost.

II. **Ordination** from his brethren.
III. **Recognition** by the Church.
IV. A definite **sphere of labour.**

Ver. 3. *The Best Travelling Attendance for a Missionary on his Departure.*

I. The Divine call concerning him.
II. The Spirit's impulse within him.
III. The Church's prayers behind him.
IV. The sighing of the heathen world before him.—*Gerok.*

Vers. 1-3. *The Forward Movement at Antioch.*

I. **The contemplated character of this movement.**—Not the consolidation of the Church's own membership, the elaboration of the Church's worship, the systematisation of the Church's doctrine, the development of the Church's resources, the completion of the Church's order—all of which were praiseworthy objects; but the extension of the gospel throughout the heathen world—the greatest movement that can occupy the thoughts of Christ's people.

II. **The felt necessity for the movement.**—Hardly remarkable that this was first recognised not in Jerusalem, the city of exclusive theocratic privilege, of religious conservatism, of haughty spiritual pride, of comparative poverty, but in Antioch, a city of mixed population, of intellectual liberality, of commercial enterprise, of large wealth.

III. **The earnest preparation for the movement.**—In proportion to its vast importance and herculean difficulty, it required to be gone about with caution. Not only had fitting agents to be selected and proper fields to be marked out for their labours, but the approbation of the Holy Ghost and the concurrence of the Church had to be secured. Accordingly it was not surprising that the Church's leaders gave the whole scheme prolonged and serious consideration, and in company with the Church's members, it may be supposed, spread the matter out before the Lord.

IV. **The actual initiation of the movement.**—This was done by the Holy Ghost, whose province alone it was to sanction such a forward step, and without whose approbation the Church authorities would not have felt warranted to stir. Only when they got His signal could they see their way to advance; when that came they could no longer hold back.

V. **The practical execution of the movement.**—This was entrusted to Barnabas and Saul, than whom no better evangelists have ever unfurled the banner of the cross. Were all heathen missions conducted by two such captains, fewer failures and more successes would be recorded. Barnabas and Saul present the types of men the Church should seek for her missionaries.

VI. **The faithful historian of the movement.**—Not Lucius of Cyrene, but Luke, the beloved physician, who in his unadorned and artless chronicles has supplied an admirable model for missionaries' reports.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 4—12.

Barnabas and Saul in Cyprus; or, the Commencement of the First Missionary Journey.

I. **The journey to Cyprus.**—1. *By land to Seleucia.* This town, sixteen miles distant from Antioch, to which it served as a seaport, stood upon the coast five miles north of the mouth of the Orontes. "Seleucia united the two characters of a fortress and a seaport. It was situated on a rocky eminence, which is the southern extremity of a range of hills projecting from Mount Amanus. . . . The harbour and mercantile suburb were on level ground towards the west," and were protected by "strong artificial defences" (Conybeare and Howson, *The Life and Epistles of Paul*, i. 132). "In addition to splendid buildings and temples,

the city possessed other advantages. The climate was excellent, and the soil around uncommonly fruitful. Its geographical position, before the gate of Antioch, between Cyprus, Cilicia, Syria, and Phœnicia, made it a seat of extraordinarily lively and profitable commerce" (Hertzberg in Riehm, art. "Seleucia"). "A village called *Antakia* and interesting ruins point out the ancient site" (Hackett). 2. *By sea to Cyprus.* Conybeare and Howson offer four reasons why the missionaries turned in the first instance towards this island. It was separated by no great distance from the mainland of Syria; a vessel sailing from Seleucia to Salamis was not difficult to procure, especially in the summer season; Cyprus was the native land of Barnabas, a consideration which would naturally weigh with the Son of Consolation (compare John i. 41, 42, xi. 5); and some of the Cypriotes were already Christians (xi. 20). As the Holy Spirit is not said to have prescribed the route, these suggestions may serve as an explanation of the missionaries' movements, at least till better can be found.

II. **The work in Salamis.**—1. *The city and its inhabitants.* Situated near the modern town of *Famagousta*, the ancient city stood "on a bight of the coast to the north of the river Pediæus." "A large city by the sea shore, a widespread plain with cornfields and orchards, and the blue distance of mountains beyond, composed the view on which the eyes of Barnabas and Saul rested when they came to anchor in the bay of Salamis" (Conybeare and Howson, i. 135). "When the apostles stepped ashore upon one of the ancient piers, of which the ruins are still visible, it was a busy and important place, and we cannot doubt that Barnabas would find many to greet him in his old home" (Farrar, *The Life and Work of St. Paul*, i. 347). 2. *The synagogues and their worshippers.* Since there were "synagogues," the Jewish population must have been considerable; and one can easily understand how "the unparalleled productiveness of Cyprus, and its trade in fruit, wine, flax, and honey, would naturally attract them to the mercantile port" (Conybeare and Howson, i. 135). Hitherto it had been Saul's custom to begin his work by visiting the synagogues; and from this practice, neither he nor Barnabas as yet departed. 3. *The missionaries and their occupation.* Whatever else they did, their time was mainly spent in preaching or proclaiming the word of God to their fellow-worshippers in these synagogues, who would of course be Jews with a mixture perhaps of heathen proselytes. (On synagogue worship, see ver. 15.) What measure of success they obtained is not reported. 4. *Their attendant and his duties.* By name John Mark (see on xii. 25); but whether he assisted Barnabas and Saul in preaching and baptising, or confined his attention to secular matters, such as making arrangements for the travel, lodging, and sustenance of the company, cannot be determined. That John Mark is introduced in this "curiously incidental" way, was probably designed, in view of what was to happen in Pamphylia, to show that "he was not essential to the expedition, had not been selected by the Spirit, had not been formally delegated by the Church of Antioch, but was an extra hand taken by Barnabas and Saul on their own responsibility."—Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller*, etc., p. 71.

III. **The arrival at Paphos.**—1. *The town.* New Paphos, on the west coast of the island, a hundred miles from Salamis; then a bustling haven, the city of Aphrodite (Venus), whose infamous rites long continued to be celebrated in its temple, and the residence of the Roman proconsul; now a decayed and mouldering village, the modern *Baffa*. 2. *The governor.* (1) His name—Sergius Paulus, of whom nothing more is known. Galen mentions a Sergius Paulus who flourished more than a century later, and was distinguished for philosophy; while Pliny (A.D. 90) names a Sergius Paulus as his chief authority for some facts in natural history which he relates, and in particular for two connected with Cyprus. "A Greek inscription of Soloi, on the north

coast of Cyprus, is dated in the proconsulship of Paulus, who probably is the same governor that played a part in the strange and interesting scene to be described" (Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen*, p. 74). (2) His character—"prudent," or "a man of understanding." One who intermeddled with all knowledge, a philosopher like his namesake above referred to. Out of this thirst for learning may have arisen his acquaintance with Bar-jesus; it was a better proof of the sincerity of his desire for enlightenment that he summoned Barnabas and Saul to his palace to hear from them the word of God. (3) His office—"deputy of the country," or rather, proconsul. That Sergius Paulus should have been so styled was formerly regarded as an error on the part of Luke, but is now proved to be in accordance with absolute historical accuracy (see "Critical Remarks"). 3. *The sorcerer.* (1) His personal designation. Bar-jesus, the son of Jesus (see "Critical Remarks"). (2) His professional title. A certain magician. He had assumed the appellation Elymas (from the same root as the Turkish Ulemah), meaning, "the wise man" or wizard. (3) His correct description. A false prophet. "He was a fortune-teller, but his art was an imposition" (Hackett). (4) His national derivation. A Jew. Hackett thinks he may have been born in Arabia or lived there for some time.

IV. **The encounter with Bar-jesus.**—1. *The conduct of the sorcerer.* He "withstood Barnabas and Saul, seeking to turn away the deputy or proconsul from the faith." A statement which shows—(1) That the governor's reception of the apostles took place not in private, but in public, at least to the extent of being in presence of the inmates of his household, including Elymas, who was apparently established in the service of Sergius. (2) That the exposition of the gospel given by the apostles had made a manifest impression on the governor's heart, which promised to result in his conversion. (3) That the false prophet interposed with a view of preventing his master and patron from yielding to the eloquence of the missionaries. How Elymas sought to weaken the force of the apostles' preaching and deaden its influence upon Sergius is not told, but it is probable "he spared neither argument nor insult in his endeavour to persuade Sergius of the absurdity of the new faith" (Farrar)—perhaps reviling Christ as a crucified malefactor, and denouncing Him as an enemy of Moses. 2. *The action of Saul.* Significant that not Barnabas but Saul steps into the arena against Elymas and for the rescue of Sergius—a heroic deed which, by its success, for ever established Saul's precedence over Barnabas, and, as some conjecture, won for him his new and now world-renowned name of Paul (see, however, "Critical Remarks"). (1) The secret impulse which pushed Saul into the foreground came from the Holy Ghost, who then presided and still presides in the Church, who then selected and still selects His agents, and who then directed as He still directs their steps. "Saul, filled with the Holy Ghost." (2) The searching glance with which Saul transfixed the wizard (compare iii. 4) showed how completely the wizard's character and motives were understood, and how indignantly the apostle's soul flamed out against them. Saul's eyes were illumined by the Spirit of the Lord, which searcheth all things (1 Cor. ii. 10). Ramsay finds in the power of the apostle's eye an indirect proof that the apostle's "stake in the flesh" was not "impaired vision" (*Ibid.*, p. 97). (3) The denunciation uttered by the apostle must have told the detected impostor that his career of wickedness was at an end. In three terrific ejaculations the apostle revealed to him his depraved character, telling him first that he was "full of all guile and of all villainy," deceit and rascality, cunning and criminality; next, that instead of being a Bar-jesus—*i.e.*, a son of the salvation of Jehovah—he was a veritable son of the devil (compare John viii. 44); and thirdly, that he was an enemy of all righteousness, thus making him "equal to the father of lies" (Stier), "pierced

through with hatred against the good" (Besser). In a short, sharp question the apostle unfolded to him the wickedness of his present behaviour: "Wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" "The ways of the Lord aim directly and rightly at the salvation of all men (Deut. xxxii. 4; Hosea xiv. 9), and the two preachers of the gospel have just explained to the Romish governor these ways; . . . and Paul sees that the false prophet will not cease to crook the straight paths of the Lord and to turn them away from Sergius Paulus that he may not believe and become blessed" (Besser). (4) The appalling judgment invoked upon the sorcerer—"Behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee," etc.—was a richly merited retribution for his heinous wickedness in having sought to prevent the salvation of a soul. Yet was it mingled with fourfold mercy. In the first place it was a bodily infliction, whereas it might have fallen on his soul, as with Judas (i. 25). Secondly, it spared his life, whereas it might have cut him off, as it did Herod (xii. 23). Thirdly, it was only blindness, whereas it might have been loss of reason, as in the case of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. iv. 34). And fourthly, it might have been for the whole term of his natural life, whereas, as with Zacharias (Luke i. 20), it was only for a season. 3. *The impression on Sergius.* (1) What he saw. The judgment taking instant effect. "Immediately there fell on Elymas a mist and a darkness," etc. (2) How he felt. He was astonished at such a display of spiritual power. (3) What he did. "He believed." "How far his belief was deep-seated or otherwise we have no evidence which would enable us to judge. But the silence of Luke would seem to indicate that he was not baptised, and we can hardly look upon him as a deep and lifelong convert, since otherwise we should, in the rarity of great men in the Christian community, have as certainly heard of him in their records, as we hear of the very few who at this period—like Flavius Clemens or Flavia Domitilla—joined the Church from the ranks of the noble or the mighty" (Farrar, *The Life and Work of St. Paul*, i. 355). With this pronouncement one may reasonably disagree. It is too much to expect that all great men who are converted should have their names and doings paraded in Church chronicles.

Learn.—1. The highest sign of wisdom—desiring to hear the word of God. 2. The grossest act of wickedness—perverting the right ways of God, or opposing the salvation of others. 3. The sorest of all earthly calamities—the falling on one of God's hand for judgment. 4. The noblest trophy of a preacher's power—the conversion of a soul.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 4-12. *The First Missionary Ship.*

I. **Its bold crew.**—1. The great Paul. 2. The noble Barnabas. 3. The youthful Mark.

II. **Its first wind.**—1. The east wind filling its sails. 2. The breath of the Holy Ghost inspiring its teachers.

III. **Its favourable anchorage.**—The renowned Cyprus with its natural beauties and sinful abominations.

IV. **Its great prizes.**—1. The sorcerer vanquished. 2. The governor converted.—*Gerok.*

Ver. 6. *The Story of Bar-jesus.*

I. His **name**—good.

II. His **character**—bad.

III. His **profession**—vile.

IV. His **sin**—great.

V. His **punishment**—severe.

Vers. 6-12. *Elymas, Sergius, and Saul; or, Three Sorts of Wisdom.*

I. **Elymas**, the representative of false wisdom, the subtilty inspired by the devil (ver. 10).

II. **Sergius**, the representative of earthly wisdom, the wisdom which the world admires (ver. 7).

III. **Saul**, the representative of true (as opposed to false) and celestial (as distinguished from earthly) wisdom,

the wisdom which the Holy Ghost teaches (ver. 9).

Ver. 7. *Sergius Paulus.*

I. **A man of understanding,** and yet the dupe of a sorcerer.

II. An **anxious inquirer** opposed by a pretended "wise one."

III. An **astonished spectator** of a suddenly inflicted judgment.

IV. A **promising convert,** who accepts the teaching of the Lord.

Desiring to hear the Word of God. Might proceed out of—

I. **Curiosity,** as in the case of Herod and the Athenians.

II. **Thirst for knowledge,** as with Sergius Paulus.

III. **Eagerness to believe,** as was true of the Gentiles in Antioch.

IV. **Determination to oppose,** as with the unbelieving Jews.

Sergius Paulus, a Prudent Man.

I. **The nature of true prudence.**—It is not craft or cunning, it is not self-conceit or self-wisdom, it is not a cautious avoidance of the dangers that lie in the path of duty. It is the adaptation of our line of action to the proprieties of time, and place, and persons. It is practical wisdom.

II. **The cases to which it applies.** 1. To the preference of objects according to their comparative value. 2. To the due improvement of all opportunities of doing good and getting good. 3. To the foresight of all future events that may be anticipated. 4. To the control of the temper. 5. To the government of the tongue.

III. **Its advantages.** 1. It prevents many evils. 2. It sweetens all the charities of social life. 3. It increases the means of doing good. (1) Cherish a deep sense of its inestimable value; (2) Cultivate it by prayer, and an intimate acquaintance with the Bible. —*G. Brooks.*

Ver. 8 with viii. 9. *The Two Sorcerers; or, Simon Magus and Elymas Bar-jesus.*

I. **Compare.**—In being—1. Men. 2. Magicians. 3. Hearers of the gospel. 4. Guilty of heinous sin—the one seeking to purchase the gift of God with money, the other to hinder the work of God in others, doubtless for the sake of money. 5. Subjects of apostolic denunciation.

II. **Contrast.**—1. The one (Simon Magus) an Oriental, the other (Elymas) a Jew. 2. The one a willing, the other an involuntary hearer of the gospel. 3. The one a baptised believer, the other a malignant opponent of the truth. 4. The one an adherent of Philip, the other an enemy of Saul. 5. The one simply denounced, the other signally punished. N.B.—These points of contrast sufficiently dispose of the allegation of the Tübingen critics that Paul's contest with Elymas is simply an imitation, without any historical foundation, of Peter's struggle with Simon Magus.

III. **Suggest.**—1. That there is not much to choose between an insincere disciple and an open enemy of the truth. 2. That nothing short of genuine conversion will secure salvation. 3. That the punishments of sinners are always less than they deserve. 4. That it is dangerous to oppose or disbelieve the gospel.

The Sorcerer, the Proconsul, and the Apostle; or, a Triangular Contest.

I. **Elymas and Sergius,** the sorcerer and the proconsul, the pretended wise man and the earthly savant; or the deceiver and his dupe.

II. **Sergius and Paul,** the proconsul and the apostle, the vicegerent of Cæsar and the ambassador of Christ, the impersonation of human prudence and the bearer of heavenly wisdom; or the scholar and his teacher.

III. **Paul and Elymas,** the true prophet and the false, the servant of Jesus and the son of the devil; or the preacher of righteousness and his satanic opponent.

Ver. 10. *Perverting the Right Ways of the Lord.*

I. **The ways of the Lord are right.** —1. The ways of the Lord Himself are

right—always in accordance with holiness and truth (Hosea xiv. 9). 2. The ways the Lord prescribes to men are right—always like His own, conformable to law and justice (Psalm xix. 8, cxix. 75).

II. **The right ways of the Lord may be perverted.**—1. Not God's ways for Himself—which never can be other than pure and upright (Psalm cxlv. 17). 2. But God's ways for man—which may be turned aside (1) by false teaching (2 Peter ii. 1), (2) by bad example (2 Tim. iii. 5, 6), (3) by sinful temptation (2 Peter ii. 15).

III. **To pervert the right ways of the Lord is offensive.**—It is—1. Presumptuous on the part of a creature. 2. Sinful, being contrary to Divine law. 3. Dangerous, as incurring the just judgment of God.

Vers. 11, 12. *The Judgment on Elymas and its Effect on Sergius a Type of the Double Work of Christianity.*

I. **It blinds those who** (like Elymas think they) **see** (John ix. 39).

II. **It imparts sight to those who** (like Sergius confess they) **are blind** (John ix. 39).

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 13—43.

A Sabbath Day in Pisidian Antioch; or, Paul's Sermon in the Synagogue.

I. **The missionaries in the city.**—1. *Their journey thither.* It is apparent from the narrative that Paul and Barnabas did not make a prolonged stay in any of the places which they visited on this journey. Having completed their visit to Cyprus, which probably extended over two months, and having set sail from Paphos, they landed at Perga in Pamphylia, situated on the Cestrus about seven miles from its mouth—a city, the ruins of which survive to this day in the shape of "walls and towers, columns and cornices, a theatre and a stadium, a broken aqueduct encrusted with the calcareous deposit of the Pamphylian streams, and tombs scattered on both sides of the site of the town" (Conybeare and Howson, i. 153). In Perga they did not linger many days—not longer than to settle the dissension caused by the proposal to cross the Taurus (Ramsay). The natural beauty of the city and its celebrated temple of Artemis (Diana) possessed for them no attractions. Accordingly they hastened on to Antioch in Pisidia, perhaps because the season of the year rendered it expedient to prosecute their journey into the interior then rather than at a later period. "Earlier in the spring the passes would have been filled with snow. In the heat of summer the weather would have been less favourable for the journey. In the autumn the disadvantages would have been still greater from the approaching difficulties of winter." Besides, "at the beginning of the hot season people move up from the plains to the cool basinlike hollows on the mountains"; and "if Paul was at Perga in May, he would find the inhabitants deserting its hot and silent streets" (Conybeare and Howson, i. 156, 157). Ramsay (*The Church in the Roman Empire*, pp. 62, 63) suggests that Paul caught fever in Perga, and was obliged, for health's sake, to proceed into the more elevated region of the interior (see "Hints" on ver. 13), selecting Antioch as their destination because of its commercial importance and numerous Jewish population (*Ibid.*, p. 19; compare *St. Paul the Traveller*, etc., pp. 89 *ff*). 2. *What occurred upon the way.* John Mark, departing from them at Perga, returned to Jerusalem. The reasons, not stated and not approved by Paul (xv. 38), were probably mixed. (1) Mark was young and not inured to hardship, and may have shrunk from the perils of the enterprise (Grotius, Holtzmann, Zöckler). (2) His natural temperament may have been somewhat unsteady (Alford). (3) He may have resented the growing ascendency of Paul, which was thrusting Barnabas, his uncle, into a second place. (4) He may have been doubtful of the liberal

theology which Paul was everywhere preaching. (5) He may have grown somewhat apprehensive about the safety of his mother, whom he had left behind at Jerusalem: "either he did not like the work or he wanted to go and see his mother" (Henry). (6) He may have regarded the proposal to cross the Taurus as an unwarranted deviation from the original plan (Ramsay). 3. *How they acted on arrival.* They doubtless made themselves acquainted with the aspect of the city and the character of its inhabitants; Antioch was a flourishing commercial city, which lay about a week's journey north of Perga, up the valley of the Cestrus, on the central table-land of Asia Minor, on the confines of Pisidia and Phrygia. It had been built by Seleucus I., the founder of the Syrian Antioch, and was then an important emporium for the trade of Asia Minor in wood, oil, skins, goat's-hair, and Angola wool, besides being a Roman colony. Its true position, at a place now called *Yalobatch*, was discovered by Mr. Arundell in 1833, its identity having been rendered certain by coins and inscriptions. On the Sabbath they visited the synagogue, which appears to have been the only one, and must therefore have been large.

II. **Sabbath worship in the synagogue.**—1. *The day.* It said a good deal for the missionaries that they remembered the Sabbath day to keep it holy, and more for their good sense that they devoted its hours to worship. The Sabbath was meant by its Lord for the double purpose of resting man's body from the toils of the other six days, and refreshing man's soul through communion with heaven. To neglect either of these ends—to devote the entire day to physical repose but not to worship, or to worship in such a fashion as to fatigue the body—is to violate the day and misapprehend its use. To give it neither to worship nor to rest, but wholly to labour in business or in pleasure, is to turn it to the worst possible account. 2. *The synagogue.*—"A low, square, unadorned building, differing from Gentile places of worship by its total absence of interior sculpture"; "on one side a lattice-work partition, behind which sat a crowd of veiled and silent women"; "in front of these the reader's desk, and in its immediate neighbourhood, facing the rest of the congregation, those chief seats which Rabbis and Pharisees were so eager to secure" (Farrar, *The Life and Work of St. Paul*, i. 365, 366). 3. *The worship.* "Each as he entered covered his head with the *Tallîth*, and the prayers began. They were read by the *Shelîach*, or 'angel of the synagogue,' who stood among the standing congregation. . . . After the prayers followed the first lesson, or *Parashah*," which was "read in Hebrew, but translated or paraphrased by the interpreter. The *Chazzân*, or clerk of the synagogue, then took the *Torah* roll from the Ark and handed it to the reader. . . . After the *Parashah*, was read the *Haphtarah*, or the second lesson, from the prophets, the translation being given at the end of every three verses. After this followed the *Midrash*, or sermon, which was not delivered by one set minister," but might be given by any distinguished stranger who might happen to be present (Farrar, i. 366, 367). (See an excellent account of synagogue worship in Stapfer's *Palestine in the Time of Christ*, pp. 338-343.) 4. *The invitation.* In accordance with this custom Paul and Barnabas, who had doubtless not selected the chief seats in the synagogue (Matt. xxiii. 6), but sat among the ordinary worshippers (1 Cor. xiv. 16, 23, 24; James ii. 2-4), were asked if they had any word of exhortation for the people, in which case they might say on. Possibly some rumour had reached the synagogue that they were preachers; but whether or not, Paul and not Barnabas responded to the invitation.

III. **Paul's sermon to the congregation.**—1. *The exordium.* In manner respectful—"he stood up," and serious—"he beckoned with his hand"; in matter, brief, consisting solely of a request for attention: three characteristics which improve all sermons in which they are found. 2. *The contents.* There were

three main divisions in his discourse. (1) The goodness of God to Israel, which culminated in sending them a Saviour according to His promise—a kind of "captatio benevolentiæ" (Holtzmann) (vers. 16-25). Beginning with their earliest history, he rehearsed Jehovah's gracious acts towards them—ten in number: the choice of their fathers; their exaltation in Egypt, meaning thereby their multiplication into a numerous and powerful people (ver. 17); their deliverance from bondage by His own right hand (ver. 17); their preservation in the wilderness, notwithstanding much unbelief and disobedience (ver. 18); their settlement in Canaan after destroying seven nations therein (ver. 19); their government by judges for a space of four hundred and fifty years (ver. 20); their reception from God of a king in answer to their request (ver. 21); the removal of Saul and the establishment of the throne in David and his seed (ver. 22); the appearance of Christ as a descendant of David, and in fulfilment of ancient promise (ver. 23), when the Baptist, His distinguished forerunner, had closed his career, or was fulfilling his course (ver. 24). Thus the history of Israel in its three chief moments—the formation of the covenant, the settlement in the land, and the institution of the theocracy—was depicted as a preparation for the appearance of Christ. (2) Jesus of Nazareth proved to be the Saviour by His death and resurrection (vers. 26-37). The condemnation of Jesus by the Jewish leaders had been a literal fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy (ver. 27). Besides dying an innocent death, He was actually laid in a sepulchre (ver. 29). Taken down from the tree, He was buried, not by the rulers, it is true, but by Joseph of Arimathea (John xix. 30), Paul not deeming it necessary to discriminate as to the agents, though his statement was literally accurate (see "Critical Remarks"). Yet God raised up Jesus from the dead, and showed Him alive to His disciples, in particular to those of them who had come up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem and who then were His witnesses to the people. This resurrection had been foretold in the second psalm (ver. 33), in the fifty-fifth chapter of Isaiah (ver. 34), and again in the sixteenth psalm (ver. 35), which could not possibly refer to David, as he had died and seen corruption, whereas "He whom God raised again saw no corruption" (ver. 37). (3) The proclamation of free forgiveness or of justification by faith through Jesus Christ (vers. 38, 39), a blessing which had not been attainable through the law of Moses. 3. *The application.* In the form of a solemn warning drawn from words used by Habbakuk, he cautioned them to beware of rejecting the gospel and so involving themselves first in the guilt and then in the doom of those who persistently refused to see the hand of God in the events which were taking place around them (vers. 40, 41). 4. *The result.* (1) As they, Paul and Barnabas, were leaving the synagogue, the rulers, perhaps interpreting the wish of the congregation, requested them to repeat their preaching on the following Sabbath (see "Critical Remarks"). (2) When the synagogue was dispersed, many of the Jews and of the devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, no doubt expressing their desire to hear more of the good tidings to which they had listened. (3) Speaking to them Paul and Barnabas urged them to continue in the grace of God.

Learn.—1. That no man having put his hand to the plough in connection with Christ's kingdom should, like John Mark, draw or even look back. 2. That Christ's disciples, like Paul and Barnabas, should honour the Sabbath and the sanctuary. 3. That ministers of the gospel, like Paul and Barnabas, should embrace every opportunity that opens to them of publishing their good news of salvation. 4. That the gospel when frankly, fully, and fearlessly preached will seldom fail to make a good impression. 5. That a chief point in the gospel is the doctrine of free forgiveness, or of justification by faith.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 13. *The Incident at Perga; or, John Mark's Departure. A Sermon on Weariness in Well-doing* (but see "Homiletical Analysis"). Weariness in well-doing.

I. **A common occurrence.**—Seldom justified by good and sufficient reasons. Plausible excuses often offered; but men never give the right reason for doing a wrong thing.

II. **An unfortunate example.**—Discouraging to fellow-workers, deterrent to those who might become workers, hurtful to the individual worker himself. Bad examples much more contagious and much more easily set than good ones.

III. **An irremediable mistake.**—Men who lay down a good work cannot always take it up again at the point where they laid it down or at the time when they wish. Mark found this to be so with himself.

IV. **An irreparable loss.**—Those who grow weary in well-doing miss the reward which is promised to and laid up for them who labour on and faint not.

Ver. 14. *Passing through Perga; or, Paul's Supposed Illness at Perga.*—"Every one who has travelled in Pamphylia knows how relaxing and enervating the climate is. In these low-lying plains fever is endemic; the land is so moist as to be extraordinarily fertile, and most dangerous to strangers. Confined by the vast ridges of Taurus, five thousand to nine thousand feet high, the atmosphere is like the steam of a kettle, hot, moist, and swept by no west winds. Coming down in July 1890 from the north side of Taurus for a few days to the coast of Pamphylia, I seemed to feel my physical and mental powers melting rapidly away. I might spend a page in quoting examples, but the following fact bears so closely on our present purpose that it must be mentioned. In August 1890 I met on the Cilician coast an English officer on his way home from three years' duty in Cyprus; previously he had spent some years in Eastern service. He said that the climate of the Cilician coast (which is very similar to that of Pamphylia, and has not any worse reputation for unhealthiness) reminded him of Singapore or Hong-Kong, while that of Cyprus was infinitely fresher and more invigorating.... We suppose then that Paul caught fever on reaching Perga (the Rev. Mr. Daniell, who travelled with Spratt and Forbes, the author states in a footnoot, died of fever at Attalia, a few miles from Perga). Here it may be objected . . . that Paul was used to the climate of Cilicia and Syria; why should he suffer in Pamphylia? In the first place, no one can count on immunity from fever, which attacks people in the most capricious way. In the second place, it was precisely after fatigue and hardship, travelling on foot through Cyprus amid great excitement and mental strain, that one was peculiarly liable to be affected by the sudden plunge into the enervating atmosphere of Pamphylia. The circumstances implied in Galatians iv. 13 are therefore in perfect keeping with the narrative in the Acts; each of the authorities lends additional emphasis and meaning to the other" (Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire*, pp. 62, 63). Professor Ramsay not only assigns this malarial fever as the cause of Paul's passing through Perga, but afterwards uses it as a confirmatory argument in support of his thesis that the Galatian Churches which Paul subsequently visited, and to which he wrote the Epistle to the Galatians, were not in North but in Southern Galatia—were, in fact, the Churches of Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe (see on xvi. 6). He also maintains that this malarial fever became chronic and was regarded by Paul as his "stake in the flesh" (*St. Paul the Traveller*, etc. p. 94).

Vers. 17-19. *The Story of Israel; a Type of the Church's History.*

I. **Chosen.**—As Jehovah selected Abraham's descendants to be a people for Himself (Exod. xix. 5, 6; Deut. vii. 6; Isa. xliv. 1; Psalm xxxiii. 12), so did Christ elect His apostles the representatives of His Church (John xv. 16), and so were Christians chosen by Divine grace (Eph. i. 4).

II. **Exalted.**—As Jehovah looked upon the low estate of His people and exalted their horn when in Egypt (Psalm cxlviii. 14), so has He exalted or lifted up His believing people from their sin and misery because of His grace and mercy (Luke i. 52; Eph. ii. 6).

III. **Emancipated.**—As Israel was led forth from Egypt by the mighty hand of God (Exod. xv. 13; Isa. lxiii. 12), so has the Church of Christ been redeemed from the bondage of sin and death (John iii. 16, 17; Gal. iii. 13).

IV. **Borne.**—As Israel was carried and upheld during the wilderness wanderings (Deut. i. 31, xxxii. 10-12; Isa. xlvi. 3), so has the Church of Christ and so have individual believers been supported during their earthly pilgrimage (Matt. xvi. 18; Luke xxi. 18; 2 Thess. iii. 3).

V. **Endured.**—Exactly as Jehovah had to exercise much long-suffering in dealing with Israel in the wilderness (Psalm cvi. 43-46), so has He still to bear with Christians as individuals and with the Church as a whole (Rom. ii. 4; 2 Peter iii. 9, 15).

VI. **Protected.**—As Israel's enemies were destroyed (Deut. vii. 1), so have been and will be the Church's and the saints' foes (1 Peter iii. 13).

VII. **Settled.**—As Israel was established in the earthly (Josh. xxiii. 4), so will the whole body of believers be in the heavenly Canaan (John xvii. 24).

Vers. 20, 22. *Judges and Kings.*

I. **All forms of government are legitimate**—*i.e.*, are of God.

II. **No form of government is entitled to count on permanency.**—What suits one age may not be adapted to another.

III. **Jehovah is superior to all governments**, and may establish or remove them at pleasure.

IV. **The government that does God's will will last longest.**—The people that refuse to serve Him will be destroyed.

Ver. 21. *Old Testament Prophets.*—These were—

I. **Religious seers.**
II. **Foretellers of the future.**
III. **Political statesmen.**
IV. **Social reformers.**

Ver. 23. *The Saviour Jesus.*

I. **Promised to the fathers** (ver. 32).
II. **Heralded by John** (ver. 24).
III. **Manifested to the Jews** (ver. 27).
IV. **Crucified under Pilate** (ver. 28).
V. **Raised from the dead** (ver. 30).
VI. **Received up into glory** (ver. 31).
VII. **Preached unto the world** (vers. 26, 32).
VIII. **Believed on by the Gentiles** (ver. 48).

Ver. 26. *This Salvation.*

I. **What it is.**—1. Forgiveness. 2. Eternal life.

II. **Whence it comes.**—From God, its sole author.

III. **Through whom procured.**—Jesus.

IV. **To whom offered.**—1. To the Jews first. 2. Also to the Gentiles.

V. **On what condition.**—As a free gift.

Ver. 27. *The Criminality of the Jewish Rulers.*

I. **In being ignorant of their own sacred books.**

II. **In not recognising Christ when He appeared.**

III. **In condemning Him when no cause of death had been found in Him.**

IV. **In rejecting Him after He had risen from the dead.**—Show how far the criminality of the Jewish rulers may be reproduced in Christendom to-day.

The Voices of the Prophets.

I. **An important question.**—"Upon what grounds are we to rest the authority with which the prophets spoke — an authority which still breathes in their writings?"

II. **A provisional reply.**—"With one consent they would say that the thoughts which arose in their hearts and the words which arose to their lips were put there by God."

III. **A requisite interrogation.**—"What guarantees have we that they were not mistaken? How do we know that they are not projecting their own thoughts outside of themselves, and ascribing them to an external cause?"

IV. **A decisive answer.**—"We believe it on the strength (1) of the glimpses which the prophets give us into their own consciousness on the subject; (2) of the universal belief of their contemporaries; (3) of the extraordinary unanimity of their testimony; (4) of the difficulty of accounting for it in any other way; and (5) of the character of the teaching in which this Divine prompting and suggestion results —a character which is not only not unworthy, but most worthy of its source" (Sanday, *Inspiration*, pp. 145-147).

Ver. 33. *The Witness of the Second Psalm to Christ.*

I. **A proclamation of the Divine Sonship of Christ.**—Neither—1. *Physical*, with special reference to His miraculous or supernatural birth (the Nazarenes, Socinus, Beyschlag). Nor—2. *Ethical*, as marking the exceptional perfection of His moral nature (Theodorus, Paul of Samosata, Strauss, Baur, Ewald). Nor—3. *Official*, signalising the theanthropos or God-man as the theanthropic king by pre-eminence, the Messiah (Weiss). But, without denying that the phrase may sometimes appear to bear one or more of these significations, 4. *Metaphysical*, as descriptive of the essential relationship subsisting between Christ's higher pre-existent nature and the deity (Gess, Godet, Luthardt, Calvin, and others).

II. **A demonstration of the Divine Sonship of Christ.**—"This day have I begotten Thee." Probably signifying the same thing as, "Thou art My Son," these words may, nevertheless, be understood as having received illustration and confirmation in—1. The incarnation (Heb. i. 5, which some interpreters regard as alluding to the birth in Bethlehem). 2. The resurrection, as in the text. 3. The exaltation (Heb. v. 5). (See Whitelaw's, *How is the Divinity of Jesus depicted?* pp. 66. 67.)

Ver. 34. *The Blessings of David*

I. **Promised.**
II. **Gracious.**
III. **Great.**
IV. **Holy.**
V. **Sure.**
VI. **Divine.**

Ver. 35. *God's Holy One.*—See on ii. 27.

Ver. 36. *The Life, Death, and Burial of David.*

I. **His life.**—1. *Useful.* He served his own generation. 2. *Pious.* He served the counsel of God (to adopt the reading of R.V.). 3. *Planned* and determined for him by God. He served his generation by the will of God, or in accordance with the Divine purpose or plan. 4. *Measured.* He served his generation, and then passed away.

II. **His death.**—1. *Appointed.* He fell on sleep by the will or counsel of God, according to a third reading. 2. *Timely.* He fell on sleep after he had served his generation—*i.e.*, after, not before, his work was done. 3. *Peaceful.* He fell on sleep.

III. **His burial.**—1. His *body* was deposited in the tomb and saw corruption. 2. His *spirit* was gathered to his fathers, and continued to exist in a future state (see "Critical Remarks").

Ver. 36. *Our Day.*

I. The words suggest the thought, that **a man's earthly history is a very**

limited period.—"His own *generation.*" We are accustomed, almost reconciled, to the brevity of our earthly career, but perhaps this attribute of it is more remarkable than we commonly feel it to be. The large portion of past human history which a man must needs miss when he only comes into it in the course of its seventh millennium,—this would still have left him much if then it had been possible for him to abide in the midst of human history until its consummation. The period of earthly life is in many ways an inadequate period—scanty, even to unnaturalness, from the merely terrestrial point of view. Fifty years of work in this world, then—that is the utmost we can reasonably look for, after we are equipped and before we are weary unto death. There is not much time to lose; our own generation is a quantity that is frugal of opportunity, so far as opportunity consists in continuance. Yet it is one great opportunity from first to last, and its very brevity accentuates its greatness. To live and work in a world like ours, after such a manner as grace can empower us to do; to bear and battle our way through it, with any credit and any success, ere we look back upon it out of a higher existence; to stand for God and righteousness, with the sterling bravery of a good conscience, that is an opportunity which must be in many ways unique, and has elements in it of heroism, with touches of tragic significance, which gather upon us the interest of multitudes of invisible well-wishers. Perhaps the opportunity is long enough if it be strenuously employed; for then, with all its wondrous cheer, it is not a little arduous.

II. The words suggest the thought, that **a man has a lasting personal relation to the time upon which his earthly history is cast.** "*His* own generation." All generations of mankind, it is true, belong to the man who has given himself to God, and such a man belongs to all the generations. But the period of the world's history upon which our relations centre themselves, and to which they stand for ever intimate, shall be the period in whose history we ourselves took part. It was that generation which most of all put its impress upon us, and it was that generation which most of all bore away the marks of whatever influence our own personality exerted upon men and things beneath the sky. Many steamers cross the Atlantic, and many trains wheel their way across the American continent; let a man cross the one or the other but once only—then, as long as he lives, that steamer, that train, by which he himself travelled, with its passengers and its incidents, is "his own" steamer, "his own" train; and it is still this upon the lips of his children after he is gone. So our experience of world-life and world-history, brief as it is, and passing rapidly from successor to successor again, is for ever bound up with the circumstances of our own one journey, and has abidingly gathered into it the memories, the complexion, and to some extent the type, which those circumstances determined. All this takes on a firmer emphasis according as we let in the consideration of duty and privilege, both of them having their ultimate source in Jesus Christ, the Sovereign of the human ages. The true man is the Christian man. It is he alone who is the genuine unit in world-life, the authentic link in the continuity of true world-history within his limits. The Christian man lives his life—more wisely indeed for himself than any unchristian man, yet straight in the line of liberating his whole feeling and action from the dominion of self-seeking. He lives his life for God in Christ; he lives it for other men in Christ's name. He "keeps himself"—in spirit, in mind, in body—and finds he has a goodly task on hand in so doing; but it is not for himself that he keeps himself; it is for Christ, and for the will of Christ. The will of Christ is the weal of men—my own weal, and the weal of all around me. My "own generation"—the set of

things which touches me on all sides, and is touched by me at many points—is the element within which I may, I must, directly fulfil the will of Christ as a will for this world in which He lived and died.

III. The words suggest the thought, that **a man is called to note and to know the peculiar character of his own time.**—"His *own* generation." There is a certain individuality about every generation. It has its own disposition, temperament, moods, capabilities, opportunities, not all of which are shared in the same measure by any other generation. Each generation has something in it of every generation that has been; but it has also somewhat in it which is original enough to give a special tone to itself and to its effect upon the generations following. Intelligence about the past is mostly of value according as it helps us to be intelligent about the present. He will not fail to note, that his generation is one of unwonted activity—activity intense, ingenious, adventurous, daring—activity of hand, of tongue, of pen, of thought; yet a generation of special thinking rather than of general thoughtfulness, and eager rather than earnest—having much of the tug and bustle of strain, which has need to soothe itself into a more settled and self-controlling energy. He will scarcely overlook that His generation, more distinctly still, is one of scientific progress and material advancement—of rapid secular civilisation. If now our youthful observer, all but ready to step forth into the arena of his generation, turn his eye more intently upon its moral and religious aspects, he may still find much that ought to stir his interest. He will note, that Christian truth, as truth which holds the supernatural, and at its centre the great Biography which means all that is supernatural, is emerging from trials that have been severe—emerging from them, and with only new clearness in her eye and new stability in her bearing. He will mark, nevertheless, that Christian truth is not past all her trials. On the other hand, he will be free to mark, that in the face of all this his generation displays not a little of evangelic force and evangelistic fervour, and even some willingness to devise methods for overtaking the multitudes among us who are virtually beyond the contacts of Christendom.

IV. The words suggest the concluding thought, that **a man is summoned to do the best for his own time.**—There is no young man with the right spirit in him, and with the most ordinary preparation for his world-career, who will fail to recognise that this generation of his is waiting for him, and gives some occasion for his best work on its behalf. As he is getting him ready to step forth into the thick of his time, he will be resolving to look beyond the legitimate interests of self and of family, and onwards to the wider interests of truth, of Church, of country, of race. It may look more of a paradox than it is, if we say, that in order to be anything worth while for our generation, we must conserve our own individuality, and must confirm the personal independence of our own conscience and will. Among the forces of the time we must get in good measure to be masters of ourselves, and must refuse to let any of them be handling us very much without our consent. More than this: we shall do most for our time by developing all that is worthy of development in our own type of character, whether moral or intellectual, social or religious; so that it shall still be our very selves, and more of our very selves, with all the advantage of natural confluence of power, who are at work upon the materials of the time. And among the multifarious claims of a complicated time like ours, it seems in place to say that it were not well to scatter our energies by attempting too many things, but rather to make our energies tell by bringing their weight to bear upon one or two selected points. Your selection will be determined by circumstances, by capabilities, by tempera-

ment—that is, by providence, more or less fixed and cordially accepted. To some of us will fall a larger share of contest and demolition, to others of us a larger share of cherishing and construction: in the issue, none the less, it is all of it construction still. But we cannot, perhaps, look abroad upon our own generation, in the light of the past, without a feeling that combat with untruth and evil, hand to hand and weapon to weapon, is more and more evidently inadequate, and that something other and further must be endeavoured than to smite uprising error in the face, or to meet wrong-going with confronting argument and point-blank effort which ought to compel it into rightness. The real strength of all wrong things is not in their front, but in their flank and rear: their fronts are only the special facings, ever varying and ever new, which are evolved out of one or two principles, steady and old, that are lurking strong and vital behind the fighting-line. It is these that we ought above all to spend our lives in striving to reach and to enfeeble. It is ours to root around us as we can the living love of God in Christ. It is ours to take the strength out of the admiration of what is material by promoting a sense of what is spiritual. It is ours to throw our energies upon making the Church more ready of heart and hand for all her duty, and upon ridding her from the hesitancy and feebleness and reservation of human sympathy, which still so greatly limit her power.—*J. A. Kerr Bain, M.A.*

A Model of Life.—There is a biography in this brief epitaph. It is a "Life" flashed into vividness by a lightning sketch. The text conducts us to the master-secret of a great career. There is no time wasted over events and details. We are introduced at once to the purpose, the method, the spirit of the man commemorated. This is essentially the man's life. All other matters—the time and place of his birth, the character of his education, his social environment, his plans and difficulties, his conflicts and achievements—are but incidents and episodes, the arena on which he pursues his purpose, the instruments by which he accomplishes his will. Our text gives us the right estimate. It is not the pious fraud of a charitable epitaph-writer. It is essentially just when, passing over exceptional episodes and penetrating to the normal mood of the life, it depicts this man as one who served his God and his generation. But our text is of more than historical interest. While it embalms a memory, it indicates an ideal. It is a philosophy as well as a biography. It presents life and death in their higher aspects; one as an unselfish yet self-rewarding energy, the other as in no sense an accident or disaster, but an ordered and gracious dispensation. It links the character of a man's death to the character of his life, and both to the righteous dominion of God.

I. **A good model of life.**—"He served his own generation by the will of God." 1. Now, in analysing this account of a great career, three prominent characteristics immediately arrest our attention. The first is that it was a life of service. It was not one of idleness, whether ornamental or fussy; not one of ease, either cultured or coarsely luxurious. It was an active life of service whose zeal was as broadly unselfish as it was intelligent and incessant. The full significance of that fact is only perceived when we remember that this serving-man was a king. Girt with the authority of power, gifted with the self-delighting resources of genius, housed amid the wealth and luxury incident to regal station, this man served. That is a noteworthy point. It emphasises a truth not always clearly perceived, that whatever be a man's station or resource he does not escape the common obligation of service. To whom much is given, from him much shall be required. The king owes, because he can render, a larger loyalty to the subject than the subject owes to the

king. The master is greater debtor to the servant than the servant to the master. Among rich and poor alike it is a common sentiment that the higher a man climbs in the social scale the further he gets from the thrall and burden of work. God's law expresses and exacts the very opposite conclusion. God looks for the broadest and best servants of humanity not among the necessitous at the bottom, but among the free and favoured at the top. This Divine distribution of debt finds recognition, theoretically at least, even poetically, it may be said, in our English titles of distinction. Etymologically, the king is the able kinsman of his brethren, called to loftiest station because most fit to serve. The duke, as the word indicates, is the leader, the man who can see furthest ahead, with courage enough to stand at the front, capable not only of showing the way, but of giving and taking the first blows in the battle of progress, The earl is the elderman or alderman. the man of funded experience and accumulated wisdom, as eminent in grace as in vigour, the counsellor and shield of the people. The highest official in our Executive Government we call Prime Minister, which means head servant. The doctrine of Christ admits of no doubt on this subject. It denies to any man, whether rich or poor, the right to be an idler amid the ceaseless tasks of humanity. It aims at sweeping away parasites and excrescences of all kinds and degrees. But in doing this it is careful to distinguish itself from a mere gospel of industry. It is more than a law of labour. It is a law of service. Labour may be, and often is, utterly selfish. It is careful of its own products. It aims at its own aggrandisement. What we do for our own bread and comfort is labour. Service is the unselfish expenditure of talent in behalf of others. And Christ's gospel is one of service, which means that it is one of human brotherhood. In nothing, perhaps, does the practical beneficence of our Christian gospel shine so luminously as in the victory it has won for this nobler philosophy of life. Men are beginning, as never before, to see that nothing in life is held in absolute ownership, that time and talent are possessed under a stewardship whose obligations are broad and ceaseless. 2. A second essential of noble living, as indicated in the example we are considering, is the element of contemporaneousness—the ability to see and seize the opportunities of the day. David not only served; he served his own generation. He discovered, that is to say, in the circumstances and claims of life around him, an ample field for all his energies, a primary and sacred call upon his various resource. Therein lay the secret of his greatness. The sign of all true wisdom and heroism is the ability to take occasion by the hand and translate it into beneficent achievement; to see what needs doing, and right zealously to do it. That is what our fathers used to call judicial wisdom, the highest because the lowliest wisdom, the wisdom most profound because most perceptive and most practical. To be, in any adequate sense, a leader or teacher of the time, one must be a student of all times—past, present, future. No man can read the lesson of to-day who did not learn his alphabet amid the events of yesterday. He will make sad mistakes in his handling of current opportunities who casts no prescient glance towards the indications of to-morrow. The combined genius of history and of prophecy can alone interpret and guide the spirit of the time. It is as true of humanity as it is of the physical universe; it is a grand and vital unit, not a kaleidoscope of broken fragments. And to understand where we are and whither we ought to tend we must know whence we have come and to what goal the growing indications point. A pitiable spectacle of noisy incompetence is the man who imagines that to serve his own generation he must cut himself adrift from all consideration and reverence of the past. Of no use to his age is the fussy experi-

menter, the declared opportunist, who boasts that he never looks more than a fortnight ahead in his manipulation of affairs. The crown of all true wisdom is service, and to serve the age a man must be alive to its evils and possibilities, to its laughter and its tears. The danger of judicial blindness, however, the failure to see and do the duty of the day, does not beset the leaders alone, but very palpably surrounds and afflicts the humbler occupants of the ranks. In one man it takes the form of regretful and debilitating reminiscence. His heart is in the "good old days." Life was worth living then. There was something to be done, and room to do it. Things are different now. Life is too crowded, too vulgar, too complex. Poetry is gone. Chivalry is out of date. Heroism is impossible. This man is blinded by memory. Another is blinded by forecast. He believes there is work to be done, somewhere; he believes he is the man to do it, some time; but he waits his opportunity. His dream of great deeds fills him with enthusiasm, but he must bide his time. Thus, from one cause or another, men are apt to overlook or underrate the present task. They are dreamers, idlers, pessimists, in some cases pietists who despise the world's problems even while they live by the world's problem-making labour. 3. The third element in a truly noble life is the feature of Divine inspiration and submission. David not only served—he not only served his own generation—but he served it according to the will of God. That means, in a word, that while he served his own age he did not serve at its bidding, by its direction, for its reward. He stood above its prejudices and passions, above its noisy voices and its alleged interests. While in the world he was not of it. He was God's servant, working out in God's name and by His direction the sacred tasks of the day. That feature of his life suggests two important remarks. In the first place, it helps us to distinguish between a time-server and one who serves his time. Do not think, then, that in order to serve your own generation you must needs bow down to all its demands and favour all its schemes. Not the age, but God, is your Master; only as you make Him your Inspiration and Guide can you win liberty for yourself and success for your work. But another point is brought into prominence by this association of God's and man's service. It is clearly indicated that the true service of God is the true service of man. This identification of work and worship as twin elements of piety is suggested by the curiously balanced grammatical construction of the text. In the A.V. the text reads, "After he had served his own generation by the will of God"; but it places in the margin an alternative reading, "After he had in his own age served the will of God." The R.V. gives us, with a slight verbal alteration, both these translations, only it places the text of the A.V. in its margin. and the marginal reading in its text. The sentence can be construed with equal accuracy either way, and so can its sense. For when we ask, What is the substantial difference between serving our generation by the will of God and serving the will of God in our generation? we cannot discover it. We can only see variously accentuated expressions of the same thought. Do not mistake me. I am not saying God has no delight in our songs, our prayers, our orderly and regular occasions of praise. He is pleased with them, and makes them means of grace to us. They are properly described as Divine service. But should I not be right if I called them occasions of self-service as well as of Divine praise? We get a great deal more than we give when we enter the sanctuary. We get a vision of God; a renewal of grace. I will tell you when the real Divine service begins—when the preacher has ceased to speak, and the organ has finished its noble notes, and the lights are put out, and the doors of the sanctuary are closed, and you are out yonder

in the street, and you turn about to find an outlet for the inspiration of the house of prayer in the feeding of the poor, in the succouring of the helpless, in the attacking of some gaunt wrong, in the advocacy of justice, sobriety, truth. *That* is God's service, Divine service, and it makes for the peace and joy of His kingdom! Such is the model life set before us in the text.

II. **A fine conception of death.**—"He fell on sleep." 1. The death of the godly man is an ordered and gracious dispensation. For it was *after* David had served that "he fell on sleep"; not before nor during his submissive fulfilment of the work God gave him to do. 2. The death of the godly man is a peaceful sinking into rest. What a beautiful phrase is that, "He fell on sleep"! There is nothing repulsive or fearsome about sleep.—*C. A. Berry, D.D.*

Ver. 38. *A Sermon on Forgiveness.*

I. **The burden of the gospel message.**

II. **The result of a Divine act of justification.**

III. **A blessing secured for man through the work of Jesus Christ.**

IV. **Attainable by all on condition of believing on Christ.**

Ver. 43. *Continuing in the Grace of God.*

I. **The best evidence of conversion.**

II. **The requisite condition of salvation.**

III. **The essence of Christian duty.**

Ver. 39. *Paul's Doctrine of Justification.*

I. **The meaning attached by Paul to the term justification.**—1. *Etymologically considered*, the English word "justification" signifies to make just; but the Greek word, being strictly a forensic term, does not mean to make just, or infuse righteousness into any one, but to declare one to be just or righteous, to absolve one from any charge or claim which the law might have against him. 2. *Legally viewed*, justification is the exact opposite of condemnation, which also is a purely forensic term, and does not make or render any one brought before it guilty, but simply declares or pronounces such a one to be guilty, if so be the evidence supplied has established his guilt. 3. *Theologically regarded*, justification is a declaration or pronouncement on the part of God, not that the sinner is thenceforward personally innocent, holy, blameless, but that, so far as the Divine law is concerned, the sinner is acquitted, freed from liability to punishment, and contemplated as having met all the law's just and necessary demands upon him.

II. **The ground upon which, according to Paul, this sentence of justification proceeds.**—1. *Not the original righteousness or faultlessness of the so-called sinner*, who has been impeached, but wrongly, at heaven's bar. Paul's doctrine of justification rests upon the antecedent doctrine of the universal guiltiness and actual condemnation of the race in its totality and in every separate member (Rom. iii. 9-22). 2. *Not the acquired righteousness of the individual sinner*, who by personal merit has undertaken to wipe out his original and actual unrighteousness. The Jews, and especially the Pharisees, imagined that this could be done by observance of the law of Moses. Men in general conceive the same thing attainable through good works. But Paul repudiated and repudiates all sort of personal merit based upon the individual's own performances as a basis for the Divine sentence of justification (Rom. iv. 5; Eph. ii. 8; Titus iii. 5). 3. *But the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ*, who, according to the view taken by Him of Christ's person and work, occupied the room of sinful men (2 Cor. v. 21), and in their stead fulfilled the law's requirements by His obedience unto death (Phil. ii. 8), which obedience unto death, having been provided by God's free grace, constituted

"His righteousness" (Rom. iii. 25), which He wrought out for man by Jesus Christ, and manifested and set forth and still manifests and sets forth as an adequate and all-sufficient ground, yea, as the only ground upon which He either will or can justify the nngodly (Rom. iii. 19-31).

III. **The condition upon which, according to Paul, this real act of justification proceeds.**—1. *Not works*, inasmuch as these have been already excluded (Gal. ii. 11), and if again admitted would not only tend to impair the all-sufficiency of Christ's righteousness (2 Cor. v. 21), but would inevitably introduce thoughts of personal merit into the individual's mind (Rom. iii. 27), and so far would militate against the true character of justification as a judicial act of acquittal pronounced upon those who are themselves absolutely without righteousness or merit of their own (Rom. iv. 5). 2. *But faith*, and faith alone, without works (Rom. iii. 28), without merit, without righteousness (Eph. ii. 9; Gal. ii. 16), simply by believing in Jesus Christ, and on Him who for Jesus' sake justifies the ungodly (Rom. x. 4-11; Gal. iii. 8; Phil. iii. 9).

IV. **The extent to which, according to Paul, this justification prevails.**—"All things from which a man could not (and cannot) be justified by the law of Moses," whether moral or ceremonial. 1. *It discharges the sinner who believes from all responsibility for his sins*, past, present, and to come. It relieves him of the sentence of condemnation which previously overhung him (Rom. viii. 1). It blots out the handwriting which stood recorded against him (Col. ii. 14). It places him in a state of reconciliation towards God (2 Cor. v. 18). It sets him in a condition of peace before God (Rom. v. 1). It practically pardons him fully, freely, and for ever. 2. *It furnishes the sinner who believes with a righteousness that can perfectly satisfy the law's demands for obedience.* It not only releases him from the law's penalty, but it accepts him as righteous in its sight, not on account of any righteousness infused into him, but on account of Christ's righteousness imputed to him (Rom. iv. 22-25, x. 4). While Christ's sacrificial death discharges him from the guilt of his sin, Christ's perfect obedience constitutes his title to eternal life.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 45—52.

A Second Sabbath in Pisidian Antioch; or, the Promising Situation changed.

I. **Fierce opposition to the gospel on the part of the Jews.**—Displayed in ascending stages. 1. *Indignation.*—They were filled with "envy" or "jealousy," or better, boiling wrath, against the multitudes of Gentiles who on this second Sabbath had crowded the synagogue and perhaps overflowed into the street, and who everywhere manifested an eager desire to hear the word of God (ver. 45). 2. *Contradiction.* They interrupted the apostles while preaching by declaring what they said about Jesus to be contrary to fact and therefore untrue, possibly asserting that He was not the long-promised Messiah, was not God's Holy One, had never been raised from the dead, and could not be the author of salvation to any. 3. *Blasphemy.* Either reviling Jesus as an impostor and a malefactor, or declaring Him to have been in league with Satan (compare John x. 20). Perhaps also hurling opprobrious epithets and railing accusations against the apostles (ver. 45). 4. *Rejection.* Rising into greater heat, they appear to have openly and scornfully intimated their determination not to believe in Christ or accept of salvation through His name, but to thrust away from themselves the offer of eternal life (ver. 46). 5. *Persecution.* They stirred up and urged on the devout women of honourable estate who were proselytes, along with the chief men of the city, most likely their husbands, to set on foot

a persecution against the apostles—a persecution Paul afterwards alludes to (2 Tim. iii. 11). 6. *Expulsion.* So successfully did they work that the apostles were forcibly ejected from their "coasts" or "cast out of their borders." The persecution, probably a tumultuous outbreak, obliged the apostles to retire beyond the precincts of the city, to which, however, they returned on their homeward journey (xiv. 21).

II. **Solemn decision as to preaching on the part of the apostles.**—1. *Its purport.* Not that they would henceforth discontinue preaching to the Jews, and turn exclusively to the Gentiles, since they do not appear to have passed by their countrymen in their subsequent ministrations (xiv. 1), but that there and then they would leave their unbelieving brethren to their blind infatuation and self-elected doom, and devote their attention to the Gentile inhabitants of the city. 2. *Its reason.* It was necessary, both as according with Christ's command (i. 8; Rom. i. 16) and with their own natural instincts, that their countrymen and kinsmen should obtain the first offer of the gospel; but these, having judged themselves unworthy of the everlasting life, having shown by their unbelief, but more especially by their contradiction and blasphemy, that they loved the darkness rather than the light (John iii. 19), had thus virtually made their choice to seek no part or lot in the kingdom of God or the salvation of Messiah. 3. *Its boldness.* It was uttered in no half apologetic tone, but with courageous manliness as became those who were conscious, not only of following the path of duty, but of being guided by the Spirit. 4. *Its finality.* They shook off the dust of their feet, as Christ had directed them (Matt. x. 14), not in contempt for (Meyer), but as a testimony against, the unbelievers, and departed into Iconium, presently called *Konieh*, a city variously located—at ninety (Plumptre), sixty (Lewin), forty-five miles (Hackett) south-east of Antioch, the capital of Lycaonia, and situated at the foot of the Taurus (see on xiv. 1).

III. **Hearty reception of the gospel by the Gentiles.**—1. *Eager listening.* Almost the whole city—the greater part of the congregation being the native heathen inhabitants—came together to hear the word of God. (1) A sublime spectacle, a whole city moved by a common impulse, more sublime when that common impulse is to hear the gospel, most sublime when that common impulse is yielded to. Compare the situation in Samaria (viii. 6). (2) A hopeful attitude. When men will not hear their conversion is impossible, or at all events improbable, since "faith cometh by hearing" (Rom. x. 17). Those who hear the gospel, if not yet in, are at least near the kingdom. The word of the kingdom received into the understanding may find its way to the heart and conscience. 2. *Earnest believing.* Those among the listeners who were ordained to eternal life and whose hearts the Lord opened (xvi. 14), believed, received the truth in the simplicity of faith, and were thereby saved. (1) That any believed was due to grace Divine. Whatever else is signified by being "ordained to eternal life," this is implied, that their faith proceeded not from themselves, but was the gift of God (Eph. ii. 8). (2) That all did not believe was due to the natural disinclination of the human heart (1 Cor. ii. 14). If it cannot be supposed that all the Antiochians were converted, the impression conveyed by the narrative is that many were. Had the majority been won over, the persecution of the apostles would scarcely have been successful. 2. *Triumphant rejoicing.* The Gentiles were glad. (1) At the intimation of the apostles that they were about to bear their gospel message to the heathen. (2) At the announcement that Christ had been "set for salvation unto the ends of the earth." (3) At their own personal experience of the blessing of the gospel, "they were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost." 4. *Adoring gratitude.* They glorified the word of God, or of the Lord, not simply by listening to, believing in, and making experience of, but also in giving thanks

for it—"for the mercy which had embraced them in the plan of salvation and had given them this opportunity to secure its benefits."

Learn.—1. That the duty of every one to whom the gospel comes is to accord it a hearing, patient, unprejudiced, and respectful. 2. That the gospel cannot be killed by contradicting and blaspheming either it or its messengers. 3. That the first to hear the gospel are often the last to accept it. 4. That none are lost except those who judge themselves unworthy of eternal life. 5. That none believe except those who are ordained to eternal life. 6. That the same gospel which fills some with rage fills others with joy. 7. That joy in a believer's soul arises from the inhabitation of that soul by the Holy Ghost.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 44. *A Marvellous Sight.* "Almost a whole city gathered together to hear the word of God."

I. **Unusual.**—Cities or the people in them have so much else to engage their attention, as, *e.g.*, business, pleasure, social duties, political engagements, etc.

II. **Wonderful.**—Not to see groups of persons assembled to hear the word of God, but to observe a whole city or nearly so gathered for such a purpose.

III. **Sublime.**—To look upon a vast multitude all absorbed in higher things than those of time and sense, in things pertaining to salvation and eternal life.

IV. **Desirable.** — Few, who can rightly estimate the value of the gospel as God's word in contradistinction to man's, will deny that such a spectacle as is here described is one greatly to be longed for.

V. **Hopeful.**—What consequences of good might be expected to result from a whole city or the larger portion of it turning out to hear the word of God! Surely an immediate awakening would follow with not a few, perhaps a multitude of conversions.

Vers. 45-48. *Jews and Gentiles; or, Gospel Hearers and their Different Attitudes, Characters, and Destinies.*

I. The Jews full of **envy**, the Gentiles full of **gladness.**

II. The Jews **contradicting**, the Gentiles **listening.**

III. The Jews **thrusting from them** the word of God, the Gentiles **glorifying the word of God.**

IV. The Jews **condemning** themselves as **unworthy of eternal life**, the Gentiles **believing** to justification as **worthy of and qualified for** eternal life.—*Stier.*

Ver. 47. *Salvation.*

I. Its **nature**—light.

II. Its **medium**—"Thee," Christ.

III. Its **destination**—the Gentiles, the uttermost parts of the earth.

IV. Its **source**—God.

Ver. 48. *Ordained to Eternal Life.*

I. The **goal**, eternal life.

II. The **way** thither, through faith.

III. The impelling **power**, Divine grace.

IV. The **plan** in accordance with which it works, foreordination.

Or thus:—

A Sermon on Foreordination.—Foreordination. An act—

I. **Divine.**—Of necessity whatsoever comes to pass is known beforehand to God. Whether foreordination is grounded on foreknowledge (*Arminius*) or foreknowledge on foreordination (*Calvin*), makes no difference to the issue. Whatever comes to pass is and has been divinely arranged, τεταγμένον.

II. **Sovereign.**—This arrangement has its basis in the good pleasure of God, or the counsel of His own will (Eph. i. 5, 11). This so, even should it be that God in arranging has had regard to foreseen faith and good works in man.

III. **Gracious.**—It is ordination, not

to condemnation, but to eternal life. If men are lost, it is because they judge themselves unworthy of eternal life; if they are saved, it is because Divine grace has chosen them to eternal life (Eph. i. 4).

IV. **Rational.** — Foreordination is not an arbitrary or mechanical force or decree that overrides the human will and executes itself irrespective of the nature of man, but a counsel of perfection that works towards its end by making use of man's free will and responsible intelligence.

V. **Mysterious.**—After all has been said that can be said by metaphysical theologians, it remains an impenetrable secret how God can be sovereign and man free. Yet Scripture, providence, and individual consciousness attest that both doctrines are true.

Ver. 52. *Filled with Joy.*

I. **Desirable.**—Cannot be desirable to live in doubt, sadness, and fear arising from uncertainty as to personal salvation.

II. **Possible.**—Proved by numerous instances in Scripture; as, *e.g.*, the Samaritans (viii. 8), the Corinthians (2 Cor. viii. 2), the Thessalonians (1 Thess. i. 6), the Eunuch (viii. 39), the jailor of Philippi (xvi. 34).

III. **Attainable.**—1. By being filled with the Holy Ghost (Rom. xv. 13; Gal. v. 22). 2. By believing on Jesus.

Vers. 48, 49. *How to glorify the Word of God.* By—

I. **Listening to it.**
II. **Believing it.**
III. **Obeying it.**
IV. **Spreading it.**

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY (PAUL AND BARNABAS)—CONTINUED AND CONCLUDED.

§ 1. Paul and Barnabas at Iconium; or, continued Opposition from the Jews (vers. 1-7).

§ 2. Paul and Barnabas at Lystra; or, the Gospel among Barbarians (vers. 8-20).

§ 3. The Homeward Journey of Paul and Barnabas; or, Back to Antioch in Syria (vers. 20-28).

CRITICAL REMARKS.

Ver. 1. **Iconium.**—Presently styled *Konieh.* Situated south-east of Pisidian Antioch, and according to apocryphal legend the abode of the virgin martyr Thecla, who is said to have been at this time converted by Paul. Whether Iconium was a Lycaonian (Cicero, Strabo, Pliny), Phrygian (Xenophon), or Pisidian (Ammianus Marcellinus) city is debated by modern writers (see "Homiletical Analysis"). **Together.**—κατὰ τὸ αὐτὸ, as in iii. 1, rather than at the same time (Holtzmann), or in the same manner (Wolf). **So.**—Not with such power, but with this result. **The Greeks.**—Having been in the synagogue these were most likely proselytes (compare xiii. 43), and therefore a different class from those mentioned in xi. 20.

Ver. 2. **But the unbelieving Jews.**—Lit., *but the Jews having disbelieved,* when the others believed, **stirred up the Gentiles,** etc. Better, *stirred up the souls of the Gentiles and made them evil affected.* κακόω occurs in the New Testament only here. How the Jews incited the Gentiles is not told; but see xiii. 45-50, xviii. 5-9. Only two of the persecutions recorded in the Acts (xvi. 19, xix. 23) proceeded from others than Jews. The Bezan text adds, "But the Lord gave peace quickly," which Professor Ramsay is disposed to accept as correct, in order to explain the "long time" of next verse.

Ver. 3.—The best authorities omit **and** between "gave testimony" and "granted." Spitta regards this verse as "a scrap from an independent and complete narrrative;" Ramsay, as "an early gloss similar to the many which have crept into the Bezan text."

Ver. 4. **Divided.**—The usual result of the gospel (see John vii. 43, x. 19; Acts xxiii. 7).

Ver. 5. **An assault.**—Should rather be *an onset* (R.V.), or better, "an impulse," or inclination towards such an onset (Meyer, Alford), a hostile agitation (Zöckler), since the words "they were ware of it" seem to imply that the assault had not been made. Besides, Paul was only once stoned (2 Cor. xi. 25), whereas had this evil intention been carried out he would have twice suffered that indignity (see ver. 19).

Ver. 6. **Lystra.**—About six hours south-south-west from Iconium, at Khatyn Serai (Sir C. Wilson), "on a hill in the centre of a valley," "3,777 feet above the sea, and 427 above Iconium" (Ramsay). **Derbe.**—"The frontier city of the Roman province on the south-east" (Ramsay). The site uncertain, placed by some (Lewin, Conybeare and Howson, Farrar) twenty miles, by others (Sterrett) two miles distant from Lystra. **Cities of Lycaonia.**—Ptolemæus reckoned these as belonging to Isauria. "Lystra and Derbe were cities of Lycaonia Galatica—*i.e.*, that part of Lycaonia which was attached to the province Galatia, while Iconium reckoned itself as a city of Phrygia, Galatia—*i.e.*, the part of Phrygia which was attached to the province Galatia" (Ramsay).

Ver. 7. **And there they preached the gospel.**—*Codex Bezæ* adds: "And the whole multitude was moved at their teaching; and Paul and Barnabas abode in Lystra"; but this cannot be accepted as original (Ramsay).

Ver. 8. **Sat.**—No doubt in some public place begging like the lame man in Jerusalem (iii. 1). Not "dwelt" (Kuinoel).

Ver. 9. **Steadfastly beholding him.**—Or, *fastening his eyes upon him*, as he did on Elymas (xiii. 9), and as Peter did upon the cripple at the Gate Beautiful (iii. 4). **Faith to be healed.**—Or, faith to be saved—*i.e.*, from his lameness, though the larger and higher meaning need not be excluded. He had, no doubt, been listening to Paul's preaching, and given indication by his countenance that he believed the gospel message.

Ver. 10. **With a loud voice.**—Speaking in a tone higher than that in which he had been preaching (compare iii. 6). **Stand upright on thy feet.**—Christ's name not mentioned as by Peter (iii. 6), because probablyu unecessary. **And he leaped** (one act) **and walked.**—Baur) (*Paul, his Life and Works*, i. 95) finds in this miracle and that of the judgment on Elymas (xiii. 11 most undoubted tokens of an apologetic parallel with Peter, who healed a lame man at the Gate Beautiful (iii. 1-8) and encountered a sorcerer in Samaria (viii. 9-24)—*i.e.*, on first stepping out among the heathen. But as lame men and magicians were then plentiful, it is not surprising that both apostles should have met such characters; while, if both apostles were guided by the Holy Ghost, why should it be wonderful that He should lead Paul to work similar miracles with those of Peter? And more especially if (as Baur admits) such miracles were necessary to legitimate Paul's apostleship? The Holy Ghost, one would naturally reason, would be as likely as a second century writer to know what sort of works Paul should do to secure his recognition as a Christian apostle.

Ver. 11. **The speech of Lycaonia.**—Supposed by some to have been an Assyrian dialect (Jablonski), by others a corrupt form of Greek (Guhling), and by a third party a Galatian tongue, has completely disappeared, though Stephen of Byzantium, in the fifth century, reports it as then existing, and gives δέλβεια as Lycaonian for "a juniper" (Farrar, i. 381). For the chief cities of Lycaonia (ver. 6) see "Homiletical Analysis." **The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.**—Compare Homer's *Odyssey*, xvii. 484: καὶ τε θεοὶ ξείνοισιν ἐοικότες ἀλλοδαποῖσιν, παντοῖοι τελέθοντες, ἐπιστρωφῶσι πόληας, etc. "And the gods, like to strangers from foreign lands, coming forth in all sorts of shapes, visit the cities, observing both the insolence and the order (or good behaviour) of men"; and Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, viii. 626: Jupiter huc, specie mortali cumque parente, venit Atlantiades positis caducifer alis. "Hither comes Jupiter in the form of a mortal, and with his parent comes herald Atlantiades (Mercury) his wings laid aside." Such conceptions were common in New Testament times (Harnack). See further on ver. 11 "Hints."

Ver. 12. **Barnabas** was designated **Jupiter** or **Zeus**, probably because the older and more dignified in appearance. **Paul Mercurius.**—Or *Hermes*, because he was **the chief speaker.**—Lit., the leader of the discourse—*i.e.*, because of his eloquence. "Paul is here the messenger of the Supreme God: he says in Gal. iv. 14, 'Ye received me as a Messenger of God'" (Ramsay).

Ver. 13. **The priest.**—Most likely the principal or high-priest **of Jupiter** or *Zeus*. Professor Ramsay regards the reading "priests" of *Codex Bezæ* as preferable, on the ground that the oxen and garlands would not be brought by the priest himself, but by his attendants, *ministri*. **Which**, rather, *who*, **was.**—*I.e.*, had a statue or temple consecrated to him, **before their**, or *the*, **city.** "The temple of the tutelary god stood often outside of the walls" (Hackett). **Unto the gates.**—Of the house where the apostles lodged (De Wette, Lewin, Olshausen, Plumptre), of the temple, or most probably of the city (Meyer, Alford, Stier,

Holtzmann, Hackett, and others). According to the Bezan text which reads ἐπιθύειν, the proposed **sacrifice** was an extra beyond the ordinary ritual—a sense which though not occurring elsewhere "seems to lie fairly within the meaning of the compound" (Ramsay).

Ver. 14. **Rent their clothes.**—From the neck downwards; the ordinary Jewish mode of expressing horror at anything seen or heard (see Ezra ix. 3; Job i. 20, ii. 12; Matt. xxvii. 65). **Ran in,** *leaped forth.*—From the city or from the house in which they were.

Ver. 15. **Men of like passions,** or, *natural properties* **with you.**—Compare Peter's address to Cornelius, x. 26; and James v. 17.

Ver. 16. **Times** should be *generations,* and **all nations,** *all the nations.*

Ver. 17.—The best authorities read *your* instead of **our.**

Ver. 18. **That they had not done sacrifice.**—Better, *from doing sacrifice* **unto them** : τοῦ μὴ θύειν αὐτοῖς. Compare x. 47.

Ver. 19. **Who persuaded,** etc.—Should be *who having persuaded the multitudes and having stoned Paul—i.e.,* they persuaded the multitude to stone the apostle (see 2 Cor. xi. 25; 2 Tim. iii. 11). This is the only occasion on which Paul was stoned, the intention in Iconium (ver. 5) not having been carried out. Barnabas appears to have escaped their notice. It is those who advocate their opinions who have to suffer for them.

Ver. 20. **The disciples.**—Among these probably stood Timothy, the apostle's future associate (see xvi. 1; 2 Tim. iii. 11).

Ver. 21. **Taught many** is better rendered *made many disciples* (Matt. xxviii. 19). One of these was probably Gaius of Derbe (xx. 4). Gaius of xix. 29 was a Macedonian; he of Rom. xvi. 23 and 1 Cor. i. 14 a Corinthian.

Ver. 22. **We must through much tribulation** (many tribulations, R.V.) **enter,** etc. "This is one of the few personal touches of the Acts," which can in no way be accounted for "than by supposing that Luke was composing his history during the time of special persecution," viz., during that of Domitian (Ramsay, *St Paul, the Traveller,* etc., p. 123). An interesting remark but by no means a conclusive argument, since "we" might have been used by Paul and only quoted by Luke.

Ver. 23. **Ordained.**—χειροτονεῖν (2 Cor. viii. 10) signifies properly to stretch out or hold up the hand, as in voting, hence generally to appoint (see x. 41). Whether the election was made by the apostles (Olshausen, Holtzmann, Hackett, Spence, Plumptre), or by the Church (Alford, Lechler, Calvin, Brown, Ramsay), is debated; though the example of vi. 2-6 would seem to indicate that the apostles admitted into office by ordination those whom the people had chosen by show of hands. **Elders,** *presbyters.*—Those appointed in each Church to watch over the disciples, and thence called "overseers" (xx. 28). In Jewish Churches these officials were mostly styled "presbyters" or "elders," in Gentile Churches "overseers" or "bishops"; but that the two were exactly synonymous appears from their interchangeability (xx. 17, 28; Titus i. 5, 7). Elsewhere (Eph. iv. 11) they are designated pastors or shepherds and teachers. **Prayed with fasting** does not point to later liturgical use as its origin (Holtzmann), but later liturgical use rests on apostolic practice, as here exemplified.

Ver. 25. **When they had preached the word** (some MSS. add *of the Lord*) **in Perga.**—This they did not do on their outward journey (xiii. 13). What success, if any, attended Paul's labours is not stated, perhaps because it was not encouraging (Hackett). **Attalia** or **Attaleia** (see "Homiletical Analysis") was sixteen miles distant from Perga.

Ver. 27. **A door of faith.**—A favourite metaphor with Paul (compare 1 Cor. xvi. 9; 2 Cor. ii. 12; Col. iv. 3) which Luke may have derived from him (Alford).

Ver. 28. **Long time.**—Lit., *no little time.* Calculations show this period to have embraced the year A.D. 48 and 49 (see "Homiletical Analysis").

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 1—7.

Paul and Barnabas in Iconium; or, continued Opposition from the Jews.

I. **Their occupation in Iconium.**— 1. *The town and its population. The town.* Compelled to retire from Antioch in consequence of the threatening attitude of the Jews, who stirred up against them the principal inhabitants of the city and their wives—in fact, expelled by these from their coasts, the apostles, Paul and Barnabas, not without shaking off the dust from their feet as a testimony against their co-religionists (Matt. x. 14), directed their steps towards Iconium, now called *Konieh,* a city lying on the road between Antioch and Lystra, at a distance of ninety (others say sixty) miles south-east from the former city and forty north-west from the latter" (Plumptre). Whether it belonged to the province of Lycaonia, or of Phrygia, or of Pisidia, appears to be as much disputed by modern as by ancient writers (see "Critical Remarks").

Perhaps the truth is that Iconium belonged originally to Phrygia but afterwards became a city of Lycaonia. Professor Ramsay thinks it may have been in 63 B.C. that according to Pliny (*Nat. Hist.*, v. 25), "a tetrarchy of Lycaonia containing fourteen cities, with Iconium as capital, was formed," and that it was "given to King Polemo in 39 B.C. by Mark Antony" (*The Church in the Roman Empire*, p. 41). If so, Luke's statement that Paul and Barnabas, on leaving Iconium, fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, will require explanation; and this Professor Ramsay furnishes by saying that, while between 100 B.C. and 100 A.D. for administrative purposes Iconium was reckoned to Lycaonia, in all probability the Iconians, true to their tribal feelings, and adhering to their old nationality, "continued to count themselves Phrygian" (*Ibid.*, 38). In any case, Iconium was the principal city of that district which was called by the Romans Lycaonia, and was situated at the foot of the Taurus, like a green oasis in the middle of bleak plains that were "scoured by wild asses and grazed by countless herds of sheep." The modern city Konieh, says Captain Kinneir, "extends to the east and south over the plain far beyond the walls, which is about two miles in circumference. . . . Mountains covered with snow rise on every side, excepting towards the east, where a plain as flat as the desert of Arabia extends far beyond the reach of the eye" (quoted by Conybeare and Howson, i. 174). (2) Its population. These, according to the writers just named, were a mixed company: "A large number of trifling and frivolous Greeks, whose principal place of resort would be the theatre and the market-place; some remains of a still older population, coming in occasionally from the country, or residing in a separate quarter of the town; some few Roman officials, civil or military, holding themselves proudly aloof from the inhabitants of the subjugated province; and an old established colony of Jews who exercised their trade during the week and met on the Sabbath to read law in the synagogue (*Ibid.*, i. 174). 2. *The apostles and their ministry.* (1) The place where this was exercised was in the first instance at least the synagogue of the Jews on the Sabbath days and afterwards during week days, probably in public thoroughfares and other places of resort. (2) The form in which it was exercised was twofold—preaching or speaking in the Lord, *i.e.*, in the power of His Spirit—the theme of their preaching being as elsewhere the doctrine of Jesus as Israel's Messiah and God's Son, proved through His rising from the dead; and working miracles, though none of these have been recorded—doing signs and wonders through which God gave testimony to the word of His grace. (3) The time during which it was exercised cannot be determined, though the words "long time" point to a considerable stay, perhaps of some months, in this important town. (4) The manner in which it was exercised is described as "boldly," their confidence increasing as their convictions of the truth of the gospel deepened and as their observation of its saving power widened. (5) The efficiency with which it was exercised was revealed by the success which attended it. The apostles so spake, in such a manner and with such a result, that "a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed," so great a multitude indeed that the city seemed to be split in twain (ver. 4).

II. **Their experience in Iconium.**—1. *The minds of the heathen population were turned against them.* Not of their own accord, but through the misrepresentations of the unbelieving Jews, who, no doubt, employed similar tactics to those employed by their co-religionists at Antioch (xiii. 45), perhaps vilifying the persons of the apostles, putting a false colour on the object of their mission, and, above all, traducing the character and name of Jesus whom they preached. 2. *A threefold combination was formed against them.* The Gentiles, the Jews (in both cases the unbelieving portion of them—"the carnal mind is enmity against God" (Rom. viii. 7), and their rulers—*i.e.*, both the civic and the ecclesiastic, the

magistrates of the town and the officers of the synagogue conceived a design to set on foot active measures of hostility against the apostles even to the length of maltreating and stoning them—measures, however, which were never carried out (see "Critical Remarks").

III. Their departure from Iconium.—1. *Prompted by their knowledge of what was being concerted against them.* How they became acquainted with the evil designs of their adversaries, though not related, need occasion no difficulty, since they had numerous friends in the city who were interested in their safety, and above all Him upon their side of whom it had been written, "He preserveth the souls of His saints, and delivereth them out of the hands of the wicked" (Psalm xcvii. 10). Advised of their peril, like prudent men they fled (Prov. xxii. 3), acting on the counsel Christ had given to His disciples (Matt. x. 23). 2. *Effected with complete success.* In this case, as in a former (ix. 25), Paul's enemies had been outwitted. Whatever annoyance he and Barnabas had suffered, they were not on this occasion stoned. Nor did they deem it necessary by remaining longer in Iconium to become martyrs before their time. 3. *Directed towards the two adjoining cities of Lystra and Derbe.* The exact sites of these cities are unknown. "Lystra," says Lewin (*The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, i. 163), "lay about forty miles to the south of Iconium, and was still upon the highroad to Syria. It was situate in a hollow on the north side of a remarkable isolated mountain rising out of the great plain, and now called Kara Dagh, or Black Mountain. Lofty peaks looked down upon the town on all sides, except on the north, where the valley opened into the plain of Iconium. The ruins of it remain, and are called Bin-Bir-Kilisseh or the Thousand and One Churches, from the traces still visible of the numerous sacred edifices with which it was once adorned." "Lystra," says Hausrath (*Der Apostel Paulus*, p. 219), "must have lain hard upon the confines of Isaurica, since Ptolemaus reckoned it to Isaurica, and, indeed, according to him it was eight hours' distant from Iconium." Professor Ramsay (*The Church in the Roman Empire*, pp. 47, 50) locates Lystra "about six hours south-south-west of Iconium," and identifies it with the village of Khatyn Serai or 'The Lady's Mansion,' situated "about 3777 feet above the sea and 427 feet above Iconium." "As a Lycaonian town Lystra had been quite undistinguished; as a Roman garrison it was a bulwark of the province of Galatia, and a sister city to the great Roman centre at Antioch." Derbe, according to Lewin, was "about twenty miles distant from Lystra, at the south-eastern corner of the great Lycaonian plain, and where commence the highlands which run up to Mount Taurus." "Near by, but deeper in the mountain, on the boundaries of Cappadocia, find we Derbe," writes Hausrath. "Derbe was the frontier city of the Roman province on the south-east," reports Professor Ramsay, who inclines to locate it at Gudelissin, three miles north-north-west from Zosta, adding, "Gudelissin is the only site in this district where a city of the style of Derbe, the stronghold of 'the robber Antipater,' could be situated."

Learn.—1. The unwearied diligence that ought to be manifested by a faithful minister of Jesus Christ. 2. The unsleeping hostility with which the gospel and its ministers, when these are faithful, are pursued by the unbelieving world. 3. The watchful providence that continually guards Christ's servants and Christ's cause.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 3. *The Gospel the Word of God s Grace.*

I. **Its origin, grace.**

II. **Its message, grace.**

III. **Its fruit, grace.**

IV. **Its conditions, grace.**

Fellow-Workers in the Gospel. Christ and His Apostles.

I. **The work of the apostles** (or ministers).—1. Preaching boldly in Christ's name. 2. Doing signs and wonders (in the case of the apostles miracles, both physical and moral; in that of ministers only moral) in Christ's name.

II. **The work of Christ.**—1. Giving testimony to the word of His grace. By His Spirit. 2. Granting power to perform signs and wonders. Also by His Spirit. 3. Watching over His servants while at their work. 4. Opening up escapes for them when in danger.

Ver. 4. *The Dividing Power of the Gospel.*

I. **In the world.**—Separating believers from unbelievers.

II. **In the Church.**—Separating true disciples from hypocrites.

III. **In the individual.**—Separating the soul from guilt and sin.

Vers. 1-7. *The Preacher and his Gospel.*

I. **What the preacher has to do with his gospel.**—1. Preach it to those who have not yet heard it. 2. In the face of the fiercest opposition. 3. So long as the Lord continues bearing witness to his work.

II. **What the gospel will do for the preacher.**—1. It will gain him converts. 2. Rouse against him opposition. 3. Perhaps endanger his life. 4. Secure for him the co-operation and commendation of the Lord.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 8—20.

Paul and Barnabas at Lystra; or, the Gospel among Barbarians.

I. **The miracle at Lystra.**—1. The *subject.* "A certain man, impotent in his feet, a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked" (compare iii. 2). "The three phrases are like three beats of a hammer; there is no fine literary style in this device, but there is real force which arrests and compels the reader's attention. Luke uses the triple beat in other places for the same purpose—*e.g.*, xiii. 6, 'Magian, false prophet, Jew' and xvi. 6, 7, according to the true text" (Ramsay, *St. Paul*, etc., p. 115). The cripple, who was obviously no professional mendicant but one whose sad history was well known, was, besides being a proper subject for benevolent assistance, manifestly one whom supernatural aid alone could restore to health. 2. The *place.* Most likely in the street at some public resort, as Lystra does not appear to have had a synagogue, the Jews in that rude and uncultivated region being probably a mere handful. 3. The *time.* When Paul was preaching and the cripple listening. "I, being in the way, the Lord led me" (Gen. xxiv. 27). The Bezan text suggests that the lame man had been a proselyte before he came under Paul's influence. 4. The *agent.* Paul, who had now taken complete precedence of Barnabas, who had already performed a miracle of judgment on the sorcerer (xiii. 11), and who by the Lystrans was recognised as the chief speaker. 5. The *manner.* (1) The apostle fastened his eyes upon the cripple as Peter had done on the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple (iii. 4), and as he himself had done on Elymas at Paphos (xiii. 9). He had probably been arrested by the cripple's eager look, and in turn had searched his inner soul with that penetrating glance which belongs only to souls filled with the Holy Ghost (xiii. 9, xxiii. 1). (2) Having perceived that the cripple had faith to be healed (literally, *saved*, but whether more than from his physical malady is impossible to tell), the apostle said with a loud voice, "Stand upright on thy feet!" Compare Peter's address to the lame man (iii. 6), in which the name of Christ is invoked. That Paul omitted Christ's name may be explained either by the brevity of the record, or by supposing Paul's discourse had so clearly indicated the source of healing that this required no further mention. (3) At once,

without delay, the cripple "leaped and walked." *I.e.*, thrilled with a Divine power, he sprang to his feet (a single act like that in iii. 8), and began to step out as he had never done before.

II. **The conduct of the Lystrans.** 1. *Their exclamation.* Like Welshmen who, after listening to an address in English, revert to their mother tongue to find an outlet to their emotions, the Lystrans in their native dialect, the speech of Lycaonia (see "Critical Remarks"), shouted forth, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men," and proceeded to identify Barnabas with Jupiter (Zeus) presumably on account of his combined majestic and benignant appearance, and Paul with Mercury (Hermes), not because of his bodily insignificance (2 Cor. x. 1, 10), but because of his eloquence—"he was the chief speaker." The belief that the gods were accustomed to visit the earth in human form widely prevailed among the ancients; that such a belief, especially with regard to Jupiter (Zeus), should have existed among the Lycaonians is not surprising considering that Lystra had a temple of Jupiter (Zeus) at its gates, and was thus, as it were, placed under the tutelage of the "Father of gods and men." That Jupiter (Zeus) should have been accompanied by Mercury (Hermes) accorded also with their own traditions, one of which told of a visit made by these divinities to this very region (see Ovid's story of Baucis and Philemon, *Met.*, viii. 611, etc.). 2. *Their action.* The priest of Jupiter (Zeus), whether by himself or through his attendants, having procured oxen and garlands, caused them to be fetched "unto the gates"—*i.e.*, to the temple, and, surrounded by the excited populace, would have offered sacrifice to the supposed divinities. Superstitious as the proposition was, it rebuked, and still rebukes, the lack of enthusiasm on the part of those who, though they know God, glorify Him not as God (Rom. i. 21).

III. **The protest of the apostles.**—1. *The horror they displayed.* Having learnt what the priest and people were about, Paul and Barnabas, as might have been expected of pious Jews, not to say enlightened Christians, with their strong monotheism, "sensitive conception of the awful majesty of the One True God," and instinctive shrinking from the least approach to idolatry, "rent their garments, according to Jewish custom," from the neck in front down towards the girdle (see "Critical Remarks"), and sprang forth—either from the city towards the temple, or from the house in which they lodged into the street, if the procession had not yet reached the temple—and dashed in among the excited and fanatic crowd. 2. *The words they uttered.* (1) A question about the folly of the priest and people—"Sirs! why do ye these things?" An expostulation that might be addressed with propriety to many besides the Lystrans. (2) A declaration about themselves and their mission, that they were ordinary mortals like the Lystrans, whom besides it was the object of their mission to turn from these vanities to serve the living God. These thoughts about ministers and their missions should be kept in mind both by ministers themselves and their hearers. (3) A proclamation concerning God. His nature, as the living—*i.e.*, self-existent and life-bestowing God (Deut. v. 26; Psalm xlii. 2; Jer. x. 10; Dan. vi. 26). His omnipotence, as the maker of the universe (Gen. i. 1; Neh. ix. 6; Psalm cii. 25). His justice, in suffering the heathen to go their own ways seeing they had first forsaken Him (compare vii. 42; Rom. i. 24). His forbearance (according to a different interpretation of the verse) in allowing the nations to walk in their own ways without any manifestation of righteous indignation against them (compare xvii. 30; Rom. iii. 25). His goodness, in giving them witness of Himself by sending them "rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness" (compare Matt. v. 45). On the course of the apostle's argument, as illustrating his manner of dealing with the heathen, a remarkable light is shed by the apology of Aristides (see "Hints on Verses 15-17"). 3. *The success they attained.* They restrained, though with difficulty, the people from carrying

out their design; that they obtained no deep hold on their hearts subsequent movements showed.

IV. **The interference of the Jews.**—1. *Whence these came.* From Antioch and Iconium, where their hostility had been aroused and their rage baulked. Nearly every persecution Paul suffered proceeded from the Jews. However wrong, this was partly natural. No man likes apostates, and from the standpoint of the Jews Paul was an apostate of the first water. 2. *How they proceeded.* They stirred up the crowds who, besides being fickle, as all crowds are (compare Exod. xvi. 2, xvii. 4; Luke xxiii. 21), were probably in a sullen and half hostile mood in consequence of having discovered that their visitors were not gods but ordinary mortals, and therefore most likely magicians and impostors. 3. *What they effected.* They so raised the mob that these "stoned Paul," not beyond the precincts of the town, as the Jews had done to Stephen (vii. 58), but in the streets, where they were, "and dragged him out of the city, supposing he was dead." See Paul's allusion to this experience (2 Cor. xi. 25). How Barnabas escaped does not appear. 4. *How far they failed.* (1) They did not kill him as they intended and supposed. "As the disciples stood round him he" came to, "rose up and entered into the city." (2) They did not detach from him all his friends in Lystra. The disciples gained there stood round his mangled body, when, like the carcase of a dead dog, it was thrown beyond the city, and received him into their homes, when, having revived, he returned into town. (3) They did not prevent the prosecution of his missionary work. "On the morrow he went forth with Barnabas to Derbe.

Learn.—1. The power of the gospel to work moral miracles. 2. The credibility of the doctrine of the incarnation. 3. The folly of idol worship. 4. The power, majesty, and goodness of God. 5. The rewards of the faithful.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 9. *Faith to be saved.*

I. **Possible to all who need salvation.**

II. **Requisite for all who wish salvation.**

III. **Observed in all who seek salvation.**

IV. **Rewarded to all who obtain salvation.**

Vers. 8-10. *The Lystra Cripple.*

I. **An object of sincere pity.** Born lame, he had never walked.

II. **A recipient of great privilege.**—He heard Paul speak concerning Christ and salvation.

III. **A subject of rich mercy.**—He was healed in body and saved in soul.

IV. **A monument of Divine grace.**—All owing to grace that he had been privileged to hear Paul, that his heart had been touched, that faith had been awaked, and that he had been healed and saved.

Ver. 11. *The gods are come down to us in the likeness of man.*

I. The **error** contained in this declaration. That there were "gods," heathen divinities, to come down to men.

II. The **truth** foreshadowed in this declaration. The incarnation of the Divine Son in the person of Jesus.

III. The **lessons** suggested by this declaration. 1. That the human heart instinctively believes in a gracious God who can and will and does hold fellowship with His creature man. 2. That the doctrine of an incarnation is by no means contrary to the intuitive conceptions of the human mind. 3. That the gospel of Jesus Christ the incarnate Son can find a point of contact with man's soul in the most benighted nations.

Grecian fables on the Subject of Lycaonia.—1. **The legend of Lycaon.** See Ovid, *Met.*, i. 6. "The origin of the name Lycaonia is unknown, but

as there happened to have been a king of Arcadia, called Lycaon, Greek invention soon discovered a connection. It was said that Lycaon had been warned by an oracle to found a city in the region of Lycaonia (why, it does not appear), and that the whole country thence derived its appellation. But further, Λύκος, or Lycus, a wolf, was so near in sound to Lycaon, that the resemblance was to be accounted for, and the ready-witted Greeks originated the fable, that when the earth was filled with wickedness Jupiter descended from the skies to satisfy himself of the fact, that he visited the house of Lycaon, and that the people around, when the god was recognised, were for paying him adoration; but that Lycaon mocked the servility of his subjects, and questioned the divinity of his inmate, and to put it to the test, served human flesh at the table to try the deity's discrimination; that Jupiter was enraged at the attempt, and metamorphosed Lycaon into a wolf" (Lewin, *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, i. 161). 2. **The story of Philemon and Baucis.** See Ovid, *Met.*, viii. 631, etc. According to this fable Baucis and Philemon were an aged couple who lived in a small cottage in a penurious manner when Zeus (Jupiter) and Hermes (Mercury) travelled in disguise over Asia. Having extended to the wandering divinities hospitable shelter which the wealthier inhabitants refused, they had their dwelling changed into a magnificent temple of which they were constituted priests, while an inundation swept away the mansions of their churlish neighbours. In addition they were permitted to live happily to an extreme old age, and to die at the same hour, in accordance with their united request to Zeus, that one might not have the sorrow of following the other to the grave. After death their bodies were changed into trees before the door of the temple.

Ver. 13. *The Temple of Jupiter at Lystra.* Concerning this, Professor Ramsay writes: "Much may yet be discovered at Lystra. We should be especially glad to find some independent proof that a temple of Jupiter before the city (Διὸς Προπόλεως) existed there. From the many examples of such temples quoted by the commentators on Acts (see "Critical Remarks"), it seems highly probable that there was one at Lystra. The nearest and best analogy, which is still unpublished, may be mentioned here. At Claudiopolis of Isauria, a town in the mountains south-east from Lystra, an inscription in the wall of the mediæval castle records a dedication to Jupiter before the town (Διὶ Προαστίῳ). . . . "There is every probability that some great building once stood beside the pedestal in Lystra, dedicated to Augustus." . . . "There is every probability that the worship of the Imperial Founder was connected with the chief temple, and that the pedestal was placed in the sacred precinct of Zeus, as at Ephesus the Augusteum was built within the sacred precinct of Artemis." . . . "Very little excavation would be needed to verify this identification, and probably to disclose the remains of the temple, in front of whose gates the sacrifice was prepared for the Apostles" (*The Church in the Roman Empire*, pp. 51, 52).

Ver. 15. *Sirs! why do ye these things?* Idolatry.

I. **Indefensible** in reason, since the gods of the heathen are "vanities."

II. **Degrading** to man, since man is superior to the object of his worship, when that is an idol.

III. **Insulting** to God, since He alone is, 1. The living God. 2. The creator of the universe. 3. The providential ruler of the world. 4. The benefactor of His creature and child man.

All men alike.

I. In their **origin.**—1. From God. 2. From the dust.

II. In their **nature.**—1. Soul. 2. Body.

III. In their **character.**—1. Sinful. 2. Mortal.

IV. In their **destiny.**—I. To die. 2. To live for ever.

Ver. 17. *God's Witness of Himself.*

I. **Beneficent in character.**
II. **Universal in extent.**
III. **Constant in duration.**
IV. **Despised by its recipients.**
V. **Condemning in its judgments.**

Vers. 15-17. *The Light of Nature.*

I. **Its excellences.**—It reveals—1. The existence of a supreme Being. 2. His perfection in wisdom and power. 3. His supreme and absolute dominion. 4. His moral government. 5. His universal beneficence.

II. **Its uses.**—Various. 1. To show men their duty. 2. To convince them of sin. 3. To encourage them in repentance. 4. To vindicate God's character as a moral governor. 5. To prepare for the gospel of His grace.

III. **Its defects.**—1. It illuminates but a small portion of the things of God. 2. Is but dim and feeble. 3. Exercises little influence on men's hearts and lives. 4. Can discover no effectual relief for guilt and sin.

Note.—The light shed by the Apology of Aristides, a document composed in the second century (A.D. 120) in Athens, on the method commonly adopted by sub-apostolic writers in dealing with the heathen, is well worthy of attentive study. "Aristides," says Professor George T. Stokes, D.D., "begins his address to the Emperor (Hadrian) by stating, as St. Paul often does, the effect of the contemplation of nature upon his own soul, teaching him the eternal power and godhead of the Author thereof. In the very opening of his argument he attacks that subtle Pantheism, with its belief in the eternity of the material universe, which characterised the religions of Greece and Rome. 'O King, by the grace of God, I came into this world, and having contemplated the heavens and the earth and the sea, and beheld the sun and the rest of the orderly creation, I was amazed at the arrangement of the world; and I comprehended that the world and all that is therein are moved by the impulse of Another, and I understood that He that moveth them is God, who is hidden in them and concealed from them; and this is well known that that which moveth is more powerful than that which is moved. And that I should investigate concerning this Mover of All, as to how He exists, and that I should dispute concerning the steadfastness of His government, so as to comprehend it fully, is not profitable for me; for no one is able perfectly to comprehend it. But I say, concerning the Mover of the world, that He is God of all, who made all for the sake of man; and it is evident to me that this is expedient, that one should fear God and not grieve man.' The argument of Aristides in this passage is just the same as St. Paul's at Lystra, or in that great indictment of paganism contained in the First of Romans, an indictment which Aristides amply confirms in all its awful details."—*Modern Discoveries and the Christian Faith, Sunday at Home*, 1891, *December*, p. 107.

Ver. 19. *The Stoning of Paul.*

I. **A hideous crime.**—On the part of the Jews who stirred up the Lystrans.

II. **A pitiful spectacle.**—For the disciples and friends of the apostle.

III. **A strange experience.**—Which must have recalled to the apostle's mind the stoning of Stephen.

IV. **A powerful argument.**—Perhaps impressing the heart of Timothy as Stephen's stoning did that of Saul.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 20—28.

The Homeward Journey of Paul and Barnabas; or, Back to Antioch in Syria.

I. **The turning point.**—Derbe (see on verse 6). 1. The *character* of the apostles' work in Derbe. Preaching the gospel. Thus early were Paul's mottoes, "This

one thing I do" (Phil. iii. 13); "whom we preach" (Col. i. 28); "Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. ii. 2). 2. The *acceptance* of the apostles' work in Derbe. No persecutions encountered here (see 2 Tim. iii. 11). The omission of Derbe from the list of places in which persecution was experienced strikingly confirms the narrative of Luke (Paley, *Horæ Paulinæ*, iv. 9). 3. The *success* of the apostles' work in Derbe. They made many disciples, amongst them probably Gaius of Derbe (xx. 4). 4. The *duration* of the apostles' work at Derbe. Not stated, but may be inferred to have been some weeks.

II. **The way back.** 1. *The route indicated.* First to Lystra, twenty miles; next to Iconium, forty miles; after that to Antioch in Pisidia, sixty miles; then to Perga in Pamphylia; then across the plain for sixteen miles to Attalia (the modern Satalia), founded by Attalus Philadelphus, king of Pergamus, a seaport on the Pamphylian Gulf and near the mouth of the Catarrhactes; and finally thence to Antioch in Syria. 2. *The work done.* (1) Confirming the souls of the disciples. Not by outward rites, but by instruction and encouragement, "exhorting them to continue in the faith," and reminding them "that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God." (2) Appointing elders in every Church. These elders or presbyters were not modern diocesan bishops, but presiding overseers of different Churches. The mode of their election is not sufficiently clear. Whether by the stretching forth of the hands of the congregation or of the apostles is disputed. If the method adopted in the election of deacons (vi. 5, 6) was followed here, then the congregation would elect and the apostles ordain, the service being accompanied with fasting and prayer, in which the chosen office-bearers were commended to God for their work. (3) Preaching the gospel. This, doubtless, would not be neglected in any of the towns visited on the homeward route, but it is specially mentioned that they spoke the word in Perga, because they had not done so on the outward journey (xiii. 13; which see for the reason of this omission).

III. **Home reached.**—1. *Their arrival in the city.* From Attalia they sailed to Seleucia, "saw once more the steep cone of Mount Casius, climbed the slopes of Coryphæus, and made their way under the pleasant shade of ilex and myrtles and arbutus, on the banks of the Orontes, until they crossed the well-known bridge, and saw the grim head of Charon, staring over the street Singôn, in which neighbourhood the little Christian community were prepared to welcome them with keen interest and unbounded love (Farrar, *The Life and Work of St. Paul*, i. 390). 2. *Their meeting with the Church.* (1) This was proper, seeing they had been by the Church recommended (or committed) to the grace of God for the work they had fulfilled (xiii. 3). Nothing could have been more becoming than that they should report to the Church how the work had fared. (2) Interesting, since they rehearsed all that God had done with them—*i.e.*, their experiences, and in particular how God had opened a door of faith unto the Gentiles—*i.e.*, the success which had attended their labours. (3) Encouraging, as showing the wisdom of the step which had been taken in despatching a mission to the heathen. 3. *Their stay with the disciples.* "A long" or "no little time." The exact duration of the first missionary journey can only be approximately calculated. If it began in March A.D. 45, we are hardly at liberty to suppose that it occupied much more than a year (Farrar), in which case the return of Paul and Barnabas to Antioch would fall in all probability about the spring of A.D. 46. Professor Ramsay gives April 45—July 47 (or 46—48) as the period over which the first journey extended. From the close of the journey they remained in Antioch till the outbreak of controversy concerning the terms on which the Gentiles should be admitted to the Church required their presence in Jerusalem (xv. 2).

Learn.—1. The duty of persevering in the work of the Lord. 2. The necessity

of abiding in the faith. 3. The only way of entering the kingdom. 4. The Scripturalness of Church order. 5. The interest Christians should take in foreign missions.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 21, 22. *The Pastoral Office—its True Function.*

I. **To preach the gospel.**
II. **To make disciples.**
III. **To confirm believers.**
IV. **To comfort the suffering.**

Ver. 22. *Scriptural Confirmation.*

I. **Not an external** (bodily) **rite, but an internal** (spiritual) **grace.**

II. **Not performed by the laying on of hands, but by the utterance of exhortations and consolations.**

III. **Not doing a work of establishment, for others, but instructing others to do this for themselves.**

Ver. 22. *The Way into the Kingdom.*

I. **Painful.**—Through much tribulation or many tribulations.

II. **Necessary.**—We must. Unavoidable by any, indispensable for all.

III. **Certain.**—It leads into the kingdom. No question about whither it conducts.

IV. **Blessed.** — The terminus to which it tends is the kingdom of God.

Entering the Kingdom.

I. **Heaven a kingdom.** — 1. Its *sovereign*, God. The great king who built it, the architect of the universe, the Lord of Hosts. 2. Its *subjects.* (1) In nature diversified, angels and redeemed men. (2) In character, holy and without blemish, (3) In condition, free from every defect and possessed of every felicity. (4) In number, a multitude which no man can number and constantly increasing. 3. Its *permanence.* It will never be destroyed and never pass away.

II. **The believer's entrance into the kingdom.** — Effected — 1. *In time* through regeneration, a work of gracious renewal upon his heart, which *ipso facto* at once constitutes him a subject of the kingdom. 2. *At death,* when the soul, having been purified and perfected through much tribulation, taking its departure from the body, passes through the vale and joins the company of the spirits of just men made perfect. This entrance certainly follows on the first after an interval, longer or shorter, of preparation.

Continuing in the Faith.

I. **The danger of declining from the faith.**—Arising from—1. Indwelling sin. 2. The fascinations and temptations of the world. 3. The ills and tribulations of life. 4. False teachers and erroneous teaching. 5. The self-righteousness and spiritual pride of even converted hearts.

II. **The necessity of abiding in the faith.**—1. Christ's express command. 2. Continuance in the faith the best evidence of having ever been in the faith. 3. Without this the prize of eternal life cannot be won.

Ver. 23. *The Office of the Eldership.*

I. Its **authority.**—Derived from the Head of the Church (Ephes. iv. 11).

II. Its **function.**—To superintend the membership of the Church (xx. 28).

III. Its **selection.**—By the members of the Church. Christian people should elect their own office bearers.

IV. Its **ordination.**—By the apostles in the first instance (2 Tim. i. 6), afterwards by the laying on of the hands of the presbyters (1 Tim. iv. 14).

V. Its **efficiency.**—Derived from the Lord, on whom the elder has believed.

VI. Its **sphere.**—Within the Church. Purely a spiritual office.

VII. Its **qualification.**—The elder must himself be a believer. Other qualifications are set forth in the pastoral epistles.

Vers. 26, 27. *The First Recorded Missionary Meeting.*

I. **The place where it was held.**—

In Antioch of Syria, which had sent forth the first pair of evangelists to proclaim the gospel to the heathen. An unperishable renown which never can be taken from Antioch.

II. **The congregation which assembled.**—The company of believers in the city, or the Church. That all the Christians who could be were present, that all were interested in the proceedings, and that all were eager to see the men who had hazarded their lives for the name of Jesus Christ (xv. 26), can hardly be doubted.

III. **The story told by the missionaries.**—Paul and Barnabas related all that God had done with them, and how He had opened a door of faith unto the Gentiles.

Ver. 27. *The* (or a) *Door of Faith.*

I. **Divinely constructed.**—Salvation by faith a scheme, not of man's inventing, but of God's appointing.

II. **Widely opened.**—By the publication of the gospel, inviting all who will to enter.

III. **Easily reached.**—Requiring no distant or difficult pilgrimage to get near it: "The word is nigh thee," etc. (Rom. x. 8).

IV. **Freely entered.**—By all who come in the exercise of simple faith, trusting in the mercy of God for Jesus' sake.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FIRST CHRISTIAN COUNCIL; OR, THE TERMS OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP FOR THE GENTILES DEFINITELY SETTLED.

§ 1. Judaising Teachers at Antioch; or, the Circumcision Controversy Raised (vers. 1-5).
§ 2. The Council at Jerusalem; or, the Controversy Settled (vers. 6-21).
§ 3. The Apostolic Letter; or, the Publication of the Settlement (vers. 22-35).
§ 4. The Second Missionary Journey commenced; or, the Separation of Paul and Barnabas (vers. 36-41).

CRITICAL REMARKS.

Ver. 1. **Certain men which came down from Judæa.**—Lit. *having come down from Judæa.* These were not the emissaries who came from James (Gal. ii. 12), but the "false brethren unawares brought in" (Gal. ii. 4), most likely Christianised Pharisees from Jerusalem, who, in their zeal for the Law, had undertaken a mission to Antioch, perhaps on the invitation of some of the same class in the Syrian capital. According to Epiphanius their leaders were Cerinthus and Ebion. With this party Paul was in conflict all his life. **Taught the brethren.**—Their teaching consisted mainly in an assertion of the necessity of circumcision for salvation.

Ver. 2. **Dissension.**—In their views. The word στάσις (compare xxiii. 7, 10), used by Thucydides (iii. 82) and Aristotle (*Polit.*, v. 2) to express political faction, suggests that parties, in accordance with those views, had begun to be formed in the Church at Antioch. **Discussion,** or *questioning*, about the points in dispute (xxv. 20). **They,**—*i.e.*, *the brethren*, or the Church, in a public meeting, and by formal resolution, **determined,** *appointed*, or arranged. **Certain other of them.**—Not named, but see "Homiletical Analysis." **Should go up to Jerusalem.**—This, the apostle's *third* visit to Jerusalem (Gal. ii. 1), took place fourteen years after his *first*, that to Cephas and the other apostles to whom he was introduced by Barnabas (ix. 27; Gal. i. 18). His *second* visit was made shortly before the Gentile mission (xii. 25).

Ver. 4. **The Church, the apostles and elders.**—The reception of the deputies from Antioch took place in a public convocation of the Christian disciples in Jerusalem.

Ver. 5. **The sect of the Pharisees.**—First mention of any converts from this body and of the Pharisees as a sect. The name ("Separated Ones"), probably bestowed on them by their

opponents, expressed the same idea as their self-chosen designation, *Chasidim* ("Holy Ones") —viz., separation, not so much from their fellow Jews as from the heathen world. Their practical obligations, were to observe with strictness all the ceremonial ordinances of the Law of Moses, and to be scrupulous in payment of tithes as well as in discharge of all religious duties. Originating in a genuine impulse towards superior sanctity, Pharisaism in our Lord's time had degenerated into dead formalism, and become little better than a cloak for hypocrisy (Matt. xxiii.; Luke xi. 37-52). In Josephus's day the association numbered six thousand members.

Ver. 6. **The apostles and elders came together.**—Not alone, but in presence of and with the Church (see ver. 23). How many were present cannot be conjectured.

Ver. 7. **Much disputing,** *questioning,* or debating, concerning the point of controversy. **A good while ago.**—Lit., *from early days.* Comparatively speaking (compare "in the beginning," xi. 15); not an exaggeration, in order to take from the conversion of the heathen the aspect of novelty (Wendt). The phrase has a parallel outside of Scripture (*Polyk. ad Phil.*, 1, 2; ἐξ ἀρχαίων χρόνων). Peter referred to the conversion of Cornelius, which had taken place while Paul was at Tarsus (ix. 30), probably about fourteen years previous. Baur (*Paul, his Life and Works*, i., 130), in the interest of his tendency theory, considers that Peter could not have appealed to what took place with Cornelius, or have talked in so Pauline a manner as he here does: but such an assertion will convince none except those who have decided, *à priori*, that an impassable theological gulf separated the two apostles. Impelled by a like motive, Weizsäcker (*The Apostolic Age*, i., 208), asserts that "Peter was not the pioneer of the mission to the heathen, but entirely and solely the apostle of the Jews," and accordingly impeaches the credibility of the whole Cornelius story, **By my mouth.**—Peter did not mean that never before had the gospel been preached to a Gentile (see viii. 35), but that the circumstances under which he preached to Cornelius were such as to show that God wished the door of faith to be opened to the Gentiles.

Ver. 8. **God who knoweth the hearts.**—Therefore looks not upon merely outward and accidental marks, such as one's nationality, but upon the inner moral and spiritual quality of the soul. Compare i. 24.

Ver. 9. **Purifying their hearts by faith.**—Therefore not by circumcision or works of any kind. "The thought is quite as much Petrine (compare iii. 16, 19) as it is Pauline (xiii. 38; Rom. iii. 24 *ff*) or Johannine (1 John i. 8, ii. 2; Rev. vii. 14)" (Zöckler).

Ver. 10. **To put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples.**—Compare Gal. v. 1. Decidedly Gentile-Christian and universalist sounds this statement of Peter; yet is it not on that account improbable. "Through frequent conversations with Paul and Barnabas, which, according to ver. 4 and Gal. ii. 3, must have taken place, Peter was unquestionably once more relieved of all his perhaps temporarily cherished doubts, and completely carried back to the standpoint of apostolic freedom which he had taken after Cornelius's baptism, and which he had asserted in opposition to the party of James" (Zöckler).

Ver. 11. **Even as.**—Better, *in like manner*, or in the same way, **even as they**—viz., the Gentiles; *i.e.*, through grace alone, by faith without works. Compare Rom. i. 7, v. 15; 1 Cor. i. 3; 2 Cor. i. 2, xiii. 13; Eph. i. 2.

Ver. 12. **The multitude.**—*I.e.*, the Church, consisting, no doubt, of members and adherents, or believers, enjoying full ecclesiastical status and catechumens. **Kept silence.**—Having been tranquillised by Peter's speech. Out of this statement, and the similar one concerning James (xii. 17), Catholic expositors infer, but wrongly, that only clergy are entitled to speak at Church councils.

Ver. 13. **James.**—Not the apostle, but our Lord's brother (xii. 17), who was "a pillar" in the Jerusalem Church (Gal. ii. 9), its chief elder, and probably its president.

Ver. 14. **Simeon.**—The Hebrew name of Peter (2 Pet. i. 1), who is never again mentioned in the Acts, though he is found later at Antioch (Gal. ii. 11), and perhaps at Babylon (1 Pet. v. 13). According to tradition, not well founded, he ended his career at Rome.

Ver. 15. **The words of the prophets** are cited from Amos ix. 12, and conform closely to the LXX.—the Hebrew text reading, "That they may possess the remnant of Edom and of all the heathen who are called by My name," or "upon whom My name is called" (compare James ii. 7); so that they are also in the highest sense God's children. If James, who spoke in Greek (Alford), or in Aramaic (Holtzmann), followed the LXX., it may be reasonably supposed that he regarded it as expressing with sufficient accuracy the essential idea of the Hebrew.

Ver. 16. **The tabernacle of David which is fallen down** meant the divided and sunken state into which the theocracy had lapsed since the days of Rehoboam.

Ver. 18. **Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world.**—Taken from A. D. Vulgate and Syriac. The original words, "known from the beginning," have been enlarged by the addition of "unto God are all His works," in order to make a complete sentence. The best reading (ℵ B C) may be thus rendered: *Saith God, who maketh these things known from the beginning*, or *who doeth these things which are known from the*

beginning. In either case the sense is the same. Whether James found these words, "known from eternity," in another text of the Hebrew prophet which was circulating in Palestine, or added them of his own accord, to express the idea that nothing could take place in the development of the plan of salvation without the Divine foreknowledge (Bengel, De Wette, Overbeck, Wendt, Holtzmann, Zöckler), cannot be determined.

Ver. 20. **Pollutions of idols.**—*I.e.*, Sacrificial victims, regarded as polluted by being offered to idols rather than such defilements as arose from unlawful contact with idols (Holtzmann). The word for pollutions (ἀλισγημάτων = εἰδωλοθύτων, ver. 25), occurring only here, should not be viewed as governing the four succeeding genitives, but restricted to the first. "The James clauses represent no arbitrary selection of historical material, but correspond with the regulations for Israel as these at the time existed in the Old Testament." . . . They belong, therefore, "to the earliest time of the Church" (Holtzmann). **Fornication.**—Has been understood here of "forbidden marriages," as in Lev. xviii. (Baur, Zeller, Ritschl, Overbeck, Wendt, Holtzmann, Zöckler), but should probably be taken in the wider sense of uncleanness generally (Bengel, De Wette, Weiss, Alford, Hackett, and others).

Ver. 22. **To send chosen men** should be, *having chosen men* from among themselves to send them.

Ver. 23. **The apostles and** (lit. the) **elders and** (lit. the) **brethren.**—Signifying three separate bodies, as in ver. 22. The best MSS., however, read, "The apostles and the elders, brethren," which may signify, "The apostles and the elder brethren" (R.V.), or "The apostles and the elders (who are) brethren" (Holtzmann), or "and the brethren who are elders." This reading is justified by Wordsworth on the grounds (1) that Paul and Barnabas are said to go up to the apostles and elders (ver. 2); (2) that the apostles and elders are said to have come together to consider this matter (ver. 6); and (3) that Paul is said to have delivered to the Churches the decrees determined by the apostles and elders (xvi. 4); and by Alford, who thinks "and the" before "brethren" may have been inserted to make the text harmonise with that in ver. 22. On the other hand it may be argued (1) that the whole Church was present at the deliberations of the apostles and elders (vers. 4, 6, 12); (2) that the whole Church is represented as having at least acquiesced in the finding of the court (ver. 22), which certainly implies that they possessed the power to modify, if not reject, the same, and (3) that the words καὶ οἱ before ἀδελφοί might just as easily have been dropped from the text at a subsequent period in order to justify the exclusion of the laity from all share in Church Synods. Upon the whole it seemed reasonable to conclude that in apostolic times the entire membership, either directly or through representatives, enjoyed the right, if not of initiating measures, at least of voting on them. **Who have hazarded their lives.**—Not "dedicated themselves soul and body to the service of our Lord the Messiah" (Hess), but exposed themselves to the perils of death, as at Damascus (ix. 24), Antioch (xiii. 50), Iconium (xiv. 5), and Lystra (xiv. 19).

Ver. 27. **Who shall also tell** *you* **the same things by mouth,** or *by word* of mouth.—Not the same things—*i.e.*, truths and doctrines that Barnabas and Paul have taught, as if the teaching of these beloved brethren required confirmation; but the same things that we now write.

Ver. 28. **It seemed good unto the Holy Ghost and to us.**—The combination of the Divine and human authors of the ecclestical decree is instructive. The expression shows that the apostles and elders claimed for themselves that they had been guided in their deliberations by the Holy Ghost, and for their conclusions that these possessed the authority of an inspired and infallible decision. **Necessary things.**—Not demanding abstinence as wrong in themselves (except the last), but in obedience to the law of charity (Rom. xiv. 15), which required Christians to avoid what might offend weaker brethren.

Ver. 33. **Unto the apostles.**—The best authorities read, *unto those that had sent them forth.*

Ver. 34 is omitted by the best texts. It was probably inserted to explain ver. 40. Ramsay (*St Paul*, etc., p. 175) thinks it must have formed part of the original text and been "at some period omitted, from the mistaken idea that ver. 33 declared the actual departure of Judas and Silas," whereas, he continues, "the officials of the Church in Antioch simply informed Judas and Silas that their duties were concluded and that they were free to return home," a permission of which Silas did not avail himself. In any case, if Silas did depart, he must have soon after returned, on receiving Paul's invitation to join him in a second missionary tour.

Ver. 36. **Some days** (as in xvi. 12; compare ἡμέραι ἱκαναί, ix. 23) might be weeks or months. **After.**—Subsequent to the departure of Judas or Judas and Silas from Antioch. In **visit our brethren** substitute *the* for "our." **How they do?**—*I.e.*, *how they fare*, spiritually. The clause requires an antecedent supplement, *and see.*

Ver. 37. **Determined.**—ἐβουλεύσατο. The oldest MSS. have ἐβούλετο, *wished*, which some consider a correction, with a view of softening down the altercation between Barnabas and Paul (Alford and Hackett).

Ver. 39. **The contention was so sharp between them.**—Better, *there arose a severe contention.* If the incident described in Gal. ii. 11 had occurred in the days preceding this

contention (Alford, Lechler, Conybeare and Howson) that incident would help to explain the hotness of the dispute between the two missionaries; but it seems improbable that such a reaction in favour of Judaism as that scene at Antioch represents could have taken place so soon after the decision at Jerusalem (Hackett). **They departed asunder one from the other.**—Not in friendship, but in service. **Barnabas.**—Not named again in Acts, but reported by one tradition to have proceeded to Milan, and died as first bishop of its Church; and by another to have spent some years in Rome and Athens. **Took Mark**, who afterwards gained Paul's esteem (Col. iv. 10; 2 Tim. iv. 11), **and sailed to Cyprus**, his native city (iv. 36), where, according to the second of the above traditions, he suffered martyrdom. The authenticity of the well-known Epistle of Barnabas cannot be defended.

Ver. 40. That Paul and Silas, on setting forth, were **commended by the brethren to the grace of God** suggests that the Church at Antioch espoused the side of Paul, as no similar commendation appears to have been given to Barnabas and Mark.

Ver. 41. **Confirming the churches.**—Not candidates for admission to, but those already in, them (xiv. 22). Of the founding of these churches in Syria and Cilicia no account has been preserved, but they most likely dated from the time of Paul's visit to those regions (ix. 30; Gal. i. 21). One of these churches was probably located at Tarsus.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 1—5.

Judaising Teachers at Antioch; or, the Circumcision Controversy Raised.

I. **The Judaising teachers and their doctrine.**—1. *The teachers.* Certain men from Judæa. Not those who afterwards came from James (Gal. ii. 12), but those who were brought in unawares (Gal. ii. 4). Possibly converts from the Pharisaic party in Jerusalem who had been invited by their co-religionists within the Church at Antioch. 2. *Their doctrine.* That salvation was impossible without circumcision. That the way into the Church of Christ led through the doorway of Judaism. That without submission to this carnal ordinance the spiritual blessing of the gospel could not be enjoyed. 3. *Their activity.* They taught the brethren. Not content with merely suggesting the doubt as to whether even Gentile Christians could disregard the Mosaic ritual—a doubt which would, at least, have been not unnatural in a narrow-minded and bigoted Pharisee—or with expressing their opinion that the Law God had given to Moses could not safely be set aside, they confidently laid down the dogma that circumcision was imperative: "Except ye be circumcised," etc.

II. **The Christian Church and its resolution.**—1. *The Church.*—Was (1) divided into factions. "There was no small dissension." The word points to the rise of parties in the Church. Even had all the Gentile Christians remained upon the side of freedom, there remained still the Jewish Christians (xi. 19), who espoused the doctrine of the false teachers; while it is possible that not a few of the Gentiles may have allowed themselves to be overawed by the seeming and perhaps assumed authority of the Judæan emissaries. (2) Rent by disputation. Impossible that it could have been otherwise. To have admitted the tenet of the Judaisers would have been to subvert the gospel of Christ (Gal. v. 2-4). Hence Paul and Barnabas felt themselves impelled to stand forth in defence of Christian liberty against those Pharisaic legalists who desired to bring the Gentiles into bondage. "To whom we gave place by subjection," do you say? exclaims Paul. "No! not for an hour" (Gal. ii. 5). 2. *Its resolution.* To refer the controversy for decision to the Mother Church at Jerusalem. This determination was not necessary in the sense that the Church at Antioch possessed no authority to compose the quarrel had it been able. But it was clearly unable. Hence the reference to Jerusalem was a wise procedure, partly because the troublers had come from Jerusalem and may have represented that they spoke with the authority of the apostles and elders there, and partly because a decision by the mother Church would undoubtedly carry greater weight.

III. **The delegates and their journey.**—1. *The delegates.* Paul and Barnabas, with certain others, not named, but most probably chosen from among the prophets and teachers that were in the Antioch Church (xiii. 1), and the men of

Cyprus and Cyrene, whose labours had founded the Church (xi. 20). Titus (Gal. ii. 3), most likely accompanied Paul as a representative and specimen of the sort of converts that had been made among the Greeks. 2. *Their journey.* (1) Its object. Whilst the delegates had in view the execution of the Church's commission which had been entrusted to them—viz., the submission of the disputed question to the apostolic tribunal—Paul informs us (Gal. ii. 2) that he went up by revelation; which may be harmonised with the statement of Luke by supposing that the revelation instructed Paul either to propose or to agree to the reference to Jerusalem; and indeed, without some such inward intimation of the will of his Divine Lord it would not have been surprising had Paul hesitated to submit the decision of this vital question to the mother Church, out of which the very parties had come who had attempted to fetch away from Gentile believers the liberty they enjoyed in Christ. "We need not be surprised if we find that Paul's path was determined by two different causes: that he went up to Jerusalem partly because the Church deputed him, and partly because he was Divinely admonished. Such a combination and co-operation of the natural and supernatural we have observed in the case of that vision which induced Peter to go from Joppa to Cæsarea" (Conybeare and Howson); and, the same writers add, in Paul's escape from Jerusalem to Tarsus, which was urged on him by the brethren (ix. 30), and at the same time commanded by Christ, who appeared to him in a trance (xxii. 17, 18). (2) Its commencement. The delegates were accompanied a portion of their way by the Church, as a mark of honour to themselves and as an indication of the interest the Church took in their mission (compare xx. 38, xxi. 5; 3 John 6). (3) Its progress. They passed through Phœnicia and Samaria (see on xi. 19, and viii. 5). As Galilee is not mentioned, it may be concluded that they travelled along the coast as far south as Ptolemais (xxi. 7), and then crossed the plain of Esdrælon into Samaria. (4) Its accompaniments. The delegates, wherever they appeared, declared the conversion of the Gentiles, and caused great joy unto all the brethren. (5) Its termination. They came to Jerusalem, within whose gates seldom had a more important embassy arrived.

IV. **The mother Church and its procedure.**—1. *The reception given to the envoys.* (1) By the whole Church, with the apostles and elders at its head, the various congregations having come together for this purpose. (2) With the utmost cordiality: this implied in the verb used to express the ceremonial. (3) In patient hearing of their story, when they rehearsed all things that God had done with them. That Paul laid not before the collective Church the gospel which he preached among the Gentiles, with its doctrine of salvation without "the works of the Law," but reserved this for a private interview with the Church leaders, one naturally infers from Gal. ii. 2. Had he done so, instead of confining himself to a simple narration of his Gentile mission, he would most likely have prematurely kindled a conflagration. As it was, his address acted like a spark thrown into a heap of combustible material. It awoke the slumbering prejudices of his Judaising hearers. 2. *The opposition developed against the envoys.* (1) This proceeded, in all probability, from the party that had despatched the emissaries to Antioch—viz., the sect of the Pharisees who believed, and who may have felt their doctrinal position to be in danger through the enthusiasm aroused by the orations of the missionaries. (2) The form it assumed was a reassertion of the false and pernicious doctrine which had brought the delegates to Jerusalem—"that it was needful to circumcise the Gentiles and to command them to keep the Law of Moses."

Learn—1. The persistence of outworn creeds. 2. The celerity with which error intrudes itself into the Church. 3. The duty of Christian teachers to resist every attempt to corrupt the simplicity of the faith. 4. The function of the Church, as a whole, to guard the truth.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 1, 5. *No Salvation without Circumcision.*

I. **An old-time truth.**—Under the Mosaic dispensation it was true that no Israelite could be saved who, in unbelief and disobedience, repudiated circumcision, though, from the nature of the case, submission to the rite was not left in the hands of the individual. Hence it is doubtful if, even under the Old-Testament economy, circumcision was of universal obligation as an indispensable condition of salvation. Certainly submission to the bodily ceremonial was no absolute guarantee of the soul's forgiveness and renewal, or of its future enjoyment of eternal life.

II. **A plausible doctrine.** — Like many another mistaken theory, it had some considerations to advance on its behalf. It was by no means surprising that a Jew should have argued that circumcision must have been designed to be of permanent and perhaps also universal obligation, considering that Jehovah Himself had imposed it on the fathers of Israel, that it had descended from a hoar antiquity, and that its value as a religious ordinance had been recognised by so many even of the Gentiles themselves.

III. **A dangerous error.**—To assert that circumcision was indispensable to salvation was (1) directly to challenge the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice as an atonement for sin; (2) virtually to impair the fulness of salvation as a gift of grace, by imposing an external condition of enjoying the same; (3) practically to teach the doctrine of salvation by works, against which the gospel is a vigorous and uncompromising protest; (4) certainly to destroy all hope of Christianity ever becoming a world-wide religion; (5) absurdly to exalt a positive enactment to the same level, in respect of saving worth, as a spiritual precept; (6) foolishly to maintain that a positive institution could never be abrogated or set aside by its founders; (7) sinfully to corrupt the truth of God which had been revealed through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

IV. **An exploded heresy.**—Nobody now within the Church of Christ thinks of maintaining the necessity of circumcision; though unfortunately the same error survives in spirit among those who teach the doctrines of baptismal regeneration and sacramental grace, or the impossibility of being saved unless one has been baptised and partaken of the Lord's Supper.

Ver. 2. *How to Deal with Heretics.*

I. **Endeavour to convince them by reasoning** (Titus iii. 10).

II. **Lay the matter in dispute before the courts of the Church** (Matt. xviii. 17).

III. **Separate from such as refuse to obey the decision of the Church** (1 Tim. vi. 5; 2 John 10).

Ver. 3. *The Conversion of the Heathen a Source of Joy to the Church of Christ.* (A Missionary Sermon.)

I. **As a solid increase to the sum of human happiness.**—Every sinner saved being a soul rescued from the guilt and power of sin.

II. **As an irrefragable proof of the saving power of the gospel.**—The progress of foreign missions the most powerful apologetic of to-day.

III. **As a valuable extension of the Saviour's kingdom.** — Every convert won from heathenism becomes a subject of the empire of truth and love, of salvation and eternal life.

IV. **As a delightful prophecy of the millennial era.**—Each tribe and nation brought under the power of the gospel being a foreshadowing of that happy era when "the kingdoms of the world shall have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ."

Vers. 3, 4. *Paul and Barnabas on the Way to Jerusalem;* or, what all ministers ought to be.

I. **Champions of orthodoxy.**—*I.e.*, of the truth. Certainly men who claim

to be Church teachers should not war against the faith they profess, or propagate opinions contrary to the truth they have been appointed to expound.

II. **Messengers of peace.**—Constantly directing their endeavours towards maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace. As representatives of the Prince of Peace, they should themselves be lovers of peace.

III. **Publishers of grace.**—Heralds of the good news of salvation through the free grace of God in Christ—a theme so great and glorious that none other in the estimation of a true preacher should for a moment be suffered to dispute its claims on his attention.

IV. **Dispensers of joy.**—Such those preachers and ministers cannot fail to be who are mindful of their calling, and unwearied as well as hearty in its exercise.

Ver. 4. *Paul's Third Visit to Jerusalem.*—Was this the visit recorded in Gal. ii. 1? An affirmative reply seems justified on the following grounds:—

I. **The impossibility of synchronising the Galatian visit with any other alluded to in the Acts.**—Either with that recorded in xi. 30, which occurred before the famine predicted by Agabus, or that reported in xviii. 22, which happened at the close of Paul's second missionary journey; all others being practically out of the question. Decisive against the latter of the above two is the circumstance that Barnabas was not then a travelling companion of Paul, as he was on the occasion of the visit spoken of in Galatians; while opposed to the former stand a number of considerations, as, *e.g.*: 1. The different object of the xi. 30 visit, which was to carry a benevolent contribution to Jerusalem; whereas the Galatian visit contemplated conversation with the Church leaders about Paul's gospel to the Gentiles. 2. The date of the xi. 30 visit which coincided with that of Herod's death, not more than ten years after Saul's conversion, whereas the Galatian visit fell at least seventeen years after that event. 3. The unlikelihood of an ecclesiastical council being convened in Jerusalem during, or so near, the time of the Herodian persecution. 4. The improbability of Paul having attained, in the course of one year's labour at Antioch, to such pre-eminence over Peter as he appears in Galatians to have reached. 5. The almost certainty that, if Paul's mission to the heathen had already been recognised at the visit of xi. 30, there would have been no need to undertake a second journey to Jerusalem to obtain another decision thereupon; and (6) the difficulty of harmonising this supposed commission of Paul to the Gentiles, received at the visit of xi. 30, with the express statement of xiii. 1, that Paul's mission was entrusted to him after that visit.

II. **The obvious correspondence between the Galatian visit and this to the Jerusalem council.**—1. The two narratives assume that Paul and Barnabas had already conducted a gospel mission among the Gentiles. 2. In both journeys Paul is accompanied by Barnabas. 3. Both visits have the same end in view—to obtain a judicial settlement of the controversy which had broken out at Antioch, concerning the amount of liberty to be accorded to Gentile converts. 4. The settlement reported in both accounts is practically the same—that the Gentiles were not to be subjected to the yoke of circumcision. 5. In both narratives Peter and James appear as principal parties in bringing about the deliverance which restored peace to the Church.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 6—21.

The Council at Jerusalem; or, the Circumcision Controversy Settled.

I. **The composition of the council.**—1. The *apostles.* The twelve; Paul not yet included in their number. These, as having been chosen by Christ, were naturally regarded as the heads of the Christian community, which accordingly

looked to them for counsel in matters of Church administration, and especially for guidance in circumstances of difficulty. 2. The *elders.* The presidents, superintendents, or overseers, of the different Christian synagogues, or Churches. How large a body the eldership formed cannot be surmised; but all its members, it is clear, stood on an equality as presbyters. 3. The *brethren.* The members of the Church called "the multitude" (ver. 12); "the whole Church" (ver. 22). Whether these took an active part in the discussion cannot be answered without knowing in what capacity James (ver. 13) spoke; that they were associated with the apostles and elders in the finding of the court the narrative distinctly states (ver. 22). "The three bodies stood to each other as the *Boulè* or council, the *Gerusia* or senate, and the *Ecclesia* or assembly, in a Greek Republic" (Plumptre).

II. **The deliberations of the council.**—1. *Peter's speech.* After considerable discussion, in which the "brethren" may have taken part, the Man of Rock, Cephas, or Peter, asked a hearing from the court. (1) He reminded those present of a series of facts with which all were familiar (see xi.): first, that about fourteen years before God had specially selected him (Peter) to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, under such circumstances as evinced it to be the will of Heaven, that they (the Gentiles) should be invited to believe, and so be received into the Christian Church (see x. 34); secondly, that God Himself, who, from His character as Heart Searcher, could be under no mistake concerning the inward attitude of any toward the gospel, had borne witness to the genuineness of their conversion, by granting them the Holy Ghost in the same manner as He had done unto the Jews (see x. 44); and thirdly, that God had put no difference between themselves (the Jews) and the Gentiles on becoming Christians—that in the case of both, faith had operated in the same way, and produced the same results—viz., had led to the purification of the heart from sin, or, in other words, had made the nature holy. (2) He asked them a question which contained a very powerful argument. Why they should seek to impose circumcision on the disciples? First, to do so was to be guilty of tempting God—*i.e.*, of presumptuously putting Him to the proof by demanding additional evidences of His will, when those already furnished, and just recited by Peter, ought to be enough. Secondly, to do so would be to place upon the necks of the Gentile disciples a yoke which the Jews themselves had found to be intolerable, irksome, burdensome, oppressive, slavish in the extreme, as it could not fail to be when men came to regard it (as the Jews unfortunately did, and now desired to teach the Gentiles that it was) indispensable for salvation. Thirdly, to do so was to insist upon a ritual which experience had shown to be altogether unnecessary. The Jews themselves who believed had practically confessed that they could not be saved by the ceremonies of the Law, and had turned to seek salvation by grace; if so, how could it be other than inconsistent and ridiculous to impose upon the Gentiles that in which the Jews themselves had lost faith. 2. *Barnabas's and Paul's orations.* One after the other the two missionaries addressed the House—Barnabas preceding, presumably on account of age, and because the council had, as yet, greater confidence in him. The subject handled by both was their missionary travels. One can imagine the eloquence with which the "chief speaker" would dilate upon the thrilling tale of their experiences and of God's signs and wonders among the heathen, and almost see the bated breath—"all the multitude kept silence"—with which the thronged assembly would listen to the story "of the greatest revolution the world has ever seen." The speakers appear to have confined themselves to an unvarnished narrative of facts. 3. *James's advice.* The James who, after Barnabas and Paul had sat down, claimed the attention of the meeting was the brother of the Lord (Gal. ii. 9), "who, from the austere sanctity of his character, was commonly called, both by

Jews and Christians, James the Just" (Conybeare and Howson, i. 204). From the circumstance that he spoke last it has been quite reasonably inferred that he acted as president of the council, and that in all probability he was chief pastor in the Church of Jerusalem. From his well-known character as a strong legalist, his decision in favour of freedom, coming after Peter's, could not fail to carry great weight. The substance of what he said was (1) that the conversion of the Gentiles, as rehearsed by Simeon (Peter's Hebrew name), was an exact fulfilment of Old-Testament prophecy, the particular prediction cited being taken from Amos ix. 11, 12; and (2) that, that being so, the conversion of the Gentiles manifestly had a place in the plan and purpose of God, to whom all His works were known from the beginning, so that nothing could occur by accident. After this he proceeded to give judgment on the case, which judgment the court unanimously adopted.

III. **The finding of the council.**—1. *That Gentile Christians should not be troubled about circumcision, or other Jewish ceremonies.* Neither those who already had turned, nor those who in future might turn, to God, by believing on Jesus, should be molested, worried, or harassed about these beggarly elements; but all should be left alone in that liberty wherewith Christ had made His people free (Gal. v. 1). 2. *That Gentile Christians should be asked to abstain from certain things.* (1) Pollutions of idols. *I.e.*, parts of sacrificial victims which had not been used in sacrifice, and which the heathen sold in the market for ordinary food, but which, as having been presented to an idol, the Jew regarded as entailing upon him who ate them the guilt of idolatry (compare Rom. xiv. 15; 1 Cor. viii. 10). (2) Fornication. The heathen mind had become so corrupt as to have practically lost all sense of chastity as a virtue; and besides, in connection with heathen festivals in honour of their deities, the most shameless licentiousness was frequently practised: hence, both of these considerations called for stringent prohibition of this sin. (3) Things strangled. *I.e.*, the flesh of animals not put to death in the ordinary way, which the Jews were not allowed to eat, because it was not properly drained of blood (Lev. xvii. 13, 14; Deut. xii. 16, 23). (4) Blood. This heathens often drank at their idolatrous feasts, and even at other times, mingled with their food. 3. *That the Gentile Christians should be instructed as to the reason for this partial restriction of their liberty.* "For Moses of old time (or from generations of old), hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath." Meaning that because of this constant reading of the Law the feelings of such Jewish Christians as had not broken with the synagogue would be wounded should Gentile Christians be exempted, not only from circumcision, but from such restrictions as were wont to be imposed on proselytes coming over from heathenism to Judaism. Hence, as a compromise, the above-mentioned prohibitions, the so-called Noachian precepts, were enjoined upon Gentile Christians.

Learn—1. The right of the Christian laity to take part in Church synods, assemblies, and councils. 2. The propriety of conducting all Church deliberations with decency and in order. 3. The wisdom of the Church membership giving heed to the counsels of its leaders. 4. The duty of Church councils to depend on nothing but moral suasion for the enforcement of their decrees.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 6-21. *The First Ecclesiastical Assembly.*

I. **The question discussed.**—Concerning the conditions of salvation.

II. **The spirit manifested.**—A spirit of love and truth.

III. **The standard recognised.**—God's testimony in the Scriptures and in providence.

IV. **The decision given.**—One of Christian wisdom, calculated to conciliate and promote union among the saved.

Ver. 8. *God's Knowledge of the Heart.*
I. **Immediate.**
II. **Constant.**
III. **Thorough.**
IV. **Gracious.**

Ver. 9. *No Difference between Us and Them—i.e., between Man and Man.*—In respect of—

I. The **need** of salvation. The hearts of all, being impure, require cleansing.

II. The **provision** of salvation. Christ's atonement and the Spirit's grace designed for all.

III. The **condition** of salvation. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

IV. The **possession** of salvation. All who believe receive the Holy Spirit, which is the earnest of our inheritance.

Heart Purification.

I. **The heart is by nature unclean, and requires cleansing.**

II. **This cleansing can be effected only by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost.**

III. **The Holy Ghost always operates through the faith of the individual.**

IV. **The faith of the individual rests upon the truth of God.**

Ver. 11. *The Apostle's Creed.*

I. **That Jews, as well as Gentiles, alike need salvation.**—Both being alike under sin (Rom. ii. 9).

II. **That for Jews, as well as Gentiles, salvation can be only through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.** None other name (iv. 12); only one Mediator (1 Tim. ii. 5).

III. **That as a consequence, Jews, as well as Gentiles, can be saved in no other way than by faith without works.**—By the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified (Gal. ii. 16).

IV. **That Jews and Gentiles alike are sure of salvation, if they do believe.** — "Whosoever believeth" (John iii. 16).

The First Confession of Faith.

I. The **error** against which it guarded. Salvation by works.

II. The **ground** on which it rested. God's word and Christian experience.

III. The **spirit** by which it was pervaded. Courage and humility; boldness and love.

IV. The **gospel** which it proclaimed. Salvation through God's grace and man's faith.

V. The **assent** which it received. It was embraced by all the office-bearers and members of the Church.

Vers. 14-18. *The Conversion of the Gentiles.*

I. **An accomplished fact.** — God hath visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name.

II. **A fulfilment of prophecy.**—In addition to Amos ix. 11, 12, such passages as the following might have been quoted: Isa. ii. 2, ix. 2, xi. 10, xxv. 6, lii. 15; Jer. iv. 2, xvi. 19; Dan. vii. 14; Joel ii. 28; Zech. viii. 23.

III. **A foreseen event.**—Having had a place in God's eternal counsel, it was known unto God from the beginning.

IV. **A progressing work.**—The residue of men are still seeking after God. (See Hints on ver. 3.)

Vers. 17, 18. *Old-Testament Views of God.*
I. **The Father of Men.**
II. **The Lord of the Nations.**
III. **The Ruler of the Universe.**
IV. **The Omniscient Worker.**
V. **The Supreme Good of Mankind.**

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 22—35.

The Letter from the Church at Jerusalem; or, the Publication of the Settlement.

I. **The resolution of the Church.**—1. *To prepare an encyclical letter*, to be sent round the Gentile Churches. This suggestion, made by James (ver. 20), was formally adopted by the whole Church, under the visible leadership of the apostles and elders (ver. 22), and at the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, the supreme

president of the assembly (ver. 28). 2. *To forward it to Antioch,* the missionary centre, *by chosen messengers,* along with Paul and Barnabas. This addition to James's motion, by whomsoever proposed, commended itself to the sanctified intelligence of the community as at once respectful to the brethren at Antioch and expressive of their own high sense of the importance of the occasion.

II. **The special messengers.**—1. Their *names.* (1) Judas, called Barsabbas. That he was not the apostle Judas Thaddeus his surname shows. That he was a brother of Joseph Barsabbas, the candidate for the apostleship (Grotius) is an unproved conjecture. It is enough to know that those who selected and sent him were acquainted with his person as well as with his name. (2) Silas. Silvanus in the Epistles. Paul's companion on the second missionary journey (ver. 40). Whether the bearer of the first epistle of Peter to the Churches of Asia (1 Peter v. 12) cannot be decided. Not the writer of the Acts (see i. 1). 2. Their *character.* "Chief men among the brethren," eminent disciples, had in reputation perhaps both for piety and ability. The word translated "chief," meaning "leading," may point to the fact that they were elders (Heb. xiii. 17). 3. Their *standing.* Whether they had been among the seventy (Luke x. 1) may be doubtful; no uncertainty exists as to this: that they ranked as prophets (ver. 32; compare xiii. 1). 4. Their *companions.* Barnabas and Paul, who returned to Antioch bearing the affection of the whole Church at Jerusalem. "Our beloved Barnabas and Paul" the letter styles them, and—knowing that their splendid services in the cause of Christ had been acknowledged—"men that have hazarded their lives," etc., it continues. 5. Their *selection.* Rendered necessary in order to authenticate the letter to the Churches, and to free Paul and Barnabas from all suspicion of having tampered with the letter, or imposed their views on the assembly.

III. **The encyclical letter.**—1. *The reason for its sending stated.* That the Church of Jerusalem had heard how the Gentiles in these Churches had been troubled, even to the degree, in some instances, of having their souls subverted by certain unauthorised teachers who had gone forth from their midst (and perhaps pretending to their authority). 2. *To whom it was addressed.* To the brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, which shows how widely these false leaders had diffused their pernicious doctrines. That it was designed to be laid before all Gentile Churches cannot be inferred (but see xxi. 25). 3. *In whose names it was despatched.* Those of the apostles, elders, and brethren (A.V.), or of the apostles and elder brethren (R.V.); *i.e.*, either of the Church's office-bearers alone (Presbyterianism) or of the Church membership as well (Congregationalism). See Critical Remarks. 4. *The writing it contained.* (1) After the opening salutation (ver. 23), in which the word used for greeting points to James's hand as that which drew up the document (see Critical Remarks), and (2) the insertion of the above-stated reasons (ver. 24), there follow (3) the names of the special envoys sent with Paul and Barnabas (ver. 27), and (4) the decision of the council—its authorship (the Holy Ghost, with the apostles and elders), and its contents (vers. 28, 29); after which it closes with (5) a word of farewell (ver. 29). 5. *The reception it met with.* Arrived at Antioch, towards which they had been solemnly dismissed, perhaps with religious services (see ver. 33, xiii. 3), and possibly an escort for several miles of the way (ver. 3), Judas and Silas, having convened a meeting of the Church, formally delivered into their hands the epistle, which, when they had read (it may be, had heard read by Barnabas, the son of consolation), they rejoiced, for the consolation it gave them by the happy settlement of a hard question, which most likely, had it not been settled, would have proved troublesome, and even dangerous to the peace and prosperity of the Church.

IV. **The return of the envoys.**—1. *After a period of happy service* at Antioch, in which they (Judas and Silas), themselves prophets, delighted to engage, and in which they attained considerable success (ver. 32), exhorting the disciples there with many words to cleave to Christ alone for salvation. 2. *With a parting salutation of peace,* or with best wishes for their happiness and safety (compare xvi. 36; Mark v. 34; Luke vii. 50). 3. *To those who had sent them forth—i.e.,* to the Church at Jerusalem, leaving Paul and Barnabas behind at Antioch, to continue there the work of teaching and preaching the word of the Lord; though from the narrative (ver. 40) it may be gathered that Silas soon after rejoined Paul at Antioch.

Learn—1. That wisdom and love combined are much required in dealing with the difficulties of Christian members. 2. That Church courts should strive to attain unity in all their decisions. 3. That the decisions of supreme ecclesiastical courts should always be announced with tenderness. 4. That only persons of approved piety should be entrusted with special missions for the Church: 5. That the Holy Ghost requires unity among Christians only in essentials. 6. That decisions of ecclesiastical assemblies, if come to under the Holy Spirit's presidency, may be fitly regarded as His decisions.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 22. "*Chief men among the brethren*;" or the prominent leaders in the first Christian council.

I. **Two apostles.**—1. *Peter.* One of the original twelve: who opened the door of the Church to the Gentiles in the person of Cornelius. 2. *James.* Of apostolic rank, though not included in the twelve; the president of the Jewish Christian Church at Jerusalem.

II. **Two missionaries.** — 1. *Paul.* The apostle to the Gentiles par excellence, the pioneer evangelist who carried the gospel beyond the bounds of Palestine—first into Asia, and subsequently into Europe. 2. *Barnabas.* The son of consolation, the good Levite; the modest and self-effacing companion of his great colleague.

III. **Two deputies.**—1. *Judas Barsabbas.* A Jerusalem Christian of good repute among his brethren; otherwise unknown. 2. *Silas.* Also a recognised disciple of good standing; afterwards Paul's companion on the second missionary tour.

Ver. 23. *The Jerusalem Concordat.*—1. *The salutation*—"Greeting." "The actual form of the salutation is remarkable—χαίρειν: Hail! The secular traditional Greek salutation is used here, and not yet, as in the subsequent epistles, the apostolic greeting: 'Grace and peace from God and Christ'; but the Israelitish salutation of Jesus and his disciples is no longer adopted, which ran, 'Peace be with you!' We find this χαίρε used in the New Testament by Judas with the kiss of betrayal (Matt. xxvi. 49), by the mocking soldiers (Matt. xxvii. 49; Mark xv. 18; John xix. 3); in the letter from the chief captain Lysias to the governor Felix (Acts xxiii. 26); it is also quoted as a salutation of everyday life in 2 John 10, 11, and it is made use of in the Epistle to James (i. 1). This Greek expression, χαίρειν, is certainly spiritualised by Christian use, and raised to its true and highest signification, just as is the Israelitish שָׁלוֹם לְךָ in the mouth of the Lord; here, however, it is a friendly mode of address to the Greek brethren, and a greeting highly suited to the case" (Stier). 2. *The contents.* "As an independent commandment of loving wisdom for the edification of the Jewish and Gentile Church, this letter formed the remarkable beginning of inspired writing of the New-Testament system, as the Decalogue did in the Old Testament. . . In this letter we find the first transition from oral teaching to the principal form of the New Testa-

ment Scripture" (*Stier*). 3. *The authority.* "It seemed good unto the Holy Ghost and to us." "We must neither look upon this expression as a mere formula, as in the later councils, nor must we refine upon it, as if the apostles and elders said, The Holy Ghost instructed us in this in the house of Cornelius, and we now decide therefrom; as if they had been taught by that outpouring of the Holy Spirit that these four items were to be specially imposed on the Gentile brethren. In this decretal formula now made use of there is, of course, some allusive reference to the matters of fact which had been set forth by Peter, and to the Scripture that had been quoted by James, both being alike testimony of the Holy Spirit, by which testimony the assembly had been induced to come to a conclusion." . . . "But the ἔδοξε of the Holy Ghost refers as much to the four requisitions of abstinence as to the principal resolution, which declared the liberation of the Gentiles; consequently, it is always maintained that these four requisitions were made by the full authority of the Holy Ghost" (*Stier*).

Ver. 24. *Subverting Souls.*

I. **An easy performance.**—May be done by (1) promulgating erroneous doctrine; (2) setting a bad example; or (3) unduly exercising liberty (Rom. xiv. 15).

II. **A frequent practice.**—By no means seldom occurring. Sometimes ignorantly, but often also deliberately done (2 Tim. ii. 14, iii. 6; Titus i. 10, 11).

III. **A dangerous achievement.**—1. Imperilling the salvation of the subverted soul. 2. Involving in awful guilt—that of soul-murder—him who subverts (2 Peter i. 1-3).

Ver. 26. *Hazarding One's Life for the Name of Christ.*

I. **To decline to do so when necessary is sin.**—To save one's life at the expense of one's fidelity to Christ, or to deny Christ in order to save one's life, is to be guilty of apostasy.

II. **To do so when called on by conscience is duty.**—When one who is called to serve Christ finds that he cannot do so without imperilling his life, it becomes his duty to embrace the risk.

II. **To do so voluntarily, in order to serve Christ, is heroism.**—One who would not hesitate to sacrifice his life when serving might still shrink from deliberately encountering such risk, in order to find opportunities of serving Christ. This latter did Barnabas and Paul.

Ver. 30. *The Jerusalem Epistle: the Church's Charter of Liberty.*

I. Its **urgent occasion.**—It concerned the question, Moses or Christ.

II. Its **unassailable origin.**—Dictated by the Holy Ghost.

III. Its **honourable bearers.**—The heralds of evangelical grace, accredited by God Himself.

IV. Its **incontestable contents.**—Freedom from the ceremonial, but not from the moral, law. Deliverance from the yoke of slavish obedience, but not from the service of self-denying love.

V. Its **joyous publication.**—First to the Church at Antioch, and afterwards to the Churches in the cities visited by Paul and Silas (xvi. 4).

Delivering the Epistle.—That this encylical was never composed and far less delivered—at least in the way recorded in the Acts—has been argued (Baur, Zeller, Weizsäcker, Holtzmann, and others) on various grounds.

I. **The apparent discrepancy between the narrative in Acts and the account given by Paul, who was an eye-witness of what took place in Jerusalem, it is said, shows the letter to be unhistorical.**—It is urged—1. That the conference with the Jerusalem authorities, according to Galatians, was sought for by Paul alone; whereas, according to Acts, it originated in a Church resolution. 2. That the Galatian story bears no trace of the

antecedent disturbance at Antioch; whereas the picture drawn by Luke is that of storm and dissension, both at Jerusalem and Antioch. 3. That Acts is absolutely silent about the Titus episode, which forms so striking a feature in the Galatian letter. But, *as to the first*, why may not both statements be true, and Paul have resolved, on his own account, while executing the Church's commission, to lay before the Jerusalem authorities a full and clear exposition of the gospel which he preached among the heathen, in the hope and belief that this would put an end to all further controversy? *As to the second*, may not Paul have deemed it quite unnecessary to inform the Galatians of every detail concerning the struggle for liberty at Antioch and Jerusalem, and considered it enough to emphasise the main point, that his apostleship to the Gentiles had been expressly recognised by the three pillar apostles, James, Cephas, and John? *The third*, the Titus episode, though not particularised in Luke's narrative, is not contradicted, or even excluded, and may well have formed an item in the much questioning (xv. 7) which preceded Peter's speech; or it may have been deliberately omitted from Luke's narrative because it formed no part of the public discussion. In any case the two accounts, when impartially viewed, are rather supplementary than contradictory of each other.

II. **Had the letter been written as reported, it is held Paul could not have stated in Galatians, as he does, that those who were of repute imparted nothing to him.**—"There is no getting beyond this," says Weizsäcker. "It is a round assertion, and perfectly clear. . . . All possibility of an exception, of anything having been added by the apostles, is excluded. . . . Paul has not said that nothing burdensome, but that nothing at all, was imposed upon him." But surely this is to misunderstand the meaning of the apostle, who is not writing about ecclesiastical decrees for the observance of Gentile converts, but about apostolic authorisation for himself, and who distinctly asserts that the three pillar apostles imparted nothing to him—*i.e.*, did not for a moment ever imagine that he required to be authorised by them, and certainly did not arrogate to themselves the right to authorise him as an apostle to the Gentiles, but, on the contrary, recognised that he had already been authorised as such by God.

III. **Had the letter been written, it is difficult, we are told, to see how either Peter could have acted at Antioch or James at Jerusalem, as they are represented afterwards to have done** (Gal. ii. 11, 12). But (1) with reference to both apostles it should be borne in mind that it is by no means uncommon for even the best of men to act at times inconsistently and in flat contradiction to their previously expressed opinions and principles—even Barnabas, as well as Peter, was carried away with the prevailing spirit of dissimulation. (2) As regards Peter, had the letter not been written it is doubtful if Paul would have been justified in so sharply censuring Peter's conduct. Nor (3) is it likely that Paul would have so distinctly charged Peter with having acted contrary to his avowed principles had he not been aware how Peter had expressed himself at the Jerusalem conference. While (4) as to James, it is not certain that his emissaries did not travel beyond their instructions; or, if they did not, it is by no means unintelligible that, while James may, at the conference, have recognised the Church membership of uncircumcised Gentiles, he may also have desired that Jewish Christians should not be too free in social intercourse with the Gentiles.

IV. **Had the letter been written,** it is further contended, **it would hardly have dropped so completely as it appears to have done out of the Pauline epistles.**—Though referred to again in Acts (xvi. 4, xxi. 15) it is not alluded to again by Paul, it is said, in either Romans, Corinthians, Galatians,

or Ephesians. But—1. Paul may have deemed it unnecessary to cite the apostolic decrees either (1) because they were sufficiently well known, or (2) because they were more or less Palestinian in their colouring, and therefore less suitable for impressing Churches in Europe and Western Asia; (3) because the purpose of his letters did not call for their citation; or (4) because he chose to rely rather on fundamental gospel principles than on ecclesiastical enactments. 2. Even in Galatians Paul may have judged it better to make no appeal to the decrees, in case of weakening his claim to apostolic autonomy and total independence of human authority in the exercise of his ministry. 3. It is scarcely accurate to assert that all trace of the encyclical, if it ever existed, quickly disappeared, since each of the above-named epistles contains manifest allusions to its contents, as, *e.g.*, (1) to abstinence from flesh and wine (offered to idols) for the sake of a weak brother (Rom. xiv. 21); (2) to the practice of fornication (1 Cor. v. 1, vi. 13, x. 8); (3) to things offered to idols (1 Cor. viii. 1, 13, x. 7, 19, 20, 21, 28); (4) to the freedom of the Gentiles from circumcision (Gal. ii. 3, 11, 14, v. 2); and (5) to marriage (Eph. vi. 25).

V. **The recognition by Paul of the mother Church in Jerusalem as the supreme court, whose decisions were universally binding (it is added), does not harmonise with his claim for independence of all human authority in the gospel which he preached** (Gal. i. 1).—But while Paul's conviction that he had received his gospel by express revelation from heaven may have been, and was, for himself a sufficient authorisation of the same, he may also have felt (or been taught by the special revelation that sent him to Jerusalem) that a decision from the mother Church would not be without importance as a means of securing the acquiescence of Jewish Christians, who could hardly be expected to remain satisfied with his statement about the heavenly source of his views.

VI. **Other objections to the historicity of this decree,** such as that it opens and closes like Claudius Lysias' letter to Felix (xxiii. 26-30), and that the sentence formations of vers. 24, 25, are analogous to Luke i. 1-3, do not strike one as weighty. Both only show that there were customary modes of composition, which were known to Theophilus's friend and to Claudius Lysias, as well as to the apostles and brethren in Jerusalem—surely by no means an impossible or even violent supposition!

VII. The suggestion that, **nevertheless, the letter has a historical basis,** and that a concordat of similar purport must have been arranged subsequent to the Antioch dispute (Weizsäcker), shows how hard put to it objectors feel themselves in their attempts to get rid of the document as it stands, and how difficult they find it to explain the growth of Gentile Churches without some such deliverance as Acts records.

Ver. 33. *Let Go in Peace.*

A testimony to—

I. **The success of their mission.**
II. **The unity of the Church.**
III. **The influence of the letter.**

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 36—40.

The Second Missionary Journey Commenced; or, the Separation of Barnabas and Paul.

I. **Paul's proposal to Barnabas.**—1. *To what it referred.* The initiation of a second missionary journey, for the purpose of visiting the brethren—*i.e.*, the young converts in every city in which, on their previous tour, they had preached the gospel—and inquiring into their spiritual condition. Not only must the work of spreading the gospel never stop, but the equally important business of edifying and building up those who have been converted must never be neglected. A true

pastor will not only labour to bring souls into Christ's fold, but will watch with assiduity and care over such as are already in. 2. *When it was made.* Some days after the return to Jerusalem of Judas and Silas (ver. 33), or of Judas alone (see "Critical Remarks"), and after their own evangelistic activity at Antioch had continued for some time, though how long remains uncertain. Perhaps the commencement of this second journey should be dated A.D. 51. 3. *How it was received.* Obviously Barnabas assented to the proposal, though it had been mooted by Paul rather than by himself. Of jealousy on Barnabas's part not a trace appears. Though probably older than Paul he appears to have recognised, with equanimity and satisfaction, Paul's superior genius and greater fitness to be a leader. That they quarrelled before the proposal could be carried out was, doubtless, to be regretted. But meanwhile it may be noted that the cause of that quarrel was nothing connected with the subordinate position of Barnabas.

II. **Paul's contention with Barnabas.**—1. *Quite simply it arose.* As great contentions often do. (1) Barnabas very naturally wished, as before, to take along with them John Mark, his kinsman (Col. iv. 10)—probably for his own sake, as having a liking for his relative as well as a desire for his society, and probably because Mark, having got over his home-sickness, or, having laid aside his early feeling of offence (see on xiii. 13), was once more desirous of resuming active service in the cause of the gospel. (2) Paul, on the other hand, demurred to the proposal of Barnabas, probably because he had not been able to sympathise with Mark's motives for going back on the previous occasion, and because he was not yet assured of Mark's stability and courage. It is, however, pleasing to observe that Paul susequently took a kindlier view of the young man (2 Tim. iv. 11), and even accepted him as a companion in travel (Col. iv. 10). 2. *Very hotly it blazed.* The contention became so sharp that the two missionaries felt obliged to separate. Barnabas's kinship with, and affection for, the young man would not allow him to yield. Paul's judgment as to the unlikelihood of a fickle character like Mark being of much use in the mission field determined him to hold out. Which was right is not clear. If Barnabas had Christian feeling on his side, Paul had Christian reason. Most likely both erred in exhibiting temper and in not trying to understand each other's view of the case. Had they done this, and omitted to do that, they would surely have come to some amicable arrangement. 3. *Exceeding peacefully it ended.* As they could not agree, they let the matter drop, and took each his own independent course. What a pity they had not done this before the quarrel! It would have saved an unpleasant episode in the history of both.

III. **Paul's separation from Barnabas.**—"They parted asunder the one from the other." 1. *Not in perfect friendship.* There is some reason to suspect that they were a trifle displeased with one another. All the more likely if this occurred shortly after the rebuke which Paul administered to Peter for conduct of which Barnabas also had been guilty. Yet that the present rupture did not permanently estrange the good men appears from the way in which Paul afterwards alludes to Barnabas as a Christian teacher worthy of the fullest confidence of the Churches (1 Cor. ix. 6). 2. *But in Christian service.* Neither of them retired from his work as a Gentile missionary, as modern Christian workers often withdraw from service altogether when they quarrel with one another. Both continued to labour in the cause of the gospel, but each pursued his own path. Barnabas, taking with him Mark, sailed to his native Cyprus on a missionary tour, thus following the track of his first journey with Paul; Paul, choosing as a companion Silas, who must by this time have returned to Antioch (ver. 33), started on a similar journey over the old route, only approaching it from the opposite end, travelling to Derbe and Lystra through the Cilician gates.

3. *And with the prayers of their brethren.* Although it is only of Paul that it is written that he was "commended by the brethren to the grace of the Lord," it is hardly to be supposed that Barnabas would be allowed to depart without the prayers of his fellow-Christians. To infer that he was, because the Church had taken sides in the quarrel and decided for Paul as against Barnabas, is to ascribe to the Church quite an unworthy part. Better far let it be said that Luke has omitted to record anything of the Church's attitude towards Barnabas, and confined himself to what was done in the case of Paul—not because Barnabas was left to go his way alone and unsympathised with, but simply because Paul was the hero whose future fortunes it was Luke's object to trace.

Learn.—1. That good men are, unhappily, not above quarrelling, though they should be. 2. That when good men do quarrel, they should study to go asunder rather than come to blows. 3. That God can overrule even the quarrels of good men, for good. 4. That Churches should never send forth missionaries without commending them to God's grace. 5. That ministers and missionaries should not neglect the work of confirming young converts.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 36-40. *Four Valuable Lessons.*

I. **For Christian preachers.**—Never to desist from their holy work of converting sinners and edifying saints.

II. **For Christian friends.**—Never to contend with one another, except in love and Christian activity.

III. **For Christian workers.**—Never to grow weary in well-doing, but to be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

IV. **For Christian Churches.**—Never to omit praying for both ministers and missionaries.

Barnabas, Paul, and the Lord.

I. **The forbearing love of Barnabas was good.**

II. **The holy severity of Paul was better.**

III. **The wisdom of the Lord, converting all things into good, was best.** —*Gerok.*

Ver. 36. *Pastoral Visitation.*

I. **A necessary part of ministerial work.**—Christ's sheep and lambs have not merely to be gathered into the fold, but also to be carefully fed and tended (John xxi. 15-17).

II. **A kindly display of Christian sympathy.**—If it betokens an amiable and brotherly disposition to ask after each other's welfare (Exod. xviii. 7), much more does it do so to inquire after each other's spiritual progress.

III. **A profitable form of religious service.**—Like mercy, "it blesses him that gives and him that takes." It benefits those who are visited and them who visit; it contributes to the spiritual upbuilding of both.

Ver. 39. *The Quarrel between Barnabas and Paul illustrates—*

I. **The imperfection of good men.**

II. **The danger of success. even for eminent Christians.**

III. **The grace of God in making the wrath of men to praise Him.**

The Quarrels of Good Men—

I. **Are of more frequent occurrence than they ought to be.**

II. **Are less deeply lamented than they should be.**

III. **Are seldom healed as quickly as they might be.**

IV. **Are more tenderly dealt with than they deserve to be.**

V. **Are sometimes productive of more good than they promise to be.**

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY (PAUL AND SILAS)—CONTINUED.

§ 1. Paul and Silas in Lycaonia; or, Meeting with Timothy (vers. 1-5).
§ 2. Regions Beyond; or, the Vision of the Man of Macedonia (vers. 6-10).
§ 3. Paul and Silas in Philippi; or, the Gospel carried to Europe (vers. 11-13, 40).
§ 4. A Sabbath in Philippi; or, the Conversion of Lydia (vers. 14, 15).
§ 5. The Cure of a Pythoness; or, the Slave-girl and the Apostle (vers. 16-18).
§ 6. The First Pagan Persecution; or, the Imprisonment of Paul and Silas (vers. 19-39).

CRITICAL REMARKS.

Ver. 1. **Derbe and Lystra** (see xiv. 6) are now visited by Paul and Silas in reverse order to that followed in the first journey. **There** meant Lystra, not Derbe, as has been wrongly inferred out of xx. 4. **The son of a certain woman,** etc., should be, *the son of a believing Jewish woman,* whose name was Eunice, the daughter of Lois (2 Tim. i. 5), both pious females who instructed him in the Scriptures (2 Tim. iii. 15), but of a Greek father, who may have been a proselyte, and was certainly uncircumcised.

Ver. 2. **Well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium.**—This may well have been if Timothy had been converted on the occasion of Paul's first visit to the former city, and if since that he had been engaged in evangelistic labours both there and in Iconium.

Ver. 3. **Circumcised him.**—Whether by Paul's own hand (Meyer, De Wette), or by that of another (Neander) is immaterial. Any Israelite might perform the rite, though no heathen could (see Riehm's *Handwörterbuch des Biblischen Altertums,* art. *Beschneidung*). On the seeming inconsistency of this act with Paul's refusal to circumcise Titus (Gal. ii. 3), see "Homiletical Analysis."

Ver. 4. The mention of the **decrees** confirms the historic credibility of chap. xv.

Ver. 6. **Phrygia and the region of Galatia** should probably be, *the Phrygian and Galatian region*; but whether one or two distinct districts is intended is presently under debate. The commonly accepted interpretation (Hackett, Alford, Plumptre, Holtzmann, Zöckler, and others) holds that Paul and Silas, having visited the Churches in Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, directed their steps first in a north-easterly direction towards Phrygia, and then turned north-west towards Northern Galatia, which was bounded "on the north by Paphlagonia and Bithynia, on the east by Pontus and Cappadocia, on the south by Cappadocia and Phrygia, and on the west by Phrygia and Bithynia" (Hackett), and inhabited by a Celtic population; but a different view (Zeller, Renan, Hausrath, Weizsäcker, Wendt, Ramsay, and others) considers the Phrygian and Galatian region to be the district alluded to in vers. 1-4, in which the above-named Churches were situated—viz., Southern, as distinguished from Northern Galatia. (See further in "Homiletical Analysis.") That Paul again visited the Churches in this district, or these districts, at the beginning of his third journey is afterwards mentioned (xviii. 23). **Forbidden of the Holy Ghost.**—Not through the exercise of ordinary prudence on the part of the apostles (De Wette), but by some special Divine intimation, as in xiii. 2 (Alford), but whether conveyed by the Bath-Kol (Renan), or through some prophetic voice, as in xx. 23, xxi. 11 (Holtzmann), cannot be determined. That this prohibition extended to preaching in Phrygia and Galatia is against the presupposition contained in xviii. 23. **Asia.**—*I.e.,* Proconsular Asia, or the western coastland.

Ver. 7. **Mysia** was situated in the north-east corner of Asia Minor, **Bithynia** in the north and west of Mysia. Why they were prevented from preaching in Asia and Bithynia cannot be known, though Rom. xv. 20 and 2 Cor. x. 15, 16 may shed some light on the problem. Perhaps it should suffice to say that in this way the Spirit designed to turn their steps and faces westward in the direction of Europe. But see further in "Hints." **The Spirit.**—The oldest authorities read, *The Spirit of Jesus.* As in the *Filioque* controversy at the Synod of Toledo, A.D. 589 neither party quoted this phrase, the inference is that by that time the text had been long corrupted.

Ver. 8. **Passing** or *having passed* **by Mysia.**—Not "having passed along" the border of Mysia, but "having passed it by" so far as their work was concerned—*i.e.,* having not stopped to preach in, but hastened through it. **Troas.**—Called *Alexandria Troas,* in honour of Alexander, founded by Alexander's successors, and situated on the Hellespont. Now *Eski-*

Stamboul. Visited twice again by Paul (xx. 5; 2 Cor. ii. 12). The home of Carpus, who perhaps acted as his host (2 Tim. iv. 13).

Ver. 9. Whether Paul's **vision in the night** (compare xviii. 9, xxiii. 11, xxvii. 23; 2 Cor. xii. 1) occurred in a dream or in an ecstasy cannot be decided. **A man of Macedonia.**—Paul would know this, if not from the man's appearance, from his words—"Come over." Ramsay (*St. Paul the Traveller, etc.*, pp. 202, 203) maintains that the man of Macedonia was Luke.

Ver. 10. **We.**—The commencement of the "We" passages of this book (xvi. 10-17, xx. 5-15, xxi. 1-18, xxvii. 1-xxviii. 16), which shows that the writer of the Acts (Luke) joined Paul's company at Troas. Tradition makes Luke to have been an Antiochian.

Ver. 12. **The chief city of that part of Macedonia**, and **a colony.**—Better, *a city of Macedonia, the first of the district, a colony—i.e.*, of Rome. Macedonia was divided into four parts; but whether "the first" meant "the first arrived at" (Winer, Zöckler, Lightfoot, Alford), not a very valuable observation; or the first in political importance (Farrar, Ramsay), which Philippi was, though Thessalonica was the capital of Macedonia, and Amphipolis of the province; or "the first to be made a colony" (Grotius, Meyer, Wendt, Overbeck), the distinction pointed out in the text; or "the first city on the frontier" (Wordsworth), is debated, and is not clear. Wordsworth's idea derives support from the occurrence of a similar phrase in Xenophon (*Anab.*, I. iv. 1): εἰς Ἰσσούς, τῆς Κιλικίας ἐσχάτην πόλιν. Dr. Hort thinks some early corruption has crept into the text, and that instead of μερίδος should be read Πιερίδος (M for Π), for Philippi belonged to the Pieria of Mount Paragon, and might well be called "a chief city of Pierian Macedonia" (Westcott and Hort's *The New Testament in Greek*, ii. 97, Appendix.) Ramsay says: "The term 'first' was commonly assumed by towns which were or claimed to be chief of a district or province."

Ver. 13. **By a river side.**—Neither the Strymon nor the Nestos, which are both distant from Philippi, but the smaller stream Gangas close by the town. **Where prayer was wont to be made**; or, *where we supposed there was a place of prayer* (R.V.). The received reading corrected thus, *where a place of prayer was wont to be*, has the support of good authorities. Josephus (*Ant.*, XIV. x. 23) mentions the custom of making "prayer houses" at the seaside.

Ver. 14. **Lydia.**—"Certainly a proper name, not a patronymic" (Zöckler). "She had probably become addicted to Jewish religious practices in her native city" (Ramsay). **Thyatira.**—A town in Lydia, famous for its dyeing.

Ver. 15. **Come into my house, and abide there.**—Up to this time the four teachers may have supported themselves by their own labours, Paul as a tent-maker, Luke as a physician, Silas and Timothy in ways unknown. That Paul was reluctant to accept Lydia's invitation has been argued from the words, **And she constrained us** (compare Luke xxiv. 29); and this he may well have been, not because of unwillingness to partake of the hospitality of others (see Rom. xvi. 23), or to receive assistance from them when his circumstances required (xxiv. 23, xxviii. 10; Phil. iv. 15), but because he wished to avoid the imputation of being actuated by mercenary motives (xx. 34; 2 Cor. xii. 17, 19).

Ver. 16. **A certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination.**—Better, *a female slave* (Gal. iv. 22) *having the spirit of a pythoness*, or, according to superior authorities, *a spirit, a python.* "The python was the serpent worshipped at Dephi, as the symbol of wisdom, from which the Pythian priestesses and Apollo as succeeding to the oracular power of the serpent took their distinguishing appellative" (Plumptre).

Ver. 19. The **rulers**, ἄρχοντες, were the town magistrates (Luke xii. 58).

Ver. 20. The **magistrates**, στρατηγοί, were the two chief civic authorities (duumviri) in a Roman colony town, and were usually styled prætors.

Vers. 20, 21. **Being Jews**—*i.e.*, belonging to the despised race, whom Claudius had shortly before banished from Rome (xviii. 2); and **being Romans**—*i.e.*, in proud contrast to the hated sons of Abraham. "The distinction between ὑπάρχων and ὤν seems to be that the former is used of something which the speaker or narrator wishes to put forward into notice, either as unknown to his hearer or reader, or in some way to be marked by him for praise or blame; whereas the latter refers to facts known and recognised and taken for granted by both" (Alford).

Ver. 22. **Rent off**—by ordering the lictors to remove—**their clothes.** The customary mandate was: *Summove, lictor, despolia, verbera.* **Commanded**—lit., *were commanding*—**to beat them**, the imperfect showing that the whole process of scourging went on under the narrator's eye.

Ver. 23. **The inner prison.**—"In a Roman prison there were usually three distinct parts—(1) the *communiora*, where the prisoners had light and fresh air, (2) the *interiora*, shut off by strong iron gates, with bars and locks, and (3) the *tullianum*, or dungeon. The third was a place rather of execution or for one condemned to die" (Conybeare and Howson, i. 280, note 4).

Ver. 27. **Would have killed himself.**—Because he would certainly have been put to death had his prisoners escaped (see xii. 19, xxvii. 42).

Ver. 28. **Do thyself no harm.**—As the prison was dark Paul may have learnt from some

exclamation of the jailor that he meditated suicide, or, if ordinary means sufficed not to acquaint him with the keeper's purpose, supernatural revelation may have discovered it to him.

Ver. 29. **A light** should be *lights.*

Ver. 30. **Brought them out.**—Not into his house (see ver. 34), but into the outer or common prison or other room belonging to the prison, where they were joined by the jailor's family.

Ver. 34. **Believing in God with all his house,** should be, *he rejoiced with,* or over, *all his house, having believed in,* or having believed, *God.*

Ver. 35. The **serjeants** were the *rod bearers* or lictors.

Ver. 37. **They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans,** etc.; or, *having beaten us publicly uncondemned, they cast us into prison.*—It was against the Valerian law passed A.U.C. 254 to inflict stripes or torture on any Roman citizen until an appeal to the people had been decided. The Porcian law, passed A.U.C. 506, forbade stripes and torture absolutely. From this passage it appears that Silas as well as Paul was a Roman citizen. That they did not appeal to their Roman citizenship may have been due to the haste with which proceedings had been taken against them. Of the three times Paul was beaten with rods (2 Cor. xi. 25) this was one; the other two are not recorded.

Ver. 38. **They,** the magistrates. **feared when they heard that they,** the apostles, **were Romans.**—Because, according to Roman law, "Facinus est vinciri civem Romanum; scelus verberari; prope parricidium, necari" (Cicero, *In Verrem,* v. 66).

Ver. 40. The use of the third person shows that Luke remained behind in Philippi, where he was afterwards rejoined by the apostle and his company (xx. 5).

NOTE.—The whole critical school admits the credibility of everything in this chapter except the transactions represented as having taken place in the prison. The earthquake, shaking the prison doors and snapping the prisoners' fetters, the jailor's foolishness in proposing to murder himself before he knew what had actually happened, the unlikelihood of all the prisoners remaining in their cells when the doors stood open for their escape, and the hasty dismissal of the apostles, are all set down as "holy fable," which received a colouring at least from the story preserved by Lucian of an innocent prisoner in Alexandria (A.D. 100), who disdained the opportunity of flight from prison which was offered him, and instead demanded the formal recognition of his innocence from the magistrates. But the story is not incredible, if the supernatural is not impossible; while in Lucian's tale, compared with Luke's narrative, is nothing more wonderful than this, that an innocent man fell upon the same course of action, as another did half a century before—which is surely not impossible or even uncommon.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.

Vers. 1-5. *Paul and Silas in Lycaonia; or, Meeting with Timothy.*

I. **The missionaries and the Churches.**—1. *The Churches visited by the missionaries.* Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium, which are mentioned in reverse order from that in which they were first introduced (xiv.), because on this occasion Paul and his companion approached them from Tarsus by travelling, most likely, through the Cilician gates. "And if indeed Paul and Silas took this route, and passed through the narrow gorge, under its frowning cliffs of limestone, clothed here and there with pine and cedar, which to the Crusaders presented an appearance so terrible that they christened it the Gates of Judas, how far must they have been from imagining, in their wildest dreams, that their footsteps—the footsteps of two obscure and persecuted Jews—would lead to the traversing of that pass centuries afterwards by kings and their armies" (Farrar, *The Life and Work of St. Paul,* i. 456). 2. *The special work done by the missionaries.* Twofold. (1) Confirming the Churches (xv. 41), doubtless by preaching (see xv. 32, 41). (2) Delivering them the apostolic decrees (ver. 4), presumably with exposition and enforcement on the part of both Paul and Silas. 3. *The result of their labours in the Churches.* (1) Intensive: establishment or strengthening in the faith, in the belief, love, and practice of the truth. (2) Extensive: increase in number daily, first of believers and next of Churches.

II. **Paul and Timothy.**—1. *Details of Timothy's history.* (1) His birthplace. Not Derbe (Neander), but Lystra (see xx. 4). (2) His parentage. His father a Greek; whether living, or dead, and, if living, whether a proselyte, or a heathen, cannot be told. If alive and a proselyte, he was most likely uncircumcised. His

mother a believing Jewess, by name Eunice, the daughter of Lois (2 Tim. i. 5), also a Christian disciple. Mixed marriages, condemned by Paul (1 Cor. vii.), "were far less strictly forbidden to women than to men" (Farrar). (3) His character "well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium." Supposing him to have been converted during Paul's first visit to Lystra (xiv. 8), he would at the time of Paul's second visit be a disciple of three or four years' standing, and during the interval may have given ample proof both at Lystra and Iconium of his interest in the cause of the gospel. 2. *Paul's desire to have him as a colleague in the ministry* (compare 2 Tim. iv. 5). This may have arisen from a variety of motives. Paul may have (1) considered him from his talents and graces eminently qualified for the work; or (2) felt drawn towards him from the fact that he (Paul) had been the means of his conversion (1 Cor. iv. 17; 1 Tim. i. 2, 8; 2 Tim. ii. 2); or (3) recognised in his mixed Jewish and Greek descent, a circumstance calculated to be helpful in propagating the gospel in such mixed communities as were about to be visited; or (4) wished to have a third companion in place of John Mark, as already he had Silas in room of Barnabas. (See further "Hints" on ver. 3.) 3. *Paul's conduct in causing him to be circumcised.* (1) The reason. "Because of the Jews that were in those parts; for they all knew that his father was a Greek." In Paul's estimation it would have hindered Timothy's and perhaps his own usefulness among the Jews had he accepted as a colleague one of Jewish descent who was not circumcised. In other words, it would have looked strange that Paul should ask of Timothy (a half Jew) less of conformity to the law than was demanded of a heathen who became a proselyte of righteousness. (2) The consistency. Paul's conduct in circumcising Timothy —whether with his own hand or by that of another is uncertain—has been pronounced irreconcilable with his refusal to circumcise Titus (Gal. ii. 3). Of course, if Titus was circumcised (Farrar, *The Life and Work of St. Paul*, i. 412-420), the subjection of Timothy to the same ritual requires no explanation; but if, as most hold, Titus was not circumcised, then no apology is needed further than to say, the circumstances were entirely different. To have yielded in the case of Titus would have been to concede the obligatory character of circumcision for Gentiles as well as Jews; to have left Timothy uncircumcised would simply have prevented him from finding access to the Jews. Paul acted on the principle laid down in 1 Cor. ix. 20. 4. *Timothy's ordination to the work of the ministry.* Not mentioned in the Acts, this may be gathered from the pastoral epistles (1 Tim. iv. 14; 2 Tim. 1, 14).

Learn.—1. The value of a pious mother. 2. The advantage of early conversion. 3. The influence of a good name. 4. The duty of becoming all things to all men in order to gain some. 5. The benefit that flows from a peaceful disposal of controversies.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 1. *A Certain Disciple named Timothy.*

I. **The son of a pious mother.**—The advantage of being descended from godly parents. The influence of good mothers. The power of heredity in religion.

II. **A student of the word of God.**—Instructed in the Scriptures from his youth. Value of Bible education. The profit of beginning early.

III. **A disciple of Jesus Christ.**—Circumstances that favoured his conversion—his birth and education in a pious home. What presumably led to his decision for Christ—listening to Paul's preaching, possibly witnessing Paul's stoning (xiv. 19). Advantages of early conversion—greater happiness, longer usefulness, higher advancement in grace.

IV. **A preacher of the gospel.**—A

fitting termination to Timothy's career. The noblest occupation a young man can follow.

The Pious Mothers of the Bible.

I. **Jochebed**, the mother of Moses.
II. **Hannah**, the mother of Samuel.
III. **Mary**, the mother of Jesus.
IV. **Salome**, the mother of Zebedee's children.
V. **Eunice**, the mother of Timothy.

Mixed Marriages.

I. **Not permissible to Christians** (2 Cor. vi. 14).

II. **Seldom beneficial to either party.** The Christian more likely to become unchristian than *vice versâ*.

III. **Not to be dissolved,** if formed before the conversion of either (1 Cor. vii. 10).

Ver. 3. *Paul's Companions on the Second Missionary Journey.*—1. *Silas,* or "Silvanus, as Paul constantly names him, was an older man (than Paul), who had already made his appearance in foreign Churches as a prophet and teacher, and Paul constantly speaks of him as an associate of equal rank with himself. A prophet of the mother Church, who in the moment of general falling away steps manfully forward upon Paul's side, must also have been an energetic and whole-souled man, of stronger tenacity than Barnabas and the others, and that Paul always speaks of him as a co-founder with himself of the Churches established in this period shows that he was to the apostle even more than an assistant. Then, if Silas was a sufficient compensation for Barnabas, who had departed to Cyprus, on the other hand Paul contemplated supplying the lack of John Mark through the taking with him of a younger man. For whilst the disciples of Jesus were accustomed to set forth two and two, Paul preferred, for various reasons suggested by the aim of his mission, that his travel company should consist of three. As he formerly journeyed with Barnabas and Mark, and on the present occasion travelled with Silas and Timothy, so worked he afterwards with Titus and Timothy in Macedonia and Achaia, and again with two, Luke and Aristarchus, sailed to Rome." 2. *Timothy.* "The fresh young comrade whom the two older men now took with them was even then famed among the Christian Churches in Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium. Of no apostolic scholar is so concrete a picture handed down as of Timothy. . . . Through the pastoral epistles to Timothy we possess a complete tradition concerning Timothy which nevertheless may perfectly well include in itself elements of true history. . . . But in any case, out of Paul's own letters (*i.e.*, his acknowledged epistles), it is clear that Paul could entrust even difficult commissions to 'the son of his heart, his beloved son in the Lord.' Fixing our eyes exclusively on Paul's own expressions concerning Timothy, we can see that modesty and even shyness were fundamental features in his character, so that Paul occasionally bespeaks for him a friendly reception that he might be able to appear amongst those to whom he is sent without fear (1 Cor. xvi. 10). Forceful natures, like Paul, are often conscious of an inward attraction towards such quiet and gentle helpers; and just for this reason Paul rated the modest Timothy far above all his other fellow-labourers (Phil. ii. 20). Nor was he deceived in him, since in persecution and bonds the younger disciple remained true to him when stronger natures fell away, and even after the apostle's death he belonged to the best-known travelling preachers of the second generation (Heb. xiii. 23). Tradition has endowed Timothy like another Achilles with eternal youth, so that in the epistles to Timothy, which, according to tradition, were composed towards the end of Paul's activity, he appears the same youngling as he had been when first called by the apostle to the holy work (1 Tim. iv. 12; 2 Tim. ii. 22). Indeed, so high stood his reputation in the Church at this time, that his future career was said to have been pointed

out by prophet voices (1 Tim. i. 18); whilst with great earnestness tradition asserted he had been a genuine scholar of Paul (1 Tim. i. 2)."—*Hausrath*, "*Der Apostel Paulus*," pp. 258-260.

Ver. 5. *The Strength of a Church.* Consists in—

I. **The number of its members.**

II. **The enlightenment of their faith.**

III. **The cheerfulness of their obedience.**

IV. **The completeness of their organisation.**

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 6—10.

Regions Beyond; or, the Vision of the Man of Macedonia.

I. **The hindering Spirit.**—1. *Who this was.* (1) The Holy Ghost. The third person of the Trinity, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son (John xv. 26), and whom Christ promised to send after His departure from the earth (John xvi. 7), who came according to promise, on the day of Pentecost (ii. 4), and had ever since been guiding the development of the Church and the footsteps of its apostles and evangelists (see viii. 29, x. 19, xi. 12, xiii. 2, 4). (2) The Spirit of Jesus—*i.e.*, the Spirit whom Jesus had sent. A valuable statement, the genuineness of which must be conceded (see "Critical Remarks"), confirming the well-known dogma of the Creed that the Spirit bears the same relation to the Son as to the Father. 2. *When He interposed.* (1) After the two missionaries Paul and Silas had gone through the Phrygian and Galatian region, lying on the west and north of Lycaonia. The route pursued by them can only be conjectured. Probably from Lystra they proceeded to Iconium, and from that to Antioch in Pisidia, where Paul had on his previous journey founded a Church, after leaving which they would most likely cross the hills, and, merely touching Phrygian territory, enter the district of Galatia towards the north. (See, however, "Critical Remarks" and "Hints" on ver. 6.) Whether they evangelised any towns in Phrygia cannot be determined. Colossæ, situated in the south of Phrygia, it is not certain the apostle ever visited; but that he published the gospel to the Phrygians and made disciples seems the obvious deduction from xviii. 23. That he preached in Galatia and founded Churches there himself declares (Gal. i. 2, iv. 19). No Galatian cities are specially mentioned in connection with the spread of Christianity in this province; hence the inference that the Christian communities were scattered about the rural parts. Paul's preaching in Galatia was, in a manner, brought about against his will, through an attack of bodily sickness which detained him in that province, when possibly he intended to push eastwards to Pontus. What this sickness was is not recorded, though most likely it was ophthalmia, and presumably had to do with his "thorn" or "stake in the flesh" (compare 2 Cor. xii. 7-10 with Gal. iv. 13-15); and see also xiii. 14; "Homiletical Analysis" and "Hints"). (2) Again when they assayed to go into Bithynia. This they did when they had come over against Mysia, which lay north of Asia, and, like it, looked out on the Ægean. Arrived thither, they contemplated turning north-east to Bithynia, a province located between Mount Olympus and the Euxine, when once more they were mysteriously arrested. 3. *How He signified His will.* This also can only be surmised. It may have been by an outward voice (Renan), such as probably directed Philip (viii. 20), or by an inward impression, such as Paul had already experienced (Gal. ii. 2), by a dream or by a vision, by the voices of prophets, as in xx. 23, xxi. 11 (Holtzmann, Nösgen), or simply, though less likely, by some natural occurrence, unrecorded, which rendered it impossible to carry out their intentions first of going into Asia and next of moving north into Bithynia. Paul's rule (2 Cor. x. 15, 16) was not the hindrance. (See "Hints" on ver. 7.) 4. *What course He appointed.* (1) That they should not

speak the word in Asia. Politically considered, Asia meant the western portion of Asia Minor, which included Mysia, Lydia and Caria, Galatia, Phrygia, Bithynia, Cilicia, Pamphylia and Lycia, but, popularly viewed, it signified the territory situated west of Phrygia and south of Mysia. Why the missionaries were prevented from entering it can only have been that the hour was not yet arrived for its inhabitants to hear the gospel. (2) That they should not pass into Bithynia. This seemed the natural direction for them to take, if their mission was not to cross the Ægean. But the Spirit, unconsciously to them, was conducting their steps towards Europe. Accordingly, once more stopped (at Mysia) and turned westward, they passed through but did not preach in (the meaning of "passing by") the country, till they came down to Troas on the Hellespont, about four miles from the site of ancient Troy.

II. **The midnight vision.**—1. *The form it assumed.* "A man of Macedonia" appeared before the eye of the apostle, "standing, beseeching him, and saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us." The apparition and the voice were both supernatural (compare ix. 12, x. 30). Whether Paul recognised the man as a Macedonian by his appearance, dress, or speech is not related; but as Paul's thoughts the day before had probably been much occupied with the Macedonian land which lay beyond the Ægean, and as the vision, though not created by, had been fitted to, his thoughts, it is not difficult to understand how his soul, lying in the hand of God, quickly leapt to the interpretation of the scene. The strange figure wore the aspect of a Macedonian man—perhaps, from his upright posture, a soldier (Farrar); the outstretched hands evoked a mute appeal for aid; the voice sounded like a summons to hurry over with that help which the men across the water greatly needed, not alone because of the corrupt and decaying civilisations in the midst of which they were perishing, but because of the magnificent potentialities for good which lay within them, notwithstanding their environment as members of the most advanced and active races on the face of the globe. 2. *The inference it suggested.* The apostles at once perceived the reason of that mysterious hindrance they had twice suffered, and, concluding that God had called them to preach the gospel in Europe, at once took steps to obey. "Straightway, we sought to go forth into Macedonia." Like the good soldier of Jesus Christ that he was (2 Tim. ii. 3), Paul always obeyed his marching orders with military promptitude and precision.

Lessons.—1. The real, though unseen, presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church and with the true servants of Jesus Christ. 2. The development of the Christian Church the proper care of the Holy Ghost. 3. The duty of Christian people, but especially of Christian ministers, to wait upon and follow the leading of the Spirit. 4. The certainty that guidance will never fail those prepared to accept it. 5. The loud call of the heathen world to the servants of Jesus Christ.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 6. *The Region of Galatia.*—The view that this was not Northern but Southern Galatia, the district in which lay the Churches of Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, has been recently championed by Professor Ramsay, who offers in its support the following consideration:—

I. **The phrase,** *τὴν Φρυγίαν καὶ Γαλατικὴν χώραν,* **describes a single district,** the land or territory which is both Phrygian and Galatian—a description which the professor maintains to be "strictly true," and perfectly inapplicable to Northern Galatia, which could have been thought of had the discarded reading of the Textus Receptus, *τὴν Φρυγίαν καὶ τὴν Γαλατικὴν χώραν,* been retained.

II. **Roman documents of the first**

century show that the district in which the above-named Churches were situated **might be accurately described as Phrygian-Galatic.** "In some inscriptions," writes the professor, "the Governor of Galatia (in the larger sense) is called simply the Governor of Galatia, while in others he is styled Governor of Galatia, Pisidia, Phrygia, Lycaonia, Isauria, Pontus Galaticus, etc."

III. **No traveller from North Galatia to Bithynia could come to a point "over against Mysia,"** still less "to the frontier of Mysia." "A glance at a map (preferably a large map) will make this clear to all"; while everything is natural, if, after leaving Phrygian Galatia, the apostle was making for Asia when his course was arrested, and again was heading northwards to Bithynia, when he was a second time checked and turned westwards to Mysia and Troas.

IV. **South Galatia is favoured by the chronology of Acts.**—"The process of preaching in the great cities of Galatia needed in any case a considerable time; an invalid, as St. Paul is supposed on the North Galatian theory to have been, would require a long time in that vast and bare country. But the period allotted on any of the proposed systems of chronology to this journey leaves no room for the evangelisation of Galatia. We may safely assume that Paul left Antioch on his second journey in the spring. No one who knows the Taurus will suppose that he crossed it before the middle of May; June is a more probable time. Say, he passed the Cilician Gates on the 1st of June. If we calculate his journey by the shortest route, allowing no detention for unforeseen contingencies, but making him rest always on the Sundays, and supposing a stay of two Sundays each at Derbe, Iconium, and Antioch, and of at least five weeks at Lystra (which is required to select Timothy as comrade, to perform the operation on him, and to wait his recovery), we find that even if he did not touch North Galatia, October would be begun before he reached Philippi. Eleven months may be fairly allotted to the events recorded at Philippi, Thessalonica, Bœrea, and Athens; and then Paul went to Corinth where he resided a year and a half. He would then sail for Jerusalem in spring. Thus three entire years are required as the smallest allowance for this journey, even if it was done in the way our theory supposes.

V. **Paul's sickness makes for the South Galatian theory.**—"It is required by the North Galatian theory that St. Paul, stricken at Ancyra by the severe illness," referred to in Gal. iv. 13, "took that opportunity to make the long, fatiguing journeys needed in order to preach in Tavium and Pessinus. Those who know the bare, black uplands of Galatia, hot and dusty in summer, covered with snow in winter, will appreciate the improbability and want of truth to nature which are involved in the words 'because of an infirmity of the flesh I preached unto you.'" Professor Ramsay thinks Paul's infirmity was the fever which he caught at Perga, and which determined him to visit the highlands of Pisidia and Lycaonia.—*The Church in the Roman Empire*, chaps. iii., iv.

Vers. 6, 7. *Forbidden to preach in Asia and Bithynia.*—The reason suggested for this by Hausrath is that Paul's visit to Galatia, and indeed his entire progress hitherto, had been one of controversy and struggle. "Controversy in Jerusalem, controversy at Antioch, controversy in Galatia: that had been the way which lay behind him. Perhaps it was just for this reason that in the year 53-54 the Spirit suffered him not to turn either west to Proconsular Asia, where Ephesus was already in the struggle with Jewish Christians, or to Bithynia in the north, where in the days of Pliny at least a strongly coloured Jewish Christianity prevailed, but called him by a vision to Europe, where a freer development of his own peculiar foun-

dation principle was possible among the Jews of the Diaspora who were less closely bound up with Jerusalem" (*Der Apostel Paulus*, p. 266).

Ver. 7. *The Spirit of Jesus.*

I. **The personality of this Spirit.**—1. *Implied in the actions here ascribed to Him*—"suffering not," "hindering." Impossible to be explained as a merely human, moral spirit, or even as "the power of the true religion or of the fellowship in life which the human spirit has with God, which has proceeded from Jesus Christ and continues to work in the Christian Church" (Pfleiderer, *Grundriss der Christlichen Glaubens- und Sittenlehre*, p. 163). Throughout Acts the Spirit is a Divine person. 2. *Confirmed by other Scripture representations.* John xiv. 26, xv. 26, xvi. 7, 13-15; Rom. viii. 9; 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11; 2 Cor. xiii. 14, etc. "With Paul the Holy Spirit is that Spirit which, according to its origin, is Divine, but in Christians is Divine-human, as becoming the peculiar and permanent principle of the new man (Gal. v. 22, 25; Rom. v. 5, viii. 1-15; 1 Cor. ii. 10-15). With John also the Holy Spirit, corresponding to and in consequence of the Divine Logos personality in Christ is definitely conceived of as a separate Divine being" (*Ibid.*, pp. 159, 160).

II. **The relation of this Spirit to Jesus.**—1. *Equal in essence with Christ.* This implied in His association with Christ in the baptismal formula (Matt. xxviii. 19) and the Christian benediction (2 Cor. xiii. 14). "As the principle of man's life fellowship with God," says Pfleiderer (*Grundriss*, p. 159), the Holy Spirit with Paul "is thought of at one time as of the same essence with God and Christ, at another time as distinguished from both as the gift of God intermediated through Christ." 2. *Distinguished in personality from Christ.* This also involved in the biblical doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Yet the distinction in personality must not be so held as to contradict the unity of essence. The existence of such relations in the Godhead may transcend human reason, but is not on that account to be denied. 3. *Proceeding forth from Christ.* Not merely from the Father (John xv. 26), but also from the Son. Though not so stated in the New Testament, this has been accepted by the Christian Church as the necessary consequence of the doctrine of the divinity of the Son, and therefore of the Son's essential equality with the Father. 4. *Dispensed by Christ.* In the days of His flesh Christ claimed that after His glorification He would send forth the Spirit from the Father (John xv. 26, xvi. 7), and this promise He fulfilled at Pentecost (ii. 33). 5. *Representative of Christ.* That the Holy Ghost should be the personal vicegerent and plenipotentiary of Jesus after His departure from the world was likewise distinctly taught (John xvi. 16).

III. **The functions of this Spirit in the Church.**—1. *The creator and sustainer of its life.* The new moral and spiritual nature which belongs to every individual member of the Church is a direct production of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the soul of the believer (John iii. 5; Eph. ii. 1, 10; 2 Cor. v. 17). 2. *The revealer and interpreter of its truth.* Whatever spiritual understanding the believing soul attains to, he owes to the inward illumination of the Holy Spirit (John xvi. 13, 14; 1 Cor. ii. 9-14; Eph. i. 17; 1 John ii. 20). 3. *The inspirer and guide of its movements.* As the footsteps of Paul and Silas were directed by the Holy Ghost, so are those of believers superintended by the same Divine leader (Rom. viii. 14; Gal. v. 16).

Ver. 9. *The Cry of the Heathen—Come over and help us.*

I. **The significance of the cry.**—1. The cry of a perishing humanity. 2. Which has begun to realise its danger. 3. For that succour which alone can relieve distress—viz., the salvation of the gospel.

II. **The parties to whom it is**

directed.—To the Christian Church—*i.e.*, to those (1) who have that salvation in their possession; (2) who themselves received it as a free gift; and (3) who also have been commanded to make it known to others.

III. **Reasons why the cry should be listened to.**—Because (1) it is urgent, and has been long sounding in the Church's ear; (2) those crying are the Church's brethren, who, like themselves, belong to Jesus Christ; (3) ordinary gratitude for mercy received, if not love to Jesus Christ, should impel the Christian Church to respond to it; and (4) without the Church's aid the heathen world cannot be recovered for Jesus Christ.

The Cry of the Nations.

I. **All nations ignorant of the gospel need help.**—Arising from: 1. Their *ignorance* (1) of God, and the way in which He is to be worshipped; (2) of the Saviour, and the manner in which He is to be approached. 2. Their *condition*, represented in Scripture as a state of (1) darkness (Matt. iv. 16; Eph. v. 8); (2) disease (Isa. i. 6); (3) bondage (Rom. vi. 17; Eph. ii. 2); and (4) death (Eph. ii. 1).

II. **All nations needing help utter the same cry as the men of Macedonia.**—Evident from (1) the knowledge we have of their condition; (2) our connection with them in the way of commerce; and (3) the political relations in which we stand towards them.

III. **It is the duty of the Church of Christ to respond to this cry.**—1. God has done everything to facilitate our exertions. 2. He has committed the care of the inhabitants of the world to the Christian Church. 3. Christ commands us to "love our neighbours as ourselves" and to "preach the gospel to every creature" imply the obligation here referred to. 4. Reason and equity say we should send to others that which we ourselves received from others.—*Bogue.*

Ver. 10. *The Call to Macedonia.*—The *cause* which led to the apostle Paul's crossing from Asia into Europe, and the *object* which he had in view in coming here.

I. **As to the causes which led to his coming.**—While one is referred to in the text, you will find others mentioned in the verses which go before (ver. 6). Thus, even so far, Paul might have felt himself guided to this continent. But he was not left to judge of it merely in that way. It was so important a step, and such great consequences were to follow on it, that a vision was given him.

II. **And for what object did they come?**—They drew the conclusion, we are told, that the Lord had called them *to preach the gospel* in that place. This was the object for which all the journeys of the apostle Paul were undertaken.

What are the lessons which we may learn for ourselves from this history? 1. From the way in which the apostle Paul was more than once kept from going where he intended, kept from going into the province of Asia, and kept from entering into Bithynia, and was led on where he seems never to have intended to go, to accomplish a mighty purpose, we learn how God may disappoint His people now in regard to some plan of usefulness which they have in view. 2. Another truth which we are reminded of is, that as this vision was given to Paul, the man of Macedonia calling on him to help them, so there are calls of the same kind continually made upon all Christian people, which we need no vision to remind us of, because they are a reality with which we are acquainted. 3. And there is one other lesson closely connected with this, which we may learn from what we have been considering to-day—the exceeding value of the gospel. This was shown by Paul's object in coming over to Macedonia.—*M. F. Day.*

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 11—13.

Paul and Silas in Philippi; or, the Gospel carried to Europe.

I. **The journey to Philippi.**—1. *From Troas to Samothracia.* No sooner had Paul and his companions, Silas, Timothy, and Luke, the beloved physician, who had now joined the apostle (see "Critical Remarks," ver. 10, and "Hints" on ver. 11), understood the significance of the midnight vision than they proceeded to comply with the call of the Macedonian man. With the early dawn, having turned their steps towards the harbour, and found a ship about to sail for Europe, they engaged berths. As the vessel weighed anchor and shot into the deep "the sun rose and spread the day over the sea and the islands as far as Athos and Samothrace" (Conybeare and Howson). Running in a straight course, or, in modern nautical phrase, sailing before the (south) wind (see xxi. 1, and compare xxvii. 16), the vessel would reach the island of Samothrace that day, anchoring for the night to the leeward of it. Samothrace, the present-day *Samothraki*, about half-way between Troas and Neapolis, contains the highest land in this part of the Ægean except Mount Athos. 2. *From Samothrace to Neapolis.* "A run of seven or eight hours would bring the vessel under the lee of the island of Thasos, and within a few miles of the coast of Macedonia" (Conybeare and Howson), which accordingly was reached next day. The harbour in which the four passengers disembarked belonged to the town of Neapolis, the modern *Kavala*, in Thrace, on the Gulf of Strymon, and about ten miles distant from Philippi, to which it served as a port. Hence the missionaries did not linger in Neapolis, but pushed on towards the capital of the district. 3. *From Neapolis to Philippi.* A short journey of not more than three hours would conduct them to "the chief city of that part of Macedonia," or to "a city of Macedonia, the first of the district [see "Critical Remarks"], a *Roman* colony." This city was Philippi, once an obscure place, called *Krenides* from its streams and springs, but erected into a frontier city against the Thracian mountaineers, and named after himself by the father of Alexander, and constituted a *colonia* by Augustus. It was "a fact of deep significance that the first city at which Paul arrived on his entrance into Europe was that colony which was more fit than any other in the empire to be considered the representative of Imperial Rome" (Conybeare and Howson, i. 267).

II. **The stay in Philippi.**—1. *How long it continued.* Impossible to tell. Clearly two Sabbaths (vers. 13, 16), and most likely some weeks were spent in the city (ver. 20). 2. *What incidents occurred.* (1) The conversion of Lydia on the first Sabbath in a prayer-house by the river-side, through Paul's preaching (vers. 13-15). See below. (2) The cure of a Pythoness, or damsel possessing a spirit of divination, by the word of Paul who, in the name of Jesus, commanded the spirit to come out of her (vers. 16-18). (3) The imprisonment of Paul and Silas by the town magistrates, who first commanded them to be beaten and then handed them over to the care of the town jailor (vers. 19-24). (4) The conversion of the jailor, who was spiritually awakened by an earthquake which shook the foundations of the prison at midnight, and by Paul was directed how to find salvation (vers. 25-34).

III. **The departure from Philippi.**—1. *After liberation from jail.* This took place: (1) on the morning after the earthquake—"when it was day"; (2) at the request of the magistrates, who had become alarmed at the situation, either in consequence of the earthquake which seemed like an interposition of the gods on behalf of the prisoners, or because on reflection they had grown convinced of the injustice of what they had done (vers. 35, 36); (3) after the remonstrance of Paul, who declined to be surreptitiously thrust out of bonds after having been

publicly scourged, and that, too, while they were Romans, and who demanded that they should be honourably and openly liberated by the magistrates themselves (ver. 37); and (4) by the hands of the magistrates, who, on learning that their prisoners were Roman citizens, feared what might happen to themselves for having so thoughtlessly violated the sanctity of Roman law, and, like evil-doers generally who tremble when confronted with the consequences of their crimes, were exceeding glad to get them peacefully despatched beyond the city precincts (ver. 39). 2. *After visiting the house of Lydia.* Having resided there before arrest and imprisonment (ver. 15), they naturally returned thither on release from confinement. Not, however, to stay, but to exchange Christian greetings with, and address words of comfort to, the brethren there assembled, who, having been converted by their ministry, formed the nucleus of the Church to which afterwards the epistle to the Philippians was directed. This done, they departed, but not for ever (see xx. 6).

Learn.—1. That the track of the gospel over land and sea has always been guided by God. 2. That Europeans have reasons to bless God for having so early sent the gospel to their shores. 3. That nothing befalls God's people without His express permission. 4. That events which seem to hinder may eventually further the gospel. 5. That the gospel spreads by means of preaching.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 11. *The Writer of the "We" Passages; or, Luke the Beloved Physician* (see Introduction).—"Of Luke himself, beyond what we learn of his movements and of his character from his own writings, we know but little. There is no reason to reject the unanimous tradition that he was by birth an Antiochene, and it is clear (?) from St. Paul's allusions that he was a Gentile convert, and that he had not been circumcised (Col. iv. 10, 11, 14). That he was a close observer, a careful narrator, a man of cultivated intellect, and possessed of a good Greek style we see from his two books; and they also reveal to us a character gentle and manly, sympathetic and self-denying. The incidental allusion of St. Paul shows us that he was a physician, and this allusion is singularly confirmed by his own turns of phrase. The rank of a physician in those days was not in any respect so high as now it is, and does not at all exclude the possibility that St. Luke may have been a freedman; but on this, and all else which concerns him, Scripture and tradition leave us entirely uninformed. That he was familiar with naval matters is strikingly shown in his account of the shipwreck, and it has even been conjectured that he exercised his art in the huge and crowded merchant vessels which were incessantly coasting from point to point of the Mediterranean.—*Farrar*, "*The Life and Work of St. Paul*," chap. xxiv.

St. Luke and St. Paul.—"It may be well to note the phenomena in the writings ascribed to the physician which, though they do not directly indicate his calling, at least fall in with it and are best explained by it. . . . Thus we find him noting specifically the special combination of fevers (πυρετοί, as in Hippoc., *Aph.*, vii. 63, 64—the plural is obviously technical for feverish symptoms) and a bloody flux (δυσεντερία) from which the father of Publius suffered at Melita (Acts xxviii. 8), and using in relation to the generous gifts which it called forth the special word "honour" (τιμή), which, like our "honorarium," was applied to the payments made to those who practised a profession and not a trade (?). So, again, in the healing of the cripple in the temple (Acts iii. 7), he records with a technical precision which our English Version but partially represents that

"his feet" (not the common πόδες, but βάσεις—a word used by Hippocrates, p. 637) "and ankle-bones" (σφυρά) "were strengthened," the previous crippled state being due to the congenital imperfect development of the bones and tendons of the feet. . . . So he stated that the paralysis of Æneas lasted eight years, and that for the whole of that period he had been bedridden (Acts ix. 33); that from Saul's eyes "there fell as it had been the scales" (ὡσεὶ λεπίδες) of the incrustation incidental to ophthalmia (Acts ix. 18); and that the damsel at Philippi had "a spirit of Python," or Apollo, "presenting phenomena identical with the convulsive movements and wild cries of the Pythian priestess at Delphi" (Acts xvi. 16); while as one whose previous studies had made him acquainted with the recorded cases of phthiriasis, such as those of Antiochus Epiphanes (2 Macc. ix. 9), Pheretima (Herod., iv. 205), and Sylla, and perhaps Herod the Great (Josephus, *Ant.*, xvii. 15), he would note with a special interest the addition of another instance in the death of Herod Agrippa as "eaten by worms," σκωληκόβρωτος (Acts xii. 23).—*Dean Plumptre, in "The Expositor"* (1876), iv., pp. 137-139.

Ver. 13. *An Ancient Prayer Meeting.*

I. **The place of worship.**—1. *Outside the city.* Rendered necessary because of the character of the city which, being large and heathen, was not much suited for devotion. Those who wish to pray should withdraw from both the world's bustle and the world's superstition and sin (Matt. vi. 6). 2. *By a river-side.* Jewish prayer-houses were usually erected on river-banks, or at places where water could be easily obtained for ceremonial lustrations. Suggestive of that inward cleansing which is required by all who would approach God in prayer (Isa. i. 15, 16; James iv. 8). 3. *In a prayer-house.* Not an ordinary synagogue (Schürer), there being few Jews in the town; most likely an open space consecrated to Divine worship. Prayer may be offered anywhere. If Christians, for any reason, cannot obtain comfortable edifices in which to worship, rather than not worship at all they should betake themselves to river-banks, hill-sides, district moors, dens, and caves of the earth.

II. **The time of worship.**—The Sabbath. Whether on other days is not clear (see ver. 16); but in any case the seventh-day worship was not neglected. Neither should the Lord's-day worship be omitted by Christians (xx. 7; Heb. x. 25).

III. **The congregation of worshippers.**—A few women; amongst them some converts to Judaism, like Lydia (see below). If no men were present before Paul and his companions arrived upon the scene, the intrusion of four male worshippers must have caused a sensation. Women have always been more devout than men (i. 14, xiii. 50).

IV. **The acts of worship.**—1. *Prayer.* This the primary object of such gatherings. 2. *Reading of the Scriptures.* Though not stated, this may be assumed. 3. *Exposition of the word.* As in the synagogue by any capable person who might happen to be present (xiii. 15).

Ver. 13. *The Opening of the Mission.*

I. **When** was it that they had an opportunity of preaching? It was on the Sabbath day. The Sabbath was the great day on which he knew that his work was to be done.

II. Observe, then, the **place** at which he preached. It was by the river-side, "where prayer was wont to be made." There appears to have been no synagogue at Philippi.

III. One other thing to be observed is, the **persons** to whom they preached. They "sat down and spake unto the women which resorted thither."

Now, what are the lessons which we are to learn for ourselves from this account of the first preaching of the gospel at Philippi? 1. It is fitted to remind us of the great practical value of the Sabbath. 2. Another lesson

which we learn from the history, closely connected with this, is the importance of meeting together for united prayer whenever we have the opportunity. 3. One other thing we are taught by this passage of history which we have been considering to-day, and that is, not to despise any means of doing good, however small it may be, which is put within our reach. We do not know what great results may follow it.—*M. F. Day.*

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 14, 15.

A Sabbath in Philippi; or, the Conversion of Lydia.

I. **The antecedents.**—1. *Lydia's settlement in Philippi.* A native of Thyatira, on the confines of Lydia and Mysia, afterwards the seat of a Christian Church (Rev. ii. 18); a seller of purple, for which the Lydians were celebrated, the guild of dyers at Thyatira, οἱ βαφεῖς, having left behind them an inscription which attests the accuracy of the sacred historian; Lydia, so called not from her native district, since the name was common among both Greeks and Romans, in prosecution of her calling had crossed the Ægean and settled in Philippi. Had she not done so, she might never have met Paul. But a good man's (and also a good woman's) footsteps are ordered by the Lord (Psalm xxxvii. 23). 2. *Lydia's conversion to Judaism.* That like the Eunuch (viii. 27) and Cornelius (x. 2) she had become an adherent of the Jewish faith, a proselyte, is the clear sense of the clause, "one that worshipped God." Had she been been still a heathen she would not have been found in the *proseuche*, or place of prayer. An illustration of how God leads those who fear Him and seek the truth (Psalm xxv. 9). 3. *Lydia's presence in the house of prayer.* Had she on that memorable day when Paul visited the *proseuche* been absent from any cause—ill-health, business, pleasure, or indifference—she had missed the blessing that was that day being prepared for her. A lesson for irregular attenders of the sanctuary. Compare the case of Thomas (John xx. 24). 4. *Lydia's attention to Paul's words in the meeting.* Lydia listened—all worshippers do not this. Listening for Lydia proved the way to faith (Rom. x. 17). A hint for careless hearers of the word.

II. **The accompaniments.**—1. *The opening of Lydia's heart.* By an inward work of grace performed thereupon by the Lord, *i.e.*, Jesus Christ, through His Spirit. Man's heart, naturally shut against the truth (1 Cor. ii. 14; Eph. iv. 18; Rev. iii. 20), can be opened only by heavenly influence (Matt. xi. 25; Luke xxiv. 45; 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7). 2. *The attention of Lydia's spirit.* This more than such hearing as the understanding gives. The language points to such inward marking of the truth, whether heard or read, as an awakened or opened spirit supplies, discerning the suitability of the truth to its needs and laying hold of the truth so discerned for the satisfaction of those needs. 3. *The decision of Lydia's will.* Faith a voluntary act of the soul appropriating to itself the Lord Jesus Christ as presented in the gospel and a deliberate resting on Him for salvation (Gal. ii. 20; 2 Tim. i. 12).

III. **The consequents.**—Confession. 1. *By baptism.* Necessary after faith in the case of adults (ii. 38). As to its bearing on the baptism of infants, see below. Whether Lydia was baptised at once or afterwards and whether immersed or sprinkled are points not determined. 2. *By good works.* She desired to attest the sincerity of her conversion and her gratitude to those through whose instrumentality it had been brought about by pressing on Paul and his companions the hospitalities of her roof.

Learn.—1. That God's hand is in every conversion. 2. That God's grace alone can effect any conversion. 3. That without God's word there can be no conversion. 4. That obedience to God's commandments, ceremonial and moral, best attests conversion.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 14. *The Church of Christ in Europe.*

I. **Commenced in the important town of Philippi.**—The keystone of Rome's greatness became the foundation-stone of Christ's kingdom.

II. **Planted by Divine direction.**—God guided the steps of Paul and Silas to Macedonia.

III. **Founded by the apostle of the Gentiles.**—Paul's preaching the instrument used to convert Lydia.

IV. **Originated in a prayer meeting.** The kingdom of God cometh not with observation.

V. **Rooted among the humbler classes of society.**—Not many wise, not many mighty are called.

VI. **Begun with the conversion of a woman.**—If first in the transgression, woman is oftenest first in repentance, faith, and salvation. "In Tinnevelly, in South India, where are now 120,000 converts, the first convert was a woman. Clarinda heard Schwartz preach, received light into her heart, was baptised, and by her efforts in obtaining a native evangelist and in building a church was instrumental in giving light to large numbers of her countrymen and countrywomen" (*Zenana Mission Quarterly of the United Presbyterian Church*, No. I., p. 4).

VII. **Started with a representative of commerce.**—Upon the bells of the horses should be holiness unto the Lord.

The First Convert.

I. **Who was this person that was the first in Philippi to experience the saving power of the gospel?**—We are told that it was "a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God." In the account which is here given of her, I think there are several things which made it unlikely, beforehand, that she should be the first person converted to the faith of Christ. In the first place, she was a stranger in the country. She was not a native of Philippi, nor even of Macedonia. She was from Thyatira, a city of Asia Minor. When the gospel crossed over from Asia into Europe, we would expect that the first person to whom its preaching should be blessed should be some person of the country. Again, there was another circumstance connected with this woman which made it unlikely that she should be the first convert to the gospel. She was not a Jewess by descent; she was only a Gentile proselyte. This is what is to be understood by the expression that she "worshipped God." It is almost the same as that made use of about Cornelius (x. 2). There is one other circumstance mentioned concerning Lydia, which might also have made it unlikely that she should have been the first brought under the saving influence of the gospel. It was the busy trade in which she was engaged. Others there may have been in the group which Paul addressed, the mothers of families quietly occupied in their home duties, with such influences surrounding them as would draw out their minds in devotional and solemn feeling. It is not those whom we think the most likely or the most promising that are always brought to the saving knowledge of the gospel; but it is sometimes those whom we would judge the most unlikely.

II. And now we are to look at **the manner in which she was converted.**—It is very briefly, but at the same time very plainly told—"Whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." I think it means first that she felt interested in them as a matter of *personal concern.* What we each want, what makes the saving difference in any individual case, is that God the Holy Ghost should open the heart to receive that truth which is heard with the outward hearing.

III. I can only just refer to what we are told of Lydia, in the next

verse, **after her conversion.**—"She was baptised and her household."—*M. F. Day.*

Lydia's Heart Opened.—Look at this incident in the light which it casts on personal conversion.

I. We have **the central faculty on which this change is wrought:** the heart. The heart is the generic term in which primarily we include the entire phenomena of the animal and the spiritual man. Metaphorically it concentrates whatever distributively belongs to the physical, the emotional, and the intellectual nature. In popular speech it is the organ of vitality; the great arterial centre, the common ground and basis on which all the functions of life are dependent. In its Scriptural import the heart is the normal status that conditions man's relations to God. . . . The heart, therefore, is the power in man that most of all needs to be changed. Individual tendencies, constitutional idiosyncrasies, even moral aberrations and vicious practices, can be arrested and are frequently mastered by culture. The heart never outgrows its inherent depravity. . . . To change the heart in man, then, whatever else it may mean, is not merely to amend the life; for the life may be superficially correct, while the heart is utterly false. For the same reason, it cannot be any mere intellectual change, such as a new way of thinking of God, of His claims, or of His worship; nor yet does does it consist in any quickened sensibility of the conscience in its outward reverence for the truth; all of which are perfectly congruous with the felt, ascendent alienation of the heart from God and goodness. . . . The new birth, as our Lord's language implies, is the coming into life of that which did not previously exist. . . . Redemption through Christ is potentially the re-creation of the lost Divine order in the soul. Its aim is not to awaken or to direct merely the religious instincts, but to renew the soul after the image in which it was created.

II. From the subject we pass to **the method of this change.**—Let us mark —1. *The supernatural source* in which the change originates. Regeneration is a supernatural work wrought by the exercise of a Divine power upon the soul. It is always this where it is real. It may not be miraculous, it probably is not; it would not be more real or superhuman for being miraculous; but it certainly is not the product of human nature. It may be simulated, but it cannot be fabricated by any art or device of man. 2. A second characteristic of this Divine power in conversion is in *the variety of methods* in which it operates. In the instance before us the work was done silently as the young spring bud is opened by the morning sun. It was the sublime serenity of a translation out of darkness into light. In the history of the jailor, the same work is done, not in silence, but in tumult; not in a translation, but in a resurrection. Instead of the gentleness of the budding leaf or the silence of the falling dew, there were the throes of the earthquake, shaking the prison walls, and turning into a storm of agony the soul of the man. . . . And this variety in the methods of the Divine working according to the constitutional differences in men unfolds to us in perpetuity, the mental difficulties with which the gospel has to contend and the different methods in which it proceeds in dealing with them. Uniform in its effects, it is yet multiform in its modes of action.

III. **The reality of Lydia's conversion** was seen in its immediate fruits. 1. *She attended unto the things which were spoken by Paul.* If listless before, if curious only, if speculative, she is awake now. 2. *She was baptised, and her household.* She took upon herself and upon her home the profession of the Christian faith.—*John Burton.*

Vers. 14, 15. *The Conversion of Lydia.* (Another treatment.)—Remarkable as—

I. **The conversion of a woman.**—The first instance of such in the Acts.

Others occurred afterwards (xvii. 4, 12, 34). Relation of woman to Christianity. What the gospel has done for woman, and what woman can do for the gospel.

II. **The conversion of a merchantess.** —Again first example recorded in the Acts. Trade and religion not incompatible. Commerce might be the handmaid of the gospel. The gospel fitted to purify and ennoble commerce.

III. **The conversion of a European.** Or, at least, of one on European shores. Once more the first case mentioned in Luke's narrative. Whether the gospel had before this found its way to Rome is uncertain. But in any case Lydia may be regarded as the beginning of the Church of Christ in Europe.

The Conversion of Lydia. (A third treatment.)

I. **How occasioned.**—1. By attending a prayer meeting. 2. By listening to a sermon.

II. **Through what effected.**—1. By Divine grace. 2. Through human faith.

III. **By what followed.**—1. Baptism. 2. Good works.

Ver. 15. *Household Baptism.*

I. **The apostolic practice.** — To baptise the entire household when its head became a believer, as in the cases of the jailor (ver. 33), Crispus (xviii. 8), Stephanus (1 Cor. i. 16), and no doubt others, in addition to that of Lydia.

II. **The probable basis.**—Not the faith of each individual baptised. If it cannot be argued that any of the households baptised contained children —though children in a household are the rule rather than the exception—it can as little be reasoned that all who were baptised, assuming them to be relatives, servants, grown-up sons or daughters, believed. In the case of the jailor and his household, it is not said that they, but only that he believed on God (ver. 34). Yet they as well as he received baptism, and probably on the following grounds. 1. *The fact was recognised that children had been included in the Abrahamic covenant*, and through circumcision were admitted into the Hebrew Church. From this the step was doubtless easy to argue that children of believing parents should be received into the Christian Church through baptism, which like circumcision partook of the character of an initiatory rite, and all the more that Christ had not enjoined their exclusion. 2. *The language of Christ concerning children had declared that of such was the kingdom of heaven* (Matt. xix. 14); and from this the inference was not difficult to draw that, if children might without personal faith receive the substance of salvation, they might also on the same terms receive its external sign. 3. *The instructions given to the apostles by Christ* to baptise all nations, "teaching them to observe all things," etc. (Matt. xxviii. 20), might appear to them to warrant the deduction that "discipleship" might in certain cases, as for instance of children of believing parents, go before instruction and therefore before faith.

III. **The warrantable inference.**—That infant baptism accords with Scripture. This seems borne out by the view the apostle takes of the children of believing parents or of parents of whom one only is believing (1 Cor. vii. 14). "What would Lydia have said" asks Besser, "if the preachers of the Lord Jesus had refused to baptise the little children of her house? She must have become doubtful of her own faith —the free gift of God."

The Characteristics of True Faith.

I. **Humble.**—Submitting itself to the judgment of advanced Christians.

II. **Learning.**—Longing after further progress in knowledge.

III. **Thankful.**—Both to God, the prime author, and to man, the instrument (when he is so) of its existence.

IV. **Active.**—Working by love—"come to my house."

V. **Obedient.**—She and all her house were baptised.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 16—18.

The Cure of a Pythoness; or, the Slave-girl and the Apostle.

I. **The slave-girl.**—1. *Her abject condition.* A bond-servant, the property of several masters, who may have received her by inheritance (Alford), and who had an interest in her valuable gift, a supposed power of divination. 2. *Her reputed power.* That of divining or prophesying, which caused her to be regarded by the people of Philippi as a python—*i.e.*, as a person inspired by Apollo, like the priestess at Delphi. 3. *Her real character.* Not a ventriloquist (Augustine, Holtzmann), though Plutarch asserts the term python was frequently employed to describe such, but a demoniac whose insane ravings were palmed off by her crafty owners as inspired utterances. 4. *Her truthful ejaculation.* "These men are servants," etc. Not to be supposed she merely uttered words of the apostles either heard by herself or reported to her by others. Her cry an involuntary because a supernaturally inspired testimony to the character and work of the apostles, similar to that borne to the Saviour by the demons whom He encountered (Matt. viii. 29; Mark iii. 11; Luke iv. 41, viii. 28).

II. **The apostle.**—1. *His sore trouble.* (1) If Paul's grief took the form of indignation, as in iv. 2, then its object was not the woman, who was an involuntary victim of the demon, or her saying which was true, but either her inhuman masters who made gain of her misery, or the evil spirit which had enthralled her and maliciously designed by her utterance to hinder the work of the apostles. (2) If of sympathy, then it was directed exclusively towards the suffering girl whose sad case he pitied. 2. *His delivering command.* (1) To whom spoken? To the evil spirit in the girl. Paul unmistakably recognised the personal existence of evil powers. (2) In whose name? That of Jesus Christ (compare iii. 6), who had come to destroy the devil and his works. (3) In what terms? Come out of her: in imitation of his Master's language (Mark i. 25, v. 8; Luke iv. 35, viii. 29). (4) With what effect? Immediate healing. "It (the evil spirit) came out that very hour."

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 17. *The Dignity and Duty of Christian Ministers.*

I. **Their dignity.**—Servants of the most high God. 1. By *creation.* Formed by His grace. 2. By *purchase.* Through His Son's blood (Isa. xliii. 21; 1 Cor. vi. 20). 3. By *dedication.* As the result of their own consecration (Psalm cxvi. 16).

II. **Their duty.**—To proclaim unto men the way of salvation as: 1. *Divinely provided.* 2. *Clearly revealed in Scripture.* 3. *Humanly easy.* By faith instead of works (Rom. iii. 28). 4. *Positively certain.* "He that believeth shall be saved" (John vi. 47); 5. *Absolutely exclusive*—in fact, as the only way (iv. 12).

Ver. 18. *Satan's Devices.*

I. We are told here that as they went to prayer—probably in the same place by the river-side where they originally met—a young woman, a female slave, possessed by an evil spirit, who brought her master much gain by fortune-telling, met them, and cried after them continually. It appears by this that the power which evil spirits were permitted at that time to exert over men was not confined to the land of Judæa, but was known in other countries also. It shows us the power of the devil directly in connection with the idolatry of the ancient world, that he was working in this way, and in others, to keep mankind in bondage, at a distance from the living God.

II. We are told in the next place after what way this woman, under the influence of the evil spirit, acted towards the preachers of the gospel—

"The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation." It was not, we may be sure, with any friendly object that such a declaration was made. The very appearing in this way to praise its preachers might be in itself a means of drawing them into disrepute.

III. We have related to us finally in the text the way in which St. Paul dealt with this interference to which he was exposed. He bore with it for a considerable time—"This did she many days."

And now, what lessons may we learn for ourselves from this history? 1. It teaches us, in the first place, to recognise the power of Satan as working in the various false religions and forms of error which are prevalent in the world. But Satan's power in supporting false religion has been exerted not only in heathenism, but in the corruptions of Christianity. When the apostle Paul (2 Thess. ii.) is foretelling the coming of the man of sin, he describes him (ver. 9) as one "whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders." 2. We learn also, from what has come before us to-day, a device which Satan, through his agents, sometimes employs for the hindrance of the gospel, and that is, leading them outwardly to join with it. Men would have said, "There is one of Paul's converts," and they would have classed all together as one band of fanatics and hypocrites. But that was not one of Paul's converts at all. That was a distinct work of Satan, stirred up to do him injury. The one is never to be confounded with the other. 3. There is one other lesson which we are to learn, and it is a most happy one, from the way in which St. Paul is described as expelling this evil spirit in the text, saying, "I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour." We learn this from it, that the name and power of our Lord Jesus Christ is the one force by which the power of the devil is to be overcome. It is said (Rev. xii.) concerning the contest which Christians carry on against him —"They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb." There is no plea but that even to the very last; but that is all-sufficient. Again, to meet the temptations of the devil, when he would lead us into sin, the name of Jesus Christ is the effectual defence.—*M. F. Day.*

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 19—34.

The First Pagan Persecution; or, the Imprisonment of Paul and Silas.

I. Before the magistrates.—1. *The prosecutors.* (1) Their persons. The masters of the girl. Their hostility formed the first instance of persecution raised against the apostles by pagans. Hitherto the adversaries of the apostles had been their own countrymen. (2) Their motive. Because they saw that through the exorcism of the evil spirit from the afflicted maid their gains were gone. Their conduct as well as that of Demetrius of Ephesus (xix. 23-31) show that it is always dangerous to touch a man's pocket, and that even religion has little chance when it comes into competition with love of gain. "The first way," says Professor Ramsay, "in which Christianity excited the popular enmity outside the Jewish community was by disturbing the existing state of society and trade, and not by making innovations in religion" (*The Church in the Roman Empire*, p. 130). (3) Their violence. Having arrested Paul and Silas as the principal persons in the company, or perhaps because Luke and Timothy were at the moment out of the way, they dragged those into the market-place where the magistrates—in this case the Roman police-executive, the duumviri or prætors, as distinguished from the city rulers (see "Critical Remarks")—were

sitting. 2. *The accusation.* "These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, being Romans" (vers. 20, 21). That is to say, they were indicted, not for the crime of observing their own form of worship, which by Roman statute was a *religio licita*, but of doing what Roman statute did not permit, endeavouring to persuade Romans to forsake their own religious customs and embrace those of (as it seemed) the Jews. If the charge was in appearance true, since the apostles' preaching was undoubtedly being attended by conversions, and the Philippians could not then distinguish between Judaism and Christianity, it was still in reality false, since the real head and front of the apostles' offence was not the publication of a new religion about which, like other easy-going tolerant pagans, the girl's masters "did not care two straws" (Ramsay), but the interference of his preaching with their unholy profits, about which they were extremely sensitive, and more especially the destruction by his miracle of their stock-in-trade, for which they could perceive no chance of compensation. 3. *The multitude.* The market-place mob, composed doubtless for the most part of idlers, out-of-work and loungers (Matt. xx. 3; Acts xvii. 17), having heard the accusation, and having been incapable of understanding a defence, even had it been offered, like other eager and tumultuous rabbles, raised a yell of indignation against the apostles and demanded their punishment (compare xix. 28, 34, xxi. 30, xxii. 22; Luke xxiii. 18). 4. *The magistrates.* Yielding to the popular cry, without hearing from the prisoners a word of explanation, far less putting them on trial, the two prætors, representatives of Roman law and justice, who should have studied equity and afforded their prisoners at least an opportunity of speaking in self defence (xxv. 16), proceeded to act in flagrant violation of Roman law. (1) Without troubling themselves to conduct even the smallest or most formal investigation, they commanded the apostles to be scourged, in accordance with the customary formula ordering the lictor to remove the prisoners' clothes, if not, in blind fury doing this with their own hands, that on the backs of the apostles thus bared might be laid ignominious stripes by means of rods—though sometimes more severe instruments such as whips, loaded with lead, were employed for the infliction of this degrading punishment. That this was one of the three occasions on which Paul tells us he endured this indignity (2 Cor. xi. 25) there can be no doubt; and should it be inquired why, as afterwards in the castle of Antonia, he did not, in this instance, protect himself by making known his Roman citizenship (xxii. 25), it may be answered either that both Paul and Silas may have done so, though their voices, if raised, were drowned in the general din, and the fast-falling blows of the rods" (Lewin), or that in the agitation of the moment caused by the suddenness of the inhuman proposal it did not occur to them in this way to rescue themselves, or that if it did they may have preferred to suffer, thinking that by so doing they would more effectively promote the cause they had at heart. (2) Not content with having publicly beaten the apostles, the magistrates cast them into prison, as if they had been convicted of a heinous crime, handing them over wounded and bleeding to the tender mercies of the town jailor with instructions to keep them "safely," either in case further proceedings should require to be instituted against them, or perhaps lest some attempt at rescue should be made by their friends.

II. **In the inner prison.**—1. *Their degradation.* The town jailor, having perfectly understood what his master wanted, thrust his supposed criminals into the inner prison, the interior ward of a Roman cell, probably a damp, cold chamber, shut off with bolts and bars, iron gates and locks, and totally excluded from fresh air and light (compare xii. 6; and see "Critical Remarks"). In addition, improving most likely on his instructions, he made their feet fast in the stocks, which were pieces of wood drilled through with holes, into which

the feet were thrust, and sometimes so far apart as to cause the stocks to become an instrument of acute torture. Compare the treatment of Joseph in the Round House at Heliopolis (Psalm cv. 18). 2. *Their occupation.* So far as can be gathered from Scripture, this was Paul's and Silas's first experience of a jail, Yet neither of them yielded to despondent thoughts. Their solitary hours were enlivened, and their pains alleviated by the hallowed exercises of religion, in which they prayed and sang praises to God, doubtless finding appropriate expression for their mingled emotions in well-known words from the Hebrew Psalter (compare Luke i. 46-55, 68-79, ii. 29-32; Col. iv. 2). That they could thus pass the hours of their incarceration, forgetting the pains of their lacerated bodies and tortured limbs in the inward joyfulness of their spirits, was a signal testimony both to the sustaining grace of Him who had given them "songs in the night" (Job xxxv. 10), and to the power of that religion they professed and proclaimed to elevate the soul above all life's ills, as Tertullian finely says, "The limbs do not feel the stocks when the heart is in heaven." Nor were their prison devotions without eager listeners on earth, as none can doubt they found delighted hearers in heaven (Psalm cii. 19, 20). The inmates of the outer or common cell of the prison had never before heard such melodies proceeding from the inner or from any ward of a Roman jail, and kept listening, it can well be imagined, with wonder and amazement. 3. *Their deliverance.* (1) Effected by an earthquake, which cannot be successfully explained as a natural occurrence (Baur, Zeller), which might indeed have shaken the prison's foundations, but could hardly have unlocked the barred doors or unloosed the prisoners' fetters. That the writer distinctly intended to describe a supernatural interposition on behalf of Paul and Silas can hardly be questioned, even by those who decline to accept the narrative as true history; and that the other prisoners partook of the same gracious visitation was as obviously designed to arrest, impress, and if possible save them, if not from earthly, at all events from spiritual bondage and condemnation. "When we reflect," say Conybeare and Howson (i. 282), "on their knowledge of the apostles' sufferings" (for they were doubtless aware of the manner in which they had been brought in and thrust into the dungeon); "and on the wonder they must have experienced on hearing sounds of joy from those who were in pain, and on the awe which must have overpowered them when they felt the prison shaken and the chains fall from their limbs; and when to all this we add the effect produced on their minds by all that happened on the following day, and especially the fact that the jailor himself became a Christian, we can hardly avoid the conclusion that the hearts of many of those unhappy bondmen were prepared that night to receive the gospel, that the tidings of spiritual liberty came to those whom, but for the captivity of the apostles, it would never have reached, and that the jailor himself was their evangelist and teacher." (2) Accompanied by a trophy of Divine grace in the person of the jailor who, through the earthquake, was awakened to more than a sense of his temporal danger, even to a realisation of his spiritually lost condition. For this he may have been in some measure prepared by his acquaintance with the character of the apostles' preaching, of which he had doubtless heard; though he could hardly have been affected by their praying and singing, since during the time they were engaged in these holy exercises he was sleeping. In answer to his cry of distress—"Sirs! what must I do to be saved?"—an utterance which cannot be explained as signifying less than genuine soul concern—he was first directed to the one and all-sufficient method of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved"; and afterwards along with the inmates of his household, who by this time had appeared upon the scene, the jailor's house being not necessarily above (Meyer), but on a higher level than the prison (ver. 34), more fully instructed in the way

of the Lord, with the happy result that he believed and was baptised, along with all his house, rejoicing in God.

III. **In the jailor's house.**—1. *Before they entered it*, while yet in the prison court underneath, the jailor took them, his lacerated prisoners, and washed their stripes. A beautiful indication that sympathy, repentance, and gratitude—three emotions to which, probably, he had been long a stranger—had begun to dawn within his soul. "The jailor," says Chrysostom, "washed them, and he was washed himself. He washed them from their stripes, and he in his turn was washed from his sins." 2. *When they were within it*, he set meat before them. "His former cruelty was changed into hospitality and love" (Conybeare and Howson). "The two sufferers may well have needed food. . . . They were not likely to have made a meal, when they were thrust into the dungeon" (Plumptre). Doubtless by such hospitality the jailor hoped to compensate in some degree for his previous unkindness, and to evince the grateful affection he now entertained towards his benefactors. 3. *How they left it.* With a triumphant acknowledgment of their innocence on the part of the magistrates (see preceding homily), who, having learnt that their prisoners were Romans, became alarmed for their own safety, because of having violated the sanctity of Roman law in scourging two uncondemned citizens, and with all haste caused them to be fetched from the prison, entreating them at the same time to leave the city. This they agreed to do, but not before they had visited the house of Lydia, and comforted the brethren, amongst whom, doubtless, henceforth the jailor took an honoured place.

Learn.—1. That natural men as a rule, and occasionally spiritual men, as an exception, prefer their businesses to religion. 2. That Christ's ambassadors need hardly expect to escape persecution of some sort. 3. That when Christ's servants suffer God their maker can give them "songs in the night." 4. That no prison doors or bars can keep out God when He wants to be in, or keep in God's servants when He wants them out. 5. That conversions can occur in the most unlikely places, and pass on the most unlikely persons.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 20. *Preachers of the Gospel, City-troublers.* Because they—

I. **Interfere with men's sinful gains**—being teachers of morality.

II. **Expose men's intellectual delusions**—the gospel bringing the light of truth to the understanding.

III. **Change men's irreligious customs**—substituting for the worship of idols that of the true God.

IV. **Turn men's thoughts towards salvation**—men not caring to be reminded of their lost condition.

Ver. 24. *Fast in the Stocks.*

I. **A verification of Christ's promise.**

II. **A testimony to the efficiency of the apostles' work.**

III. **A trial of the sincerity of their faith.**

IV. **A means of helping on the cause of the gospel.**

Ver. 25. *Singing in Jail.*

I. **Not easy.**—Requires great grace.

II. **Perfectly possible.**—Grace can make a Christian do all things.

III. **Eminently comforting.**—To those who are imprisoned innocently for conscience' sake.

IV. **Occasionally useful.**—May lead to the conversion of the prison inmates.

A Strange Religious Service.

I. **The unusual hour of prayer**—midnight.

II. **The singular temple**—a prison.

III. **The remarkable conductors**—Paul and Silas in the stocks.

IV. **The strange congregation**—the prisoners in their cells.—*Gerok.*

Songs in the Night.

I. **The singers.**—Paul and Silas. 1. *Their character.* (1) Servants of the most high God. (2) Missionaries of the cross. (3) Benefactors of their race. 2. *Their condition.* In the night. (1) In the darkness of a Roman cell. (2) In the painfulness of bodily suffering. (3) In the sadness of disappointed hopes.

II. **Their songs.**—1. The *giver* of them: God, whose servants they were (Psalm xix. 8); Christ, for whose name they had been cast into prison (John xvi. 33, xvii. 13); and the Holy Spirit, in obedience to whose leading they had come to Philippi (Eph. v. 18, 19). 2. The *burden* of them. (1) Thankfulness that they had been counted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ (ver. 41). (2) Prayerfulness for grace to sustain them while suffering, and for a happy issue to their trial in the furtherance of their mission. 3. The *hearers* of them. Doubtless the angels in heaven, but also the prisoners on earth. Christians when at their devotions are more frequently than they suspect observed by others. 4. The *effect* of them. If they comforted the singers, they most likely helped to convert the listeners.

Ver. 25. *Singing in Jail.*—"His presence turns a prison into a palace, into a paradise." "From the delectable orchard of the Leonine prison"—so the Italian martyr Algerius dated his letter to a friend. "I was carried to the coal-house," saith Mr. Philpot, "where I with my fellows do rouse together in the straw as cheerfully, we thank God, as others do in their beds of down." "Philip, Landgrave of Hesse, being a long time prisoner under Charles V., was demanded what upheld him at that time. He answered that he felt the Divine consolations of the martyrs" (*Trapp*). (See on xxiii. 11, "Hints.")

Ver. 26. *Opened Doors and Loosened Bands.*

I. **A miracle of power.**—Even if explainable as the result of the earthquake, the earthquake itself was the work of God.

II. **A symbol of grace.**—1. *Of the message of the gospel,* which proclaims liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. 2. *Of the influence of the Spirit,* which breaks the fetters of sin from the soul and opens the heart to receive the truth. 3. *Of the work of providence,* which opens doors of usefulness for Christ's servants and gives them ability to enter in.

III. **A prophecy of glory.**—Of the opening of the prison-house of the grave and the unloosening of the bands of death.

Vers. 30, 31. *The Way of Salvation.*

I. **The jailor's question.**—1. *Important.* Concerning the salvation of the soul, the most momentous of human concerns. 2. *Personal.* Concerning individual salvation. Salvation a personal affair. 3. *Urgent.* No time for delay in this concern of the soul's salvation.

II. **The apostle's answer.**—1. The *simplicity* of it. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." Nothing needful but faith. 2. The *certainty* of it. "Thou shalt be saved." No peradventure. 3. The *sufficiency* of it. "And thy house."

Vers. 23-34. *The Story of the Jailor; or, the Moral and Spiritual History of a Soul.*

I. **A spiritual sleeper.**—1. Unconscious of his moral degradation (ver. 24). 2. Insensible to his danger (ver. 27).

II. **An awakened sinner.**—Roused from his bodily slumber by means of the earthquake, he instantly realised the peril in which he stood—(1) bodily and temporarily (ver. 27), and (2) spiritually and eternally (ver. 30).

III. **An anxious inquirer.**—Manifested by his exclamation, "Sirs! what must I do to be saved?" (ver. 30), which referred exclusively to his deliverance from the spiritual alarm which had seized upon his soul.

IV. **An eager listener.**—This followed of necessity from his soul agitation and the sincerity of his exclamation. Anxious souls always hear the gospel with avidity (ver. 32).

V. **A humble penitent.**—Evidenced by his gentle and affectionate treatment of the apostles (ver. 33).

VI. **A rejoicing believer** (ver. 34).—As faith cometh by hearing, so does joy spring from believing. Not joy is the source of faith, but faith is the source of joy.

VII. **A baptised Christian.**—"He and all his were baptised" (ver. 33), and so incorporated in the Church of Christ.

Vers. 19-34. *The Jailor at Philippi.*

I. "**Do you, jail keeper of Philippi, believe in being scared into religion?** An earthquake—pardon the suggestion—is a shaky foundation for a religious resolve. Now do you believe in religion which begins in fear?" "The question is stated offensively, although in a popular form," such is the jailor's reply; "but I do believe that fear is a proper motive to religion and in religion. In my case it worked well. I came into the kingdom moved by fear, as the history plainly tells you. Other motives were present, but fear was foremost. The absence of fear would have been stolidity. It is the part of wisdom to be taught by events. In them God is the Teacher, and when events are fearful we ought to fear." It is worth while to listen to the testimony of the jailor upon this point, because current religious thought of a superficial and sentimental sort hesitates to find a place for fear amongst the motives to religion. Fear "which takes counsel of the reason and not of the imagination" is a proper motive to religion and in religion. Noah was not playing the part of a craven in a truly courageous world when he, "moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house." An apostle made no ill-judged appeal to fear when he said to impenitent men, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." And now let us give to fear its true place amongst religious motives. Do the great hopes of the gospel fill and sway our hearts? Then away with fear! Does the love of God, like a summer's atmosphere full of sweet odours, enfold our spirits in its warm embrace? Then away with fear! Does gratitude, the sense of infinite indebtedness to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us, stir our hearts, so that to lay our powers and possessions at his feet is only a grateful and easy task? Then away with fear. Is the sense of duty so dominant in our hearts that we are always ready to make payment of our dues to God? Then away with fear. But if none of these higher motives have control, then, as we love our souls, we ought not to allay our fears in any other way than by seeking the grace of God to save us from the danger which occasions fear. It is conceivable that the jailor might have reasoned with his fears until all apprehension vanished, but in so doing he would have lost his soul.

II. If we were permitted to make further inquiries of the jailor, a second query would arise. We should be disposed to say: "You were upon that night of the earthquake plunged into the greatest excitement. You were well-nigh beside yourself. Of a sudden, the record tells us, you whipped out your sword to take your own life. This therefore is our question, **Do you believe in emotional religion?**" "My own religious life began in a sudden and tidal sweep of the emotions," is the reply. "They were emotions which I did not stop to analyse or question, and which I could not control. Confused, tumultuous feelings rushed and crowded in upon me. The sudden manifestation of the power of God, His marvellous interference in behalf of the prisoners, His no less wonderful interposition to prevent the escape of the prisoners; in some way there came to me suddenly and with overwhelming power the feeling that I was a lost soul; that I could not repress this

feeling was my salvation. And besides this, it is to be remembered that no life is unemotional." If a fervent religious experience seems to any one the commitment of life to the control of the emotions, be it remembered that irreligious experience has its controlling emotions also. The publican who smote upon his breast was an emotional man no doubt, but he was not more under the power of emotion in his penitence and humility than the Pharisee was emotional in the self-complacency which prompted his useless prayer; only a Pharisee's emotion was narrower and meaner, an emotion occasioned by thought of self, while the publican's higher emotion grew out of his thought of God. "I thank Thee that I don't believe in emotional religion." It is wise to turn over the pages of the Bible, and to review the lives of God's chosen ones, the master-workmen of all time, to see whether or not their religion was *emotional.* The record will tell us of Elijah's tempestuous emotion in the wilderness and before the prophets of Baal. The religion which God honours and loves and uses is one which not only convinces the intellect, but which powerfully sways the heart. In thoughtful communities the Church of these last times is in as little danger of undue emotion as the North Sea is in danger from the blasts of the sirocco, a wind which never blows north of Italy. A philosophic calmness in religion may proceed from a dim apprehension of what it is to be under condemnation for sin and a feeble gratitude to our Redeemer. God is in holy emotions; cultivate them by increasing your knowledge of Him. Follow them loyally. Do not think the Christian heart that never sings or weeps is the better therefor.

III. Were we permitted further to interrogate the jailor, we should be interested to seek answer to a third question. It is this: "**Do you believe in sudden conversion?** You will pardon us of these last times whose habits of thought are evolutionary, if we look upon character as a slow and steady growth. It results from education and training and habit and circumstances. What character is to-day is the result of what it was yesterday. To-morrow grows up out of to-day. Now, can any man be changed at once in the spirit and purpose of his life?" "That such a change is possible," such is the jailor's reply, "my own experience is the sufficient proof. I was converted suddenly and thoroughly; within an hour's time I was convicted of sin, found peace with God, and did the first works of love. In that hour of visitation from the Spirit of the living God I was transformed. That midnight hour was the pivot upon which my life turned, the hour of destiny when by faith in Christ I laid fast hold upon the grace of God."

IV. There is a final inquiry which we should place before the converted jailor, if he were present and willing to entertain our interrogations. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." It is of this answer that we wish to ask: "**Is not this a narrow gospel?** Are there not broader conceptions of the way of life? Is nothing to be said, when this great question is answered, of civilisation, of orderly, law-abiding life, of good citizenship, of morality, of neighbourly kindness, of a human endeavour and resolve to keep the commandments? Surely salvation must mean good character. Is not the command too narrow for the diversified conditions of the good and the bad, the wise and the ignorant, the cultured and the uncouth?" "The command is narrow," is the courteous answer, "but not narrower than the way of life. Its adaptation to the diverse conditions of human experience each man must determine for himself. I can only bear testimony that it was marvellously fitted to my needs. I needed a power within to calm the tumult of my spirit, to quiet a guilty conscience, and that power came to me by faith in Jesus. I needed to learn the lesson of human pity and kindness, and having received

faith in Jesus I arose and tenderly washed the stripes of Paul and Silas, and set before them the choicest food my house could furnish. Narrow? In my case it turned out to be the one duty out of which came a dutiful life." If the command seems to be narrow, we have only to obey it to find it exceeding broad. It touches all character and truth.—*W. G. Sperry.*

Ver. 35. *Let those Men go!*

I. **An order of fear.**—The Philippian magistrates to the prison serjeants. Those who wrong their fellows are commonly delighted to be relieved of the presence of their victims; like Ammon, who, having humbled Tamar, hated her exceedingly, and said, "Arise, be gone!" (2 Sam. xiii. 15).

II. **A command of love.**—Jesus to His captors in the garden: "If ye seek Me, let these go their way" (John xviii. 8). A signal mark of Christ's affection for His own, in whose behalf He was going forward to condemnation and death.

III. **A sentence of justice.**—God to believers, in whose room and stead Christ has suffered the penaly of sin: "There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ" (Rom. v. 1). "He that believeth is passed from death unto life" (John v. 24).

IV. **A proclamation of power.**—The glorified Christ when He speaks over the graves of His people, as He did at Lazarus's tomb (John xi. 44): "Loose them, and let them go!" "The hour is coming," etc. (John v. 28, 29).

Ver. 40. *The Brethren in Lydia's House; or, the Church at Philippi.*

I. **Its original members.**—1. *Lydia.* That this lady is not mentioned in the epistle to the Philippians may have been due to her having died or returned to her native city before the epistle was written, unless the unlikely supposition be adopted that she was either Euodia or Syntyche. Had the epistle been a forgery she would most probably have been named. 2. *The jailor.* The same difficulty presents itself with regard to this early disciple, who also is passed over in silence, which shows how dangerous it is to draw conclusions from the omissions of a composer. 3. *Euodia and Syntyche.* Two Christian females (Phil. iv. 2), who appear to have been somewhat estranged from one another at the time when Paul wrote to the Church in Philippi, unless the suggestion be adopted (Farrar) that Paul was only alluding to their "joint wrestlings for the gospel." 4. *Zyzygus and Clement.* The former term, meaning "yoke-fellow," has been taken as designating an individual of that name whom the apostle playfully addresses (Meyer, Farrar, and others)—an interpretation in support of which much can be advanced; but doubt remains whether, after all, it is not Epaphroditus (Phil. iv. 18), to whom the apostle refers under this appellation (Hutchison). Of Clement, whom tradition reports to have been the third bishop of Rome, Paul's letter affords no clue to the identification, resting satisfied with describing him as a fellow-worker, whose name, along with those of others, was written in the Book of Life.

II. **Its original character.**—Whatever it may have become in later years, when Paul wrote to it, its members were distinguished by several delightful features. 1. *Steadfast faith.* Firm adherence to the gospel (Phil. i. 5), even in the face of persecution (Phil. i. 28-30). 2. *Joyful confidence.* Exulting in Christ (Phil. ii. 17, 18), and in their personal experience of his salvation. 3. *Tender sympathy* with the apostle in his labours and afflictions (Phil. iv. 14). 4. *Generous liberality* in contributing to the apostle's needs (Phil. iv. 15). 5. *Laborious activity*, working together for the advancement of the gospel (Phil. i. 27; iv. 3).

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY (PAUL AND SILAS)—CONTINUED.

§ 1. Paul and Silas in Thessalonica; or, Mingled Experiences of Success and Persecution (vers. 1-9).
§ 2. Paul and Silas at Berœa; or, another Good Work interrupted (vers. 10-14).
§ 3. Paul at Athens; or, Alone in a Heathen City (vers. 15-21).
§ 4. Paul on Areopagus; or, Preaching to Philosophers (vers. 22-34).

CRITICAL REMARKS.

Ver. 1. **They.**—Paul, Silas, and Timothy, Luke having remained behind at Philippi. (See on xvi. 40.) **Passed through.**—The road traversed was the *Via Egnatia*, a great military road, the Macedonian continuation of the Appian Way. **Amphipolis.**—Thirty miles south-west of Philippi, on the eastern bank of the Strymon, "which flowed almost round it and gave to it its name" (Hackett). **Apollonia.**—To be distinguished from a town of the same name in Galatia (Ramsay). Thirty miles south-west of Amphipolis. At each of these towns the travellers most likely passed a night, but not more, "as it appears the Jews were not at either town in sufficient numbers to maintain a synagogue, or perhaps even an oratory" (Lewin). **Thessalonica.**—Now *Saloniki*. The capital of the second division of Macedonia; a rich commercial city near the mouth of the Ecedorus, on the Thermaic Gulf, about twenty-eight miles west of Apollonia. Weizsäcker, badly off for an objection to the historic credibility of the Thessalonian visit, finds it strange that Paul "went, of all places, to the capital of the province which had just given him such a bad reception"; from which it may presumably be inferred that the German critic would not have proved so courageous as the Christian apostle. **A** (according to the best MSS. the definite article is wanting, though Hackett and Alford favour its retention) **synagogue of the Jews.**—Doubtless the only one in town.

Ver. 2. **As his manner was.**—Compare xiii. 5-14, xiv. 1. **Out of**, or *from* the Scriptures.—The source whence Paul drew his teaching (compare xxviii. 23).

Ver. 3. **Opening.**—*I.e.*, giving the sense of Scripture, and **alleging**—*i.e.*, propounding, maintaining, or setting forth as the sum of their teaching. **Christ** should be *the Christ*. **That this Jesus**, etc., should be, *that this is the Christ*—viz., *the Jesus whom I* preach or *proclaim* unto you.

Ver. 4. **Believed.**—Rather, *were persuaded*. **Consorted with.**—Attached themselves to (Olshausen, Hackett), though the more correct interpretation is *were added by lot to* (Winer, De Wette, Meyer, Alford, Holtzmann, Zöckler)—viz., by God (compare xiii. 48; John vi. 44, xvii. 6). **Of the devout Greeks** reads in the Alexandrine Codex *of the devout and of Greeks*, which, however, is not to be preferred (see xiii. 43). **Of the chief**, or *first* **women.**—See on xiii. 50.

Ver. 5. **The Jews who believed not.**—The best MSS. omit the relative clause, as an insertion from xiv. 2. **Lewd fellows of the baser sort.**—Lit., *certain disreputable men of the market idlers*—such as Cicero calls *subrostrani*, Plautus *sub-basilicani*, Xenophon the market-place mob, τὸν ἀγοραῖον ὄχλον, and Demosthenes the knaves of the market, περίτριμμα ἀγορᾶς. **Jason** was Paul's host (ver. 7), as Lydia had been his hostess at Philippi. Whether this Jason was Paul's kinsman (Rom. xvi. 21) cannot be determined.

Ver. 6. **When they found them not.**—Probably because Paul and Silas were then absent from their lodging. **The rulers of the city**, politarchs = the ἄρχοντες of xvi. 19.—Not in this case, as in that of Philippi, *prætors*, because Thessalonica was not a colony, but a *free city*, possessing the right of self-government in all its internal affairs, within the territory that might be assigned to it, and having magistrates with whose jurisdiction the provincial governor had no right to intermeddle. An inscription found on an arch at Thessalonica mentions that the city magistrates were called *politarchs*, and gives as three of these individuals bearing the names of three of Paul's friends—Sosipater (xx. 4), Gaius (xix. 29), and Secundus (xx. 4).

Ver. 7. **Another King**, one **Jesus.**—Virtually a charge of high treason, a more alarming charge than that preferred against them at Philippi (xvi. 21), and recalling the accusation of the Jerusalem Jews against Christ (John xix. 15).

Ver. 9. **When they had taken security.**—Lit., *having taken the sufficient* (sum or pledge) = *satisdatione accepta*, either by sureties or money. **They let them go** ἀπέλυσαν (compare xiii. 3).

—Paul's language in 1 Thess. ii. 14-16 appears to contain a reminiscence of his experience in Thessalonica.

Ver. 10. **Bœrea.**—Presently *Pheria*, south-west of Thessalonica, and fifty-one miles distant.

Ver. 12. **Many of them believed.**—*Codex Bezæ* adds, "And some disbelieved." The adjective **Greek** qualifies men as well as women.

Ver. 13. **They came thither also and stirred up the people** should be *they came, stirring up and troubling* ("and troubling" being inserted in accordance with the best authorities) *the people there also.*

Ver. 14. **As it were to the sea.**—ὡς with ἐπί may signify intention, actual or pretended (Winer's *Grammar of the New Testament Diction*, p. 640), and some (Grotius, Bengel, Olshausen) suppose, in accordance with this reading, that Paul's companions only made a feint of sending him off by sea, while in reality they conducted him off by the overland route to Athens—a distance of 251 Roman miles; but the oldest codices (ℵ A B E) read ἕως as far as to the sea, and this avoids even the suggestion of pretending to go one way and taking another.

Ver. 15. **A commandment unto Silas and Timothy that they should come to him with all speed.**—According to Acts xviii. 5 they came from Macedonia to him in Corinth; according to 1 Thess. iii. 1 Timothy was sent back from Athens to Macedonia. The statements are not inconsistent. Silas and Timothy may have followed Paul at once to Athens, (so Ramsay) from which Timothy may have been recommissioned to the Thessalonians, and Silas to some other church in Macedonia, both again returning to him in Corinth.

Ver. 16. **Athens.**—Described by Milton (*Paradise Regained*, iv. 20) as "the eye of Greece," and "the mother of arts and eloquence." The capital of Attica was situated about five miles from the harbour of Piræus, partly on a group of rocky hills, and partly upon the low land surrounding these, and separating them one from the other. Of these rocky eminences the loftiest was the Acropolis, which stood almost in the middle of the town, and to which a magnificent marble staircase led up through the Propylæum, built by Pericles. Here were, besides other works of art, the colossal statue of Athene Promachus, the glorious Parthenon, or Virgins' house, replete with the masterpieces of Phidias, and "the colossal statue (of Athens) of ivory and gold, the work of Phidias, unrivalled in the world, save only by the Jupiter Olympius of the same artist" (Conybeare and Howson, i. 330).

Ver. 17. **In the market.**—The Agora, richly decorated with statues, lying between the two hills, Pnyx on the west and Museum on the south-west of the Acropolis, was "the centre of a glorious public life, when the orators and statesmen, the poets and artists, of Greece found there all the incentives of their noblest enthusiasm" (*Ibid.*, i. 326).

Ver. 18. **This babbler.**—ὁ σπερμολόγος. Lit., *seed-picker*, properly a bird, in which sense it is used by Aristophanes (*Birds*, 232); hence one who prowls about the market-place picking up and retailing gossip, or one who lives by his wits; hence, again, "a contemptible and worthless person." Or the allusion may be to the chattering of such birds, whence the word may denote "a babbler." Zeno called by this name one of his disciples, who had more words than wisdom (*Diog. Laert., Zeno*, c. 19); and Demosthenes used this expression of ready-tongued opponents. "Many an Athenian is likely to have babbled all the week through about this babbler at the Areopagus" (Stier). "Probably the nearest and most instructive parallel in modern English life to *Spermologos* is 'Bounder' allowing for the difference between England and Athens. In both there lies the idea of one who is 'out of the swim,' out of the inner circle, one who lacks that thorough knowledge and practice in the rules of the game, that mould the whole character and make it one's nature to act in the proper way and play the game fair" (Ramsay, *St. Paul*, p. 243).

Ver. 19. **Areopagus.**—This ancient college of justice in Athens, whose province it was to pronounce judgment on the worst criminal cases, had its name from the elevation, Mars' Hill (ver. 22), upon the east end of which it had its sittings. It was approached from the market-place by a flight of steps cut in the rock, and on its summit had, also cut in the rock, a row of seats, in which the judges sat, and room for a considerable number of spectators and listeners. Ramsay (*St. Paul, etc.*, pp. 241 *ff.*), thinks Paul was brought before the Council of Areopagus, neither to be tried by the city judges, nor to address the Athenian people, nor to discuss with the philosophers, but to explain to the university court the nature of his doctrines. (See Hints on ver. 19.)

Ver. 21. **Either to tell or to hear some new thing.**—Compare Demosthenes: "Is it your sole ambition to wander through the public places, each inquiring of the other, what new advices?" (*Philippic*, i. 11); and Thucydides (iii. 38): "And so you are the best men to be imposed upon with novelty of argument," etc. "It is just the same to-day with the upper and lower classes in our great cities. It is ever καινότερόν τι; or, as they are wont to say, One new thing supplants another" (Stier).

Ver. 22. **Too superstitious.**—Somewhat superstitious (R.V.); better, *more god-fearing*, more religious (*sc.*, than others)—*i.e.*, unusually religious; though the word has both senses. **Your devotions** should be *objects of devotion*, as temples, images, altars, and the like.

Ver. 23. **To the** (or, an) **unknown God.**—Not a singular for a plural as Jerome (*ad. Tit.*, i. 12) asserts: "Inscriptio aræ non ita erat ut Paulus asseruit: ignoto Deo; sed ita: Diis Asiæ et Europæ et Africæ, Diis ignotis et peregrinis. Verum quia Paulus non pluribus Diis ignotis indigebat sed uno tantum ignoto Deo, singulari verbo usus est." The accuracy of Paul's statement is confirmed by the testimony of Pausanias, I. i. 4, and Philostratus, *Apoll.*, vi. 2, who both report the existence at Athens of altars to unknown divinities. **Whom . . . Him.**—Rather, *what . . . this.*

Ver. 26. **Blood.**—Omitted by the best authorities. **Times before appointed,** προτεταγμένους, should be *times appointed*, προστεταγμένους.

Ver. 28. The quotation, **For we are also His offspring,** is verbally taken from Aratus, a native of Tarsus, B.C. 270, who composed astronomical poems, and in one of the only two extant, the *Phænomena*, wrote τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμέν; though substantially, also, it is contained in the words ἐκ σοῦ (Διὸς) γὰρ γένος ἐσμέν of Cleanthes of Assos in Troas, B.C. 300. Other traces of Paul's acquaintance with Greek poetry may be found in 1 Cor. xv. 33; Titus i. 12.

Ver. 31. **Because,** διότι. Better, *inasmuch as*, καθότι. Giving the reason why the heathen are required to repent. **The world** means "the inhabited earth." **That man** should be "the" or "a man"—viz., Jesus, of whose appointment to the office of judge God had given **assurance,** or confirmation—lit., *offered faith*, or a sufficient ground for faith ("Quia res erat vix credibilis argumentum adfert eximium"—Grotius), unto all men by raising Him from the dead.

Ver. 32. **Some mocked.**—Perhaps Epicureans. **Others,** perhaps Stoics (Grotius) or Platonists (Zöckler), **said**—whether seriously (Calvin, Grotius, Alford) or only courteously, as a polite refusal (De Wette, Meyer), remains uncertain—**we will hear thee again of this** *matter*, or less happily *person.*

Ver. 34. **Dionysius, the Areopagite.**—Obviously a man of note, though nothing further in known concerning him—at least with certainty. According to tradition he became the first bishop of Athens (Euseb, *H. E.*, iii. 4, iv. 23) and suffered martyrdom under Domitian (Nicephorus, *H. E.*, iii. 11). **Damaris.**—Conjecturally regarded by Chrysostom to have been the wife of Dionysius, and by Stier unnecessarily supposed to have been a courtesan.

Note.—On the historic credibility of Paul's visit to Athens and oration before the Areopagus.

I. The **usual objections** to the narrative on the ground of miracle narrations are in this case awanting, as the apostle is not credited with having performed so much as one wonder in the capital of Achaia.

II. The **special difficulties** set forth by the Tübingen critics (Baur, Zeller, Overbeck, Hausrath, and others) are so unreasonable that they can hardly claim a refutation. Weizsäcker, indeed, without offering any reasons, dismisses the story of Paul at Athens, as of "no historical value," and looks upon the speech before the Areopagus as simply "the author's conception of Paul's manner of preaching to the heathen." By those who give reasons it is alleged: 1. That the narrative is so obviously full of purpose and reflection that it must have been manufactured in order to bring out as strongly as possible the contrast between Christianity and Heathenism. 2. That the apostle could not have introduced his mention of the resurrection in so sudden and objectionable a manner as is represented, and in fact in a way so admirably fitted to make the worst possible impression upon his hearers. 3. That the apostle should have alluded to the Athenians' characteristic irony as well as to their peculiar curiosity. 4. That there was no altar to an unknown God in Athens, but only "to the gods unknown." 5. That if Paul had been brought before the Areopagus, he must have undergone a judicial trial—which he did not. 6. That the glory of Paul's "hearing" before the Areopagus, or highest Greek tribunal, was simply invented as a parallel to the account given of Stephen's appearance before the highest Jewish court. 7. That the last section of the oration breaks off so suddenly as to show that the composer has been without accurate information about what actually occurred. So far as these and other similar difficulties require explanation, that is furnished either in the "Critical Remarks" or under the "Homiletical Analysis"; but their purely arbitrary and subjective character shows the straits to which the opponents of the credibility are reduced.

III. The **sufficient answer** to all that can be urged against Luke's narrative is that it bears on its surface evident marks of its truthfulness. 1. *The Pauline conceptions and expressions it contains*, which are too numerous to have been invented. Compare, *e.g.*, ver. 27 with Rom. i. 19, 20; ver. 26 with Rom. v. 12; 1 Cor. xv. 45; ver. 30, "times of ignorance," with Rom. iii. 25; ver. 31, "the judgment of the world through Christ," with 2 Cor. v. 10. 2. *The exact acquaintance which it shows with the thoughts and manners of the Athenians*, as these are borne witness to by classical writers—as, *e.g.*, with (1) the habit of the Athenians to ask after new things; (2) the devotion of the Athenians to idolatry; (3) the existence in Athens of a worship of unknown gods; and (4) the belief which prevailed in Athens of the superior origin of their progenitors (see on these points the "Critical Remarks" and "Homiletical

Analysis")—an acquaintance much more easily explained by supposing Luke's narrative to have proceeded from an eye and ear witness such as Paul, than from a second century fabulist. 3. *The possibility of Luke obtaining accurate information about the whole Athenian visit*, either from Paul himself or from Dionysius and Damaris, all of whom may have preserved written notes of what took place. 4. *The difficulty of discovering how a second century writer could have manufactured the incident and far less the discourse.* The suggestion that these were freely constructed out of Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonians is totally inadequate as a solution of the problem.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 1—9.

Paul and Silas at Thessalonica; or, Mixed Experiences.

I. **Their arrival in the city.**—1. *How they reached it.* By passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, towards which they directed their steps on departing from the house of Lydia (xvi. 40). The first of these towns lay thirty-three miles from Philippi in a south-westerly direction, the second thirty from Amphipolis and thirty-seven from Thessalonica. In all a journey of a hundred miles was undertaken, which might easily have been performed in three or four days. The first town, anciently called the "Nine Ways," from the number of Thracian and Macedonian roads which converged at it, stood back three miles from the sea, on the east bank of the Strymon, which, flowing round it, gave it its name. The exact site of the second town has not been ascertained, although the road to it must have lain through scenes of surpassing loveliness. 2. *How they found it.* In those days Thessalonica —the modern *Saloniki*, with a population of 70,000, of whom a third are Jews—was a rich commercial city, near the mouth of the Echedorus. Originally called Therma, its name was changed by Cassander, the son of Antipater, and one of Alexander's generals, who rebuilt it, into Thessalonica, after his wife, who was a daughter of Philip. For the historic associations connected with Thessalonica see Conybeare and Howson's *Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, i. 298. When Paul and Silas for the first time entered this town "it was the most populous of all the cities of Macedonia, and the capital of the whole province," where "the Roman Proconsul, attended by six lictors and their fasces, held his court, attended by his privy council, or Board of Advice, composed of select illustrious Romans, with whom he conferred on all matters of state" (Lewin). Its dense heathenism, moreover, was relieved by the presence of only one Jewish synagogue, while its streets were crowded by "lewd fellows of the baser sort," "vile fellows of the rabble," or market-place tramps. 3. *How long they remained in it.* At least three Sabbaths (ver. 2), and possibly three full weeks, during which, it may be safely assumed, the four missionaries were not idle, and Paul specially kept working night and day (1 Thess. ii. 9). There is even ground for thinking Paul must have stayed several months in Thessalonica, as during that period he twice received pecuniary assistance from Philippi (Phil. iv. 15, 16).

II. **Their procedure in the city.**—1. *Their lodging.* This, the procuring of which naturally formed their first concern, they found in the house of one Jason, a Græcised form of Jesus, a Jew, to whom "they may have brought letters of introduction from the disciples at Philippi" (Lewin), or who may have been a kinsman of Paul's (Rom. xvi. 21), though too much significance may be attached to similarity of name. If the individual here mentioned was a relative of Paul's he must have been with the apostle at Corinth when he wrote the epistle to the Romans. 2. *Their living.* This may have been provided gratuitously by Jason, though that is unlikely. The epistle to the Thessalonians (1 ii. 9) rather shows that Paul and his companions laboured night and day, if not at their ordinary trades, at some form of manual labour, to furnish for themselves such scanty supplies as their modest wants demanded. The Philippians, indeed, once and

again forwarded money contributions (Phil. iv. 15, 16) to the apostle while in Thessalonica; but if, as he himself states, he had suffered the loss of his whole worldly property in Philippi (Phil. iii. 8), and if, as there is reason to believe, while he was there, wheat stood at famine prices in Thessalonica, a peck of wheat being sold, according to Eusebius, for six drachmæ, or four shillings and sixpence, being six times the usual price (see Lewin, vol. i., p. 258), the amounts received from his grateful converts would hardly dispense him or his companions —Silas, Timothy, and Luke—from the necessity of supporting themselves by their own hands. 3. *Their preaching.* Here the narrative loses sight of Silas and speaks exclusively of Paul, concerning whose ministrations it furnishes the amplest details. (1) The place in which they were held was the synagogue, the only one then, though now Saloniki can boast of nearly forty Jewish churches. (2) The time was the Sabbath, the ordinary season for worship, in selecting which Paul followed his usual custom of seeking the earliest hearing for his gospel from his countrymen (compare xiii. 5, 14; xiv. 1). (3) The text-book from which his expositions and exhortations were drawn was the Scriptures of the Old Testament, which he regarded as the word of God and the New Testament Church's manual of salvation. (4) The thesis in support of which he reasoned said that Jesus of Nazareth was the Hebrew Messiah who had been promised to the fathers, obviously a suitable starting-point from which to address a Jewish audience. A preacher's success with his hearers depends, to no small extent, on the way in which he opens his discourse. (5) The method in which he sought to establish this proposition was not by noisy declamation or dogmatic assertion, least of all by vulgar sensationalism, but by calm reasoning, appealing to the Scriptures for the evidence on which he based his proposition, expounding the meaning of the prophecies that spoke of the Messiah, and showing how they all had received their fulfilment in Jesus of Nazareth. (6) The proof which he deduced from Scripture consisted in this, that according to these prophecies "Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead" (compare ii. 24—31, iii. 18, xiii. 27—37; Luke xxiv. 44), and that, according to actual fact, Jesus of Nazareth had risen from the grave. (7) The effect produced by his disputations was such that a considerable number of his hearers were converted. First, some of the Jewish worshippers came over to his side, among them Secundus (xx. 4), Aristarchus (xix. 29, xx. 4; Col. iv. 10; Philem. 24), and perhaps Gaius (xix. 29). Next, a great multitude of the Greek proselytes (according to another reading "of the devout and of Greeks") attached themselves to the new faith. Lastly, not a few of the chief (or first) women—*i.e.*, occupying a leading position in the town (compare xiii. 50), espoused the new cause. *N.B.*—As all the above, unless the other reading be adopted, were practically gathered from Judaism, while Paul speaks of the Thessalonian Christians as having been drawn from those who worshipped idols (1 Thess. i. 9; ii. 14), it has been surmised that Acts preserves the result only of Paul's three Sabbaths' reasonings in the synagogue, and that either he preached to the Gentiles during the week (Neander) or spent a longer time in Thessalonica preaching to the Gentiles after he had been excluded from the synagogue, and before the incidents next recorded (Paley). See above, I. 3.

III. **Their treatment in the city.**—1. *Their work hindered.* Perceiving the success which had attended the apostle's preaching in drawing away from the synagogue so large a body of converts, "a greater multitude of adherents than they had won during many years to the doctrines of Moses" (Farrar), indignant at seeing the strange missionaries teaching the Gentiles (1 Thess. ii. 16), and perhaps furious at their losing the resources, reverence, and adhesion of the leading women of the city (Farrar), the unbelieving Jews followed the example of their co-religionists at Antioch (xiii. 50), Iconium (xiv. 2), and Lystra (xiv. 19),

and excited against the evangelists a fresh persecution, calling to their aid "certain lewd fellows of the baser sort," the roughs and scoundrels, loafers and loiterers of the city, the men of the market-place, the street-walkers, and raising a hue and cry against the objects of their rage (see "Critical Remarks"). 2. *Their lodging assaulted.* Jason's house, surrounded by the mob, was broken into in hope of finding his hated guests (compare Gen. xix. 4-11). The ostensible ground of attack was that Jason had granted these wandering preachers a lodging; the real purpose was to fetch these out before the people, *demos*, or popular assembly, in which their condemnation would at once have been secured. Had the apostles, at the moment, been within Jason's house, they would certainly have been arrested. As, however, they were absent, Jason and certain brethren—*i.e.*, Thessalonian converts with him at the time—were apprehended and forcibly dragged before the city-rulers, or *politarchs* (see "Critical Remarks"). 3. *Their names traduced.* The absent missionaries were charged—not with being Christians, which had not yet become a crime in the Roman empire—but with being (1) revolutionaries, men who were aiming at turning, and who in some measure actually had, "turned the world upside down"; and (2) rebels—persons who acted contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying, "There is another king, one Jesus," and who therefore were, to all intents and purposes, guilty of high treason. The decrees of Cæsar were the Julian Laws, which enacted that whosoever violated the majesty of the State, or insulted the emperor by casting a stone at his image, would be counted as a traitor. As intended by its promoters, the accusation was, of course, false (compare Luke xxiii. 2; John xix. 12, 15), though it found a seeming warrant in the character of Paul's preaching at Thessalonica, which talked about Christ's kingdom and glory (1 Thess. i. 10, ii. 19, iii. 13, iv. 13-18, v. 1, 2; 2 Thess. i. 5, 7-10; ii. 1-12); in another sense than theirs it was perfectly true (see below, "Hints," etc.). 4. *Their departure rendered necessary.* The magistrates, alarmed for the peace of the city, demanded security—perhaps by sureties or by a sum of money—from Jason and his brethren, not that Paul and Silas would appear for trial, since these were forthwith sent away from the town, but that no attempt would be made against the supremacy of Rome, and that the quiet of the town would not be disturbed. As this could hardly be secured while Paul continued preaching within its precincts, it was necessary for him to depart. This, accordingly, he did, taking with him Silas and Timothy, the brethren in Thessalonica sending them off secretly, under cover of the darkness, and, no doubt, with affectionate farewells, to the out-of-the-way town of Berœa.

Learn—1. The unwearied diligence which Christ's ambassadors should exhibit. 2. The value of the Old Testament as a storehouse of proofs of Christ's Messiahship and divinity. 3. The proper subject of Christian preaching—that Jesus is the Christ. 4. The most effective style of preaching—that which is based on Scripture and aims at the heart, through the understanding. 5. The success which commonly results from faithful preaching. 6. The inveterate hostility of the evil heart towards the gospel. 7. The slanders which are often hurled against the followers of Christ.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 3. *The Death and Resurrection of Christ a Necessity.*

I. **His death necessary.**—1. To fulfil Scripture—which as God's word could not be broken (John x. 35). 2. To accomplish God's counsel—which had foreordained that Christ should die (iv. 28; 1 Peter i. 19, 20; Gal. iv. 4). 3. To atone for the sins of men—by the shedding of His blood (2 Cor. v. 21;

Col. i. 14; Heb. ix. 12). 4. To perfect His example of holiness—since in thus taking the sinner's place He gave to mankind the highest demonstration of self-sacrificing love (1 Peter ii. 21; 1 John iii. 16).

II. **His resurrection necessary.**—1. To fulfil Scripture, which had foretold His rising from the dead. 2. To demonstrate His Divine sonship, without which He could not have been a Saviour for man. 3. To attest the acceptance of His atoning work, evidence of which would have been awanting had He not risen. 4. To perfect Him as a Saviour, by showing Him to have life in Himself and all power in heaven and on earth, and therefore to be able to save to the uttermost, etc.

Ver. 6. *Turning the World upside down.*

I. **A malicious calumny.**—As used by the Thessalonian Jews about Paul and Silas, and as still directed by the unbelieving world against ministers, missionaries, and Christian people generally, who are not either—1. *political revolutionaries*, in their tenets or their actions, Christianity enjoining submission for conscience' sake and Christ's sake to the powers that be (Rom. xiii. 1); or 2. *social agitators*, their religion teaching them to follow peace with all men (Heb. xii. 14), to lead a quiet and peaceable life (1 Tim. ii. 2), and to study the things that make for peace (Rom. xiv. 19).

II. **A glorious truth.**—In a sense not intended this indictment expressed the truth concerning Paul and Silas, as it still does about Christian preachers and professors. It is the aim of these, as it was of Paul and Silas, to turn the world upside down. 1. In its *beliefs*, leading it from trust in idols to faith in God and Jesus Christ. 2. In its *actions*, turning them from sin to holiness, and from the bondage of Satan to serve the living God. 3. In its *hopes*, directing it to seek its chief good above and not below, in heaven rather than on earth.

Ver. 7. *Another King, one Jesus.*

I. **His sovereignty.**—Rests on 1. *The appointment of Heaven.* Christ is a king by Divine right (Psalm ii. 6; Acts v. 31; Phil. ii. 9-11). 2. *The affections of His subjects.* His enemies do not wish Him to reign over them, but His friends do (Luke xix. 27).

II. **His empire.** 1. Its *extent.* The universe (Matt. xxviii. 18), including the nations (Dan. vii. 14), and the Church (John i. 49; xviii. 36; 1 Cor. xv. 24; Col. i. 18), as well as angels, principalities, and powers (1 Peter iii. 22). 2. Its *character.* Spiritual, not of this world, a kingdom of truth and righteousness (John xviii. 36). 3. Its *duration.* Eternal. It shall never pass away (Rev. xi. 15) till the end of this mediatorial dispensation (1 Cor. xv. 28).

III. **His rule.** A rule 1. Of righteousness (Psalm xlv. 6; Isa. xxxii. 1). 2. Of love (Psalm cx. 3). 3. Of salvation (Zech. ix. 9).

Illustration.—"After an absence of twenty months Andrew Melville returned to Scotland and resumed his office at St. Andrew's. He was repeatedly elected Moderator of the General Assembly and Rector of the University. A remarkable instance of his plain speaking took place at Cupar, in 1596. Melville was heading a deputation to remonstrate with the king. James reminded the zealous remonstrant that he was *his* vassal. 'Sirrah!' retorted Melville, 'ye are God's silly vassal; there are two kings and two kingdoms in Scotland; there is King James, the head of this Commonwealth, and there is Christ Jesus, the King of the Church, whose subject James VI. is, and of whose kingdom he is not a king, nor a lord, nor a head, but a member.'" (*Chambers' Encyclopædia*, art. *Melville, Andrew*).

Vers. 1-9. *Paul's Visit to Thessalonica.*

I. **A time of uninterrupted labour.** 1. Providing for his own maintenance

2. Publishing the gospel. 3. Arranging for the welfare of his converts.

II. **A period of growing influence.** Extending 1. Among his own countrymen. 2. Next among the Gentiles. 3. Finally among the leading citizens.

III. **A season of spiritual joy.** Because of—1. The hearty reception which his message received; 2. The numerous converts it gained; and 3. The practical influence these exerted in the community.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 10—15.

Paul and Silas among the Berœans; or, Another Good Work interrupted.

I. **The Berœan Jews commended.**—1. *Their noble disposition.* Though Berœa, now Karra-Verria; to which secluded town the three missionaries repaired on quitting the Macedonian capital, lay only forty-five miles towards the south, yet the character of its Jewish colony compared favourably with that of the larger city. Indeed, the members of its synagogue were "less obstinate, less sophisticated," than any Paul had elsewhere found. Their minds were less contracted by prejudice, and their hearts less inspired by malice. Ready to receive the word the moment it was proved to be true, they likewise showed themselves to be profoundly interested in what the apostle preached. "The nobler conduct of the Berœan Jews consisted in their freedom from that jealousy, which made the Jews in Thessalonica and many other places, enraged when the offer of salvation was made as freely to others as to themselves" (Ramsay, *St. Paul*, etc., p. 232). 2. *Their ingenuous conduct.* Instead of angrily rejecting what was submitted to their judgment, they dealt with it as upright and honest men. (1) They accorded it a candid hearing, which is more than many nominal Christians do; they shut it not out from their understandings by preliminary prejudice against or indifference towards it, as is the habit of many moderns, but frankly and openly allowed it to fill their minds in such a way that at least they accurately comprehended its import. (2) They searched the Scriptures daily whether the doctrines propounded by Paul could be found therein, or were by fair and legitimate argument deducible therefrom. Instead of sitting in judgment on Paul's preaching, and determining its credibility by *à priori* considerations suggested by the natural reason, they humbly and respectfully accepted the Old Testament Scriptures as the ultimate court of appeal. If Paul's ideas concerning Jesus Christ could be sustained before this tribunal then all controversy concerning them was at an end; if they could not, just as decidedly and promptly must they be rejected. It was a clear and a fair issue which was thus raised. Probably Paul had the Berœans in his mind when he afterwards exhorted the Thessalonians to "prove all things and hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. v. 21). (3) They in large numbers believed, their example being followed by not a few Greek women and men, both of honourable estate—*i.e.*, belonging to the first families in the town. Sopater of Berœa (xx. 4), it may be presumed, was at this time won for Christianity. In all respects the Berœans afforded a worthy pattern for gospel hearers.

II. **The Thessalonian Jews discommended.**—1. *Their persons distinguished.* The parties referred to are expressly stated to have been the unbelieving Jews, who had stirred up the Thessalonian populace against Paul and Silas (ver. 5), and to whom, through some secret channel, intelligence had been conveyed of the extraordinary success of these evangelists at Berœa. 2. *Their motive specified.* This was, on the one hand, to hinder the progress of the gospel which they had learnt was being preached with acceptance among the Berœans, and on the other hand to "overwhelm the apostate from the law of Moses" (Lewin). Their proper ancestors were the Pharisees of Christ's day, who would neither enter into

the kingdom of heaven themselves, nor suffer those who were entering to go in (Matt. xxiii. 13), and who ultimately crucified the Prince of Life and Lord of Glory. 3. *Their behaviour described.* Having come to Berœa they stirred up and troubled the people there as at Thessalonica (ver. 8), by circulating the same calumnies and organising the same lewd fellows of the baser sort against the missionaries. Their hatred of both Paul and his gospel unsleepingly pursued him henceforth from city to city. 4. *Their success recorded.* Not directly, but indirectly, by the circumstance narrated that Paul's friends deemed it prudent to hasten his departure from the city, as the brethren in Thessalonica had counselled his withdrawal from that city (ver. 10), and as formerly other friends had hurried him from Jerusalem (ix. 30). He had been anxious to return to his converts in Thessalonica (1 Thess. ii. 18), but Satan in the person of these persecuting Jews from Thessalonica had hindered. The path of providence for him lay southwards to Athens. Immediately therefore the brethren conveyed him as far as the seaport of Dium, sixteen miles from Berœa, and shipped him for the Greek metropolis. Some of them even accompanied him all the way to the Achaian capital, because Silas and Timotheus were left behind in Berœa to continue the work which he had so auspiciously begun, to preach the gospel and to organise the Church, while he, the apostle, owing either to his weak eyesight or to some other bodily infirmity, was not fit to travel alone.

Learn.—1. The duty of hearing the gospel with an open mind. 2. The propriety of proving all things and holding fast that which is good. 3. The suitability of the gospel for persons of the highest estate. 4. The inveterate hostility of the carnal heart against what is good. 5. The fickleness of crowds. 6. The wisdom of attempting to preserve useful lives. 7. The dependence of most men upon the services of others.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 11. *True Nobility of Mind.* Evinced in three things.

I. **Readiness to receive the word.**

II. **Diligence in searching the Scriptures.**

III. **Faith in the person of Jesus of whom the word speaks.**

Ver. 11. *The Elements of a Truly Noble Spirit.*—1. Attention to religion. It is the highest kind of truth and the grandest object of pursuit. 2. Candour in religious inquiry. Prejudices are bars to fair dealing. Idols. Cobwebs. 3. The exercise of the right of private judgment. It is mean to surrender this right to a Pope or a priest. It is not less mean to surrender it to great thinkers and great dreamers. 4. Deference to the authority of Scripture. Man never occupies a more noble position than when, like a little child, he submits his own feeble faculties to the guidance of the oracles of Him that cannot lie. It is not worship of the Book, but of the infallible Author of the Book.—*G. Brooks.*

Searching the Scriptures.

I. **A blessed right.**—1. Conferred by God. 2. Due to man. 3. Not to be withheld by either State or Church.

II. **A holy duty.**—1. Commanded by God. 2. To be faithfully performed. 3. Not to be neglected without sin.

III. **An inestimable privilege.**—Considering, 1. Whose word the scriptures is. 2. The benefit resulting therefrom. 3. The unworthiness of its recipients.

IV. **A rare art.**—To be practised—1. Daily. 2. With intelligence. 3. In faith. 4. Diligently. 5. With prayer.

Vers. 11, 12. *The Noble Berœans.*

I. **Heard the gospel.**—1. With devout attention. 2. With impartial candour. 3. With careful investigation.

II. **Experienced its effects.**—1. They believed its statements. 2. They enjoyed its privileges. 3. They obeyed its precepts.

III. **Exhibited their own nobility.**—1. Adopted a noble conduct. 2. Displayed a noble spirit. 3. Presented a noble example.

Docility of Temper in Relation to the Truth.

I. **The teaching, the recognition of which the writer commends.**—1. *The "word,"* more fully expounded in the opening verses of the chapter, *contained two propositions*—viz., (1) that the Messiah, when He appeared in accordance with the Scriptures, was to appear as a suffering Messiah; and (2) that the Jesus whose history and crucifixion Paul was then recounting, was, in fact, that Messiah. This a position which he only would take, who was sure of his ground, and who felt that he could make it good by the most indubitable proofs. 2. The truth of this word the apostle established *by an appeal to the highest authority*—viz., the Scriptures, "the Old Testament documents in whose inspiration he and his Jewish hearers equally believed." "By a careful comparison of your inspired Scriptures with the veritable facts of which our whole nation is cognisant," he practically said, "we have found, beyond all doubtful disputation, that all that was foreshown, typified, and promised, concerning the Messiah of our ancient hope, has met its fulfilment in the person and history of this Jesus whom I preach unto you."

II. **The spirit in which this teaching was received.**—"With all readiness of mind." Here is—1. *The docility of temper which belongs to the right reception of truth.* "The Berœans were in that balanced equipoise of mind which, equally removed from a listless indifference on the one hand and a self-complete and haughty presumption on the other, left them at liberty to listen with attention to the apostle's reasoning, to think dispassionately on it, and, finally, to draw logically their own conclusions from it. 2. *The fearless honesty and manly independence of spirit which ought to mark inquirers after the truth.* "The great question with which the Berœans charged themselves was, whether those things were true as the apostle put them, whether they were founded on fact, and were therefore accessible to the ordinary methods of moral conviction. It was not whether they were agreeable or in harmony with their preconceptions, or with their beliefs and customs; whether they were ably reasoned by the apostle or ill; but whether they were true."

III. **The result which followed on this procedure**—"Therefore many of them believed." This result was—1. *The logical consequence of the antecedent procedure.* "Faith, waiting on the light of evidence, is met by the evidence of light, and following that, is led into the liberty of truth; as it always will be in the things of God. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." Will to do first; know afterwards. Obedience is the spirit in which to seek. Knowledge its after product. 2. *The outcome of a mental process in which several things were combined.* "There was, in the case of these Berœans, first of all a clear presentation of the truth to the mind; there was then the actual personal contact of the mind, of the individual thought of the hearer, with the truth, and a process of reflection upon it. There was a readiness to surrender all old convictions to the authority of evidence, at whatever cost of personal state or attainment, and following directly in the course of this ingenuousness of intent and act, the light came, and they believed."

Learn.—1. The fitness of the gospel to deal with dissimilar classes of men. 2. The great impediment in the way of a man's salvation—which is not in the gospel or in the ministration of the gospel, but in the indifference of the human heart to religion.—*John Burton.*

Ver. 13. *Stirring up the Multitudes.*

I. **Of a true sort.**—1. By the gospel. 2. Of noble minds. 3. To the exercise of faith. 4. For the warfare of the Spirit.

II. **Of a false sort.**—1. By wicked men. 2. Of lewd fellows. 3. To resist the truth. 4. For the persecution of the saints.

Ver. 14. *Silas and Timothy in Berœa.* —"The question naturally occurs, Why did Paul go on from Berœa alone, leaving Silas and Timothy behind, and yet send orders immediately on reaching Athens that they were to join him with all speed? There seems at first sight some inconsistency here. But again comparison between Acts and Thessalonians solves the difficulty: Paul was eager 'once and again' to return to Thessalonica, and was waiting for news that the impediment placed in his way was removed. Silas and Timothy remained to receive the news (perhaps about the attitude of the new magistrates) and to bring it on to Paul. But they could not bring it on to him until they received his message from Athens."—Ramsay, *St. Paul, etc.*, p. 234.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 16—21.

Paul at Athens; or, Alone in a Heathen City.

I. **Waiting for Silas and Timothy.**—1. *Alone.* These two friends having been left behind in Macedonia, Silas in Berœa, and perhaps Timothy in Thessalonica, to carry forward the spiritual movement which had there been initiated when those who had brought the apostle as far as to Athens had departed, he naturally began to realise the isolation of his position as a stranger in a large heathen city. Nor is it likely that the brilliant scenes on which he gazed in that fair metropolis of the ancient world did much to relieve his depression. Besides, largely on account of bodily weakness, the apostle may have felt himself in need of friendly sympathy and assistance in order to effective working in Athens. Hence, on sending back his conductors to Berœa, he deemed it prudent to entrust them with instructions for both Silas and Timothy to rejoin him with all speed. Doubtless he expected to await their arrival at Athens; but as the turn of events once more constrained him to leave the Achaian capital sooner than he had anticipated, it was not till he had reached Corinth that his esteemed colleagues overtook him (xviii. 5).—Silas coming from Berœa, and Timothy from Thessalonica, to which city (as above conjectured, though see "Critical Remarks," and "Hints" on ver. 14) he had been despatched from Berœa, instead of Paul (1 Thess. ii. 18). Meanwhile the apostle found himself in Athens alone (1 Thess. iii. 1). Yet, 2. *Not alone.* Like his glorified Master, who, in the days of His flesh, when forsaken by His disciples, affirmed that though alone He was yet not alone, because the Father was with Him (John xvi. 32), the apostle in his solitude enjoyed first the companionship of that gracious Lord on whose business he had come to Athens, who had said, "Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 20), and whose "comforts," it need not be doubted, in that season of "thoughtfulness" delighted his soul (Psalm xciv. 19). Then, like him who said he was "never less alone than when alone," the apostle had the fellowship of his own thoughts, which, if they had much to depress, were fitted also in no small measure to cheer. The recollection of the toils and sufferings he had passed through since entering on his lifework of preaching the gospel to the heathen could hardly fail at times to cast "the pale hue of sickly thought" upon his spirit, though even that could not daunt his heroic soul. But, on the other hand, the remembrance of how he had been sustained throughout his arduous warfare, and of how astonishingly the work of the Lord had prospered in his hand,

would more than counterbalance his depressing reminiscences. Lastly, he might have found, though it is doubtful if he did, in the fresh scenes upon which he gazed in that brilliant capital, the means of relieving the tedium of his lonely hours. "It was at Athens," writes Farrar, "that the human form, sedulously trained, attained its most exquisite and winning beauty; there that human freedom put forth its most splendid power; there that human eloquence displayed its utmost subtlety and grace; there that art reached to its most consummate perfection; there that poetry uttered alike its sweetest and its sublimest strains; there that philosophy attained to the most perfect music of human expression, its loftiest and deepest thoughts"; but it may be questioned if these considerations affected Paul with the like enthusiasm they inspire in the breast of modern travellers.

II. **Surveying the Athenian city.**—1. *The spectacle he beheld.* That which arrested Paul's attention, presumably from the moment of his landing at the harbour of Piræus, as he walked up slowly between the ruins of the Long Walls towards the shining city, and while he, later on, sauntered through its streets and lingered in its market-place, was not its geographical situation, or its architectural beauty, or its air of culture and refinement, but its religious condition. Like Babylon of old, which was "a land of graven images," and whose people were "mad upon idols" (Jer. l. 38), the Athens of Paul's day was "wholly given over to idolatry," literally stuffed full of idols. "A person could hardly take his position at any point in ancient Athens where the eye did not range over temples and statues of the gods almost without number" (Hackett). Petronius (*Satires*, 17) was wont to say that it was easier to find a god at Athens than a man; while, according to Pausanias, Athens had more images than all the rest of Greece put together. Some of the streets were so crowded with those who sold idols that it was almost impossible to make one's way through them. "Every god in Olympus found a place in the Agora; and as if the imagination of the Attic mind knew no bounds in this direction, abstractions were deified and publicly honoured. Altars were erected to fame, to modesty, to energy, to persuasion, to pity" (Conybeare and Howson, i. 328, 329). Finally, lest any divinity should be overlooked, the inhabitants had erected an altar with this inscription, "To the unknown God." It is of course objected that ancient writers, such as Pausanias and Philostratus, only knew of altars "to unknown gods" not "to an, or the, unknown god"; but neither can their ignorance be allowed to invalidate the testimony of Paul, nor can it be incontrovertibly demonstrated that the "altars of unknown gods mentioned by the above writers referred to a plurality of deities, and not to a plurality of altars; while, even if the former supposition be accepted as correct, it does not follow that Paul may not have observed one inscribed as Luke reports. There is even a "great probability that by 'the unknown God' was actually meant Jehovah" (Lewin). 2. *The feeling it aroused.* "His spirit was stirred within him," provoked or filled with indignation; (1) at the profanation of the holy name of God implied, in the very existence of an idol; (2) at the prostitution of manhood exhibited in the worship of a graven image; (3) at the unspeakable source of moral corruption opened in the degrading rites by which such divinities were honoured; and (4) at the terrible display of Satanic power given in the subjection of a whole city to such a caricature of religion as idolatry really was. Nor would the apostle's indignation be lessened, but immensely heightened, by the fact that in Jerusalem he had never witnessed an idol.

II. **Disputing with its inhabitants.**—1. *Where, and when?* (1) In the synagogue on the Sabbath. Although "no trace of any building which could have been a synagogue has been found at Athens" (Farrar), there is no ground for calling in question the accuracy of Luke's statement that one existed there in

Paul's day, and that Paul, according to his wont (ver. 2), entered it on the Sabbath. (2) In the market-place on the other days of the week. Located at the foot of the Acropolis and the Areopagus, the market-place of Athens was a busy scene. "Around were porticoes fitted up as bazaars for the sale of a thousand articles of commerce; here and there were circular sheds, one for the sale of slaves, another of provisions. In one place was the flesh market, in another the horse market; here the mart of books, there the stalls of fruit and flowers" (Lewin). 2. *With whom, and about what?* (1) On the Sabbath day or days in the synagogue with the Jews and devout persons or proselytes there assembled; and the fact that there were Jews and proselytes in the Greek capital shows that even in that idolatrous city the name of Jehovah could not have been utterly unknown. On the week days in the market-place with those encountered there, amongst whom mingled representatives of the various schools of philosophy for which Athens was celebrated (see below). (2) With the former his theme of disputation would be the Messiahship of Jesus, which, as on other occasions, he would endeavour to establish from the Scriptures (vers. 2, 3); with the latter he would reason not about philosophy or science, politics or trade, but about religion and theology, and, in particular, about the true knowledge of God and about the folly of idol worship, about the true wisdom which descended from heaven, and about the resurrection and eternal life.

IV. **Confronting the philosophers.**—1. *Their designations.* (1) Epicureans. The founder of this sect, Epicurus, born 342 B.C.—*i.e.*, six years after the death of Plato, in his thirty-sixth year—opened at Athens a philosophical school, over which he presided till his death in B.C. 270. The principal tenets of his philosophy were, that the *summum bonum* of human life consisted in happiness or pleasure; that this happiness was to be found in sobriety and temperance, contentment with little and a life generally in accord with nature; that death was not an evil to be feared; that man has no moral destiny; and that the gods which in his system were more phantoms than gods, took no manner of interest in mundane affairs (Schwegler's *History of Philosophy*, pp. 131-134). With his followers happiness became convertible with sensual pleasures (1 Cor. xv. 32), belief in inert and shadowy divinities degenerated into practical atheism, and man's soul, if he had one, was nothing but a body composed of finer atoms than the fleshly tabernacle in which it was enshrined. They were thus the Greek Sadducees of their day. (2) The Stoics. Followers of Zeno, who was born in Citium, a town of Cyprus about 340 B.C., and opened a school in an Athenian arcade (Stoa, whence the name Stoic), these were virtually pantheists, who believed that the world was God's body, and God the world's soul, that the highest law of human action was to live in accordance with nature, and that virtue, apart from all personal ends, was man's sole good; but in point of fact they were commonly nothing better than fatalists, who boasted of their indifference to the world, and affected an ideal of morals which in practice became unreal (Schwegler, pp. 123-131). 2. *Their exclamations.* (1) What will this babbler say? Better, what might this seed picker, this idle prater mean? *I.e.*, if he has any meaning. These depositaries of the world's wisdom looked upon the apostle as only another specimen of those market-place loungers and gossips who picked up scraps of information and retailed them to others, and whom the quick-witted humorists of the day likened to a sparrow, rook, or other bird which hopped about the streets and squares of the city picking up crumbs (see "Critical Remarks" on ver. 18). (2) He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods (or daemons)—the very charge preferred against Socrates (Xen., *Mem.*, i. 1, § 1)—"because," Luke explains, "he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection." This, the reason advanced by the philosophers for their exclamation, Luke must have learnt from Paul himself. The philosophers, it has been thought, mistook

Anastasis for the name of a second divinity in addition to Jesus (Chrysostom, Theophylact, Spence, Plumptre, Holtzmann); but it is more likely that the gods referred to were the God of the Hebrews, the true God and His Son Jesus Christ (Alford, Hackett, De Wette). 3. *Their interrogations.* (1) Where these were put. At the Areopagus or Mars' Hill, "where the most awful court of judicature had sat from time immemorial, to pass sentence on the greatest criminals, and to decide the most solemn questions connected with religion. The judges sat in the open air upon seats hewn out in the rock, on a platform ascended by a flight of stones immediately from the 'Agora'" (Conybeare and Howson, i. 346). (2) How these were put! "May we know what this new doctrine or teaching is that is spoken by thee?" "We would know what these things mean." The questions do not indicate that Paul was formally arraigned, but merely that he was called upon to furnish an explanation of the theological novelties to which they had listened—which, all things considered, was a fair enough demand. The words in which their demand was couched do not resemble those in which a prisoner at the bar is addressed by a judge; nor does the speech, made by Paul in reply, in the least degree resemble a defence. (3) Why these were put. Partly out of a desire for information—the teaching sounded strange to their ears—but chiefly out of idle curiosity, which was a notorious characteristic of the Athenians (see, however, "Critical Remarks" and "Hints" on ver. 19).

Learn.—1. The essential loneliness of God's people in a sinful world. 2. The earnest activity which Christ's servants should everywhere exhibit. 3. The natural incapacity of the human heart to comprehend the gospel. 4. The two principal obstacles to the reception of the truth, pleasure and pride. 5. The comparative frivolity of all earthly engagements in comparison with the business of salvation.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 16. *Athens: A Microcosmus.*—A city—

I. **Of degraded idolaters**, who worshipped the creature more than the Creator.

II. **Of ignorant philosophers,** who professed themselves to be wise, but were all the while fools.

III. **Of arrant triflers,** who had no just conception of the seriousness of life.

Ver. 18. *Strange Gods.*

I. **Senseless images.**—Dumb idols such as were and are worshipped by the heathen.

II. **Local divinities.**—Such deities as were supposed to be restricted to particular lands and peoples—*e.g.*, the gods of the Egyptians, Babylonians, Phœnicians, etc.

III. **Impersonal abstractions.**—Such as are worshipped by philosophers and others, both ancient and modern; as *e.g.*, the All, the Great Unknown, the Power behind the Visible, etc.

IV. **Material possessions.**—Such as are worshipped under the names of Mammon, Wealth, Riches, by all classes of society.

Jesus and the Resurrection. Jesus—

I. The efficient cause (John v. 25).

II. The personal principle (John xi. 25).

III. The archetypal pattern (Phil. iii. 21).

IV. The first fruits of the Resurrection (1 Cor. xv. 23).

The Athenian Philosophers and their Relation to Christianity.

I. **The Epicureans.**—"The Epicurean system was essentially materialistic. The senses formed the only source of knowledge. The world was traced back to atoms, out of whose accidental concurrence all things were formed.

Even the soul was said to be only a body of ethereal and fiery substance fashioned out of fine atoms. Hence the immortality of the soul was a delusion, the freedom of the will a deception, and the gods superfluous; only quite illogically Epicurus allowed them to exist, but denied them all world-government and participation in the fortunes of men. The highest good of man, placed as he is in this senseless and heartless existence, is pleasure; wisdom to attain to the highest measure of this in life; and virtue, the conduct leading to this aim."

II. **The Stoics.**—"The Stoical system, on the other hand, was essentially pantheistic. It distinguished in the world—all, matter and force. It named the latter in relation to the whole, it is true, Reason, Providence, Godhead, but thought of it only as not self-existent, impersonal, and therefore also not truly spiritual essence, as an all-forming and all-animating fire which brings forth the creatures and the worlds and again destroys them. The human soul, a spark of this impersonal godhead, and consequently without immortality, has, according to the Stoics, its highest good in virtue; but virtue is a life in accordance with nature, the agreement of the human will with the law of the world, consequently above all resignation in presence of world-governing fate."

III. **Their relation to Christianity.**—"According to these doctrines of the Epicureans and Stoics, which present numerous resemblances to modern un-Christian modes of thinking, it is conceivable that both, notwithstanding their different views of the world and of morals, should have agreed, with reference to the gospel of the apostle, to see in it a new Oriental enthusiasm desirous of being admitted to Greek philosophical rank and especially in the resurrection message, a fable to be laughed at."—*Beyschlag.*

Ver. 19. *The Teaching of Christianity at Once, Old and New.*

I. **Old,** as the fall of man, being contained in the first promise; *New*, as the latest need of man, being able to adapt itself to the ever-varying phases of human civilisation.

II. **Old,** as the outgrowth of the Hebrew dispensation; *New*, as the substance of a fresh revelation.

III. **Old,** as being the subject of prophetic anticipation; *New*, as being the burden of a specially sent teacher, Christ.

IV. **Old,** as gathering up and crowning all God's utterances in the past; *New*, as exhibiting all that is required to meet the exigencies of the future.

The New Doctrines of Christianity.

1. **The unity of God.**—Though not new to the Jews it was new to the Athenians.

II. **The brotherhood of man.**—Even to the Jews as well as Greeks this was an unheard-of idea.

III. **The resurrection of Christ.**—To both Jew and Greek this was a stumbling block and a strange thing.

IV. **The reality of a judgment day.**—The conception of such a general assize had never before entered into the world's mind.

V. **The duty of repentance.**—Men may previously have admitted the necessity in certain cases of reformation. Repentance in the sense of godly sorrow for sin against God was a novelty.

Unto the Areopagus; or, *In the University at Athens.*—"Two questions have to be answered in regard to the scene that follows: Why was Paul taken before the council? and what were the intentions of the philosophers in taking him there? 1. It is clear that Paul appeared to the philosophers as one of the many ambitious teachers who came to Athens hoping to find fame and fortune at the great centre of education. Now, certain powers were vested in the council of Areopagus to appoint or invite lecturers at Athens, and to exercise some control over the lecturers in the interests of public

order and morality. There is an almost complete lack of evidence what were the advantages and the legal rights of a lecturer thus appointed, and to what extent or in what way a strange teacher could find freedom to lecture in Athens. There existed something in the way of privileges vested in the recognised lecturers; for the fact that Cicero induced the Areopagus to pass a decree inviting Cratippus, the peripatetic philosopher, to become a lecturer in Athens, implies that some advantage was thereby secured to him. There certainly also existed much freedom for foreigners to become lecturers in Athens, for the great majority of the Athenian professors and lecturers were foreign. The scene described in vers. 18-34 seems to prove that the recognised lecturers could take a strange lecturer before the Areopagus, and require him to give an account of his teaching, and pass a test as to its character. 2. When they (the philosophers) took him to the court to satisfy the supreme university tribunal of his qualifications, they probably entertained some hope that he would be overawed before that august body, or that his teaching might not pass muster, as being of an unsettling tendency (for no body is so conservative as a university court)."—Ramsay, *St. Paul, the Traveller and the Roman Citizen*, pp. 246, 247.

Ver. 21, with Rev. xxi. 5. *The Idolatry of Novelty.*—It cannot be denied that there is in all lives—probably not least in the busiest and the loftiest—an element of dulness. This is only to say that there must be routine in every life which is either active or useful. The Athenians of the first text were not mere gossips or newsmongers. The first sound of the words does them some injustice. Their idolatry of novelty by no means exhausted itself in inventing or embellishing or retailing scandalous or mischievous stories against the great men of their city, or against humbler neighbours "dwelling securely by them." Their treatment of St. Paul shows this. He was not a man of sufficient notoriety or sufficient importance to attract the attention of the mere tattler or scandalmonger. It was because he raised grave questions, going to the very root of the national and individual life—questions of "Jesus" and of "resurrection"—that these idolaters of novelty were attracted. The idolatry of novelty has a wide range. There are those amongst us whose idolatry of novelty never rises to the level of the Athenian. In vain for them the preaching in ten thousand churches of Jesus and the resurrection, even could that doctrine be for once new. Enough for them the last new fashion in dress, the last new horror in the police-courts, the last new tragedy or comedy in the newspapers, the last new mystery or the last new misadventure in society. This sort of idolatry of novelty, this base, vulgar, grovelling curiosity, is of no value whatever beyond the evidence which it affords, more than half by negatives, to the instinct which is in all of us that this is not our rest. It may be enough to say of this worship of novelty, that, as often as not, perhaps (if we knew all) in nine cases out of ten, it is but another name for the worship of falsehood. No trouble whatever is taken by the caterers for this table to make sure whether its supply has anything more in it than a germ, if even a germ, of fact however worthless. But in itself, even where "news" and "lies" are not synonyms, how paltry, how unworthy of an immortal being is this form of the idolatry of novelty! Let us try it in another and higher region—the region of art and literature. There the idolatry of novelty becomes the worship of originality. And need I say what the effort to be original becomes in the hands of the commonplace? Need I speak of the exaggerations, the contortions, the burlesques of the would-be originalities of landscape and portrait-painting? Alas! the rage for novelty does not exhaust itself in the province of art.

It is the condition of success in the historian, to invert received opinions of character, and to rewrite history itself into contraries. But the mischief stops not even here. The preacher himself is tried by his originality. A cruel trial this for the weak, vain man, who is miserable without an audience, and must purchase it at any cost. Yet how preferable any dulness to this sort of brilliancy! The subject widens before us, and we must lose no more time in bringing it to its practical application in the one higher province still. The Athenian development of the worship of novelty will be our guide here. We can scarcely wonder that the fanciful mythology of the earlier days of that wonderful people should have sunk, before the Christian era, from a beautiful though insubstantial faith into a cold and half-conscious hypocrisy—a miserable form for the many, a political expedient for the few. Philosophers and statesmen had long ceased to worship. But the former dreamed and the latter acted in agreement thus far—that a thorough iconoclasm would be dangerous, if not to the welfare of the people, at least to the tranquillity of the State. That altar of which St. Paul availed himself with such skill in his address on Mars' Hill, "To the Unknown God," was probably the only one which had any honest votary in the then population of Athens. Those Athenians might well have an open ear for the preacher of a new divinity. This was but to confess, what was no secret by this time, that their anonymous altar was still standing, and that they waited to worship till it had a name. For them the idolatry of novelty was their hope and their religion. Alas, brethren, that we should have come round again to those days! After all these centuries we too are left with an anonymous altar, and the worship of English hearts is offered once again at the shrine of an unknown, an avowedly unknowable, God. There is not an arrival of a so-called new apostle, there is not an importation of a so-called new divinity, for which this modern Athens has not at least one of its ears open. There is no pretence and no burlesque of a new commerce with the invisible, which cannot hold its *séances* in darkened chambers with a certainty of a sufficient gathering and a great probability of a crowd of awe-struck questioners outside. We are told that some one has dared to say, within the Christian Church of London, that Buddha himself is second only (if second) to Jesus Christ in morals, and superior to Christ Himself in this, that he never claimed for himself divinity. The idolatry of novelty can no further go—at least not while "he who now letteth will let"—but soon he shall be taken out of the way, and then shall "the lawless one" be revealed—to be unmasked and consumed in his season by the One mightier. We will turn now to the other and better half of the subject, and try to show, in a few concluding sentences, how considerately, how mercifully, our Lord Jesus Christ, and His Heavenly Father our Lord God, enters into that natural want of something new, which lies at the root of the worship of the ugly idol which we have sought to characterise in this sermon. Do you suppose that Jesus Christ, God in Christ, is unaware, as of the many woes and crimes of earth, so of this particular feature of it, and specially of this earth of England and London—its flatness, its staleness, its dulness, its monotony, as it is felt certainly in all but its ten thousand upper lives—and what are they among the teeming multitudes which make up the population of either? What is the second text of this morning? "He that sitteth upon the throne saith, Behold, I make all things new." The very feeling, the very sense of monotony which has made impatient man set up this paltry idol of novelty—is here provided for by God Himself saying, "Behold I make (not a few things, but) all things new." Yes, you will say—somewhere and some day, in that visionary region, in that far-off unrealisable world, of which St. John's

Apocalypse tells. Well—despise not the world to come. Think not scorn of that pleasant land. But let me tell you of a nearer "making all things new." Let me tell you of it first in a word of St. John, and then finally in a word of St. Paul. There are two ways of fulfilling the promise of renovation. One is by the renewal of the thing itself—the other is by the renewal of the eye that views it. If the one is the promise of the text, the other is the promise elsewhere alike of St. John and St. Paul.—*Dean Vaughan.*

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 22—34.

Paul on Areopagus; or, Preaching to Philosophers.

I. **The courteous exordium.**—1. *A respectful salutation.* "Ye men of Athens," the style of address with which their renowned orators had made them familiar. Had Paul been defending himself before judges he would probably have said: ἄνδρες δικασταί. 2. *A complimentary ascription.* Possible that he characterised his hearers as "too" or "somewhat superstitious" (R.V.), but more likely that he called them more religious—*i.e.*, more occupied with and devoted to religion than others (see "Critical Remarks"). As a mere matter of good taste he could hardly have expected to gain their ears by reproaching them as superstitious; the course of his subsequent remarks shows he regarded their devotion to religion as something in itself good, which only needed to be instructed and guided to become better. 3. *A pleasing intimation.* That he had been wandering through their streets, closely observing, not their devotions (A.V.), but the objects of their devotion, such as their temples, images, altars, and the like, and in particular that he had noted one altar more remarkable than the rest, on account of its inscription, which ran: "To the (or to an) unknown God" (see "Critical Remarks"). 4. *A startling declaration.* That he, whom they had just denounced as a babbler, was prepared to acquaint them with the true personality and character of that divinity they were ignorantly worshipping. What with all their wisdom they had not been able to attain to (1 Cor. i. 21), a just knowledge of the true God, he was ready and willing to impart. By no means a modest pretension; yet splendidly fulfilled.

II. **The weighty sermon.**—Three main divisions. 1. *The relation of God to the world* (vers. 24, 25). The Supreme Being was exhibited in five different aspects. (1) As Creator of the world. A truth denied by both sects of the philosophers who listened to the apostle, but frequently affirmed by the apostle (xiv. 15; Rom. xi. 36; 2 Cor. v. 18; Eph. iii. 9), and other New-Testament writers (Heb. iii. 4; Rev. iv. 11). (2) As Lord of heaven and earth (Matt. xi. 25; compare Gen. xiii. 22); the absolute ownership of the universe flowing of necessity from God's relationship to it as Creator (Rom. x. 12). (3) As filling immensity with His presence, and therefore as incapable of being confined like idols in temples made with hands (compare vii. 49). That the heathen failed to distinguish between the Deity and His image, see xix. 26. (4) As self-sufficient and therefore as independent of His creatures. Incapable of being profited by any service that might be rendered by man's hands, God was equally removed above the necessity of requiring such service (Psalm l. 9-13). In both respects He transcended the divinities they worshipped, who not only inhabited and were confined to their shrines, but were supposed to be in need of and to be benefited by the sacrifices laid upon their altars (compare *Iliad*, i. 37). (5) As the source of life and blessing to His dependent creatures. "Seeing He Himself giveth to all life and for the continuance of the same breath, and all things they require (compare xiv. 17; Psalm civ. 14, 15, 27, 28, cxlv. 15, 16; Matt. v. 45; 1 Tim. vi. 17). 2. *The dignity and destiny of man* (vers. 26-29). (1) As forming a divinely constituted brotherhood, all nations, or every nation, of men having been made of one blood, or simply of one

(stock, or blood must be supplied), for to dwell on all the face of the earth. A magnificent conception, abundantly asserted in Scripture (Gen. i. 26, 27; Deut. iv. 32; Psalm lxxxvi. 9; Mal. ii. 10), and confirmed by the best science, which must have struck at the pride of Paul's hearers, who regarded themselves as the flower and cream of humanity, while all others were designed to be their slaves (Aristotle, *Pol.*, I. ii. 6); which still opposes itself like an immovable rock or impregnable fortress to all modern theories which deny man's descent from a common stock, and on the ground of that (supposed) fact to establish the original, radical, and essential superiority of civilised to savage, or of white to black races; and which warrants the hope and expectation that a day is yet coming when this transcendent truth will receive universal recognition, and when the Scottish poet's dream will be realised—

> "When man to man the world o'er,
> Shall brithers be and a' that."—*Burns.*

(2) As guided in all their movements by an invisible hand. That of Him who had called them into existence, and who, so far from being indifferent to and unobservant of their fortunes, had "determined their appointed seasons and the bounds of their habitations"—*i.e.*, fixed the periods of their rising, flourishing, and decaying, "and the limits of their territory" (Deut. xxxii. 8), beyond which they could no more pass than could the waves of the sea overstep the sand barriers by which their fury was restrained (compare Job xii. 23). The truth thus announced was well adapted to humble his hearers, whose city's greatness had already passed its meridian, and whose territory was year by year becoming narrower, and to remind them of the wisdom of listening to a message from Him who so manifestly held them in His hand (Psalm xxii. 28; Dan. iv. 25). (3) As designed to come to a true knowledge of God and of their obligations to Him. That they did not possess such a knowledge originally, in themselves and on the platform of creation (1 Thess. iv. 5), was a clear testimony to their fallen and sinful character and condition (1 Cor. i. 21). Nevertheless it was God's will and desire that they should grope about after Him, like blind men feeling their way in the dark, in the hope of finding Him who was not beyond their reach by being at a distance from them, but was near to every individual composing them,

> "Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet."—*Tennyson.*

for "in Him we live and move and have our being," or live and move (or are moving), and are—*i.e.*, every moment depend on Him for life, activity, and being. And that this was no self-invented dogma, but an old and acknowledged truth which their own gifted seers had discerned, he demonstrated to them by citing in its support the similar sentiment of one of their own poets (Aratus, a Cilician poet, B.C. 270), who wrote: "For we are also His offspring," clearly showing he regarded man as dependent on the Deity for life, activity, and existence. (4) As convicted of unreason in thinking that the Godhead could be like to gold, or silver, or stone graven by art and device of man. The argument was irresistible. Was man the offspring of God? Then God could in no sense be the handiwork of man. Was man God's child? Then God must at least be possessed of a nature resembling man's, and if like man's then unlike that of molten or graven idols. 3. *The doctrine of Christ and His salvation* (vers. 30, 31). This third main division of discourse, entered upon, was not finished. So far as it had proceeded it had announced four things. (1) A new dispensation on the part of God. Whereas God had winked at or overlooked the past ages of ignorance, left them alone without either gracious revelation or stern rebuke, suffering men to go their own ways (xiv. 16), He had now interposed with a word of command that men everywhere should repent—*i.e.*, change their minds, about God and His holiness,

about themselves and their sin, about the present world and the next. (2) A new duty published to men, not in one nation, but in all nations to obey this command instantly, thoroughly, permanently, honestly, cheerfully. (3) A new argument for the enforcement of that duty. Binding upon men everywhere and at all times without further reasoning, this duty was rendered the more imperative and urgent by the fact of an impending judgment day, on which all would be arraigned at God's tribunal and reckoned with for their performance or neglect of that duty, the judge already appointed being that man whom he had come to proclaim. (4) A new certificate provided both for the fact of the judgment day, and for the certainty that Christ would be the judge—viz., His resurrection from the dead. If that was true, as Paul was prepared to show, then Christ could be no other than God's Son, and if God's Son sent into the world to redeem men, it was inconceivable that there should not be a day of judgment, at, and on which, He would adjudicate upon the final destinies of men, according as they had repented and believed the gospel, or died in unbelief and sin.

III. **The disappointing result.** 1. *The preacher was abruptly interrupted.* Never before had either Stoic or Epicurean listened to sentiments so sublime, or to an orator more worthy of attention. Yet at the mention of the resurrection of the dead—a doctrine which both denied—they felt it impossible to longer remain silent or allow the speaker to proceed. Did they do so, they might seem to grant that such a thing as a resurrection was possible, while according to their philosophy it was not; if, however, on the other hand, it was possible, then the whole contention of the speaker would require to be admitted. 2. *The teaching of the sermon was variously regarded.* (1) Some mocked. At the resurrection chiefly, but also at the other tenets of Paul's gospel concerning God and concerning man. "The Greek was more irrational than the savage, when religion was philosophised about. He laughed when he heard of the resurrection of the dead, for the doctrine was not a fashionable one; but when he was told that our souls would one day pass into cows, oxen, donkeys, etc., he was less opposed to it, for this idea did not seem so new or strange to him, the Pythagoreans having taught it" (Michaelis). (2) Some procrastinated—deferred coming to a conclusion on the momentous themes which had been submitted to their judgment—saying like Felix (xxiv. 25), "We will hear thee concerning this yet again." (3) Some believed—credited Paul's teaching as true, and embraced with their hearts the gospel it contained. Among those who thus received the truth, besides others unnamed, were Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, of neither of whom is anything certain known, though Eusebius (*Hist.*, iii. 4, iv. 23), and other writers report that Dionysius afterwards became bishop of the Church at Athens, and that Damaris was his wife (Chrysostom), for neither of which statements however exist solid grounds of belief. 3. *The preacher was obliged shortly after to leave the city.* How long he stayed within its precincts after the incident just recorded is unknown; only this much can be told as certain, that no tidings survive of his having ever again preached the gospel in or visited the brilliant but idol-loving metropolis of Greece. That none of his epistles speak of a Christian Church at Athens does not prove that his work there was absolutely fruitless, or that he did not leave behind him a believing community.

Learn.—1. That advocates of Christianity should both maintain a respectful bearing towards and cherish a charitable view of those whose confidence and conversion they seek. 2. That preachers of the gospel cannot take too comprehensive a view or firm a grasp of the truth they recommend to others. 3. That the ablest and most eloquent discourse will not succeed in converting all who listen to it.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 22. *Superstition.*—Define the meaning of the original adjective, and then state the sense in which the word "superstition" is employed now. It is the preponderance of terror in the religious life.

I. **Its causes.**—1. Erroneous views of the attributes of God. 2. Ignorance of the nature of personal religion. 3. Crude conceptions of the works and laws of nature. 4. A desire to have systems of religion and worship of human invention.

II. **Its forms.**—1. Idolatry. 2. Corrupted Christianity. 3. Pietistic errors. 4. Popular illusions. Witchcraft, astrology, fortune-telling, warnings.

III. **Its evils.**—1. It degrades human nature. 2. It saps the foundations of morality. 3. It lessens the sum of human enjoyment. 4. It hinders the progress of the Gospel.—*G. Brooks.*

Vers. 22-31. *The Areopagus Oration; or, a Sermon for Philosophers.*

I. **The doctrines it proclaimed.**—1. The personality, self-existence, omnipotence, and unity of God. 2. The reality, universality, and efficiency of Divine providence. 3. The spirituality and non-externality of Divine worship. 4. The unity and brotherhood of the human race. 5. The possibility of a true natural religion. 6. The dignity and dependence of man. 7. The absurdity of idols and idol-worship. 8. The essential graciousness of God's dealings with the race of man. 9. The duty of immediate and universal repentance. 10. The certainty of a day of judgment. 11. The exaltation of Jesus Christ to the office of supreme judge. 12. The reality of a future life.

II. **The errors it corrected.**—1. *Atheism*, or the dogma that there is no God. 2. *Pantheism*, or the theory that the all is God. 3. *Materialism*, or the notion that the world is eternal. 4. *Fatalism*, or the superstition that no intelligence presides over the universe, but all things come to pass either by necessity or chance. 5. *Polytheism*, or the fancy that there are, or can be, many gods. 6. *Ritualism*, or the imagination that God can be honoured by purely external performances. 7. *Evolutionism* (in its extreme form), or the hypothesis that man is a product of force and matter. 8. *Indifferentism*, or the creed that man should seek after nothing and no one higher than himself. 9. *Optimism*, or the delusion that this is the best possible world, and man has no sin of which to repent. 10. *Unitarianism*, or the tenet that Christ was an ordinary member of the race. 11. *Annihilationism*, or the belief that after death is nothing. 12. *Universalism*, or the sentiment that all will be saved.

III. **The lessons it taught.**—1. The duty of renouncing idolatry and worshipping only God. 2. The obligation to cultivate a spirit of love towards others. 3. The necessity of repentance and reformation. 4, The wisdom of preparing for the great assize.

Vers. 22-34. *The Great Sermon on Mars' Hill.*

I. The wise men (of Athens) charged with superstition (vers. 22, 23).

II. The nature of God and the method of His worship established by natural arguments (vers. 24, 25).

III. The stupidity of men who, though created that they might recognise their Maker, nevertheless walk in darkness (vers. 26-28).

IV. The absurdity of supposing that God could resemble idols (ver. 29).

V. The doctrine of Christ and the resurrection of the dead (vers. 30, 31). —*From Calvin.*

Paul at Athens! A more striking picture than Luther in Rome or Calvin in Paris. Note—

I. **The sensations with which the apostle tarries in the city of the Athenians.**—1. He does not shut his

eyes to the monuments of the most ingenious art. 2. He does not permit himself to be captivated by their sensuous beauty. 3. A deep feeling of compassion for the error of the human spirit remains as the keynote of his innermost feelings.

II. **The testimony which he there bears.**—Three great truths opposed to three great falsehoods. 1. Creation out of nothing as opposed to Naturalism. 2. The personality of God as opposed to Pantheism. 3. The nature of sin as opposed to Antinomianism and Rationalism.

III. **The result.**—1. Not very consolatory. Prejudices too deeply rooted thwarted the apostolic word. 2. Yet not without comfort. A single convert already weighs heavily in the balance of the kingdom of God.—*From Krummacher.*

Ver. 23. "*To the* (*or an*) *unknown God.*"—The Athenian altar a significant testimony to three things—

I. **The insufficiency of human wisdom.**—If any people under heaven could have attained to a knowledge of God by philosophy those people were the Athenians.

II. **The unsearchableness of the Divine nature.**—After all man can learn from creation, providence, and revelation about the supreme being, he must still acknowledge that he knows only in part, and exclaim with Zophar (Job xi. 7) and with Elihu (Job xxxvii. 23) that the infinite and eternal One can never be fully understood by man.

III. **The incomparable glory of Christ.**—"That which can be known of God" is by the gospel more clearly and fully revealed than by either creation or providence. The central figure of the gospel records was the image of the invisible God, the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person.

Ignorant Worshippers of God.—Such were the Athenians, the philosophers amongst them no less than the vulgar herd. Both alike were ignorant—

1. **Of God's exalted nature.**—As a personal intelligence and spiritual essence. Epicureans and Stoics, indeed, spoke of God or of gods. Yet neither in one system nor the other was there room for God, the Epicureans being practically Atheists and the Stoics Pantheists. Paul's argument that God must be a personal intelligence rested on two premises: (1) that molten or carved images could not be God, seeing they lacked mind; and (2) that God must resemble man, if man is God's offspring.

II. **Of God's real character.**—As 1. *The maker of the universe.* According to the Epicureans and Stoics matter existed from eternity. The Hebrews held that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2. *The governor of the nations.* The Greek philosophers had no true conception of the moral and spiritual rule of the Divine being. This idea, which was known to the Hebrews, received its proper and complete development under Christianity. 5. *The preserver of His creatures.* "He Himself giveth to all life and breath and all things." Opposed to the Epicureans and Stoics, who equally believed that the gods, if any existed, were indifferent to men. 4. *The judge of men.* Neither of the philosophic schools had the smallest idea of a future judgment. Whatever evil they dreaded was present. Immortality found a place in neither of their creeds. Paul's sermon opened up to them a new thought.

III. **Of God's gracious purpose.**—That men should seek after Him and find Him. How did God propose to carry out this? 1. *By His providential goodness.* "Giving to all life," etc. (ver. 25). "Filling their mouths with food and gladness" (xiv. 17). "The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance" (Rom. ii. 4). 2. *By His governmental restraints.* Leading men and nations to see that they had to do with a higher power than themselves, that they might seek after and find

Him (ver. 27). 3. *By His longsuffering treatment of them.* "The times of this ignorance God winked at" (ver. 30). "Account the longsuffering of our God salvation" (2 Peter iii. 15). 4. *By His announcement of a new commandment.* That men should repent. That men must change their minds. That men can no longer be allowed to go on in sin. Whatever doubt may have existed previously as to man's duty, now there can be none. 5. *By public certification of a future assize.* Through Christ's resurrection from the dead, which showed both who Christ was and to what dignity and power He had been exalted.

Vers. 23-31. *God's Three Great Books about Himself.*

I. **The book of the world.**—In two parts. 1. Nature (vers. 24, 25). 2. History (ver. 26).

II. **The book of the heart.**—Also in two parts. 1. Reason (ver. 27). 2. Conscience (ver. 28).

III. **The book of Scripture.**—Again in two parts, 1. Law (ver. 30). 2. Gospel (ver. 31).—*Gerok.*

Ver. 26. *Made of One; or, the Unity of the Race.*

I. **One in origin.**—Created by God.

II. **One in nature.**—One blood and one spirit.

III. **One in character.**—All equally fallen, sunk in sin, and under condemnation.

IV. **One in salvability.**—All included in the offers and provisions of the gospel; none, at least, while alive, beyond the reach of grace.

V. **One in responsibility.**—All alike will be held accountable to God not only for their actions and words, but for their treatment of His gospel.

Ver. 27. *Seeking after God.*

I. **It is God's desire that men should seek after Him.**—He had so constructed the world in which men live, and arranged men's environment in the same, that they should feel themselves impelled to do this.

II. **Men's interest should lead them to seek after God.**—It being inconceivable that men should be capable of attaining happiness apart from God, without a knowledge of His character or without the enjoyment of His favour.

III. **Those who seek after God have the greatest possible encouragement.**—1. That if they seek in earnest they are sure to find. And 2. That God is so near to them that seeking should be easy.

Ver. 29. *God's Offspring; or, the Dignity of Man.*

I. **The sublime truth announced.**—That man is God's offspring. 1. *Anticipated by heathen poets.* The best pre-Christian and extra-Jewish thought had some dim apprehension of man's true origin. 2. *Revealed by inspired Scripture.* In the Old Testament (Gen. i. 26; Numb. xvi. 22; Mal. ii. 10). In the New Testament (Matt. v. 48; Heb. xii. 9). 3. *Confirmed by modern science.* Indirectly at least; first, through its failure to explain man's mental and moral nature through evolution; and second, through the circumstance that, however eager to establish a paternity for man among the lower animals, it has never been able to more than set forth an unproved hypothesis.

II. **The consoling inferences implied.**—1. *That God must be a personal intelligence.* Neither a senseless image, nor a blind force, nor impersonal matter, but a living personality. 2. *That God must be the father of men.* Not simply their creator and Lord, their preserver and judge, but their all-wise and loving parent, who regards them with pity and affection. 3. *That men, as God's children, must be brethren.* Not members of different races, but children of the same parent, and therefore members of the same family.

Ver. 30. *Repentance of Sin.*

I. **An imperative duty.** — Commanded by God.

II. **A universal necessity.**—Required by all.

III. **An immediate obligation.**—Admitting of no delay,

IV. **A saving grace.** — Without which none can stand in the day of judgment.

Vers. 30, 31. *Past and Present.* The Cross of Christ, the dividing line between these.

I. **The past.**—1. Times of *ignorance.* Before the meridian light of gospel-day had come. 2. Times of *wickedness.* Else repentance would have been unnecessary. 3. Times of *forbearance.* Otherwise the nations must have been cut off.

II. **The present.**—1. Times of *illumination.* The full light of Divine revelation now shines. 2. Times of *commandment.* Mankind everywhere enjoined to repent—change their minds and amend their sinful lives. 3. Times of *responsibility.* Whereas the past dispensation closed with a transcendent discovery of Divine mercy in the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (the first advent), the present age will terminate in a sublime exercise of judgment, at the glorious appearing of the Son of man (the second coming).

Ver. 31. *The World's Assize; or, the Great Day of Judgment.*

I. **The fact announced.**—God will judge the world.

II. **The day fixed.**—He hath appointed a day.

III. **The judge designated.**—That man whom He hath ordained, or set apart for this work.

IV. **The standard indicated.**—In righteousness. Every verdict will accord with equity and truth.

V. **The proof given.**—The resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Ver. 31. *The Doctrine of a Future Judgment as a Doctrine of Reason.*—1. The character of God requires it. 2. The analogy of the laws of nature indicates it. 3. There are facts in our own experience that foreshadow it. Incipient strivings toward retribution in the present state. 4. There is a general expectation of it among men. 5. Our history would be incomplete without it. Let it not be imagined that by rejecting the claims of revelation we shall escape the doctrine of a future judgment.—*G. Brooks.*

Vers. 32-34. *Man's Treatment of the Gospel.*

I. **Derision.**—"Some mocked."

II. **Delay.**—"We will hear thee again of this matter."

III. **Decision.**—"Certain men clave unto him and believed."

Chap. vii. 2-58 with vers. 22-34; or, *Stephen and Paul, the Two Apologies of Christianity towards Judaism and towards Heathenism.*

I. Both agree in some of their principal expressions.

II. Stephen's was delivered before the Sanhedrim, whose office it was to protect customs and morals in Jerusalem; Paul's before the Areopagus, which performed the like service in Athens.

III. Stephen was accused of destroying the old religion, Paul of introducing a new one.

IV. Stephen told his countrymen that the temple worship must cease, Paul the Athenians that God dwelt not in temples made with hands.

V. Stephen extolled the beneficence of God to Israel in His dealings with them as a people, Paul the revelation given by God to men in nature.

VI. Stephen, through the warmth of his eloquence, called forth a storm of violence against him; Paul's oration took a turn which, in an unexpected fashion, broke up the assembly.—From Holtzmann, who looks on these resemblances as unfavourable to the historicity; whereas, rightly viewed, they confirm it, being fully and satisfactorily explained by remembering that most likely Paul heard Stephen's defence.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE END OF THE SECOND AND BEGINNING OF THE THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY (PAUL AND TIMOTHY).

§ 1. Paul at Corinth; or, Meeting with New Friends (vers. 1-4).
§ 2. A Year and Six Months at Corinth; or, Three Significant Events (vers. 5-11).
§ 3. Paul before Gallio; or, a Case of Unsuccessful Persecution (vers. 12-17).
§ 4. Paul's Return to Antioch; or, the Termination of the Second Missionary Journey (vers. 18-22).
§ 5. Paul's Departure from Antioch; or, the Commencement of the Third Missionary Journey (vers. 23-28).

CRITICAL REMARKS.

Ver. 1. **Paul.**—Omitted in the best texts. How long the Apostle stayed in Athens—Weiseler suggests fourteen days; Ramsay, three or four weeks—and how he **came to Corinth**, whether by land or sea, cannot be determined.

Ver. 2. **Aquila born in Pontus.**—Or, *a man of Pontus by race.* Though Pontius Aquila was a noble Roman name (compare Pontius Pilate), there is no ground for supposing that Luke has here fallen into a mistake. Ramsay suggests that Aquila may have been a freedman, since a freedman of Mæcenas was called (C. Cilnius) Aquila. That Aquila was born in Pontus ii. 9 and 1 Peter i. 1 render probable. Possibly his real name was Onkelos, but the Onkelos who translated the old Testament into Greek lived half a century later. **Priscilla.**—Diminutive for Prisca (Rom. xvi. 3). That she was more energetic than her husband has been inferred (Ewald, Plumptre, Farrar) from her being mentioned first in several places (xviii. 26; Rom. xvi. 3; 2 Tim. iv. 19). **Claudius.**—The fourth Cæsar of Jewish origin (41-54 A.D.), a son of the elder Drusus, and therefore the nephew of Tiberius (see xi. 28). During the last years of his reign the Jews were expelled from Rome—"Judæos impulsore Chresto assidue tumultuantes Româ expulit" (Suetonius, *Claudius*, 25). Schürer thinks the occasion of this edict was the violent controversies which then prevailed among Roman Christians about the person of Christ (Riehm's, *Handwörterbuch des Biblischen Altertums*, art. *Claudius*).

Ver. 3. **Tentmakers.**—*I.e.*, not weavers of, but makers of tents from hair cloth. Most of the Rabbis had a trade by which they could earn their living. Hillel was a hewer of wood, Johanan a shoemaker, Nanacha a blacksmith; Jesus was a carpenter. The Jews after the exile held manual labour in high esteem. The man who neglected to teach his son a trade, said Rabbi Judas, practically taught him to be a thief.

Ver. 5. **Pressed in spirit.**—According to the oldest authorities this should be *was held together by the word*, *συνείχετο τῷ λόγῳ*—*i.e.*, either earnestly occupied with the business of preaching (Bengel, Holtzmann, and others), or wholly seized upon and constrained by the word within him (R.V.).

Ver. 6. **Your blood be upon your own heads.**—Compare 2 Sam. i. 16; 1 Kings ii. 33; Ezek. iii. 18, 20, xxxiii. 4, 6, 8.

Ver. 7. **Justus.**—The oldest MSS. waver between Titus Justus (R.V.), Titius Justus, and simply Justus, who, however named, is not to be identified with Titus (Wieseler).

Ver. 9. **By a vision.**—Compare xvi. 9, xxiii. 11. The words addressed to Paul remind one of Isa. lxii. 1.

Ver. 11. **A year and six months.**—Paul's whole sojourn in Corinth was three years (xix. 31).

Ver. 12. **Gallio.**—Gallio became proconsul towards the end of Claudius's reign, about A.D. 53. His character, as depicted by ancient writers, corresponded with that revealed in Luke's narrative. "He was the very flower of pagan courtesy and pagan culture—a Roman with all a Roman's dignity and seriousness, and yet with all the grace and versatility of a polished Greek" (Farrar). Eusebius asserts that he committed suicide towards the end of Nero's reign, before the death of his brother Seneca; but as Tacitus (*Annals*, xv. 73) reports him alive after that event, Dion Cassius is more likely to be correct in saying that he was put to death by order of Nero. **Deputy**, or *proconsul* **of Achaia.**—See on xiii. 7. Achaia, which included all Greece south of Macedonia, was a proconsular province under Augustus; under Tiberius an imperial province with a procurator (Tacitus, *Annals*, i. 76); under

Claudius after A.D. 44 a senatorial province with a proconsul as governor. Another instance of Luke's accuracy. **Made insurrection.**—Rather, *rose up.*

Ver. 13. **This fellow.**—The expression correctly enough states the feelings of disdain entertained by Paul's prosecutors, though the word "fellow" has no place in the original.

Ver. 17. **All the Greeks.**—The best texts have simply *all*, though "the Greeks," not "the Jews" (Ewald, Hofmann, Schürer), is the proper supplement.

Ver. 18. **Having shorn his head at Cenchrea, for he had a vow.**—The uncertainties connected with this passage are three: 1. Whether Aquila (Kuinoel, Meyer, Wendt, Zöckler) or Paul (Augustine and most moderns) is here referred to. 2. Whether the hair shaving signified the assumption of or releasing from a vow. 3. Whether the vow was a regular Nazarite or simply a private vow, analogous to that. Most interpreters hold that Paul was the person who shaved his head; that he did so in order to release himself from a vow he had taken in Corinth; that the vow was, if not in all respects a Nazarite vow, at least a private vow analogous to that which bound him along with abstinence to let his hair grow for a certain period—in this case till he left Corinth; that if it was a Nazarite vow Paul might have taken it without compromising his Christian liberty (compare xxi. 24), and might have been able to release himself from it without waiting till he reached Jerusalem (see further in "Homiletical Analysis"). That such vows were practised among the heathen numerous instances show. Diodorus (i. 18) mentions them among the Egyptians; while Homer (*Iliad*, xxiii. 140-153) records similar acts of Peleus and Achilles. Josephus (*Wars*, II. xv. 1) notices a like vow which Agrippa's sister Bernice paid in Jerusalem.

Ver. 19. **Ephesus.**—On the Cayster, which falls into the bay of Scala Nova on the western coast of Asia Minor. Dating back probably to B.C. 1044, Ephesus from its foundation "increased in importance till it became the chief mart of Asia Minor"; while its magnificent temple of Diana "never ceased to attract multitudes from all parts." It ultimately fell into the hands of the Romans B.C. 41 (*Modern Discoveries on the Site of Ancient Ephesus*, pp. 13-17).

Ver. 21. **And he left them there.**—Not meaning that Paul left Aquila and Priscilla in the town while he went into the synagogue (Alford), or that he henceforth quitted their society and devoted himself to the heathen (Wendt, Holtzmann), but signifying that he left them behind in Ephesus when he set sail for Cæsarea. The best MSS. omit the words **I must by all means keep this feast which cometh at Jerusalem,** and they are now commonly regarded as an insertion modelled after xx. 16. But as they occur in some important texts, and explain the phrase "having gone up" in ver. 22, it will do no harm to retain them—the feast being in this case either Passover (Ewald, Renan) or Pentecost (Wieseler).

Ver. 22. **The Church.**—In Jerusalem is meant, not in Antioch (Kuinoel, Blass). An impossible interpretation, for two reasons: 1. The phrase "went down" is never used of a journey from a coast town to an inland city like Antioch. One regularly goes down to a coast town (compare xiii. 4, xiv. 25, xvi. 8, etc.). 2. The terms "going up" and "going down" are used so frequently of the journey to and from Jerusalem as to establish this usage (Ramsay). The historic credibility of this journey to Jerusalem is challenged (Weizsäcker, Wendt, Pfleiderer, Holtzmann, and others) because it does not appear to be mentioned in Galatians, and along with that the truthfulness of the narrative which speaks of a first brief sojourn in Ephesus (ver. 19) and a second longer visit at a later date (xix. 1). But neither does Galatians mention the journey in xi. 30, unless this be that referred to in Gal. ii. 1, in which case Galatians omits all mention of the visit in xv. 2. Yet both of these are historical.

Ver. 23. **The region of Galatia and Phrygia.**—See on xvi. 6.

Ver. 24. **A certain Jew named Apollos**—a diminutive or pet name for Apollonios, which occurs in Codex D. (Ramsay). **Born at Alexandria,** or *an Alexandrian by birth,* he had probably received "the Jewish Grecian education peculiar to the learned among the Jews of that city, and acquired great facility in the use of the Greek language" (Neander). The success of his labours in Corinth is attested by Paul (1 Cor. i. 12, iii. 5, 6). Luther's conjecture that Apollos was the author of Hebrews is not without probability (Beyschlag, Plumptre). **Alexandria.**—The chief maritime city, and long the metropolis, of Lower Egypt, was founded by Alexander the Great, B.C. 332, and built under the superintendence of the architect who rebuilt the temple of Diana at Ephesus. Under Ptolemy Soter it became the seat not only of commerce, but also of learning and the liberal sciences. The LXX. translation of the Old Testament Scriptures was made in Alexandria, B.C. 280. Philo was born there, B.C. 20. In A.D. 39 the Jews in Alexandria were subjected to horrible persecutions by Ptolemy Philopator, because their co-religionists in Jerusalem had resisted his attempt to enter the temple there. Mark is said to have introduced Christianity into Alexandria.

Ver. 25. **The things of the Lord** should be *the things concerning Jesus.*

Ver. 26. **Aquila and Priscilla.**—The names should be reversed, as in ver. 18. "The unusual order, the wife before the husband must be accepted as original; for there is always a tendency among scribes to change the unusual into the usual" (Ramsay).

Ver. 27. **The brethren**—*i.e.*, of Ephesus—**wrote exhorting the disciples** in Achaia **to receive him.**—Better, *the brethren* (at Ephesus) *encouraged* (him) *and wrote to the* (Corinthian) *disciples* to receive him. · Holtzmann finds the right explanation in the old reading of Codex D: "But some Corinthians residing in Ephesus who had heard Apollos requested him to cross with them to their native city; and the Ephesians consenting to this proposal, wrote to the disciples in Corinth to receive him."

Ver. 28. **Helped them much which had believed through grace.**—According to another translation, *helped much through grace them who had believed* (see "Hints"). *And that* **publicly** might be connected with the participle following, as thus: *publicly showing*, or in public showing—*i.e.*, in their synagogues as distinguished from their private homes.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 1—4.

Paul at Corinth; or, Meeting with New Friends.

I. His arrival in the city.—1. *His departure from Athens.* 1. When? "After these things"—*i.e.*, after the incidents recorded in the preceding chapter, his survey of the idolatrous city, and his address to its leading philosophers and counsellors, though how long after cannot be ascertained. 2. Why? Because the character of his mission required him to move on, but chiefly because in that renowned capital of philosophic triflers and superstitious idol-worshippers the good seed of the kingdom, which it was his business to sow, had found no congenial soil. It may be that Paul felt "disappointed and disillusioned by his experience in Athens," and recognised that he had gone far enough in the way of "presenting his doctrine in a form suited to the current philosophy;" it may even be that this was the reason why, on reaching Corinth, he "no longer spoke in the philosophic style" (Ramsay); it would, however, be an error to conclude that Paul left behind him in Athens no converts (see xvii. 34), as undoubtedly a Christian Church was eventually established there. 3. How? Alone as to companionship, Luke having remained behind at Philippi, and Silas and Timothy at Berœa, or Silas at Berœa and Timothy at Thessalonica; or, if these latter had previously come to Athens, they were again on the way back to Macedonia (1 Thess. iii. 2), or had not yet returned from it (ver. 5). Sad as to his feelings, since he could not fail to be depressed at the decidedly cold reception which had been given to his gospel of a crucified and risen Saviour by "the Gentile Pharisaism of a pompous philosophy" (Farrar). 2. *His journey towards Corinth.* Whether he sailed from the Piræus to Cenchrea, a voyage of five hours across the Saronic bay, or travelled on foot the forty miles which separated the two cities, cannot be determined. Farrar suggests that "the poverty of the apostle's condition, his desire to waste no time, and the greatness of his own infirmities, render it nearly certain" that the sea route was that selected; but against this stands the circumstance that when he sailed from Berœa to Athens the brethren did not suffer him to go without a convoy (see xvii. 14, 15), whereas he was now alone. 3. *His entrance into the city.* This, which took place in A.D. 50, say Conybeare and Howson, was like passing "from a quiet provincial town to the busy metropolis of a province, and from the seclusion of an ancient university to the seat of government and trade" (*The Life and Epistles of Paul*, i. 355). Situated on the isthmus between the Ionian and Ægean seas, Corinth was in Paul's day the political capital of Greece, and the seat of the Roman proconsul. "It was not the ancient Corinth—the Corinth of Periander, or of Thucydides, or of Timoleon—that he was now entering, but *Colonia Julia* or *Laus Juli Corinthus*, which had risen out of the desolate ruins of the older city" (Farrar, *The Life and Work of St. Paul*, i. 554). The older city had been destroyed in B.C. 146 by the Romans under Mummius; the newer town was in B.C. 44 constructed by Julius Cæsar, who "sent thither a Roman colony, consisting principally of freedmen" (Strabo,

viii. 6), "amongst whom were no doubt great numbers of the Jewish race" (Lewin). Distinguished for its wealth, the Julian city was no less renowned for its profligacy, the verb, *to Corinthianise—i.e.*, to live like the Corinthians, having been from the days of Aristophanes used to describe a life of luxury and vice. Its temple of Aphrodite had a thousand courtesans for its priestesses. Its Isthmian games periodically attracted towards it, if all the athletes and geniuses, without doubt also all the scoundrelism of the empire. In short, as Farrar well expresses it, "Corinth was the Vanity Fair of the Roman empire, at once the London and the Paris of the first century after Christ."

II. **His lodging in the city.**—1. *The names of his hosts.* Aquila and Priscilla, diminutive for Prisca (Rom. xvi. 3, R.V.). "Probably Prisca was of higher rank than her husband, for her name is that of a good old Roman family" (Ramsay). (For conjectures as to who Aquila was, see "Critical Remarks.") The historian introduces him as a Jew, born in Pontus (see on ii. 9), who had lately come from Rome in consequence of Claudius's edict (A.D. 50), which had banished all Jews from that city because, according to Suetonius, they were continually making a disturbance, being impelled thereto by one Christ (see "Critical Remarks.") 2. *The attractions they had for him.* (1) They were Jews, and Paul never ceased to cherish a warm regard for his kinsmen according to the flesh. Even when they hated him the most fiercely he loved them the most tenderly (Rom. ix. 3, x. 1). (2) They were tent-makers—*i.e.* of the same craft as himself. Every Jew was required to learn a trade, and that followed by Aquila and his wife was not the weaving of goats' hair into cloth, but the manufacturing of that cloth into tents. Such cloth was woven in both Cilicia, from which Paul came, and Pontus, to which Aquila belonged. (3) Whether they were Christians before Paul met them (Kuinoel, Olshausen, Neander, Hackett, Spence, Farrar), or were converted by him in Corinth (De Wette, Meyer, Alford, Holtzmann), is debated. The former opinion is certainly not impossible, since the gospel may have been, and probably was, carried to Italy by some of the "sojourners from Rome" who had been converted at Pentecost (ii. 10). Yet as Luke does not represent them as having been Christians when Paul met them, the latter idea is quite as probable.

III. **His occupation in the city.**—1. *He worked for a living to himself* (see 1 Cor. ix. 6; 2 Cor. xi. 7). This (1) of necessity, because, to begin with at least, he had no Christian converts to whom he could look for support, and because he declined to live by charity while his own hands could minister to his necessities; and (2) of choice, because, as a rule, he preferred not to be burdensome to those he taught. Already he had observed this custom in Thessalonica (1 Thess ii. 9; 2 Thess. iii. 8), and afterwards he followed it in Ephesus (xx. 34). Whether he worked for a wage or as a partner is left unrecorded; but in either case the profits were probably not large (2 Cor. xi. 9). "It was a time of general pressure, and though the apostle toiled night and day, all his exertions were unable to keep the wolf from the door" (Farrar). 2. *He preached the gospel to others free of charge.* (1) In the customary place—the city synagogue, where the Jews, who had there long established a residence or recently found a refuge, were wont to assemble. (2) At the usual times—on the Sabbaths, Paul probably requiring the weekdays to provide for himself things honest in the sight of men. (3) After his peculiar fashion—with skilful argument and reasoning, proving out of the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ. (4) To his ordinary audience—a mixed assembly of Jews and Greek proselytes. (5) With the old effect—that he persuaded—*i.e.*, won over to believe—a number of both classes of his hearers.

Lessons.—1. The providence of God in fetching Aquila and Paul to Corinth at the same time—Aquila to lodge Paul, and Paul to convert or establish Aquila. 2. The facility with which God's people can recognise each other even in a foreign

country. 3. The power of the gospel to secure converts even in a debauched and drunken city like Corinth (1 Cor. vi. 11). 4. The duty of all, not excepting ministers, to provide things honest in the sight of men. 5. The dignity of labour. 6. The glory of being a Christian.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 2. *Aquila and Priscilla.*

I. **Husband and wife.**—A beautiful example of the marriage union.

II. **Joint workers in trade.**—A happy illustration of individual independence and family co-operation

III. **Willing entertainers of Paul.**—A bright specimen of hospitality and kindness.

IV. **Fellow-believers in Christ.**—Whether before or after they met Paul, they became Christians. A sweet instance of the marriage union being sanctified by grace.

V. **Earnest teachers of Apollos** (ver. 26).—A noble pattern of Christian zeal.

Ver. 3. *Paul in Aquila's Workshop.*

I. **An example of manly independence.**—Rather than depend on others, the apostle would work for his living (1 Thess. iv. 11).

II. **A pattern of Christian humility.**—Though an apostle he did not disdain to labour with his hands (2 Thess. iii. 12).

III. **An illustration of sincere piety.**—Providing things honest in the sight of men (2 Cor. viii. 21).

IV. **An instance of religious zeal.**—"Diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord" (Rom. xii. 11).

Vers. 2, 3. *Aquila and Paul; or, Christian Companions.*

I. **Are always desirable,** but especially in strange cities.

II. Are often **providentially brought together.**—As in the case of Aquila and Paul.

III. Are commonly **helpful** to one another. As these were.

IV. Are mostly **parted with regret.** As doubtless these were when Paul left Aquila and his wife at Ephesus (ver. 19).

Vers. 2-4. *Christian Journeymen on their Travels.*

I. **The dangers in the foreign country.**—The temptations in luxurious Corinth.

II. **The acquaintance by the way.**—Aquila meeting with Paul.

III. **The work at the trade.**—Honest toil a great safeguard against temptation.

IV. **The care for the soul.**—Sanctification of the Sabbath and worship of God.—*From Gerok.*

Vers. 3, 4. *Work and Worship; or, Week-days and Sabbath-days.*

I. **Week-days for work and Sabbath-days for worship.**—This their distinctive characters. All attempts to reduce both to one platform unscriptural, and therefore foredoomed to failure. As the work of week days must not be encroached upon by worship, so the worship of Sabbath-days must not be hindered by work.

II. **As the work of week-days does not exclude worship, so the worship of Sabbath-days must not exclude work.**—If week-day work prevents worship, then week-day work is excessive. If Sabbath worship leaves no room for works of necessity and mercy, then Sabbath worship is in danger of becoming burdensome as well as formal.

III. **Week-day work should prepare for Sabbath worship, and Sabbath worship for week-day work.**—The man who has spent his week-days in unlawful idleness is not likely to employ his Sabbath in worship. He who devotes Sabbath to the duties of religion is most likely to prove a vigorous, industrious, and faithful worker throughout the week. "Weekly labour creates hunger and thirst after Sabbath-rest and Sabbath-fare. Sabbath sanctification imparts strength and pleasure to the daily work of the week."—*Gerok.*

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 5—11.

A Year and Six Months in Corinth; or, Three Significant Experiences.

I. **Renewed activity in preaching.**—1. *Brought about by the coming of old friends.* Though Paul was of more heroic mould than to sink beneath the pressure of external circumstances, however severe (Phil. iv. 13), though he could testify for Christ without other aid than that Christ extended, whether in the Areopagus before Athenian philosophers (xvii. 22), or at Cæsarea before Festus and Agrippa (xxvi. 1), or at Rome before Nero (2 Tim. iv. 16), he was nevertheless in a high degree dependent on the sympathy of others. During the absence of Timothy and Silas he felt lonely both in Athens and in Corinth, while there is good ground for thinking that his strength was at this time somewhat weakened through his thorn or stake in the flesh (1 Cor. ii. 3), and perhaps also through the severe privations he chose to endure rather than accept support from his friends in Corinth, where his enemies were numerous (2 Cor. xi. 8, xii. 13 *et seq.*; 1 Cor. ix. 12). Consequently, though he never for a moment dreamt of abandoning his holy work of preaching, he nevertheless toiled along as if a heavy burden lay upon his spirit. Accordingly when, after the lapse probably of some weeks, or it might be months, Timothy and Silas arrived from Macedonia, the former from Thessalonica bringing cheering tidings of the faith and charity of his dear friends in that city and perhaps also such material assistance from them as helped to relieve him from the necessity of manual labour (1 Thess. iii. 6), and the latter from Berœa (xvii. 14), possibly with equally cheering intelligence about the Church there, and with gifts of love from Philippi (Phil. iv. 15; 2 Cor. xi. 9), the load lifted from his heart so that he bounded forward in his work with revived alacrity and zeal, as if the word had seized upon him (see "Critical Remarks") and constrained him with a holy violence, impelling him to greater diligence, fervour, and prayerfulness than before (compare 1 Cor. ix. 16). 2. *Manifested in special efforts to gain his countrymen.* Though designated specially as the minister of Christ to the Gentiles, Paul never could forget the fact that the Jews were his kinsmen according to the flesh, or neglect an opportunity of seeking their salvation. Hence this fresh outburst of missionary zeal which seized upon him was directed specially to them. With redoubled energy and impassioned earnestness he laid before them the proofs from Scripture that Jesus was the Christ. (For the manner of his preaching see 1 Cor. ii. 4; and for its matter 1 Cor. xv. 3.) Not that he neglected others; but these were his first care (Luke xxiv. 47; Rom. i. 16).

II. **Renewed opposition by the Jews.**—1. *Its secret spring.* Nothing local, or accidental, or personal to Paul such as his "contemptible presence or speech" (2 Cor. x. 10); but the innate hostility of the human heart to a gospel of salvation by grace and through faith without works (1 Cor. ii. 14), and the irreconcilable antagonism of the Jewish heart to everything and every one that challenged the validity of Moses' law, as understood and practised by them, or accused them of ignorance and sin in rejecting Jesus as Messiah. 2. *Its bitter violence.* Like defeated controversialists generally when they cannot answer their opponents, and like their co-religionists at Antioch (xiii. 45) and afterwards at Ephesus (xix. 9), they betook themselves to abusive language, railing against the apostle and blaspheming God and Christ (compare 1 Cor. xii. 3). 3. *Its necessary consequence.* Paul discontinued his efforts to persuade them. (1) His symbolic action. "He shook," or shook out, "his raiment"—*i.e.*, shook out the dust from its folds, as in Antioch of Pisidia he had shaken the dust from his feet (xiii. 51), for a testimony against them. (2). His solemn declaration. "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am pure; from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles." By

this he gave them to understand that the responsibility for their destruction, both as a people and as individuals, would rest entirely with themselves, that he regarded himself as in no way involved in their guilt, and that henceforth he would preach exclusively to the Gentiles (compare xx. 6; Ezek. xxxiii. 5-9). (3) His public withdrawal. From that day forward he no more frequented their synagogue, no more proclaimed to them the words of eternal life, no more invited them to believe. Having made their election, they were now by him left to the tender mercies of Heaven. So far from being again pressed to accept salvation, they would no more be troubled. Practically by Christ's ambassador they were judicially abandoned.

III. **Renewed consolation from God.**—1. *The opening of a new door.* When the synagogue was closed against the apostle, the house of a Greek proselyte, Justus, or Titus Justus (R.V.), opened to give him welcome, as afterwards at Ephesus the school of Tyrannus was placed at his disposal, when excluded from the synagogue (xix. 9). There does not appear to be sufficient ground for identifying this individual who befriended the apostle in Corinth with Titus, or supposing that Paul left Aquila's house and went to lodge with Justus. What Luke designs to say is rather this, that while Paul continued lodging and working with Aquila, he preached on the Sabbaths in the house of Justus, who resided hard by the synagogue, so that the Jews and proselytes, if they chose, might still come to hear him. In the action of Justus Paul would undoubtedly delight to see the guiding hand of his glorified Master (Rev. iii. 7). 2. *The accession of a new friend.* Whether Justus was at this time a believer or not cannot with certainty be inferred from Luke's words. If, as is most likely, he was not, the probability is that he ultimately became a convert. But the withdrawal or exclusion of Paul from the synagogue led to the decision of Crispus its ruler to cast in his lot with the new cause, in which act he was followed by his whole house. Already Paul had gathered converts in Corinth, "of humble and most probably of slavish origin," the first of these being—not Epænetus (Rom. xvi. 5), where the true reading is *of Asia*—but the household of Stephanas (1 Cor. xvi. 15). The conversion, however, of one so prominent as Crispus and of his family, whom, as well as the household of Stephanas, Paul baptised with his own hand, either because of their importance or because of the absence of his assistants (1 Cor. i. 15, 16), could not fail to exert a powerful and happy influence on the side of the gospel and on the heart of Paul. Most likely this contributed to the success of Paul's ministry in Justus's house, many of the Corinthians who heard him there having believed and been baptised, which again led to the prolongation of his ministry in Corinth for a year and six months. 3. *The enjoyment of a new vision.* In some respects this differed from each of the other visions granted to Paul. The vision at Damascus (ix. 12), like that in the temple at Jerusalem (xxii. 18), occurred at midday; this, like the vision at Troas (xvi. 9), took place at night. In the vision at Troas a man of Macedonia appeared; whereas in this, as in the Damascus and Jerusalem visions, it was the form of the glorified Redeemer that was seen. The purpose of the Jerusalem vision was to counsel Paul to flee from the city; the object of this was to make him stay in Corinth. (1) The Lord exhorted him to banish fear and preach the gospel with all boldness: "Be not afraid, but speak," etc., a suitable word for one whose ministry had been up till then carried on "in weakness and in fear and in much trembling" (1 Cor. ii. 3). (2) The Lord assured him of His constant presence and protection, saying, "I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee," or if they do their purpose shall be defeated (compare vers. 12-17). The like promise had Christ given to the twelve (Matt. xxviii. 20). (3) The Lord revealed to him that many would be converted by his ministry: "I have much people in this city," not already,

but about to be converted, a cheering announcement for one who was probably beginning to think his labours in the gospel might be in vain.

Learn.—1. The impassioned earnestness with which the word of God should be preached. 2. The certainty that a faithful minister, should he not convert others, will at least clear himself. 3. The fearful retribution that will eventually overtake those who oppose themselves and blaspheme. 4. The justification of preachers in leaving those who persistently refuse to accept the gospel. 5. The extreme unlikelihood of faithful preaching having no saving result. 6. The consolation God can give His discouraged servants. 7. The assurance that such have of God's presence with, and assistance of them in their work.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 6. *"I am Clean"; or Thoughts About Ministerial Responsibility.*—A minister may hold himself free from responsibility for his hearers.

I. **When he has faithfully preached the gospel to them.**—1. *Clearly*, so that they can understand it. 2. *Fully*, so that they are made acquainted with the whole counsel of God contained in it. 3. *Fervently*, so that they are impressed with a sense of its importance and urgency.

II. **When he has solemnly warned them of their danger in rejecting it.**—When he has reminded them—1. Of their *guilt* in refusing to believe. 2. Of their certain *condemnation* unless they do believe. 3. Of the possibility of being *abandoned* because of declining to believe.

III. **When he has exhausted every available means for securing their acceptance of the truth.**—Though Paul turned himself to the Gentiles he did not entirely desert the Jews. They were still at liberty to visit the house of Justus. Doubtless many of them did this. So ministers should never cease to labour even for those who reject and oppose the truth.

Ver. 8. *The Conversion of Crispus.*

I. **Unexpected.**—Because of his being a Jew and its occurring after Paul had left the synagogue.

II. **Scriptural.**—Brought about by the preaching of the word.

III. **Influential.**—Leading to the conversion of all his house and of many of his neighbours.

IV. **Sincere.**—Proved by being baptised and opening his house to Paul.

Ver. 10. *God's Hope for His Workers.*—"For I have much people in this city." It is very evident that the apostle came to Corinth in a state of great depression. His work had seemed almost a failure in Athens; and should he fail likewise at Corinth? He says afterwards, writing of his entrance among them, "I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling" (1 Cor. ii. 3). Nor was his early experience in that city calculated to dispel his fears; for the Jews, to whom first he preached the gospel, bitterly opposed, and blasphemed. It was, therefore, with a heavy heart that he turned to the Gentiles—such Gentiles as had mocked at the gospel in the city which he had just left.

I. **Both human instinct and Divine guidance had led the apostle Paul to concentrate his efforts on the populations of great cities.**—Damascus, Antioch, Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens—these had already been his spheres of labour; and Ephesus, Jerusalem, and Rome were to feel his power. Meanwhile, the great city of Corinth was to absorb his time and care for some eighteen months. Great cities have played a very important part in the history of the world, both in ancient and in modern times. Nineveh and Babylon, Memphis and Thebes, Athens, Carthage, Rome—how much do these names stand for, as representative of the changing fortunes of the world in

the ages of the past! And to-day great cities are of more and more account, as affording home and industry and power to the thronging populations. Great cities have had, and have still, their various objects of interest and wonderment, affording almost inexhaustible material for the entertainment of the curious, and the research and study of more serious minds. So Corinth had its Isthmus—called "the bridge of the sea," and "the gate of the Peloponnesus"—across which, about the time of the apostle's visit, the Emperor Nero attempted to cut the canal which, left incomplete through all the centuries, has just been opened from sea to sea; the great rock Acropolis, rising abruptly from the shore to the height of two thousand feet; the two harbours, of Cenchreæ and Lechæum; the temple of Neptune, hard by; and all that beauty of situation and structure which led to its being called "the Star of Greece."

II. But though the apostle would not be insensible to these things, **the attraction of Corinth**, as of the other great cities that he visited, **was not in any way external or adventitious greatness or charm**.—Nor is it any such attraction that makes the great cities of to-day of so absorbing an interest to the thoughtful mind. Said Dr. Johnson, of the London of a hundred and thirty years ago, "If you wish to have a just notion of the magnitude of this city, you must not be satisfied with seeing its great streets and squares, but must survey the innumerable little lanes and courts. It is not in the showy evolutions of buildings, but in the multiplicity of human habitations which are crowded together, that the wonderful immensity of London consists." And his biographer, commenting on the remark, says, wisely enough, "I have often amused myself with thinking how different a place London is to different people. They whose narrow minds are contracted to the consideration of some one particular pursuit view it only through that medium. A politician thinks of it merely as the seat of government in its different departments; a grazier, as a vast market for cattle; a mercantile man, as a place where a prodigious deal of business is done upon 'Change; a dramatic enthusiast, as the grand scene of theatrical entertainments; a man of pleasure, as an assemblage of taverns. But the intellectual man is struck with it, as comprehending the whole of human life in all its variety, the contemplation of which is inexhaustible." So it was the quick, busy, eager, multifarious human life of Corinth that made the city of such interest to the apostle; that made it, if we may say so, of such interest to Him who spoke to Paul of the "much people" there.

III. It was not, however, even the human interest of Corinth, under such aspects as would present themselves to other visitors, that made the supreme demand on the apostle's regard and care; nor, vast and various as they were, did these more secular interests of the city call forth the emphatic declaration of the Lord Christ. **But there was one interest which was indeed supreme, in the regard alike of Christ and of Paul**; an interest which, wherever men do congregate, is still so paramount in the eyes of all who have learned anything of the true import of human history and human destiny—the relation of men to duty, to God, to eternity. And it is the vision of these invisible but so real relations, men's relations to the infinite, that invests with so thrilling an interest all the doings, and aims, and desires of the multitudes that make up the teeming life of our great cities.

IV. **This brings us to what is indeed God's hope, as held forth in gracious encouragement to all who work in behalf of the gospel of the kingdom for their fellow-men.**—God's hope? And who but the Divine Christ could have had hope of Corinth? So busy, so wealthy, so gay—and so utterly wicked, in its unblushing sensuality of sin, that "to Corinthianise" meant to give one's self up to the worst abominations of

immorality! But, "I have much people here," said Christ; for, through all their eager alertness of industry and commercial enterprise, and beneath their superficial gaiety, and even deep down in the reeking corruption of the people's sin, did He not see that many hearts were weary of self-seeking, and aching despite their gaiety, and sick of the sin to which, nevertheless, they were selling themselves body and soul? Ah, their very despair of any good was the secret of Christ's hope for that people. For over against their utmost sin and shame the apostle was to set forth God's utmost and most holy love, as manifested in the Cross. Nor could any inferior power avail to move them. "Christ for England, and England for Christ"—this must be our watchword, and we shall not watch, and work and wait in vain. And in like manner, when we look out upon the seething millions of the great cities of the world, and equally when we regard the needs of those who live in smaller towns, and in villages, and in remote, solitary places, we must listen, as Christ says, "I have much people here."—*T. F. Lockyer, B.A.*

Vers. 5-10. *Great Things in Corinth.*

I. **Fervent preaching.**—Constrained by the word Paul testified.

II. **Violent unbelief.**—On the part of the Jews.

III. **Solemn judgment**—Pronounced against the opposers. They were self-destroyed.

IV. **Glorious mercy.**—The gospel offered to the Gentiles.

V. **Unexpected deliverance.**—Justus's house opened.

VI. **Marvellous success.**—"Many hearing believed, and were baptised."

VII. **Heavenly consolation.**—Paul's vision of the Lord by night.

Vers. 9, 10. *Thoughts for the Night of Ministerial Despondency.*

I. The **heavenly master** from whom the faithful minister holds his commission. The Lord (compare xxvii. 23).

II. The **holy duty** which that Master has imposed on His servants. To speak and hold not their peace (compare v. 20; Isa. lviii. 1).

III. The **encouraging arguments** against fear supplied by the Master to His servants. 1. His presence with them (compare Matt. xxviii 20). 2. His protection of them (Matt. xvi. 18). 3. His preparation for them. Having souls waiting to receive their word. 4. His prospering of them. Promising their labours should be successful.

Paul's Midnight Vision at Corinth; or, The Lord's interview with His servant.

I. **A sublime manifestation:** The Lord's appearance to Paul.—1. The *reality* of this appearance. Unless on *à priori* grounds of objection to the supernatural the historic credibility of what is here narrated cannot be assailed. 2. The *timeliness* of this appearance. It came when Paul was in some degree depressed. Man's extremity is ever God's opportunity. 3. The *object* of this appearance—to cheer the heart and embolden the spirit of the apostle.

II. **A magnificent exhortation**: the Lord's commandment to Paul.—1. *Not to be afraid.* Either of himself suffering injury or of his cause suffering defeat. Paul, though habitually courageous and hopeful, obviously laboured at the moment under some apprehension as to both of these contingencies. 2. *But to speak.* Manfully, openly, continuously, holding not his peace, but, like an old Hebrew prophet, crying aloud and sparing not, lifting up his voice like a trumpet, showing the Jews their transgression and the Gentiles their sins (Isa. lviii. 1).

III. **A cheering consolation:** the Lord's assurance to Paul.—1. *Of companionship.* "I am with thee": a promise which had been given of old to Abraham (Gen. xxvi. 3), to Isaac (Gen. xxvi. 24), to Jacob (xxviii. 15), to Moses (Exod. xxxiii. 14), to Joshua (i. 5), to Israel in exile (Isa. xliii. 2); a promise which had been renewed to

the disciples by Christ before His ascension (Matt. xxviii. 20). 2. *Of protection.* "No man shall set on thee to harm thee." This promise also had been given to ancient Israel collectively (Psalm xlvi. 1; Prov. ii. 7; Isa. xxxii. 2, 18, xxxiii. 16, 20; Zech. ii. 5, 8), was renewed to the Church of Christ (Luke xxi. 18), and is now repeated to the apostle. 3. *Of success.* "I have much people in this city." As Elijah of old, in a time of despondency, had been assured that Jehovah had seven thousand faithful adherents who had never bowed the knee to Baal (1 Kings xix. 18), so is Paul now informed that Jesus had many souls in Corinth who were only waiting to be gathered into His kingdom by the preaching of His gospel.

Ver. 11. *The Secret of Ministerial Success.*

I. **Much prayer.**
II. **Much patience.**
III. **Much trust in God.**
IV. **Much diligence in work.**—*Quesnel.*

The Word of God.

I. "**In complete sense** the Word of God is alone the living, historical person, Jesus Christ, understood and explained in the Divine spirit, and according to His own word and will. On this account are also the words and discourses of Jesus, since these are inseparable from His person and activity, to be included and considered as the Word of God.

II. "Whilst, however, Jesus Himself in His person, in His works and words, as in His sufferings and death, is the Word of God, at the same time also **in a derived sense** is the proclamation of Him the Word of God. That is, the gospel of Christ and of His kingdom (xxviii. 31), at first only orally diffused, later also laid down in writing, becomes recognised in Christendom as the Word of God in a special sense, in distinction from all preparatory, prophetic words of God as from all sorts of subordinate revelation. In this sense has Jesus Himself often and clearly spoken, and the whole New Testament agrees therewith. This gospel is, in its contents, firm and unassailable, homogeneous and all-embracing; in its formulation manifold and many-formed, as every really living, spiritual great thing is; and exactly, because it is homogeneous and living, also in every individual part somehow germinally contained. Hence it can be shortly described as the divine and gracious will which has appeared in Christ, as the proclamation of God's salvation work, as the Word of Christ the crucified (1 Cor. i. 23), as the Word of grace (xiv. 3, 7, xx. 24, 32), as the Gospel of grace and repentance (xx. 21), as the Word of reconciliation (2 Cor. v. 19), or as the Revelation of the divine mystery (1 Cor. iv. 1; Eph. vi. 19); or otherwise designated according to some one particular item of its contents. According to its peculiar contents, therefore, is it not so much a theoretic doctrine, as a joyous message adapted to the actualities of life, and consists principally of promises and assurances of heavenly rights and possessions, conjoined with admonitions and serious warnings which correspond to those gifts and promises."

III. "Consequently in derived sense is **every oral and written proclamation**, which teaches men to understand the person and work of Christ, inasmuch as it prepares them for this, speaks of it, leads to it, and teaches men to use it, Revelation or the Word of God. Hence also of preaching in public worship, as of every written or printed exposition of the gospel, the expression Word of God can be used. But above all does the title Word of God belong both to the whole of the Old and New Testament Scriptures, and, according to its inner sense or its understanding in graduated fashion, to particular scriptures or to their particular expositions. This meaning of the Biblical canon also becomes through this clear and practical, that in the public church doctrinal preaching the Holy Scriptures must in some way be constantly assumed as its basis."—*Bornemann*, § 47.

Vers. 5-11. *Paul's preaching at Corinth.*

I. **The place of his preaching.**—1. *The Jewish synagogue.* According to his custom. Dictated probably by three motives. (1) To find a proper starting ground for his work. The Jews knew the Scriptures, and were looking for the Messiah. (2) To secure the conversion of his countrymen. Paul loved his kinsmen, and longed for their conversion. (3) To prevent misunderstanding of the nature of Christianity. Christianity not antagonistic to, but development and completion of Old Testament religion. 2. *The house of Justus.* To this Paul withdrew when expelled from synagogue. In so doing Paul (1) followed the example of Christ; (2) showed that Christianity was not confined to special places (John iv. 21); and (3) kept within earshot of his countrymen.

II. **The subject of his preaching.**—That Jesus was the Christ, Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. iii. 2), which signified—1. *That Jesus of Nazareth had been the Messiah* promised to the fathers—to Abraham as a seed, to David as a son, to Israel as the Lamb of God. 2. *That salvation was attainable only through His Cross.* Not through his teaching alone, though "Never man spake like this man" (John vii. 46), or through His example alone, though "He left us an example that we should walk in His steps" (1 Peter ii. 21), but through His blood (Ephes. i. 7).

III. **The manner of his preaching.**—1. *Biblical.* Out of the Scriptures. The proper basis of all right preaching. 2. *Reasoning.* Addressing himself to the intellect. Paul knew the value of great ideas. The road to the heart lies through the understanding. 3. *Fervent.* Paul was no drone or dullard, no merely formal talker or polite essay reader, but a speaker aglow with holy enthusiasm. 4. *Fearless.* Resulting from (1) his confidence in the message he delivered; (2) his reliance upon God's promise of protection; and (3) his hope of ultimate success.

IV. **The result of his preaching.**—Twofold. 1. *Opposition.* Jews resisted. Not difficult to see why. If Paul was right then Jesus had been their Messiah, and they had been guilty of awful sin in rejecting Him. 2. *Success.* (1) He gained a friend in Justus. (2) He secured a large number of converts, amongst whom were Aquila and Priscilla, Titus Justus, Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, Sosthenes, Crispus's successor, Stephanas and his house, Gaius, Paul's host, Erastus, the city chamberlain.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 12—17.

Paul before Gallio; or, a Case of Unsuccessful Persecution.

I. **Persecution attempted.**—1. *The prime instigators of this hostile movement.* These were the Jews whom Paul had defeated in argument, causing them to oppose and blaspheme (ver. 6), and from whom he had separated by withdrawing from their synagogue and exercising his ministry in the house of Justus (ver. 7). To this antagonistic course they were doubtless incited by a variety of motives, as, *e.g.*, (1) their hatred of the gospel; (2) their dislike of Paul the apostate Rabbi; (3) their chagrin at the conversion of Crispus; and (4) their annoyance at the favour which the new cause was finding among the Greeks. "It must be acknowledged," says Ramsay (*St. Paul, etc.*, p. 256), "that Paul had not a very conciliatory way with the Jews when he became angry. The shaking out of his garments was undoubtedly a very exasperating gesture; and the occupying of a meeting-house next door to the synagogue, with the former *archisynagogos* as a prominent officer, was more than human nature could stand. . . . It is not strange that the next stage of proceedings was in a law court." Perhaps not; but this seems hard on Paul, who would have been almost superhuman if he had not sometimes lost his temper with his much-beloved countrymen. 2. *The exact date*

of this hostile movement. "When Gallio was the deputy, or proconsul, of Achaia," A.D. 53 (see "Critical Remarks"). Under Tiberius an imperial province governed by a procurator, Achaia, when Claudius assumed the purple (A.D. 44), was restored to the Senate and ruled by a proconsul. Gallio's predecessor had ended his term of government, and Gallio himself had just entered on office, when this persecution arose. The Jews had probably been tempted to try this assault upon their obnoxious countryman because of Gallio's inexperience and reputed easiness of character, the first of which might make him willing to curry favour with the Jews, while the second might lead him to believe their complaints without investigating whether these rested on any good foundation. Originally called Marcus Annæus Novatus, and afterwards known as Lucius Junius Annæus Gallio in consequence of having assumed the name of Lucius Junius Gallio, a friendly rhetorician who had adopted him, Gallio was brother to the well-known philosopher Seneca, who wrote of him: "No mortal man is so sweet to any person as he is to all mankind," and "even those who love my brother Gallio to the very utmost of their power yet do not love him enough" —language which, if it could scarcely be accepted as unimpeachable evidence of Gallio's merit, at least testified to the strength of Seneca's affection. 3. *The special form of this hostile movement.* A unanimous "insurrection," or uprising of the Jewish populace against the apostle, in which, having arrested him, they fetched him before the governor's tribunal, as their kinsmen in Thessalonica had dragged him before the city rulers (xvii. 6), and as the owners of the divining maid in Philippi had brought him and Silas before the magistrates (xvi. 20). The accusation in this case ran in different terms from the indictments in those. At Philippi the apostle had been charged with subverting Roman customs in religion; in Thessalonica the complainants urged that he had acted contrary to the decrees of Cæsar; here at Corinth the impeachment alleged that he persuaded men to worship God contrary to law—not of the empire (Spence, Plumptre), but of Moses (Conybeare and Howson, Farrar, Alford, Hackett, Holtzmann, Lechler), since under Roman rule Judaism was a *religio licita*, and Paul's teaching in his countrymen's eyes constituted a violation of the Hebrew Lawgiver's precepts.

II. **Persecution foiled.**—Arraigned before the judgment seat of Gallio—a chair or tribunal, three times mentioned in the story, from which Roman justice was dispensed—Paul was about to open his mouth in self-defence, when Gallio interrupted him, quashed the proceedings, and so protected the apostle, but lost to the world and the Church a speech which the latter at least would willingly have heard. 1. *The ground of his procedure* he made clearly known to the prosecutors. (1) The case they had brought before him lay not within his civil jurisdiction. Had it been a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, an act of injustice or legal injury, such as fraud or dishonesty or wicked crime—*i.e.*, a moral offence or deed of wickedness—he would have felt it his duty to bear with them and investigate their charges. (2) The case, however, was altogether outside his functions. So far as he could see, it concerned questionings or disputes about a word, or doctrine (Hackett), about names, as, *e.g.*, whether Jesus had been rightly or wrongly called Messiah, and about their own law, whether it was correctly observed or not; and these were affairs they could look to themselves. As for him, he had no mind to be a judge of such matters, even if they lay within his judicial domain, which he practically acknowledged they did not. To infer that his action was in any way dictated by secret sympathy for the Christian religion would be, to say the least, extremely hazardous. 2. *The end of his procedure* was that he summarily quashed the indictment, announced that the prosecutors had no case, and ordered the lictors to clear the court. "We may be sure they made short work of ejecting the frustrated, but muttering, mob on whose disap-

pointed malignity, if his countenance at all reflected the feelings expressed by his words, he must have looked down from his lofty tribunal with undisguised contempt" (Farrar, *The Life and Work of St. Paul*, i. 569).

III. **Persecution reversed.**—Before the court was cleared the tables were turned. 1. *The ruler of the synagogue was trounced.* The Jews who had hastened before the governor's tribunal in hope of seeing Paul scourged reluctantly beheld their own leader beat. This leader was Sosthenes, who had probably succeeded (ver. 8) if he had not been a colleague of Crispus. There is no solid reason for supposing (Theodoret, Calvin, Ewald, Hofmann) him to have been the Sosthenes our brother mentioned in Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians (i. 1). 2. *The parties who trounced him were the mob.* Not the Jews (Ewald, Hofmann), who suspected their champion had bungled their case through secret sympathy with Paul—which, by the way, forms the ground for supposing him to be "Sosthenes our brother." Certainly not the Christians, who, had it been they, would have behaved most unworthily (Matt. v. 44), but the Gentiles or Greeks, who may have been impelled to such a violent demonstration, either because Sosthenes showed himself refractory and unwilling to depart from the basilica, or because they felt indignant at the Jews for having trumped up a baseless accusation against an innocent man, whom besides, through his having withdrawn from the synagogue, they regarded as in a manner belonging to themselves. 3. *The governor looked on with indifference.* "My lord Gallio," as his brother styled him, was as completely unconcerned about the whipping which the Greeks gave to Sosthenes as he had been about the charges of the Jews preferred against Paul. Perhaps the whipping was, after all, not a violent affair. "So long as they were not guilty of any serious infraction of the peace, it was nothing to him how the Greek *gamins* amused themselves" (Farrar). If, however, it amounted to bodily injury, then Gallio's supercilious contempt was not only wrong in itself but stood in flagrant contradiction to his pompous speech (ver. 14).

Lessons.—1. The lies told against Christianity and Christians by their enemies. 2. The true province of the civil magistrate, secular affairs. 3. The retribution which often comes on those who devise evil against others. 4. The indifference of many to both religion and morality.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 12-17. *A Court Scene in Corinth.*

I. **The place of judgment.**—The agora or market-place. Justice should always be dispensed in public, in order to prevent abuses.

II. **The person of the prisoner.**—Paul, a preacher of the gospel. Preachers have often been called upon to answer for their crimes in publishing the good news of salvation.

III. **The terms of the indictment.**—That Paul taught men to worship God contrary to law. It is no sin either to worship God or to teach men so; yet are all ways of worshipping God not equally right.

IV. **The rank of the prosecutor.**—Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue. The Church's dignitaries no less than the world's great men have sometimes been found in the ranks of persecutors.

V. **The character of the judge.**—Gallio, an indifferent and haughty cynic. Rank and power often lead to such unbecoming dispositions.

VI. **The issues of the trial.**—1. To the prisoner, acquittal. 2. To the prosecutor, a beating. 3. To both, perhaps, the unexpected.

A Remarkable Trio; or, a character study.

I. **Paul,** the representative of religious zeal.

II. **Sosthenes,** the incarnation of religious intolerance.

III. **Gallio,** the type of religious indifference.

Sosthenes and Gallio; or, Paul's accuser and judge.

I. **The accuser.**—Sosthenes. 1. *His person.* Successor of Crispus. Perhaps afterwards with Paul in Ephesus and Macedonia (1 Cor. i. 1). 2. *His motives.* Mixed. (1) Responsibility for the dignity of the synagogue. (2) Anger at Crispus's defection. (3) Displeasure at Paul's success. 3. *His action.* Having caused Paul to be arrested, he brought the apostle before Gallio's judgment seat. Often easier to defeat a man at law than to overcome him in logic. 4. *His indictment.* He accused Paul of persuading men to worship contrary to the law. No civil crime imputed to Paul. Charged with propagating illegal tenets in religion.

II. **The judge.**—Gallio. 1. *A remarkable man.* Brother of Seneca. 2. *A remarkable character.* A person of talent and great amiability. 3. *A remarkable utterance.* "If, indeed, it were a matter of wrong," etc. Explain what this means (see "Critical Remarks" and "Homiletical Analysis"). 4. *A remarkable blunder.* Looking on with indifference while Sosthenes was being maltreated.

Gallio's Action.—"This action of the Imperial government in protecting Paul from the Jews, and (if we are right) declaring freedom in religious matters, seems to have been the crowning fact in determining Paul's conduct. According to our view, the residence at Corinth was an epoch in Paul's life. As regards his doctrine, he became more clearly conscious of its character, as well as more precise and definite in his presentation of it; and as regards practical work, he became more clear as to his aim, and the means of attaining the aim—namely, that Christianity should be spread through the civilised—*i.e.*, the Roman—world (not as excluding, but as preparatory to, the entire world, Col. iii. 11), using the freedom of speech which the Imperial policy as declared by Gallio seemed inclined to permit. The action of Gallio, as we understand it, seems to pave the way for Paul's appeal a few years later from the petty, outlying court of the procurator of Judæa, who was always much under the influence of the ruling party in Jerusalem, to the supreme tribunal of the empire."—Ramsay, *St. Paul, etc.*, pp. 259, 260.

Vers. 14-17. *Gallio's Behaviour.*

I. **How far it was right.**—1. In declining to interfere in the settlement of religious questions. 2. In expressing his readiness to investigate civil complaints.

II. **How far it was wrong.**—1. In not troubling himself to arrive at the truth about Paul. 2. In taking no cognisance of injustice towards Sosthenes.

Gallio, the Civil Magistrate.

I. His **judicial equity** and impartiality.

II. His **legal intelligence** and discrimination.

III. His **moral and religious indifference.**

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verees 18—22.

Paul's Return to Antioch; or, the Close of his Second Missionary Journey.

I. **Departure from Corinth.**—1. *After a somewhat prolonged stay.* At the time of Sosthenes's attempt to persecute Paul, the apostle, according to one view (Meyer), had been eighteen months in Corinth, when the failure of that attempt, the consequent notoriety his cause obtained, and the success which attended his labours, induced him to "remain yet many days" with his converts. According to the common interpretation (Alford, Lechler, Wendt, Hackett, Spence) the year and six months of ver. 11 embraced the whole period of his residence in that city. In either case, in addition to preaching and founding churches in the town and neighbourhood (2 Cor. i. 1)—as, *e.g.*, in Cenchrea (see Rom. xvi. 1)—he occupied

a part of his time in writing letters to the Thessalonians (the First and Second Epistles). 2. *With affectionate leave takings.* (1) Of his colleagues, Silas and (most likely also) Timothy, though the latter is found with him again in Ephesus on his third missionary journey (xix. 22). (2) Of his new friends—Stephanas and Crispus, with their households, whom he had baptised with his own hands (1 Cor. i. 14); Gaius, whom he also baptised (1 Cor. i. 14), and with whom he lodged on his next visit (Rom. xvi. 23); Fortunatus, Achaicus, and Chloe (1 Cor. i. 11, xvi. 17); with Erastus, the city chamberlain, and Quartus, a brother (Rom. xvi. 23). (3) Of the general body of converts, among whom were not many wise, or mighty, or noble, but only weak, ignorant, humble, and poor people (1 Cor. i. 26, 27), whom he had tended as babes in Christ (1 Cor. iii. 2), whom he regarded as his spiritual children (2 Cor. vi. 13), and for whose welfare he continued ever after to be solicitous. 3. *Accompanied by dear friends.* What induced Aquila and Priscilla to leave Corinth is not recorded. Perhaps they desired to enjoy longer the society of Paul, or to proceed to their home in Pontus, though circumstances, guided by providence, led to their being detained at Ephesus (ver. 26); but whatever may have been the motive which prompted them, their company would, without question, be helpful to Paul.

II. **Embarkation at Cenchrea.**—1. *The harbour of Corinth.* Cenchrea, Kichries, ten miles distant from Corinth, formed its eastern port, from which ships sailed to Asia; Lechæum, its western, for vessels bound to Italy, lay upon the other side of the Isthmus. At Cenchrea a Christian Church was early planted, presumably by the apostle's labours (Rom. xvi. 1). 2. *An incident before sailing.* Either Aquila (Grotius, Kuinoel, Meyer, Conybeare and Howson) or Paul (Augustine, Calvin, Bengel, Olshausen, Neander, Alford, Hackett, Plumptre, Spence, and others) shaved his head in consequence of having a vow. The only reasons for supposing that Aquila was the person who thus released himself from his vow are that the name Aquila immediately precedes the participle "having shorn," and that one feels a difficulty in perceiving why Paul should have entangled himself with such a worn-out Jewish custom while founding a Christian Church in Corinth. But (1) There does not appear sufficient cause for Luke recording anything about Aquila's vow, the principal actor in the story being Paul. (2) If Aquila had been under such a vow as is here referred to he must have proceeded to Jerusalem, and either shaved there in the temple, or, if the modification of the law permitted him to shave at Cenchrea, he must still have carried the hair to the temple and burnt it in the altar fire (Numb. vi.). (3) If the vow spoken lay on Paul, it need only be remembered that Paul, though a Christian," was still a Jew, and delighted, when able, without compromising his evangelical liberty, to observe Jewish customs—thus to the Jew becoming a Jew in order to gain the Jews (1 Cor. ix. 20-22). (4) It is not certain that Paul's vow was that of a Nazarite; but even if it was, the act performed was intended not as an assumption, but as a discharge of the vow. (5) More than likely the vow bound him to a modified asceticism as a sign and means of more earnest spiritual consecration, and was assumed as a visible expression of gratitude for the protection and success he had experienced at Corinth. 3. *The destination of the voyagers.* Immediately Syria, ultimately for Paul Jerusalem and Antioch.

III. **Sojourn in Ephesus.**—1. *The sail across the archipelago.* With a favourable wind this may have been accomplished in two or three days, though Cicero once spent fifteen on a voyage from Athens to Ephesus, and thirteen on the return trip. As the ship threaded its way among "the Isles of Greece" many ancient historical associations may have presented themselves to the mind of the apostle; but if they did (which is doubtful), the thoughts they occasioned have not been recorded, and probably were not expressed. 2. *The landing at Ephesus.* The ship, which was seemingly bound for Syria, would not stay long in the harbour of

Ephesus, but Paul and his companions disembarked, and made their first acquaintance with the famous ancient capital of Ionia, at that time the metropolis of proconsular Asia, the seat of a flourishing trade, the centre of the worship of Diana (xix. 14, which see), and afterwards the Christian metropolis of Asia Minor (see "Critical Remarks"). 3. *The work in the city.* Priscilla and Aquila no doubt followed their ordinary calling as they had done at Corinth, but Paul betook himself to preaching in the synagogue and reasoning with the Jews—according to his work, losing no opportunity of making known the gospel of the grace of God to the Jew first and also to the Gentile. Though not stated there would doubtless be here, as elsewhere, proselytes attached to the synagogue.

IV. **Voyage to Cæsarea.**—1. *After a brief stay in Ephesus.* So favourable an impression had he made upon his countrymen in that large commercial and intellectual but superstitious city, that his hearers would willingly have persuaded him to remain amongst them some time longer. This, however, they were unable to do, "He consented not." 2. *With kindly farewells to his countrymen.* Amongst these he had presumably made numerous friends and perhaps not a few converts, and from these he tore himself only under the constraint of a higher duty. For reasons not explained he deemed it incumbent on him to be present at the approaching festival in Jerusalem—either the Passover (Ewald, Renan), or more likely Pentecost (Wieseler), rather than Tabernacles, which would have made the voyage too late—and so he told his kinsmen. 3. *Promising to return.* If God should permit (compare James iv. 15). A promise soon after fulfilled (xix. 1). 4. *Unattended by his recent companions.* That Priscilla and Aquila remained behind in Ephesus appears to be the import of the clause—"and he left them there" (see "Critical Remarks"); and that they stayed behind the context shows.

V. **Visit to Jerusalem.**—1. *The certainty of this visit.* Having landed at Cæsarea (see viii. 40), he went up, not from the harbour to the town (Kuinoel, Blass), but from Cæsarea to Jerusalem. Compare the usual mode of expression (xi. 2, xv. 2, xxi. 12, 15, xxiv. 11, xxv. 1, 9; Gal. ii. 1, 2; Matt. xx. 18; Mark x. 32, 33; Luke ii. 42, xxiii. 31, xix. 28; John ii. 13, v. 1, vii. 8, 10, xi. 55, xii. 20). It forms no valid objection to this visit that it is not mentioned in Galatians. 2. *The number of this visit.* The fourth; the others having been—the first (ix. 26), the second (xi. 30), the third (xv. 2). 3. *The object of this visit.* (1) To keep the feast (see "Critical Remarks"). Whether he arrived in time for this is not told. (2) Perhaps to complete his vow by burning his hair in the temple. (3) Possibly to salute the Church there, which he did.

VI. **Return to Antioch.**—1. *How long he had been absent.* Uncertain. According to one computation (Wieseler) about three years, giving six months for Paul's journey between Antioch and Troas, six months for his work in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berœa, eighteen months for his stay in Corinth, and six months for the voyage from Corinth to Ephesus and Cæsarea, and the travel to Jerusalem and back to Antioch. 2. *Why he returned.* Because Antioch was the place from which he had been sent out, and was now practically become the Church's missionary centre. 3. *When he left.* After a brief stay. When he did depart it was probably for ever. No intimation is preserved of his having ever again visited the city. Antioch is not again mentioned by Luke.

Learn.—1. That earthly friendships should never be allowed to hinder the onward movements of God's servants and Christ's missionaries. 2. That legitimate vows voluntarily undertaken should be religiously paid. 3. That promises made by Christian people should be faithfully kept. 4. That missionaries ought to stir up the home Churches by frequent rehearsals of missionary intelligence. 5. That for the true apostle of Jesus Christ there can be no rest so long as it is day.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 18. *Vows in the Religious Life.*

I. **Are perfectly legitimate under the gospel.**—Though not enjoined in the Scriptures of the New Testament, Paul's example may be regarded as giving them a quasi sanction.

II. **Concern things which are, in themselves, morally indifferent.**—Whatever is already commanded lies outside the province, within which a vow is permissible.

III. **Should never be undertaken rashly.**—Otherwise unnecessary burdens may be laid on weak consciences.

IV. **When made should be faithfully performed.**—Better not vow than having vowed neglect to pay.

Ver. 21. *Keeping the Feast—a Communion Sermon.* "I must by all means keep this feast" (the Lord's Supper) "which cometh at Jerusalem."

I. **Because of the commandment I have received.**—"This do in remembrance of Me" (Luke xxii. 19).

II. **Because of the company I shall meet.**—Christ and His friends who are also my brethren (John xv. 14).

III. **Because of the benefit I shall receive.**—Spiritual nourishment and growth in grace (John vi. 55).

IV. **Because of the good I shall do.**—By 1. Confessing Christ before His Church and in sight of the world. 2. By encouraging my fellow-disciples to be steadfast in the faith.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 23-28.

Paul's Departure from Antioch; or, the Commencement of the Third Missionary Journey.

I. **On the way for Ephesus.**—1. *The time of starting.* After Paul had spent some time, obviously not long, in Antioch; either because of his impatience to be at his chosen lifework, carrying the gospel into regions beyond, or because he desired to get back as soon as possible to Ephesus, or because the unpleasant encounter with Peter (Gal. ii. 11-14), which most critics insert here, rendered it desirable for him to quit Antioch. It was now about the end of 54 A.D., or the beginning of 55 A.D. 2. *The line of travel.* Through the country of Galatia and Phrygia (see on xvi. 6). Probably passing north from Antioch through the Cilician Gates, visiting Tarsus on the way, and calling in upon the Churches of Lycaonia, Pisidia, and Pamphylia, though these are not mentioned. At any rate, he seems to have entered Galatia first and borne down on Ephesus through Phrygia. 3. *The business of the journey.* "Strengthening" or "establishing all the disciples," confirming the Churches and exhorting the believers (compare xiv. 22, xv. 32), perhaps also counselling them to "remember the poor," and instructing them how to lift contributions for this purpose (1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2). 4. *The names of his companions.* Not stated. But obviously Silas did not attend him on this occasion—possibly having stayed behind in Jerusalem, from which he had first started out with Barnabas (xv. 22), and where he originally held a leading place among the brethren; or having been left behind by Paul at Corinth (see ver. 18). Whether Timothy accompanied him at the outset is not clear, though on reaching Ephesus the two are again together (xix. 22). In Ephesus also Erastus, the chamberlain of Corinth (Rom. xvi. 23), shows at his side (xix. 22), having probably joined the apostle in that city. Probably also Titus, though not named in the Acts, travelled with Paul on this third missionary tour (see 2 Cor. viii. 6, 16-24).

II. **What occurred at Ephesus in the meanwhile.**—1. *The arrival of a distinguished stranger.* (1) His name. Apollos, an abbreviation of Apollonius. (2) His nationality. A Jew. (3) His birthplace. Alexandria in Egypt, "the emporium of Greek commerce from the time of its foundation, where, since the

earliest Ptolemies, literature, philosophy, and criticism had never ceased to excite the most intellectual activity; where the Septuagint translation of the Scripture had been made, and where a Jewish temple and ceremonial worship had been established in rivalry to that in Jerusalem" (Conybeare and Howson, *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, i. 36). (See "Critical Remarks.") (4) His reputation. A learned or eloquent man, especially in the Scriptures, in the understanding and exposition of which he was mighty. He had "probably been well trained in the rhetorical schools on the banks of the Nile" (Conybeare and Howson, ii. 7). (5) His knowledge. He was "instructed or taught by word of mouth in the way of the Lord," perhaps by one of John's disciples, or by John himself, whose ministry he may have attended. He knew the things of the Lord or concerning Jesus—*i.e.*, from the standpoint of John, whose baptism alone he had received. That he was not acquainted with the later facts of our Lord's history—as, *e.g.*, His death and resurrection, with all the doctrinal significance these contained—seems hinted in the narrative, which, however, may admit of his acquaintance with the person and work of Jesus as taught by John. (6) His piety. He was fervent in spirit (compare Rom. xii. 11); of a glowing religious disposition and ardent zeal in promoting the spread of the gospel as understood by him. (7) His activity. He taught carefully, and began to speak boldly in the synagogue. 2. *His meeting with Priscilla and Aquila.* (1) The place where this occurred was most likely the synagogue. "When Priscilla and Aquila heard him." (2) The impression made upon Priscilla and Aquila by his eloquent Scripture expositions was that he sincerely believed in the Messiah whom John had proclaimed, but had not a perfect knowledge of the facts of Christ's history or an accurate understanding of the plan of salvation which was grounded on them. (3) Accordingly they undertook to expound, and in point of fact did expound to him, the way of God more carefully. Whether Priscilla and Aquila had first learnt the story of the Cross in Rome from Pentecostal pilgrims, or in Ephesus from Paul, cannot be decided (see on ver. 3), neither can it be ascertained whether Apollos had been baptised by John or his disciples, or whether, if he had been, he was a second time baptised. The incident in xix. 1-7 would suggest rebaptism in the name of Christ if that ordinance had previously been administered to him. 3. *His departure from the city.* After learning the way of God more accurately he conceived the design of crossing over into Achaia. (1) His reasons for doing so may have been "a delicate reserve which prevented him from coming forward again in Ephesus, where he had already appeared with such unripe and defective knowledge" (Lechler), or a desire from what he heard of the Corinthian Church from Priscilla and Aquila to labour there, or both. (2) His way was smoothed for him by the brethren at Ephesus, who, willing to part with their eloquent teacher for the good of Corinth, encouraged him (not exhorted the Corinthians), and gave him to the Church there "letters of commendation" (2 Cor. iii. 1). (3) His resolution was providentially stamped as right by the success which attended his ministry in Achaia, which was both helpful to them who had believed through grace, and effective in defending the truth against the Jews, whom "he powerfully confuted and that publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ."

Learn.—1. That an imperfectly enlightened Christian may be instrumental in doing much good. 2. That persons of eminent parts may be greatly helped in the religious life by individuals of obscure position and slender gifts. 3. That private Christians may sometimes do the work of theological colleges and ecclesiastical boards. 4. That ministers of eminent gifts, grace being equal, may be expected to do better service in the Church than ministers of lesser endowments. 5. That Christian Churches should diligently seek out and train those among them who appear best fitted for the ministry.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 24. *Apollos: a Model Preacher.*

I. **Eloquent in speech.**

II. **Mighty in the Scriptures** (ver. 24).

III. **Fervent in spirit** (ver. 25).

IV. **Courageous in heart** (ver. 26).

V. **Humble in mind** (ver. 26).

VI. **Unwearied in service** (ver. 27).

VII. **Powerful in reasoning** (ver. 28).

Ver. 25. *The Way of the Lord.*

I. A **Divine** way. The same as the way of God. The two expressions imply the doctrine of Christ's divinity.

II. A **Prophetic** way. Foreannounced by prophets and teachers of the Old Dispensation. The Messianic element in Old Testament prophecy.

III. A **Scriptural** way. The value of Old Testament Scripture as a testimony to Christ. The Old Testament the basis and support of the New.

Ver. 26. *Growth in Christian Knowledge.*

I. **Necessary** for all, even for the gifted (ver. 24).

II. **Attainable** by humble desire of learning (ver. 26).

III. **Fruitful**, by blessed working for God (vers. 27, 28).

Ver. 27. *All of Grace.*

I. **The faith of the Christian believer** (compare Eph. ii. 8).

II. **The success of the Christian minister** (compare 1 Cor. iii. 7).

Vers. 24-28. *The Biography of Apollos.*

I. **The details of his early history.**—1. *By descent a Jew.* The honour and privilege of having been descended from Abraham (John viii. 39; Rom. iii. 1, ix. 4, 5). 2. *By birth an Alexandrian.* An additional privilege to be born in a great centre of light and civilisation. How much more to be cradled in a Christian land! 3. *By talent an eloquent or learned man.* Neither possible without a combination of remarkable powers, clearness of perception, retentiveness of memory, readiness of reproduction, quickness of emotion. 4. *By religion a half Christian.* Distinguished at this stage by three things: (1) his large acquaintance with Scripture; (2) his position as a disciple of John; and (3) his activity as a preacher.

II. **The story of his conversion to Christianity.**—1. *How providentially it was brought about.* By meeting with Aquila and Priscilla who, on their way to Pontus probably, had stayed at Ephesus. So the hand of God is in every man's conversion, though not always as plainly seen. 2. *How humbly it was brought about.* By no special manifestation of Christ, such as Paul enjoyed. By no angel ministers like those who were commissioned to lead the Eunuch and Cornelius into the light. Not even by an apostle like Paul or by an evangelist like Philip. But by two private and comparatively obscure Christians, named Aquila and Priscilla. 3. *How quietly it was brought about.* No vulgar noise or sensational appeals. Simply quiet teaching. Imparting the truth and allowing it to do its own work.

III. **His subsequent career as a Christian preacher.**—1. *He began with his own people.* As Christ commanded His disciples to begin at Jerusalem (Luke xxiv. 47); and as Andrew first found his own brother (John i. 41). 2. *He passed over into Europe.* Visited the Churches in Achaia, and specially that of Corinth, where he laboured in the house of Justus among the people Paul had gathered—and laboured so successfully that a party rallied round him as if he had been a rival of the apostle (1 Cor. i. 12), which he was not. Nor was Paul ever jealous of him, since he was afterwards in Paul's company when the First Epistle to the Corinthians was written (1 Cor. xvi. 12).

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PROGRESS OF THE THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY (PAUL AND TIMOTHY).

§ 1. Paul's Return to Ephesus; or, the Re-Baptism of some Disciples of John (vers. 1-7).
§ 2. A Three Years' Ministry in Ephesus; or, a Great Door opened for the Gospel (vers. 8-12).
§ 3. An Incident in Ephesus; or, the Story of Scæva's Sons (vers. 13-20).
§ 4. Paul's Last Days in Ephesus; or, Contemplating New Plans (vers. 21-22).
§ 5. A Popular Tumult in Ephesus; or, the Temple of Diana endangered (vers. 23-41).

CRITICAL REMARKS.

Ver. 1. **While Apollos was at Corinth.**—A note of time for the incidents narrated in the present chapter. **The upper coasts,** or the upper country.—The district mentioned above (xviii. 23) as the region of Galatia and Phrygia, and commonly regarded as the territory of Northern Galatia (see on xvi. 6), though Prof. Ramsay explains the term "upper coasts," or "higher districts," as the elevated mountain country of Phrygia which separates the Sangarios from the salt lake Anava, both of which were situated in Low Phrygia, and understands Luke to intimate that instead of pursuing the ordinary caravan route to Ephesus, which "passed along the coast of Lake Anava as it descends to Laodicea," Paul "traversed the higher districts—*i.e.*, preferred the shorter hill road practicable for foot passengers, but not for wheeled traffic, by way of Seiblia" (*The Church in the Roman Empire*, p. 94). **Came to Ephesus, and finding,** should, according to the best authorities, be read *came to Ephesus, and found.* One MS. (Codex D) begins the verse thus: "But Paul, desirous according to his own plan to proceed to Jerusalem, the Spirit told him to turn aside into Asia." (See "Critical Remarks" on xviii. 19.) **Certain disciples.**—Baur detects a contradiction, and therefore a sign of untruthfulness, in these men being called disciples when they had not been baptised.

Ver. 2. **Whether there be any Holy Ghost.**—Better, *whether a Holy Spirit is*; probably (as in John vii. 39) whether a Holy Spirit is given at baptism or on profession of faith.

Ver. 4. Omit **verily** and **Christ.** The verse is not to be read as if Paul intended to say that John baptised in order that the people should believe (Meyer), but his meaning is that while John baptised he spoke to the people that they should believe.

Ver. 7. **Twelve men.**—The truthfulness of this story is impeached on three grounds: (1) the unlikelihood of Paul's meeting accidentally with these, when Aquila could have told him about them before; and (2) the improbability that none of these twelve had ever heard of the Messiahship of Jesus and of the baptism of the Holy Ghost from some one of their own kind who had been converted (Wendt); and (3) the difficulty of seeing why they should have required to be baptised and Apollos not (Holtzmann). But, perhaps (1) Paul knew of their existence before he met them; (2) they may never have met with Apollos or Aquila; and (3) Apollos may have been baptised.

Ver. 9. **Believed not** might also be rendered *were disobedient.* **The way.**—See on ix. 2. **Tyrannus.**—Otherwise unknown. Hardly the possessor of a private synagogue (Meyer); may have been a professor of philosophy or rhetoric, who rented his academy to Paul (Zimmermann), or, if converted, gave the use of it free. From the circumstance that the name occurs in the *Columbarium* of the household of Livia on the Appian Way, and as belonging to one who is described as a *medicus*, Plumptre thinks Tyrannus may have been a physician whom Luke knew, if not also a Jew who, like Aquila and Priscilla, had been expelled from Rome by Claudius's decree, and who also shared their faith. It is uncertain whether Tyrannus may not have been dead, or at least removed from Ephesus (Overbeck), though his name still adhered to the building in which he had taught.

Ver. 10. **All they who dwelt in Asia heard the word.**—This might well be, considering that Ephesus constituted the commercial centre for the whole of Asia Minor.

Ver. 11. **Special miracles.**—*Not to be met with every day* (compare xxviii. 2), uncommon, extraordinary: in which Paul acted as an instrument in God's hand. On the ground that these miracles resembled those performed by Peter's shadow (v. 15), their historical credibility has been assailed (Baur, Zeller, Holtzmann). But if Peter's shadow worked a

miracle, why should not Paul's aprons have done the same? And if the Holy Spirit found occasion to use such uncommon methods with Peter, why not also with Paul? The special circumstances of Paul in a superstitious city, whose population believed in magic, called for special exhibitions of Divine power. (Compare on v. 15.)

Ver. 12. **Handkerchiefs.**—Lit., *sweat-cloths* (σουδάρια, a translation of the Latin *sudaria*)—*i.e.*, cloths for wiping the sweat from the face; made of white linen or cotton, and used alike by kings and common people. **Aprons** (σμικίνθια, also formed from the Latin *semicincta*) were such linen garments as artizans and servants were accustomed to wear at work.

Ver. 13. **Vagabond.**—*I.e.*, wandering about, or strolling **Jews, exorcists,** by profession (compare Matt. xii. 28). "They appear to have regarded Paul as one of their own class, but of a higher order" (Hackett). For **we** read *I*.

Ver. 14. **Which did so** should be *doing this*, as a habit—*i.e.*, pretending to do so, because it cannot be assumed that they did so in reality. Christ's language (Matt. xii. 27) does not necessarily imply that the Jewish exorcists could successfully expel demons.

Ver. 16. **And overcame them.**—The best MSS. read *both* instead of "them." **Naked** need not signify more than "stripped of their outer garment." Compare Mark xiv. 52; John xxi. 7.

Ver. 17. **And this was known** should be rendered *and this became known.* **Fear fell.**—ἐπέπεσε φόβος, as in Luke i. 12.

Ver. 18. **Many that believed.**—Rather, *of those who had believed—i.e.*, not of those who were newly converted by this occurrence (Alford, Meyer, Holtzmann), but of those who had believed and were still believers (Lechler, Zöckler, Plumptre, Spence). **Confessed and shewed** would be better translated *confessing and declaring.* **Their deeds.**—Not their sins in general (Kuinoel), but their superstitious practices (Olshausen, Meyer, Holtzmann).

Ver. 19. Those **who used curious arts.**—Lit., *practised things over-wrought*—*i.e.*, superfluous, curious things—a mild expression for magical arts. **Their books.**—Those which contained their spells, charms, magical formulæ, and such like. The so-called "Ephesian letters," γράμματὰ Ἐφέσια, were "small slips of parchment in silk bags, on which were written strange cabalistic words, of little or of lost meaning" (Plumptre).

Ver. 20. With regard to the preceding verses Ramsay (*St. Paul, etc.*, 273) says:—"In this Ephesian description one feels the character, not of weighed and reasoned history, but of popular fancy; and I cannot explain it on the level of most of the narrative. . . . The puzzle becomes still more difficult when we go on to ver. 23 and find ourselves again on the same level as the finest part of Acts. If there were many such contrasts in the book as between vers. 11-20 and 23-41, I should be a believer in the composite character of Acts. As it is, I confess the difficulty in this part; but the existence of some unsolved difficulties is not a bar to the view maintained in the present treatise"—the view, namely, of the historical credibility of Acts as a whole. The literary contrast may be perfectly explained by supposing that Luke compiled this chapter from papers written by separate authors.

Ver. 22. **Timothy.**—See on xvi. 1. **Erastus.**—Whether the city treasurer of Corinth (Rom. xvi. 23) or Paul's helper in Rome (2 Tim. iv. 20), or whether both were the same individual is debated. For the nature of this mission of Timothy and Erastus see 1 Cor. iv. 17-19, and compare "Hints."

Ver. 23. **The way.**—See on ix. 2.

Ver. 24. **Demetrius.**—The name has been found in an inscription, exhumed in Ephesus and supposed (Hicks) to belong to A.D. 50-60, recording a public honour decreed to the Neopoioi or temple wardens of Ephesus in the year of Demetrius. **Silver shrines for** (rather *of*) **Diana.**—Not silver coins stamped with the picture of the temple (Beza, Scaliger, Piscator), but miniature representations in silver of the temple, which strangers visiting the city were accustomed to purchase. **No small gain** should be either *no little business* (R.V.), or *no small wages* (Hackett) to the craftsmen.

Ver. 27. **The temple of the great goddess Diana.**—Reckoned one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. This was in 1869, after having for centuries been buried, rediscovered by the late Mr. J. T. Wood, F.S.A., who found remains of three separate buildings about a mile from the nearest (or N.E.) city gate. The earliest of the three temples had been commenced B.C. 480, by Ctesiphon and his son Metagenes, completed by Demetrius, a priest of Diana, and Pæonius, an Ephesian, and destroyed soon after. The second was erected on the same site by an unknown architect, and burnt down by Erostratus on the day Alexander was born, B.C. 356. The third, of which Dinocrates, a Macedonian, was the designer, was in course of erection when Alexander, having visited Ephesus, offered to complete it at his own expense if the people would allow him (which they would not) to dedicate it, when finished, to Artemis in his own name. This building, which was octostyle, having eight columns in front, and dipteral, having two ranks of fluted columns in the peristyle, was 163 feet 9½ inches in width from face to face of columns, and 342 feet 6½ inches in length. The cella or naos of the temple was 70 feet wide, and was doubtless hypæthral, or open to the sky. (See *Modern Discoveries on the Site of Ancient Ephesus: Bypaths of Bible Knowledge*, pp. 73, 77, 81.)

Ver. 29. **The theatre.**—Explored in 1866, this was found to have been built against the steep western side of Mount Coressus, to have been 495 feet in diameter, to have had a pulpitum or stage 22 feet deep and 110 feet in diameter, and to have been capable of containing 24,500 persons (*Ibid.*, p. 33).

Ver. 31. **Certain of the chief of Asia.**—*οἱ Ἀσιαρχαί.* These were the ten presidents of the Sacred Rites and public games, "officials of the imperial cultus" (Ramsay), in pro-consular Asia (Enseb, *H. E.*, iv. 15). In the same way other districts were provided with similar officers; as, *e.g.*, Galatia with Galatiarchs, Bithynia with Bithyniarchs, Syria with Syriarchs. These were commonly "selected chiefly on account of their wealth, and sometimes against their will" (Ramsay).

Ver. 33. **Alexander.**—His identification with the individual named in 2 Tim. iv. 14 is at least doubtful. (See "Homiletical Analysis.")

Ver. 34. **Great is Diana** (or Artemis) **of the Ephesians.**—*Μεγάλη ἡ Ἄρτεμις Ἐφεσίων.* Codex D reads, *Μεγάλη Ἄρτεμις*, Great Diana (Artemis), which, says Professor Ramsay, formed "a stock phrase of Artemis-worship," in which it was usual to insist upon the great power of the goddess. He adduces "the invocations 'Great Apollo' at Dionysopolis, 'Great Anaitis' in the Katakekaumene, 'Great Artemis' in Lesbos," as affording "complete corroboration of the title 'Great Artemis' mentioned in Acts" (*The Church in the Roman Empire*, pp. 135-139). He further cites as parallels an inscription in which the Cappadocian god, Zeus of Venasa, is addressed as "Great Zeus in heaven"; and several coins found at Laodicea, on the Lycus, which bear the legend ΖΕΥΣ ΑΣΕΙΟΣ, signifying, with probable accuracy, as M. Waddington has suggested, "Mighty Zeus." Prof. Ramsay even thinks that the Baal worshippers on Mount Carmel (1 Kings xviii. 26) may have used the epithet "great" (*Ibid.*, p. 142).

Ver. 35. **The town-clerk.**—Often mentioned in Ephesian inscriptions. **A worshipper.**—Lit., *temple keeper. νεωκόρος*, a term founded on Ephesian coins struck about Paul's time, originally signified a temple servant whose business it was to sweep out and decorate the temple, and ultimately grew to be an *epitheton ornans*, or honorary title of towns in Asia Minor which were specially devoted to the service of any divinity, and possessed a temple consecrated to that divinity. **The** *image* **which fell down from Jupiter** was the celebrated statue of the many-breasted Artemis (*Diana multimammia*, Jerome), made, according to Vitruvius, of cedar wood, according to Pliny, of vine wood, according to Xenophon, of gold, and covered with mystical inscriptions on brow, girdle, and feet. The tradition of its origin—similar to that which prevailed concerning a statue of Artemis in Tauris (Eurip., *Iph. in T.*, 977), and one of Pallas at Athens (*Iph. in I.*, xxvi. 6)—suggests that it was probably "a large aerolite, such as are found in Norway, and which, shaped by a sculptor of the day, might have been pieced out and made to assume a form similar to the well-known statues of Diana in the Museo Reale at Naples, and in the museum at Monreale, near Palermo" (*Modern Discoveries on the Site of Ancient Ephesus*, pp. 77, 78).

Ver. 37. **These men** were Gaius and Aristarchus (ver. 29). **Robbers of churches**, or *temples* (R.V.). "The temples among the heathen contained votive offerings and other gifts, and were often plundered" (Hackett). Compare Jos., *Ant.*, XVIII. iii. 5.

Ver. 38. **The law is open.**—Better, *the courts are open*, or court days are being held. **Deputies** should be *pro-consuls* (see on xiii. 7). "The coins of Ephesus show that the pro-consular authority was fully established there in the reign of Nero" (Hackett).

Ver. 39. **A lawful**, or, *the regular* **assembly.**—The ordinary civil tribunal, or popular gathering, called and presided over by the chief magistrate of the city. This assembly is mentioned in the Ephesian inscriptions (Wood, p. 38).

Ver. 40. **To be called in question for this day's uproar**; or, *to be accused of riot concerning this day.*—The town clerk frightened them with the prospect of a Roman "execution" or investigation into the tumult, for which he said "there was no cause," rather than "for which no one was the cause" (*Vulgate*).

NOTE ON THE HISTORIC CREDIBILITY OF ACTS XIX. 23-41.

I. **Against.**—"It is certainly possible, and even probable, that zeal for the great Artemis, the boast of the city, and the interests attached to her cultus, occasioned Paul's distress in Ephesus; it is possible that the name of Demetrius, the leader of the movement against him, is historical, that some such episode as that associated with Alexander took place, and that Gaius and Aristarchus were menaced with Paul. But the description of events cannot be correct—*i.e.*, according to the facts—and its separate points possess merely the value of a faint and shadowy outline of actual reminiscences" (Weizsäcker, *The Apostolic Age* [E. T.], i. 391).

II. **For.**—"It is impossible for any one to invent a tale, whose scene lies in a foreign land, without betraying in slight details his ignorance of the scenery and circumstances amid which the event is described as taking place. Unless the writer studiously avoids details, and confines himself to names and generalities, he is certain to commit numerous errors.

Even the most laborious and minute study of the circumstances of the country in which he is to lay his scene will not preserve him from such errors . . ." But "the more closely we are able to test the story in Acts (xix. 23-41), the more vivid and true to the situation and surroundings does it prove to be, and the more justified are we in pressing closely every inference from the little details that occur in it. I entertain the strong hope that the demonstration which has now been given of its accuracy in disputed points will do away with all future doubt as to the faithfulness of the picture that it gives of Ephesian society in A.D. 57" (Prof. Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire*, p. 141).

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.

Vers. 1-7. *Paul's return to Ephesus; or, the Re-Baptism of some of John's Disciples.*

I. **The Apostle's meeting with these disciples.**—1. *When he encountered them.* On returning to Ephesus, which he reached (1) by way of the upper coasts (or country), meaning probably the mountainous regions (as distinguished from the lower elevations (see "Critical Remarks") of Phrygia or of Asia as distinguished from the low ground on which Ephesus was situated, and (2) after Apollos had departed and was established in Corinth, where he laboured in the gospel with such acceptance as to draw around himself a considerable body of adherents who recognised him as their spiritual teacher (1 Cor. i. 12, iii. 4, 5, 6). 2. *Who they were.* Certain disciples—*i.e.*, believers in the Christian faith, twelve in number, "living," probably, "together as a kind of ascetic community, attending the meetings of the Church, yet not sharing the fulness of its life" (Plumptre)—who, like Apollos (xviii. 25), had some knowledge of the way of the Lord as proclaimed by the Baptist, and had even been baptised by the forerunner or one of his disciples—it is not certain that Apollos was baptised (but see "Critical Remarks," ver. 7)—but were totally unacquainted with the later facts of Christ's history, and with the Spirit baptism of Pentecost. 3. *His surprise at meeting them.* The credibility of the narrative is half suspected by Holtzmann on the ground that Paul should not have felt any surprise at falling in with the twelve followers of the Baptist, since Aquila must have prepared him for such a meeting by relating his experience with Apollos; while Wendt is half inclined to doubt whether the disciples spoken of could have been so ignorant as they are represented, if they were really converted; and Ramsay cannot understand how these men could have "escaped the knowledge of Aquila, Priscilla, and Apollos, and yet attracted Paul's attention before he went to the synagogue." But (1) Paul may have met these disciples on his first arrival in the city and before he had resumed acquaintance with his old friends Aquila and Priscilla. (2) The disciples in question may easily enough have accepted the Baptist's account of Christ and submitted to baptism without having subsequently learnt about the Resurrection and Ascension, with the Pentecostal effusion of the Holy Ghost. And (3) it is gratuitous to assume that Paul did not learn of the existence of John's followers from Aquila and Priscilla, while his knowledge of the state of imperfectly developed Christianity in which Apollos was, may have been the very circumstance which led him to suspect that the disciples now spoken of were in a similar condition.

II. **The Apostle's conversation with these disciples.**—1. *The first question addressed to them by Paul.* "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" or "Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?" (1) The import of this question was, not whether they were acquainted with the personality of the Holy Spirit, or whether they had received the Holy Spirit at any period subsequent to their believing, but whether on the occasion of their first profession of faith (by baptism) they had been the subjects of any supernatural endowment with spiritual gifts. (2) The object of the question was to ascertain

whether they had been baptised after a full and distinct profession of faith in the crucified and risen Christ. (3) The sufficiency of the question arose from this, that had they been baptised with true Christian baptism, then undoubtedly they must have received some spiritual gift (compare x. 44, 45; Rom. i. 11), whereas if they had not received any such gift, then they could not have been baptised with Christian baptism, and must still be imperfectly instructed Christians. 2. *The answer returned by them to Paul.* "We have not so much as heard" (or, we did not so much as hear) "whether there be any Holy Ghost" (or, whether the Holy Ghost *was given*). Again (1) the sense of this reply can hardly have been that they had never heard of the existence of a Holy Spirit (Hackett), since, as Bengel remarks, they could scarcely have been followers either of Moses or of the Baptist without attaining to such knowledge (Exod. xxxi. 3, xxxv. 31; Numb. xxvii. 18; Matt. iii. 11); but (2) must have been that when received into the faith either nothing had been said about the Holy Spirit at all (Alford), or nothing had been spoken about a dispensation of the Spirit being connected with the act of reception into the Church by faith (Lechler). 3. *The second question addressed to them by Paul.* "Unto" or into "what then were ye baptised?" What was the object of your faith and the subject of your confession when ye were baptised? The questions presuppose that some declaration was made either by them of their faith, or by the administrant of the baptismal rite of the significance of the ordinance, perhaps by both. 4. *The second answer returned by them.* "They said, Unto (or into) John's baptism." Not unto John as the Messiah, or unto John as their spiritual leaders which would certainly have been "opposed to the humility and the entire character of the Baptist" (Lechler); but into that repentance and faith in the coming Messiah which John preached, and to the exercise of which he took those bound who submitted to the rite of baptism. 5. *The further instruction supplied them by Paul.* This consisted in (1) an exposition of the true purport of John's baptism, which was designed to point his hearers to a Messiah who was to come and commit them to faith in that Messiah when he did come, and (2) an intimation that that Messiah had come in the person of Jesus, on whom therefore it was now their duty to believe. 6. *The response given by them to this instruction.* When they heard it they did not dispute the correctness of the apostle's teaching, but believed. This, though not stated, must be assumed.

III. **The Apostle's re-baptism of these disciples.**—1. The *fact* of it. The text cannot be read in this way—"When they (John's disciples) heard (what their Master, John, said) they were baptised (by John) in the name of the Lord Jesus," as if it were a continuation of Paul's remarks (Beza and others),—even to wrest it from the Anabaptists. That the baptism was performed by Paul is as clear as it is true that John never baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus. 2. The *manner* of it. Most likely, as was Paul's usual practice (1 Cor. i. 14), by the hands of another than himself, though this is not absolutely certain. 3. The *accompaniment* of it. The laying on of hands upon the baptised disciples. This was performed by the apostle, and was instantly followed by the descent upon them of the Holy Ghost so that they forthwith "spake with tongues and prophesied" (compare x. 44-46). 4. The *inference* from it. Not that re-baptism is always necessary when conversion intervenes after the first. It is not demonstrable that those who had been baptised by John's baptism were always re-baptised on becoming Christian disciples. Doubtless among the thousands baptised at Pentecost were many who had been baptised by John; but no evidence appears that the apostles who had only received John's baptism were re-baptised. Possibly in their case the baptism with fire at Pentecost rendered the repetition of the water rite unnecessary. The re-baptism of Apollos is also problematical.

Learn.—1. That genuine faith may coexist with very imperfect knowledge of Christian truth. 2. That sincere faith will always be ready to receive further enlightenment. 3. That a properly instructed faith always looks towards and rests on the name of the Lord Jesus. 4. That true faith is always followed by the reception of the Holy Spirit. 5. That Christian baptism once received does not need to be repeated.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 2. *On receiving the Holy Ghost.*

I. **The necessity of receiving the Holy Ghost.**—That one who has believed in Jesus must also receive the Holy Ghost was: I. *The express declaration of prophecy.* See the utterances on this subject of Isaiah, Joel, Ezekiel, Zechariah, John the Baptist. 2. *The explicit promise of Christ Himself.* As, for instance, to the woman of Samaria (John iv. 14) and to the Jews in the temple (John vii. 38, 39); to the twelve at the supper table (John xiv. 16, 17, xv. 26, xvi. 7), and again to the eleven after His resurrection (Luke xxiv. 49). 3. *The unambiguous assertion of Christ's apostles.* Examine the language of Peter (ii. 38, v. 32), of Paul (Gal. iv. 6; Eph. i. 13), and of John (1 John iii. 24).

II. **Marks by which the Holy Ghost's presence in the heart may be known.**—In the early apostolic age of the Church the descent of the Holy Ghost upon a believer revealed itself in certain miraculous endowments which were thereby communicated to him, such as the gift of tongues (ver. 6), the gift of prophecy, or of healing or of discerning spirits, or of interpretation of tongues (1 Cor. xii. 9, 10). Now it is recognised by such signs as: 1. *Inward illumination*, the Holy Ghost being a spirit of truth (John xiv. 17), whose office it is to guide into all truth (John xvi. 13); compare 1 John ii. 20. 2. *Growing sanctity*, the Holy Ghost being a spirit of purity, as His name implies, and bringing holiness into the heart as He imparts light to the understanding (Eph. v. 9). 3. *Habitual devotion*, the Holy Ghost being essentially a spirit of grace and supplication (Zech. xii. 10).

III. **Advantages that result from receiving the Holy Ghost.**—The reception of the Holy Spirit by a believer *constitutes* 1. *A true bond of union between the believer's soul and Christ.* The union of Christ to His people and of believers to Christ is not merely external, forensic, legal, but also internal, moral, and spiritual (1 John iv. 13). 2. *A seal of the believer as Christ's purchased possession.* By the gift of the Holy Spirit, Christ, as it were, claims the believer as His own (Eph. i. 13). 3. *An earnest of the believer's inheritance.* The indwelling of the Holy Ghost is the foretaste of future glory (Eph. i. 14).

Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? The influences of the Holy Spirit are extraordinary and ordinary. His ordinary influences are those which are exerted in conversion and after conversion. It is of the Spirit's work in believers I shall now speak. 1. Have ye received the Holy Ghost as a teacher? Believers need instruction. They do not receive a new revelation. The author of the Book explains it to them. On what subjects? The house of the interpreter. 2. Have ye received the Holy Ghost as a guide? Believers need guidance as well as instruction. Practical religion. No Urim and Thummim. The Bible a guide-book. Ministers and Christian friends convey information about the route. The Holy Spirit is the guide. Mentor. 3. Have ye received the Holy Ghost as a sanctifier? Believers do not learn all at once the plagues of their own heart. They are led from one apartment to another of the chambers of imagery. They desire to be holy as the miser desires gold, or the scholar knowledge, or the

statesman power. They use the means, but rely on the Holy Spirit. 4. Have ye received the Holy Ghost as a comforter? He is a comforter because He administers consolation to believers in seasons of affliction. But more. He supplies to them strength adequate to every exigency. And more. He bestows on them true and lasting happiness. 5. Have ye received the Holy Ghost as an intercessor? Distinguish between the intercession of the Spirit and that of Christ.—*G. Brooks.*

Ver. 3. *On the Import of Baptism.*—"Into what were ye baptised?" Into

I. **Repentance of sin.**

II. **Faith in Jesus Christ.**

III. **Resolution after new obedience.**

IV. **Submission to the leading of the Holy Ghost.**

Vers. 3, 5. *The two Masters, John and Christ.*

I. Human masters may transmit their words; Christ only can impart His Spirit.

II. Human masters may teach the elements; Christ only can conduct to the goal.

III. Human masters may establish schools; Christ only can found a Church.—*Gerok.*

Ver. 6. *The Tongues which the Holy Ghost gives.*

I. **The tongue of the wise.**—The tongue of truth, the tongue of knowledge (Prov. xv. 2; Mal. ii. 7; Eph. iv. 25).

II. **The tongue of the holy.**—The tongue of righteousness, the tongue of purity (Psalm xxxv. 28, xxxix. 1; 2 Pet. i. 21).

III. **The tongue of the loving.**—The tongue of kindness, the tongue of soft speech (Prov. xxxi. 26; Eph. iv. 15).

IV. **The tongue of the learned.**—The tongue of eloquence, the tongue of persuasive speech (Isa. l. 4; Psalm xlv. 1).

V. **The tongue of the earnest.**—The tongue of fire, the tongue of zealous utterance (Isa. vi. 7; Acts ii. 3).

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 8—12.

A Three Years' Ministry in Ephesus; or, a Great Door opened for the Gospel (1 Cor. xvi. 8, 9).

I. **Three months in the synagogue of the Jews.**—1. *Paul's unchanging theme.* "The things concerning the kingdom of God." "This one thing I do" (Phil. iii. 13), constituted Paul's motto in preaching. "Jesus Christ and Him crucified" formed his unvarying text, whether in Corinth or Ephesus. (1) He knew none loftier to set before the human intellect, or (2) better suited to his hearers' wants, or (3) more worthy of the consecration of all his powers to proclaim. Besides (4), it had been assigned him by his exalted Master, and (5) possessed for him exhaustless fulness of meaning as well as of perennial interest. The preacher or evangelist, minister or missionary, who substitutes for this any branch of secular science has both mistaken his calling and thrown away his best weapon for combating the ills of life and saving the souls of men. 2. *Paul's customary manner.* (1) Reasoning and persuading, addressing himself to the intellects and hearts of his hearers (compare xviii. 4). (2) And doing so not apologetically, which is apt to degenerate into apologisingly, but boldly, as one who knew that what he spoke was true and understood that he had a secret ally in the bosom of every man and woman who listened to him (2 Cor. iv. 2). 3. *Paul's usual experience.* "Divers were hardened and believed not, but spake evil of that [or the] way" (compare xvii. 5, 13, xviii. 6); which implies that some were subdued by the apostle's preaching and led to believe. The same gospel that softens some hardens others. It is a savour either of life or of death to every man who hears.

II. **Two years in the school of Tyrannus.**—1. The *place* here mentioned was

the building or semicircle in which one Tyrannus, otherwise unknown, but probably a teacher of philosophy or rhetoric, or a physician (*Plumptre*)—perhaps one of Paul's converts—was accustomed to instruct his pupils or cure his patients. Whether it was rented by the apostle and his friends, or freely opened to them by Tyrannus, as Justus's house had been (xviii. 7), cannot be decided. 2. The *work* carried on in this school was the old business that had occupied the apostle in the synagogue—viz., preaching, "disputing," or reasoning. Nor was it only on the Sabbaths, but on all the weekdays, that the apostle so laboured. 3. The *result* of his efforts was that, in spite of the exertions of his enemies to hinder the progress of the gospel, "all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks." If all who heard were not converted, many were; and these in turn would help to bear the truth into regions beyond.

III. **Three years with the people of the city.**—For this item of information we are indebted to Paul's subsequent address to the Ephesian elders (xx. 31) His occupation during this period was varied. 1. *Preaching in the synagogue* on Sabbaths for a space of three months, as above stated. 2. *Teaching in the school* of Tyrannus for two years, as just mentioned. 3. For nine months more, or for three years in all, *visiting from house to house*, and testifying both to Jews and Greeks repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ (ɔ 20, 21). 4. *Working*, or God working through him, *miracles* of a special kind—*i.e.*, greater than ordinary—lit., *not such as may be met with any day* (compare xxviii. 2), because of the special circumstances in which he was placed, in the midst of a heathen population that trusted in "charms, amulets, and mystic letters." Amongst these miracles were healings of diseased and demonised persons, which were effected by the apostle's handkerchiefs or aprons (lit., *sweat-cloths*, for wiping the sweat from the brow or face, or *girdles*, such as artizans and servants were accustomed to wear when about their work) being seized upon and brought into contact with the bodies of the afflicted. These miracles were obviously like those wrought by the hem of Christ's garment (Luke viii. 43-46), and by Peter's shadow (v. 15). (See "Critical Remarks"). 5. *Writing an epistle* to the Corinthians—probably a letter which is now lost (1 Cor. v. 9), but certainly the first of the two letters which have been preserved. 6. Paying *a brief visit to Corinth*, of which Luke has handed down no account (see 2 Cor. xii. 14, xiii. 1). 7. *Working at his trade.* An additional item of information derived from the address at Miletus (xx. 34). Compare xviii. 3.

Learn.—1. That Christ's people have in every age been evil spoken of. 2. That Christ's ministers and people should not resist evil, but retire from before it. 3. That a faithfully preached gospel cannot be kept from spreading throughout the land. 4. That God can work miracles by any sort of means, and even, if need be, without means. 5. That Christ's gospel is the most powerful remedial agency the world has ever seen.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 9. *Speaking Evil of the Way.*—A sin—

I. **Common.**—Christianity is slandered by every class of its opponents.

II. **Old.**—Christianity has been exposed to such treatment ever since it began its victorious career.

III. **Foolish.**—To tell lies about Christianity is not the way to prove it untrue; to call it bad names does not show it to be bad; to insinuate against it will not eventually hinder it.

IV. **Mean.**—Most of those who advance charges against Christianity know these charges to be groundless.

V. **Heinous.**—To speak evil of the way is to speak evil of Him whose way it is; and God will not hold him guiltless who slanders His son. "For this is an heinous crime; yea, it is an

iniquity to be punished by the judges" (Job xxxi. 11).

Ver. 9. *Separation and Schism.*

I. **The separation of believers from unbelievers a duty.**—1. For a testimony against the unbelievers. 2. For the protection of believers, who might otherwise be both hindered in their work and tainted in their characters.

II. **The separation of believers from each other a sin.**—1. Because they are commanded by Christ to remain together. 2. Because they need the countenance and help of each other. 3. Because by withdrawing into separate communities they mar the unity of the body and weaken each other's hands.

Ver. 10. *Hearing the Word of God.*

I. **A glorious privilege.**
II. **A solemn duty.**
III. **A high responsibility.**

Two Years' Work in Ephesus. "In these two successful years, when Paul taught in Ephesus, four Churches were collected in the province of Asia; besides the stem Church in Ephesus, the branch Churches of Colosse, planted by a helper of Paul in Ephesus (ver. 22), the Colossian Epaphras (Col. i. 7, iv. 12), Laodicea (Col. iv. 15, 16), and Hierapolis (Col. iv. 13). Three times four Churches of apostolic planting have we therefore seen blooming forth (unnumbered the Churches in the upper lands), twelve trees to the praise of the Lord sprouted from the root of Jesse (Rom. xv. 12), four in Lycaonia and Pisidia, four in Macedonia and Greece, and four in the province of Asia" (Besser, *Bibelstunden*, ii., 343, 344).

Vers. 8-12. *How Ministers should Preach.*

I. **Boldly.**—Like men who fear God, know the truth and value of their message, and tremble not before their fellows.

II. **Daily.**—Embracing every opportunity, allowing no day to pass without telling the good news.

III. **Intelligently.** — Like leaders who understand their lesson.

IV. **Persuasively.** — Endeavouring not to coerce, but to win the judgment.

V. **Persistently.**—Not abandoning the sacred work after a short while, but continuing steadfast unto the end.

VI. **Effectively.**—So that their gospel may gain adherents, and spread.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 13—20.

An incident in Ephesus; or, the Story of Sceva's Sons.

I. **Their social standing.**—1. *Their father's name.* Scæva, or *Skeva*, Σκευᾶ, otherwise unknown. The number of obscure individuals whose names have found a place in Holy Writ is remarkable. Fathers of no celebrity have frequently had sons who have risen to celebrity or achieved notoriety. 2. *Their father's dignity.* A Jewish chief priest. Whether an actual high priest who had been deposed, or an individual connected with the high priest's family, or the head of one of the twenty-four courses that officiated in the temple, or a priest of the higher class, or head of the priests attached to the local synagogue, cannot be determined. "There is no warrant in the text for the view sometimes advocated that Scæva was merely an impostor who pretended to be a chief priest" (Ramsay).

II. **Their professional character.**—"Vagabond"—*i.e.*, wandering "exorcists." According to the best information, the whole Orient at this time was full of such worthies, exorcists of demons, interpreters of dreams, fortune-tellers, charmers, masters of the black art, jugglers; which renders the presence of such a detachment of this fraternity as Scæva's sons formed perfectly credible.

III. **Their ill-advised experiment.**—1. The *nature* of it was to attempt the expulsion of demons by calling over such as were possessed the name of the Lord

Jesus, and saying, "I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth." 2. The *motive* which impelled them was undoubtedly a consciousness that Paul, by employing the name of Jesus, could do in reality what they with their incantations and mystic arts only pretended to do, but were well aware they did not and could not do (see "Critical Remarks"). 3. The *number* of those who took part in the particular attempt recorded is not clear. According to one view, while all the seven addicted themselves to this practice of imitating Paul, only two (after the best reading in ver. 16) were engaged in this special instance (Lechler, Alford). Another explanation runs that though all the seven employed themselves about the business, only two, who acted as ringleaders, were set upon by the demon. A third suggestion (but not so good) is that all were overcome by the demon on both sides—*i.e.* when they stood before and afterwards when they fled from him (Ewald).

IV. **Their richly-merited punishment.**—1. *From whom it proceeded.* The man in whom the evil spirit was, and who now fiercely turned on the impostors. As, however, the man was more or less the involuntary instrument of the demon, the real author of their punishment was the "spirit" rather than the man. 2. *To what extent it was carried.* The man leaped upon them with wild fury, and, endowed like the Gadarene demoniac, with almost preternatural strength (Mark v. 3, 4), overcame and prevailed against them both, stripping their (outer) garments from them and inflicting on them bodily wounds, so that, like the cowards they were (and all like them are), they were glad to flee from the house in a semi-nude and, perhaps, bleeding condition. 3. *By what argument it was justified.* This was contained in the saying of the man, "Jesus I know (or recognise) and Paul I know; but who are ye?" For the moment the consciousness of the man was taken possession of by the demon, who, as in the similar instance mentioned in the gospels (Matt. viii. 29; Mark v. 7; Luke viii. 28), acknowledged the authority of Christ, and, as in the case of the pythoness at Philippi (xvi. 17), recognised that of the apostle as Christ's servant; but had no knowledge whatever of the sons of Scæva. 4. *To what good results it led.* (1) To the impression of the public mind. Becoming known it caused a tremendous sensation in the city among both Jews and Greeks. "Fear fell upon them all" (compare v. 11). (2) To the exaltation of the name of the Lord Jesus. The occurrence showed that Christ's name, which Paul preached in the school of Tyrannus, stood on a different platform from that of any of the names which had been employed by the exorcists (see Phil. ii. 9). (3) To the repentance of many in the Church. This humiliating admission that many of those who had professed to believe under Paul's ministry in the city had been leading lives wholly inconsistent with the holy gospel, to the extent even of trafficking with these "vagabond exorcists," indirectly proves the historic faithfulness of Luke; while the confessions of the converts themselves offered no small testimony to the impression created by the incident and to the sense of the unseen felt by the Ephesian Christians. Whether this confession was made to Paul in private or in public before the Church is not stated. The Romish Church accepting the former hypothesis grounds on this text the institution of the confessional. (4) To the conversion of not a few of the exorcists themselves. The practisers of curious or magical arts, literally of things over-wrought, curious and recondite, were so struck with awe that they renounced their superstitious practices, collected their books which contained their magical incantations, charms, nostrums and such like, to the value of fifty thousand pieces of silver—nearly £2000 of English money—and burned them in the sight of all. "It was a strong proof of honest conviction on the part of the sorcerers, and a striking attestation of the triumph of Jesus Christ over the powers of darkness" (Conybeare and Howson). (5) To the accelerated progress of the gospel. "The word of the

Lord grew mightily and prevailed," as it did years before in Jerusalem on the death of Herod (xii. 24).

Learn.—1. The danger of using Christ's name unlawfully. 2. The sin of preaching Christ's gospel without knowing Christ Himself. 3. The involuntary testimony Christ can extract from His foes. 4. The certainty that all who oppose either Christ or His gospel will ultimately suffer loss. 5. The impossibility of hindering the progress of the gospel. 6. The duty of believers acknowledging their sins. 7. The power of the truth to excite to repentance. 8. The great sacrifices to which Christianity sometimes calls its adherents. 9. The absolute exclusiveness of Christianity which admits of no compromise.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 13. *The Name of the Lord Jesus.*

1. The **most exalted** in the universe. 1. In heaven higher than that of principalities and powers. 2. On earth more widely known than that of any other teacher or founder of religion. 3. In the Church, more trusted, loved and honoured by believers than any other.

II. The **most powerful** in the universe.—1. The Healer of disease. 2. The conqueror of Satan. 3. The Saviour from sin. 4. The awakener from death.

III. The **most permanent** in the universe.—" His name shall endure for ever."

Jesus whom Paul preacheth.

I. **Jesus, the incarnate Son of God,** sent forth in the fulness of the times and declared to be God's Son by His resurrection from the dead.

II. **Jesus, the sinner's substitute,** set forth to be a great propitiation through faith in His blood.

III. **Jesus, the Messiah of Israel,** proved to be so by the meeting in Him of Old Testament prophecies.

IV. **Jesus, the Saviour of believers,** who accept God's testimony concerning Him, and trust in His finished work, who renounce their own righteousness and embrace the righteousness which is of God by faith.

V. **Jesus, the conqueror of the devil,** who came indeed to destroy the works of the devil, and who triumphed over the principalities and powers of darkness through His cross.

Ver. 15. *Jesus and Paul.*

I. **The Saviour and the saved.**

II. **The Lord and the servant.**

III. **The agent and the instrument.**

IV. **The sovereign and the ambassador.**

V. **The subject and the preacher.**

Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?"—A sermon by an evil spirit; or the (sound) doctrines of devils.

I. **That Jesus is the Son of God and the conqueror of the devil** (Matt. x. 29; Luke iv. 34; Heb. ii. 14).

II. **That the gospel is a message of salvation for guilty men,** or of deliverance from the bondage of the devil (Luke iv. 18; Heb. ii. 15).

III. **That the ministry is an institution appointed by Jesus Christ for the propagation of this gospel of soul emancipation.**

IV. **That those who preach the gospel without themselves standing in personal relation to Jesus Christ** or having been appointed by Him **are false teachers and cannot really harm** them, **the devils** (2 Cor. xi. 4; Gal. ii. 4; 1 Tim. iv. 1).

V. **That false teachers will eventually bring upon themselves swift destruction** (2 Peter ii. 1).

Ver. 17. *The Name of the Lord Jesus magnified.* This happens—

I. When it is openly, widely and **courageously preached** as by Paul.

II. When it is explicitly, extensively and **firmly believed** in.

III. When it is seen to be **power-**

fully influential over men's hearts and lives, leading the unbelieving to faith, and the faithful to repentance and self-sacrifice.

Magnifying the Name of the Lord Jesus.—The Ephesians saw in this, and so should Christians to-day—

I. **The founder of God's kingdom** on the earth.

II. **The author of salvation** in the individual soul.

III. The **conqueror of the devil** and his emissaries.

IV. **The deliverer of the captives** of Satan and sin.

V. **The ruler of His people's hearts**

Ver. 19. *The Burning of the Books.*

I. **Some books have been burnt which should have been preserved.**—*E.g.*, many noble volumes of science, philosophy and literature in the library of Alexandria.

II. **Some books are preserved which should be tossed into the flames.**—*E.g.*, "the pernicious fugitive pieces of a frivolous superficial knowledge, the seductive works of an impure light literature, and the arrogant decrees of an unchristian tyranny of the conscience."

III. **Some books, though cast into the fire, will not burn.**—The magical books of the Ephesians perished; but the sacred books of the Old and New Testaments though they have often been committed to the flames, have always come forth again fresher, livelier and with more power than ever.

Ver. 20. *The Growth and Power of the Word of God.*—Exemplified in Ephesus.

I. **The word grew.**—Mightily: 1. *In clearness of exposition.* This to be expected considering that Paul was the preacher. 2. *In intensity of impression.* Also natural, remembering what was Paul's theme—the things concerning Jesus and the kingdom of God, and who was Paul's keeper—the Holy Ghost. 3. *In extensiveness of reception.* "All they which dwelt in Asia" heard the word, while "many believed." Scarcely less wonderful, seeing that Paul's word was accompanied by special signs. 4. *In productiveness of fruits.* It led to marvellous deeds of self-renunciation as well as to the manifestation of great solemnity and joy.

II. **The word prevailed.** — Also mightily. 1. *Over the corruption of the natural heart.* Leading those who heard the gospel to turn from dead idols to serve the living God. 2. *Over the opposition of the powers of evil.* Manifested in the exposure of Scæva's sons and the deliverance of the man possessed. 3. *Over the besetting sins of believers.* Enabling those who had received the word to shake themselves free from the love of magic and the fascinations of money.

Vers. 8-20. *A Three Years' Mission in Ephesus.*—During this period the cause of the gospel as represented by Paul was—

I. **Energetically pushed.** — Paul's activity was remarkably displayed in three directions. 1. In *preaching* the word of God (vers. 8, 10). 2. In *working miracles*, or signs of the Holy Ghost (ver. 11). 3. In *founding churches* of Jesus Christ. Though not stated, it was doubtless during this period that the Churches of Ephesus, Colossæ, Laodicea, and Hierapolis were founded.

II. **Vehemently opposed.**—By the attempted imposture of Scæva's sons. 1. *The form it took.* Attempting to exorcise an evil spirit by naming over it the name of Jesus. 2. *The motives inspiring it.* Many. Perhaps (1) On the part of the devil, to counterfeit the work of the Holy Ghost. (2) On the part of the Jews, to oppose the work of Paul as a preacher of the cross. (3) On the part of the jugglers, to make money, since they saw that Paul's charm was more effective than theirs. 3. *The result to which it led.* Defeat, exposure, and damage. So will every attempt to hinder Christ's cause eventually recoil on its author's head.

III. **Wondrously prospered.**—The impression made upon the community

as well as on the Church was deep and lasting. 1. *On the community.* It led to fear and veneration, if not to conviction and conversion. 2. *On the Church.* It stirred to confession and reformation, both voluntary—"they came"—and real—they burned "their books."

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 21—22.

Paul's Last Days in Ephesus; or, Contemplating New Plans.

I. **A run through Macedonia and Achaia.**—These the main divisions, northern and southern, into which Greece under Roman rule was divided. The apostle's object in this second crossing into Europe was to visit the Churches which had there been established, as *e.g.*, in the towns of Philippi (xvi.), Thessalonica and Berœa (xvii.), and Corinth (xviii.), for the twofold purpose of first establishing them in the faith, and correcting such disorders as he knew had crept in among them, and secondly of bringing to a close the collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem, which had for upwards of a year been going on among the Churches there. This part of the apostle's plan was subsequently carried out (xx. 1, 2); but in the meanwhile he remained in Ephesus, and sent over Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia.

II. **A visit to Jerusalem.**—"As the Redeemer, when He had fulfilled His course, set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem (Luke ix. 51), so Paul also turns back to that city where the Lord was crucified, and where He had founded His first Church" (Lechler). Why he wished again to journey to Jerusalem is not stated by Luke, but from the Epistles to the Romans (xv. 26) and Corinthians (1 xvi. 1-4, 2 viii. 1), it may be inferred that he contemplated bearing to the poor saints there the above mentioned munificent contribution from the Churches of Macedonia and Achaia. That he carried out this his fifth and last visit to Jerusalem is reported by Luke (xx. 16, xxi. 17).

III. **A journey to Rome.**—The first notice of any desire on the apostle's part to visit the metropolis of the Gentile world. That he actually had this desire and really used the words ascribed to him by Luke is confirmed by his letters to the Romans (i. 10-15, xv. 23). The necessity which constrained him does not appear to have been any externally revealed intimation of the divine will, but a strong inward impulse in this direction which had been imparted to his spirit, doubtless by the Holy Spirit. The plan projected by himself was after visiting Jerusalem to start upon a fourth missionary tour, proceed to Rome and travel westward as far as Spain. How different this was from God's plan for him will afterwards appear.

Learn.—1. The propriety of forming purposes always in subordination to the divine will (James iv. 15). 2. The wisdom of avoiding undue haste in carrying out our plans. 3. The advantage of always waiting upon God to direct one's path.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 21. "*After I have been there, I must also see Rome.*" Compare with Rom. i. 13, xv. 23-28. "The conformity between the history and the epistle is perfect. In the first quotation from the Epistle we find that a design of visiting Rome had long dwelt in the apostle's mind; in the quotation from the Acts we find that design expressed a considerable time before the Epistle was written. In the history we find that the plan which Paul had formed was to pass through Macedonia and Achaia; after that to go to

Jerusalem; and when he had finished his visit there to sail for Rome. When the Epistle was written, he had executed so much of his plan as to have passed through Macedonia and Achaia, and was preparing to pursue the remainder of it by speedily setting out towards Jerusalem; and in this point of his travels he tells his friends at Rome that when he had completed the business which carried him to Jerusalem he would come to them, when he should make his journey into Spain." Also "the very inspection of the passages will satisfy us that they were not made up from one another. . . . If the passage in the Epistle was taken from the Acts, why was *Spain* put in? If the passage in the Acts was taken from the Epistle, why was *Spain* left out? If the two passages were unknown to each other, nothing can account for their conformity but truth."—Paley, *Horæ Paulinæ*, chap. II., iii.

Ver. 22. *The Mission of Timothy and Erastus into Macedonia.*—"Of Timothy's special mission in Macedonia we know nothing, but from 1 Cor. iv. 17-19, we learn that this trusted companion of the Gentile apostle was directed to pass on to Corinth to prepare the Church there for the approaching visit of the apostle. Erastus was most likely the same as the person alluded to in Rom. xvi. 23, as the chamberlain of Corinth, and was not improbably chosen as the companion of Timothy on this difficult and delicate mission with which he was charged, on the supposition that his rank and station among the citizens would be a support to Timothy, who was the bearer of Paul's stern, grave message to his well-loved Church."—*Spence.*

Presumption or Piety—Which?—"After I have been there I must also see Rome."

I. **Presumption.**—This Paul's utterance might have been had he formed the resolution it expresses in his own mind and with dependence for carrying it out in his own strength. In this case, the signs of sinful arrogance would have been—1. The double use of the pronoun "I," whereas he should have remembered God and connected his purpose with Him, who alone orders and guides man's ways. 2. The taking for granted that he would ever reach Jerusalem, which he might never have done, and certainly could not have done without the divine help and protection. 3. The self-confident assertion that he must see Rome, whereas again he ought to have said, "If the Lord will!" remembering that there can be no "must" in any plan or purpose outside of God's arrangement or permission.

II. **Piety.**—This Paul's utterance was because—1. The purpose to which it referred was (1) Formed under the guidance of the Holy Ghost. Though not expressly stated this may be inferred. 2. Indicative of his love for the brethren—at least if his motive in desiring to visit Jerusalem was to carry gifts to the poor saints residing there. 3. Expressive of ardent zeal for the extension of the gospel. In this way must the desire and resolution to visit Rome be regarded. 4. Perhaps also suggestive of the loftiness of Paul's faith, which confided in the divine assistance and support until these great desires of his heart were accomplished.

Timothy and Erastus.

I. **Diverse.**—1. *In race.* Timothy a half Jew and half Greek: Erastus either a whole Jew or a whole Greek. 2. *In birthplace.* Timothy a native of Lystra: Erastus most likely of Corinth (Rom. xvi. 23), or perhaps of Ephesus. 3. *In station.* Timothy the son of an obscure father: Erastus, if of Corinth, the treasurer of the city.

II. **United.**—1. *In Christian discipleship.* Both believers and adherents of the way. 2. *In relationship to Paul.* Both numbered among his helpers. 3. *In missionary service.* Both sent into Macedonia.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 23—41.

A Popular Tumult in Ephesus; or, The Temple of Diana Endangered.

I. The speech of Demetrius, the silversmith.—1. *Its hearers.* The masters and workmen of the guild of silversmiths, with others, employers and employed, of a like occupation; Demetrius, himself one of those master silversmiths, employed a large number of craftsmen, or skilled artisans with high wages, and carried on an extensive trade in manufacturing and selling silver shrines of Diana (or Artemis). These were portable miniature temples containing a statue of the goddess, which were purchased by the inhabitants of the city as well as by strangers visiting it, and either dedicated to the goddess at the temple, or set up on returning home as objects of worship, and sometimes even carried about on the person as amulets or charms. Having collected his brother-tradesmen in some convenient building, if not upon the street, Demetrius, perhaps the chairman of the guild, directed their attention to a danger to which their business was growingly exposed. 2. *Its object.* To stir up hostility against Paul, or as Demetrius contemptuously said, "this (fellow) Paul," who, according to Demetrius's admission, had been carrying on a successful work of evangelisation in the city, not only preaching such abominable (!) doctrine as that "they be no gods which are made with hands"—a doctrine of which the Hebrew Scriptures are full (Psalm cxv. 4-8; Isa. xliv. 19, xlvi. 6, 7; Jer. x. 5, xvi. 19; Hos. viii. 6)—but doing this with such persuasive eloquence as "not alone at Ephesus but almost throughout all Asia" to turn away much people from the worship of Diana. A splendid testimony to the success of the gospel in Ephesus! 3. *Its motive.* Fear of losing his trade. "The most sensitive part of 'civilised' man is his pocket" (Ramsay). Hence one may fairly be doubtful whether Demetrius would have been concerned about Diana's honour, if his business had not been injured and his profits reduced by her decline in popular estimation. It may even be questioned whether Demetrius would have been distressed about the "turn over" of his brother-silversmiths going down, if his own had increased, or even kept up. But in any case it is significant that Demetrius's opposition to this fellow Paul had its origin in this, that Paul's preaching was interfering with his (Demetrius's) pocket. The like phenomenon is not unknown to-day. Men frequently oppose the gospel because the gospel goes against their trade. Yet the converse phenomenon is not unknown. Men profess to believe the gospel so long as the gospel, or their profession of it, favours their financial prosperity. NOTE.—The account here given of the origin of Demetrius's assault has been challenged as incorrect by Canon Hicks (*Expositor*, June 1890, pp. 401-422), who on the strength of the inscription already referred to ("Critical Remarks") holds the hostile action against Paul to have been due to the priests of Artemis, whose "jealousy only waited for an opportunity of attacking the apostle;" but Prof. Ramsay (*The Church in the Roman Empire*, pp. 130, 200) convincingly shows that "the first way in which Christianity excited the popular enmity outside the Jewish community was by disturbing the existing state of society and trade, and not by making innovations in religion." 4. *Its arguments.* (1) From self-interest. This the most persuasive argument that can be addressed to the ordinary human mind. The wealth of Demetrius and his guild, in fact, their living depended on the making and selling of these Diana shrines, and the selling, at least, of them was absolutely incompatible with Paul's further preaching in the city. Already their trade receipts had gone down. The market for their wares was declining. Unless in some way they asserted themselves they would be ruined. If this contemptible little Jew were allowed to continue denouncing Diana and her temple nobody would want

their silver shrines and such like articles as they traded in, and then what would become of themselves, their wives and families? A modern trades unionist could hardly have spoken better. (2) From religious zeal. "Not only," said Demetrius, "will our trade be endangered, but what is of vaster moment (one wonders if he believed this!), the temple of the great goddess Diana will be made of no account, and she whom all Asia and the world worshippeth will be deposed from her magnificence." The language, though extravagant, contained an element of truth. The temple at Ephesus had been built at the common expense of all the Greek cities of Asia Minor, and was visited by pilgrims from all nations and countries (see "Critical Remarks"). 5. *Its results.* (1) The populace were filled with indignation, not at the loss of Demetrius's profits, but at the dishonour done to Diana. Even false religions exercise a wondrous fascination over men's hearts, and are capable of exciting strong enthusiasm in their behalf (see 1 Kings xviii. 26). (2) The air was rent with shouts in praise of their patron goddess—"Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" This cry, which may have been "the usual chorus of the festivals of Artemis" (Plumptre), was kept up for some time—in all perhaps "about the space of two hours" (ver. 34)—and was designed to vindicate the insulted majesty of the goddess, to whom the epithet "great" was considered to rightfully belong (Xenophon, *Ephes.*, i. 15). One would say her honour had not been much hurt if the hurt was repaired by three hours of hurrahing, shouting, and yelling. (3) The whole city was plunged into confusion. The loud shouts of Demetrius and his workmen attracted towards them the mob, who, catching up the idea that some one had been attempting to overturn their accepted worship, naturally broke out into wild and fanatical excitement—all the wilder and more fanatical because they properly had no idea what it was all about. (4) Two of Paul's companions were arrested. Having learnt that the daring assailants of Diana were the Jewish strangers who had for some time past been residing in the town, and in particular that fellow Paul, with one accord they rushed to the apostle's lodging, or to the school of Tyrannus where he taught, in the hope of apprehending him; but not finding him, he having been absent, as had been the case at Thessalonica (xvii. 6), they seized on Gaius (see 1 Cor. i. 14), and Aristarchus (xx. 4, xxvii. 2), two of his companions, men of Macedonia, and dragged them off to the theatre, an immense building capable of holding twenty thousand persons, where it was the custom to hold public meetings and transact public business, as well as celebrate public sports (see "Critical Remarks"). What object they had in view in making these arrests and crowding to the theatre with their prisoners, they most likely could not state and did not know. The whole movement was a tumultuous proceeding for which they could offer no explanation except this, that somebody had been meddling with their goddess, and they had apprehended the two Macedonians on suspicion.

II. **The proposal of Paul the Apostle.**—1. *Brave.* Having come to know what had happened, the apostle, with that courageous chivalry for which he was distinguished, wished to force his way into the theatre (1) to intercede for his two companions who had been arrested without cause; (2) to take upon himself the full responsibility for any dishonour that had been done to the goddess; and (3) to explain the nature of his gospel to the multitude there and then assembled, in the hope, doubtless, that in this way the uproar would be stilled and the tumult allayed. 2. *Imprudent.* At least, so it seemed to certain of the chief officers of Asia, literally, Asiarchs. These were public functionaries, ten in number, who were chosen annually from the chief towns of proconsular Asia, and from the wealthier citizens in those towns, whose business it was to provide at their own expense and superintend in their own persons the games and festivals held every year in honour of the gods and Roman emperor. Being

friendly disposed to the apostle, and knowing their countrymen better than the apostle, they entreated him not to venture into the theatre. That they succeeded, though not without a struggle, in preventing him from carrying out his expressed intention may be inferred; and the recollection of this passage in his history when, had his friends permitted him he would have plunged into the heart of the frantic mob, was probably the inspiration of the well-known phrase about his fighting with wild beasts at Ephesus (1 Cor. xv. 32).

III. **The interposition of Alexander the Jew.**—1. *The personality of this individual.* That he was a Christian Jew or an adherent of the new faith has been supposed by not a few expositors (Calvin, Baumgarten, Meyer, Alford, and others), but the greater likelihood is that the name belonged to an unconverted Jew (Kuinoel, Neander, Olshausen, Lechler, Hackett, and others) who formed one of Demetrius's guild. Whether he and the coppersmith of that name, whom Paul afterward mentioned to Timothy (II. iv. 14) as one who had done him much evil (Zöckler), were one and the same person, must remain undetermined,—though the supposition is by no means impossible. If he was, and if the Alexander who made shipwreck of his faith (1 Tim. i. 20) was the same person—both of which points, however, are doubtful—then he appears to have at a later time become a Christian, though only in name and of pronounced Judaistic proclivities. 2. *The reason of his coming forward.* His countrymen, having detected him among the crowd and laid hold of him, thrust him forward—if a Christian Jew, that he might serve as a victim for the popular fury, or if an unbelieving Jew, that he might shift the guilt of vilifying Diana from their shoulders to those of the Christians. In either case the Jews were apprehensive lest at any moment the senseless rage of the mob might swing round and direct itself against them, both because the heathen multitude did not as yet with sufficient clearness distinguish between Jews and Christians, and because even from them at that time literary assaults upon the worship of the gods, and especially of the Ephesian Artemis, were not unknown (Zimmerman, quoted by Holtzmann). (Compare Hausrath's *Der Apostel Paulus*, p. 347; see "Hints" on ver. 34). 3. *The failure of his attempt.* No sooner had he opened his mouth in defence of his countrymen, having first beckoned to the multitude with his hand for a hearing, than "with a divine irony of fate similar to that which was manifested before Gallio's tribunal" (Zöckler), they, the multitude, recognising him for a Jew, drowned his words in a volley of frenzied exclamations, shouting, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" as Demetrius and his workmen had done, and keeping up the outcry for a space of two hours. (Compare 1 Kings xviii. 26; and see Matt. vi. 7.) "The Mahommedan monks in India at the present time often practise such repetitions for entire days together" (Hackett).

IV. **The address of the town-clerk.**—1. *His official designation.* The state-scribe, or recorder; a public functionary whose business it was to register the various laws and preserve the legal documents of the city; who was authorised to preside over public assemblies, and who is mentioned on the marbles as acting in that capacity. Unlike the Asiarchs who were appointed annually, the town-clerk was probably a permanent official. 2. *His influential character.* The instant he appeared upon the rostrum the cries of the multitude were hushed. Different from their dealing with Alexander, they made no attempt to howl him down, but listened to him in respectful silence; and at the close of his harangue allowed themselves to be quietly dispersed. "He was, if we may so speak, the Gamaliel of Ephesus, not without parallels among the princes and statesmen and prelates who have lived in the critical times of political and religious changes, and have endeavoured to hold the balance between contending parties" (Plumptre). 3. *His dexterous oration.* (1) He humoured their vanity by reminding them

of their religious loyalty to the great goddess Diana, whose magnificent temple adorned their city; of which temple also and of the image it contained—an image which had fallen from heaven or from Jupiter—their city was known throughout the world as the keeper (see "Critical Remarks"). To suppose then that anything said or done by these poor infatuated Jews could either dim the majesty of their world-renowned goddess or tarnish their loyalty was surely the height of folly and, in fact, wholly ridiculous. (2) He set before them the legal bearing of the then situation. The men they had arrested had been guilty of no crime against either Diana or her temple—they were neither "robbers of temples nor blasphemers of our goddess"—and accordingly should not be treated as criminals. If the cause of this indignation against Paul and his companions was some private grievance, as, for instance, about some trade law or civic regulation which had been infringed, then Demetrius and his brother craftsmen should proceed against them before the proconsuls in the ordinary law courts which were at that moment open, Ephesus being an Assize town and the proconsul on circuit having arrived thither (vers. 37, 38); if the cause was any matter that concerned the public, then it should be dealt with in a lawful, *i.e.*, a regularly called and constituted assembly (ver. 39), and not before a disorderly rabble like that then collected in the theatre. (3) He played upon their fears by suggesting that they might be brought to book by their Roman masters and asked to explain the cause of such a riotous proceeding as that of which they had been guilty—an explanation they would not find it easy to give.

Note.—As has often been remarked, this speech of the town-clerk was a complete vindication of Christianity and Christians in apostolic times, with regard to the groundless charges of lawlessness and violence which were so frequently preferred against them by their enemies. "This address is so entirely an *apologia* of the Christians," says Ramsay (*St. Paul*, etc., p. 282), "that we might almost take it as an example of the Thucydidean type of speech, put into the mouth of one of the actors, not as being precisely his words, but as embodying a statesmanlike conception of the real situation. At any rate it is included by Luke in his work, not for its mere Ephesian connection, but as bearing on the universal question of the relations in which the Church stood to the empire."

Learn.—1. The world-disturbing character of the religion of Christ. 2. The power of self-interest to hinder a reception of the truth. 3. The supremely foolish behaviour of idol worshippers. 4. The virtue of flattery in appeasing a mob. 5. The unconscious testimony sometimes given by the world to Christianity and Christians.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 23. *No small Stir about that Way; or, Reasons why Men oppose Themselves to Christianity.*—Because it

I. **Interferes with their** (sinful) **gains.**

II. **Explodes their foolish delusions.**

III. **Disturbs their cherished ease.**

IV. **Subverts their accustomed practices.**

Ver. 24. *Demetrius of Ephesus.*

I. **A wealthy tradesman.**

II. **An influential citizen.**

III. **A blind idolater.**

IV. **A dexterous orator.**

Vers. 24-27. *Demetrius and his Brother Craftsmen; or, Ancient Types of Modern Men.*

I. Of the **abject slaves of business** who in the pursuit of temporal gain have lost all regard for eternity.

II. Of the **blind adherents of established customs,** who, from every fresh

movement of the Spirit fear the disturbance of their ease, indeed, the destruction of the world.

III. Of the **self-satisfied priests of the beautiful** who in idolatrous veneration for nature and art acknowledge no consciousness of sin and no need of grace.—*Gerok.*

Ver. 26. *Hand-made Gods.*

I. **Widely worshipped.**—All nations outside of revelation have drifted into idolatry.

II. **Strongly condemned.**—1. By Scripture, which proclaims them to be vanities. 2. By reason, since the less cannot make the greater or the creature its creator. 3. By experience, which has shown them to be useless, gods that neither hear nor help, neither see nor save.

III. **Certainly doomed.**—1. To exposure. Of their worthlessness. 2. To desertion. By their followers. This process Demetrius observed had begun. 3. To destruction. "The idols He will utterly abolish."

Ver. 28. *Diana and Jesus.*

I. Great was Diana of the Ephesians **in her (supposed) divinity**; but greater is Jesus of the Christians **in His (real) Godhead.**—Diana was an idol; Jesus is the true God. Diana was a manufactured goddess; Jesus is the Almighty Maker of the universe. Diana was a creation of the degraded and benighted human intellect; Jesus is the "Word of the Father, in our flesh appearing."

II. Great was Diana of the Ephesians **in the magnificence of her temple**; but greater is Jesus of the Christians **in the shrines which He inhabits.**—The temple of Diana was a structure decorated by the highest art of the day, but at the best was only a limited and mean habitation; the temples of Jesus are first the boundless universe, next the Christian Church, and lastly the soul of the believer—the first of which has lavished on it all the wisdom and power of an infinite mind, and the second and third of which are being beautified by all the glory that divine grace can impart to them.

III. Great was Diana of the Ephesians **in the number of her worshippers**; but greater is Jesus of the Christians **in the multitude of His disciples.**—All Asia and the world worshipped Diana, said Demetrius; but to day the name of Jesus is adored by more millions than at that time inhabited the globe.

IV. Great was Diana of the Ephesians **in the enthusiasm of her devotees**; but greater is Jesus of the Christians **in the love of His people.**—Diana's admirers spent much time and physical energy in their insane orgies, and if howling and shouting could do her honour she was a highly exalted divinity; but the homage paid to Jesus is of a more spiritual, rational and beneficent sort, consisting of the consecration to His service of loving hearts and holy lives.

V. Great was Diana of the Ephesians **in the duration of her reign**; but greater is Jesus of the Christians **in the permanence of His.**—For long centuries the superstition of Diana worship sat like a nightmare upon the souls of men, though it is now for ever perished and gone; but the name of Jesus shall endure for ever. "Jesus shall reign where'er the sun," etc.

Ver. 35. *The Town-clerk of Ephesus.*

I. **His fearless courage.**—In facing the frenzied mob.

II. **His admirable tact.**—In humouring the crowd by endorsing their estimate of Diana.

III. **His prudent advice.**—In exhorting the people to do nothing rashly.

IV. **His impartial justice.**—In admitting the innocence of Gaius and Aristarchus.

V. **His great influence.**—In calming and dismissing the assembly.

Ver. 40. *The Uproar at Ephesus.*—A picture of rebellion against the gospel.

I. **In the dark heathen world**; on the part of brutal, yea, Satanic heathen nature.—Pictures of persecution from the missionary field.

II. **In unconverted Christendom**;

on the part of the carnal mind, which will not suffer itself to be rebuked by God's word, and of the materialistic spirit of the age which will know nothing of heavenly things.

III. **In the hearts of true Christians;** on the part of proud reason, of the self-righteous heart, and of the flesh which shuns the cross.—*Gerok.*

Vers. 24-41. *A Group of Typical Characters.*

I. **Paul.**—A type of 1. Evangelical zeal. Preaching in Ephesus. 2. Christian influence. Persuading much people. 3. Heroic self-sacrifice. Willing to rescue his companions by rushing into the theatre.

II. **Demetrius.**—A type of 1. The successful merchant, who makes no small gain from his trade. 2. The hypocritical religionist, who worships because it pays. 3. The crafty demagogue, who plays upon the ignorance of his townsmen.

III. **Gaius and Aristarchus.**—Typical of those who 1. Suffer on account of their religion; 2. Bear the consequences of other people's acts, and 3. Come safely out of their tribulations.

IV. **Alexander.**—Typical of the man 1. Who is disliked for his religion. The Ephesians refused to hear him because he was a Jew. 2. Who is punished by mistake. The Ephesians confounded him with the Christians who also were regarded as Jews. 3. Who is not allowed to speak in his defence, but is condemned without being heard.

V. **The Town-clerk.**—Typical of 1. The influential citizen. 2. The prudent counsellor. 3. The just judge.

NOTE.—*The Jews and the Temple of Diana.* It has been suggested that the opposition shown to Alexander by the Ephesian mob may have been occasioned by the assaults which the the Jews were known to have made against the worship of Diana. On this subject the following sentences may be read with interest:—"Long before the days of Paul and Apollos the synagogue of Ephesus had waged war against the prevailing heathenism; and, if Paul and John pitched their tents here, that was only because others before them had hewed a clearance in this primeval forest of superstition. From of old the synagogue at Ephesus had found the better class of citizens actively disaffected towards the existing religion, and by means of this prepared the way for Christianity. For a long time had Jews existed in Ephesus. Already the Diadochi had allowed them, contrary to the opinion of the settled citizens, to call themselves Ephesians, and their speedy transition to Rome (as her subjects) bore for them here also good fruits. They knew how to acquire for themselves, from Dolabella and other Roman authorities, numerous privileges concerning which Josephus communicates information. Their religious worship was placed under the protection of the Archons, whilst their youth were exempted from military service. From their petitions about free intercourse with the temple, as also from the fortunes of the apostle Paul, one may gather in how lively commerce with Jerusalem the Jewish quarter in Ephesus continued. Even the narratives in the Acts give the impression of a very vigorous religious life. So zealous a community must have felt itself doubly called forth to open a propaganda among its heathen fellow-citizens, seeing that all the intelligent among these were weary of the disorder of the Diana worship. The apostolic history itself points to this, that only the material interests of Ephesus as a place of pilgrimage, of the vendors of images, and of those who were entitled to the rich endowments of the Diana temple sufficed to keep up the wild cultus. Accordingly from Jewish circles in Ephesus numerous attempts were made to waken up against this condition of things the moral susceptibilities of their Greek fellow-citizens. Even before the abolition by Domitian of the Eunuch worship (Suet., *Dom.*, 7; Pseudo-

Heraclit., Ep. 9), and therefore in the time of the first Cæsar, a Jew undertook a bold assault against the temple of Diana, regardlessly uncovering all the evils of the holy disorder, and, through keen satire generally directed against idolatry, pressing to the recognition of the One God. A pretended letter of the philosopher Heraclitus suggested to this Jewish writer the thought to avail himself for the purpose of his raillery of the solemn mask of the people-deriding philosopher, of whom the story ran that he had declared the entire manhood of Ephesus to be deserving of strangulation. He, as no other, was qualified to castigate the Ephesians, and so, like one well-versed in Scripture and well read in Aristotle's ethic, this son of the synagogue composed some fictitious letters in which the obscure Heraclitus explained to the Ephesians why he had never in his life laughed. Entirely from an Old Testament standpoint Heraclitus proposes the question why it goes well with the wicked, and why their city flourishes in spite of all its vice, and arrives at the Biblical solution:—That God punishes not by the withdrawal of riches, but rather He gives these to the evil that they, by being in possession of means, might sin on to conviction; adding with a grim glance upon the wealth in the haven of Panormus, 'so may your good fortune never fail that your wickedness may call forth chastisement.' Then, proceeding to direct his weapons against the excesses of the Ephesian idolatry, with the complacency of hatred he dissects all its institutions, in order to abandon every one of them to contempt. Because the cell in which the idol image is accustomed to stand receives its light for the most part only from the door, and accordingly is half dark, he makes fun of the god placed in the darkness. Because it is an insult (especially to a god) to say that it 'is of stone' (*Odyss.*, xix. 163), he finds every stone god blasphemous. Even the narrow pedestal of the idol is a mockery of Him whom heaven and earth cannot contain. Next from idolatry generally the author turns himself to the Artemis (Diana) worship in particular, which he finds below the practices of the beasts. Should not the chief priest in the first instance curse the wooden image, since, in order to serve it, he requires to be mutilated? And is it not foolish to charge the goddess herself with unchastity when only eunuchs are allowed to approach her? But the essence of all wickedness to him are the orgies of the worship of Cybele, the nightly torch feasts, and all the ancient rites which exist only for the purpose of covering with their mantle abomination and crime. 'On this account,' says the pretended Heraclitus, 'have I given over laughing. I feel lonely in the town. To a wilderness have you made me through your wickedness. Should I laugh when you go round about as mendicant priests with the kettle-drum, each one filled with a separate vice? Should it move me to laughter when I see men do such like things, or when I consider your clothing and your beards, or when I see what useless labour is expended on your head-gear; when I see how a mother seizes her child for poisoning; how the substance of minors is devoured, how a citizen is robbed of his wife; how a maid, during pious night festivals, is forcibly deprived of her virginity; how a girl not yet arrived at womanhood is the victim of all woman's troubles; how one who is only a youth is the lover of the whole town; or when I see the squandering of oil or of ointment, or the extravagance of mirth in the social meals got up by the pledging of rings; or the assembled town gatherings at which truly very important judicial decisions in matters of the plays are published? On account of these things have I discontinued laughing.' This lively representation of the domestic and public life at Ephesus is only the basis from which the author seeks to lead to faith in the true God" (Hausrath: *Der Apostel Paulus*, pp. 346-349).

CHAPTER XX.

THE THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY (PAUL AND TIMOTHY)—CONTINUED.

§ 1. A Second Visit to Europe; or, Across the Ægean and Back (vers. 1-6).
§ 2. A Communion Festival at Troas; or, the Story of the Young Man Eutychus (vers. 7-12).
§ 3. Sailing past Ephesus; or, bound for Jerusalem (vers. 13-16).
§ 4. A Halt at Miletus; or, a Farewell Address to the Elders of Ephesus (vers. 17-38).

CRITICAL REMARKS.

Ver. 1. **After the uproar was ceased.**—Soon after, but not necessarily because of the uproar. The best authorities insert *and exhorted*, παρακαλέσας, before **and embraced** or took leave of them—*i.e.*, the disciples; the word ἀσπασάμενος referring to the farewell blessing and the farewell kiss (compare xxi. 6). **Departed for to go into Macedonia,** *viâ* Troas (see 2 Cor. ii. 12, 13), where he awaited for some time the coming of Titus, whom, however, he did not meet till he reached Macedonia (2 Cor. vii. 6).

Ver. 2. The word for **Greece,** Ἑλλάς, stands for Achaia as distinguished from Macedonia (xviii. 12, xix. 21).

Ver. 3. **And** *there* **abode three months.**—Lit., *having acted or worked there*—viz. in Corinth (1 Cor. xvi. 6), *three months,* a plot having been laid against him by the Jews, etc. ποιήσας, an anakolouthon, instead of ποιήσαντι. During this stay in Corinth the Epistle to the Romans was written (see Rom. xvi. 22, 23). **He purposed to return through Macedonia.**—Lit., *there was to him an opinion, or intention—i.e.*, it was not by accident, but in accordance with deliberate counsel and determination that he, when on the eve of embarking for Syria, changed his route and proceeded northwards through Macedonia.

Ver. 4. **As far as Asia** is omitted by many ancient authorities, possibly because Trophimus, in spite of 2 Tim. iv. 20, appears in Paul's company in Jerusalem (xxi. 29), and Aristarchus sails with Paul from Cæsarea (xxvii. 2). The retention of the clause, however, does not necessarily imply that the persons here named proceeded with the Apostle no farther than to Asia. The best MSS. also add to **Sopater of Berœa** the words "*the son* of Pyrrhus," probably to distinguish him from Sosipater, Paul's kinsman (Rom. xvi. 21).

Ver. 5. **These** (the seven) **going before.**—Rather, *having gone before*, most likely by ship from Corinth (Lewin), though some suppose by land through Macedonia and ship from Philippi (Alford, Hackett), **tarried for us at Troas** (see xvi. 8). Why Paul stayed behind at Corinth or at Philippi is not recorded. Either he had work to do in Philippi or Corinth (Alford), or he may have wished to keep the days of unleavened bread (Meyer). The use of **us** (ver. 5) and **we** (ver. 6) shows that Luke rejoined the Apostle's company at Philippi. Holtzmann thinks that Paul, accompanied by the seven, may have reached Troas by the land route, crossing over the Hellespont, and that Luke with some others followed after by sea from Philippi.

Ver. 6. **The days of unleavened bread** meant the Passover week (compare xii. 3, xxvii. 9). The voyage from Philippi to Troas was accomplished in **five days** instead of three (xvi. 11, 12). The sojourn in the city extended over **seven days,** as afterwards at Tyre (xxi. 4).

Ver. 7. **The first** day **of the week.**—Lit., *the first of the Sabbaths,* as in 1 Cor. xvi. 2, meaning not on one of the Sabbaths or Jewish festivals, but on the first day of the week, the term "Sabbaths" being put for the period of seven days (compare Matt. xxviii. 1).

Ver. 8. **Many lights.**—Mentioned that all suspicion might be removed from the assembly (Calvin, Bengel); to account for the young man's drowsiness (Alford); to show how his fall was observed (Meyer); but most likely to impart liveliness to the scene (Hackett).

Ver. 9. **In a window** should be *in the window* of the upper chamber—*i.e.*, on the seat of it. "The windows" of Oriental houses "had no glass. They were only latticed, and thus gave free passage to the air and admitted light, while birds and bats were excluded" (Kitto's *Cyclopædia:* art. *House*). **The third loft.**—Or story. The middle classes usually lived in large houses in flats—the artizans in the third stories, just under the roofs—on the same plan as in some of our great cities (Stapfer, *Palestine in the Time of Christ,* pp. 172, 173). **Taken up dead.**—Not ὡσεὶ νεκρὸς (Mark ix. 26) (Holtzmann), but νεκρός, dead.

Ver. 10. **Fell on him.**—As formerly Elijah and Elisha acted in performing similar awakenings (1 Kings xvii. 17; 2 Kings iv. 34). **Trouble not yourselves.**—Make ye no ado. Compare Christ's words in Jairus's house (Mark v. 39).

Ver. 11. **Broken** (*sc.* the) **bread.**—Points to the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

Ver. 12. **Brought the young man alive.**—The miracle is certainly a parallel to Tabitha's awakening by Peter (ix. 36-40), but yet not on that account an invented story. According to Ramsay, who in this follows Blass, this verse shows "a very harsh change of subject," the persons who brought the youth alive, not being those who were comforted. But this is surely unmeaning criticism. One would naturally conclude that they who brought the lad alive were Paul and those who assisted him; and that these were greatly comforted as well as the other Christians present.

Ver. 13. **To go afoot.**—Or, *by land.* "A paved road extended from Troas to Assos; so that starting even as late as seven or eight A.M. Paul could have reached Assos, twenty miles distant, in the afternoon" (Hackett).

Ver. 14. **And when he met with us.** Ramsay thinks the imperfect συνέβαλλεν (*was meeting*) may imply that Paul did not actually enter Assos, but was descried and taken in by boat, as he was nearing the city. **Mitylene.**—On the east coast of Lesbos, of which island it was the capital.

Ver. 15. **Having tarried at Trogyllium** is omitted in the R.V. after the best MSS., but is supported by many ancient authorities.

Ver. 16. **For Paul had determined to sail past Ephesus.** Alford thinks these words show that Paul had hired the ship at Philippi for the voyage to Patara. Ramsay thinks that had the ship been under Paul's command he would have stopped at Ephesus instead of sending for the elders to Miletus. **Because he would not spend the time in Asia.** Lit., *that it might not come to pass that he spent time in Asia, i.e.*, in Ephesus. The next clause supplies the reason.

Ver. 17. **Miletus.**—Thirty-six miles south of Ephesus, and on the south-west of the Latmian Gulf. "Now a desolation: then an emporium of trade with four ports or docks crowded with shipping" (Lewin). The stay at Miletus must have continued over three or four days.

Ver. 19. Omit **many** before **tears**, and for **lying in wait** read **plots.**

Ver. 22. **Bound in the spirit.**—*I.e.*, his own spirit (Kuinoel, De Wette, Ewald, Holtzmann, Wendt, Hackett, Spence, and others), not the Holy Spirit (Calvin, Beza, Wordsworth, Zöckler).

Ver. 23. **The Holy Ghost witnesseth.**—Not in the apostle's own spirit, but through the voices of prophets.

Ver. 24. **But none of these things move me.**—Lit., *I make account of nothing—i.e.*, which I may suffer, **neither count I my life as dear unto myself.**—Or, drawing the clauses together, *but I hold not my life of any account as dear unto me* (Tischendorf, Meyer, Holtzmann, Zöckler, R.V.). **So that.**—Is sometimes rendered, though wrongly, as a comparative, thus: "neither count I my life so dear to me as the finishing of my course," etc. (Bengel).

Ver. 25. **Shall see my face no more.**—Literally fulfilled, though perhaps not in the sense anticipated by the Apostle, who appears to have expected an early death.

Ver. 26. **Pure from the blood of all men.**—As in xviii. 6.

Ver. 28. **Overseers.**—Translated *bishops* (R.V.), were the same as "elders" (ver. 17). Not so much a term of office as a characterisation of function. The elder's duty was to oversee the flock (John xxi. 15-17; 1 Peter v. 2). It has been suggested that Gentile Churches were governed by "bishops" and Jewish Churches by "elders" (Lindsay); but this seems a doubtful distinction in face of Paul's use of the words here. **The Church of God.**—Or, according to many ancient authorities, **of the Lord**—*i.e.*, Christ. In favour of the former reading, ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ, stands the fact that this expression occurs in Paul's epistles eleven times, and the reading, ἐκκλησία τοῦ κυρίου, never; in favour of the latter witness the preponderance of external testimony, the circumstance that the customary reading is more likely to have been substituted for an unusual one than *vice versâ*, and the expression "with His own blood," which is confessedly more appropriately applied to Christ than to God. If the former reading be adopted then "God" must refer to Christ.

Ver. 29. **After my departing.**—An ambiguous phrase, but probably signifying here, "after my death" (Alford, De Wette), rather than "after my leaving" (Hackett), or, "after my coming," *Primum venit Paulus, deinde venient lupi* (Bengel, Hackett). Baur sees in the use of this phrase a proof the whole speech was a *vaticinium post eventum* put into the apostle's mouth by the writer of the Acts!!

Ver. 31. **Watch.**—That the apostle's admonition was not in vain see Rev. ii. 2, 3.

Ver. 32. The best MSS. omit **brethren**; and some read *the Lord* instead of **God.** Whether **which** should be read (Kuinoel) or *who* (Calvin, Bengel, De Wette, Meyer, Alford, Hackett, Holtzmann, and others) is debated, though the personal reference is the better. **An** should be *the* inheritance. Compare Eph. i. 13.

Ver. 33. **I have coveted**, better, *I coveted* no man's silver, etc. (compare 1 Cor. ix. 4-18; 2 Cor. xi. 7-12, xii. 14-18; 2 Thess. iii. 8, 9).

Ver. 34. **These hands.**—Probably holding them up to view. **Them that were with me** meant Timothy, Erastus, Luke, and others. This allusion to Paul's manual labour in Ephesus,

though not mentioned by Luke (xix. 1), is rendered credible by what is recorded of his practice while in Corinth (xviii. 3 ; 1 Cor. iv. 11, 12).

Ver. 35. The **weak** were not the feeble in faith, as in Rom. xiv. 1 ; 1 Cor. viii. 9 (Calvin, Bengel, Neander, Meyer, Tholuck, Lechler, Holtzmann, Zöckler) but the poor in worldly estate, the necessitous in temporal means (Chrysostom, Kuinoel, Olshausen, De Wette, Hackett, Alford, Plumptre, and others). **The words of the Lord Jesus** were sayings, alluded to by Paul as familiar, which had not found a place in the gospel records but had been handed down by tradition. Many such must have been in existence during the apostolic age. See "Hints."

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 1—6.

A Second Visit to Europe; or, Across the Archipelago and Back.

I. **The point of departure.**—Ephesus (see xix. 1). 1. *When he left it.* "After the uproar had ceased." Not necessarily immediately, but soon after the disturbance recorded in the preceding chapter. If he stayed till Pentecost (1 Cor. xvi. 8), then he probably left the city in the spring or summer of A.D. 57 or 58. 2. *Why he left it.* Not because of the just-mentioned disturbance, at least not wholly on its account, but in pursuance of a plan, already formed, to visit Macedonia (xix. 21). 3. *How he left it.* Neither hastily nor secretly, as he had formerly left Berœa (xvii. 14) and Damascus (ix. 25), but deliberately and openly, after having convened, exhorted, and embraced, or saluted (with a farewell kiss) the disciples. "At the same time he was greatly dispirited by the strong opposition which had driven him prematurely from the city" (2 Cor. i. 8 *ff.*) (Ramsay).

II. **The place of destination.**—Macedonia (see xix. 21, xvi. 9, 10). 1. *How he reached it.* By way of Troas (2 Cor. xii. 13), where he expected to meet Titus, whom he had sent to Corinth with or soon after his First Epistle to the Corinthians, where he stayed some considerable time—long enough to lay the foundations of a Christian Church (2 Cor. ii. 12)—and from which he broke up only because of the non-arrival of Titus. 2. *Who accompanied him.* Luke omits to mention the companions of his voyage, but these most probably were Tychicus and Trophimus (xx. 4), since these again returned with him from Macedonia to Asia. 3. *What he did there.* He went through those parts, visited the Churches which had been established in them—the Churches of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berœa, with perhaps others—and gave them much exhortation. Here also he wrote his Second Epistle to the Corinthians (2 Cor. ix. 2, 4), and sent it by the hands of Titus (2 Cor. viii. 18).

III. **The course of travel.**—This led him into Greece—*i.e.*, into Achaia (see xix. 21), and more particularly to Corinth (1 Cor. xvi. 6). 1. *The route by which Corinth was approached.* Most likely "round about by Illyricum" (Rom. xv. 19). At least this appears the only place in Luke's narrative where Paul's evangelising tour in those parts can be inserted. On his first visit to Macedonia "he moved along the eastern side of the peninsula, and was kept at a distance from Illyricum. When he passed through Macedonia next (ver. 3) he had already written the Epistle to the Romans" (Hackett). 2. *The time spent in Corinth.* "Three months," which probably carried him through the winter of A.D. 57 or 58 (see 1 Cor. xvi. 6). 3. *The work done in Corinth.* (1) The gospel was preached as before, and probably, as before, in the house of Justus, if by this time another place of meeting had not been obtained. (2) The disorders of the Corinthian Church were composed. "He was returning to converts who had cast off the morality of the gospel, to friends who had forgotten his love, to enemies who disputed his Divine commission" (Conybeare and Howson), and with all these he doubtless had special dealings (see 2 Cor. x. 2, 4, 6, 8, xiii. 2). (3) The Epistle to the Galatians was written in consequence of bad news having come from Galatia, and the Epistle to the Romans "to pave

the way for his" contemplated visit. 4. *The date of leaving Corinth.* When his Jewish adversaries had formed another plot against him. There is no reason to suppose that Paul's departure was hastened by the discovery of this conspiracy, yet the machinations of the Jews were apparently the cause of his changing his route, and instead of sailing direct for Syria, journeying northwards through Macedonia, and embarking at Neapolis. "The style of this plot," says Ramsay, (*St. Paul, etc.*, p. 287) "can be easily imagined. Paul's intention must have been to take a pilgrim ship carrying Achaian and Asian Jews to the Passover. With a ship load of hostile Jews it would be easy to find opportunity to murder Paul. He therefore abandoned the proposed voyage and sailed for Macedonia,"—rather as already suggested travelling to Macedonia by land.

IV. **The journey towards home.**—1. *The companions of the Apostle.* Seven in number. (1) Sopater of Berœa, the son of Pyrrhus—perhaps characterised so to distinguish him from Sosipater (Rom. xvi. 21), and named first because Paul, in travelling *viâ* Macedonia, would pick him up first at Berœa. (2) Aristarchus of Thessalonica, who was with Paul in Ephesus (see xix. 29), afterwards accompanied him to Rome (xxvii. 2), and shared his imprisonment in that city (Col. iv. 10; Philemon 24). (3) Secundus, also of Thessalonica, but otherwise unknown. (4) Gaius of Derbe, not the Gaius who attended Paul in Ephesus (xix. 29), but probably the individual of this name to whom John wrote his Third Epistle (3 John i.). (5) Timothy, whose birthplace, Lystra (xvi. 1), is passed over, presumably as well known. (6) Tychicus of Asia, one of Paul's most trusted associates (Eph. vi. 21; Col. iv. 7; Titus iii. 12) and the bearer of Paul's Epistle to the Asiatic Churches (2 Tim. iv. 12; Titus iii. 12). (7) Trophimus, a native of Ephesus (xxi. 29), whom Paul left behind at Miletus sick (2 Tim. iv. 20), but who subsequently followed the apostle to Jerusalem, where his presence in the temple led to the apostle's apprehension. That they were seven in number has (but without reason) suggested the idea that they were intended to represent at Jerusalem the converted Gentile world (Baumgarten), or the seven deacons of chapter vi. (Plumptre). 2. *The course they pursued.* Leaving Corinth they travelled northwards through Macedonia to Berœa, Thessalonica, and Philippi, at the last of which towns they picked up Luke, the beloved physician (ver. 6). From Philippi the seven above named proceeded in advance to Troas, where they announced the coming and awaited the arrival of Paul and Luke, who did not leave Philippi till after the days of unleavened bread—*i.e.*, the passover of A.D. 58 or 59—and, after a stormy passage of five days—*i.e.*, two days longer than the voyage westward (xvi. 11, 12)—anchored in Troas, where they tarried seven days, obviously waiting for another vessel in which to prosecute their voyage, or, if the same vessel proceeded southwards, passing the time while it discharged and took in cargo.

Learn.—1. That Christ's servants should never flee from the post of duty simply on account of danger. 2. That faithful pastors should bestow much care on the edification and consolidation of the Church. 3. That so long as earnest ministers preach the gospel, they may lay their accounts with plots to hinder their work, if not to injure their persons. 4. That those who are engaged in the Lord's service should keep themselves in life as long as they can. 5. That six or seven pious people with a Paul to lead them are "a formidable enemy to the devil" (Lindhammer, quoted by Besser).

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 2. *How often did Paul visit Corinth?* Twice, or thrice?

I. **Twice.**—In favour of this view is commonly urged: 1. That the Acts speak of only two visits (xviii. 1, xx. 2, 3). 2. That between Paul's

first visit and his first imprisonment at Rome his time is sufficiently accounted for. 3. That 2 Cor. xiii. 1 does not necessarily imply that he had already been twice in Corinth, while 2 Cor. xiii. 2 seems to say that his then contemplated visit would be his second. 4. That in 1 Cor. i. 15 he distinctly speaks of his then contemplated visit as his second. 5. That 2 Cor. xii. 14 proves the sense of 2 Cor. xiii. 1 to be that then was the third time Paul had been in readiness to visit them. 6. That the Alexandrian MS. in 2 Cor. xiii. 1 reads, "This is the third time I am ready to come to you" (see Paley, *Horæ Paulinæ*, iv. 12).

II. **Thrice.**—This view is based on the following considerations: 1. That 2 Cor. xiii. 1, according to the best texts, refers, not to a third intention, but to a third visit. 2. That 2 Cor. i. 15, 16 speaks, not of the benefit of a second visit, but of the advantage of being visited twice on the same tour. 3. That as Paul had been three times shipwrecked when he wrote the Second Epistle to the Corinthians (xi. 25), and as the only recorded voyages on which he could have been wrecked were those from Cæsarea to Tarsus (ix. 30) and from Ephesus to Macedonia (xx. 1), of both of which absolutely no account is given, in order to make the number three he must have undertaken another voyage, which most probably was from Ephesus to Corinth. 4. There were urgent reasons why he should have visited the Corinthian Church while residing at Ephesus. 5. Communication between the two cities was easy to obtain at any time. 6. Its omission by Luke is susceptible of explanation by remembering that occasionally long journeys are dismissed in a few words (see xv. 41, xvi. 6, xviii. 23, xix. 1, xx. 2, 3), while several important events, such as the founding of the Syrian and Cilician Churches (Gal. i. 21), and the journey to Arabia (Gal. i. 17), are not mentioned at all, and by supposing that nothing remarkable occurred during this second visit to the commercial capital of Achaia.

Vers. 1-6. *The routine of a missionary's life*, as exemplified in that of Paul.

I. **Bidding farewell to friends** (ver. 1).—Earthly ties and gracious bonds have often to be broken by those who would follow the cross.

II. **Exhorting the people of God** (ver. 2).—Almost as hard a task as that of winning men to, is that of keeping men in the faith.

III. **Evading the plots of enemies** (ver. 3).—They that will live godly, and much more they that will propagate the cause of Christ, must lay their account with persecution.

IV. **Enjoying the society of fellow-Christians** (ver. 4).—Communion of kindred souls with each other forms one of the Christian's sweetest solaces.

V. **Unfurling the banner of the cross** (ver. 6).—This the favourite occupation of a true minister or missionary.

Ver. 4. *Paul's friends; or, the Sacred Circle of Seven.*

I. **Trophies of Paul's gospel.**

II. **Companions on Paul's Journey.**

III. **Helpers in Paul's work.**

IV. **Sharers in Paul's renown.** Having found with him a place in the Inspired Record.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 7—12.

A Communion Festival at Troas; or, the Story of the Young Man Eutychus.

I. **The crowded congregation.**—1. *The persons composing it.* (1) The disciples at Troas (xvi. 8), who must have been present in considerable numbers, since Eutychus could only obtain a seat in the window. The Troas Christians forsook not the assembling of themselves together (Heb. x. 25). (2) The apostle and his company (ver. 4). These, though parted at Corinth or Philippi had rejoined each other

in Troas. 2. *The time of meeting.* On the first day of the week, the Lord's day (Rev. i. 10), an intimation that thus early the practice of meeting for worship on Sunday was observed by the followers of Christ. In the evening, as is indicated by the "many lights" or lamps that are said to have been burning. The cessation of work on this day, though it may have been the custom with some, was manifestly not as yet common. 3. *The place of assembly.* Not the Jewish synagogue, which shows that a separation of the Christians from the Jewish community had here taken place. Not a public academy or school as in Ephesus (xix. 9), scarcely even a house of any pretensions like that of Justus at Corinth (xviii. 7), which perhaps reveals that not many mighty or wise had been converted in Troas, but an upper chamber, doubtless a room in some obscure house, on the third story and next the roof (see i. 18, ix. 37). 4. *The business of the hour.* Twofold. (1) To break bread—*i.e.*, to celebrate the Lord's Supper, which consisted then, as now, in the breaking of bread and drinking of wine in remembrance of Christ, and was then, though not now, followed or accompanied by a lovefeast. (2) To hear Paul preaching, or rather to hear the word discoursed by Paul, who doubtless sat at table while he talked, since the modern practice of formally orating on a text of Scripture had not then been introduced.

II. **The protracted preaching.**—Two things noticeable: 1. *The preacher wearied not in speaking.* (1) A remarkable phenomenon. Though Paul appears to have commenced discoursing in the early hours of evening, midnight arrived, and still the stream of holy converse flowed on—yea, when the interruption which occurred through Eutychus's death and resuscitation had passed, the talk was resumed and sustained through a sleepless night till dawn. As a mere physical effort it would have taxed the energies of a strong man; how much more then must it have tested the powers of one so infirm as the apostle! Besides, since a speaker like Paul cannot be supposed to have kept on repeating the same things over and over, what a demand must that midnight preaching have made on his mental resources! And if to this be added the tender emotions which constantly uprose within his bosom when he either spoke or wrote to his converts about his Lord and theirs, it will not be hard to see that the strain on the apostle's body, soul, and spirit, must have been immense, must, in fact, have been almost unparalleled. (2) A reasonable explanation. Three things must have contributed to enable Paul to undergo such a laborious performance. First, the circumstances in which he and his hearers were then assembled. It was a flying visit he had made to their town; it was the last time, probably, they would look each other in the face, it was a farewell sermon; and it was the most solemn of all occasions on which Christ's people could meet. Second, the theme upon which he descanted to his hearers was one that inspired him with "thoughts that breathe and words that burn," that drew him on from topic to topic with never-failing enthusiasm, that so lifted him out of himself that he never felt his weariness or weakness, and probably knew not whether he was in the body or out of the body (2 Cor. xii. 2). Thirdly, the grace of his glorified Master, which never failed him, would no doubt strongly support him that night, so that he could achieve what to common men would seem impossibilities (2 Cor. xii. 9; Phil. iv. 13). 2. *The audience wearied not in hearing.* How different from modern congregations of Christ's professed followers, who, so far from listening to the preached gospel from evening until midnight, and from midnight until dawn, cannot, without impatience, endure a thirty minutes' sermon, and would almost clap their hands with joy if the preacher's discourse could be huddled through in ten minutes, or perhaps dispensed with altogether. No doubt modern congregations have not Pauls for preachers; but if they had it is to be questioned whether their behaviour would be different. The present-day outcry against long sermons—by which are meant discourses of half an hour—has its origin not in

the small ability of the preachers, but in the lack of religious zeal on the part of the hearers.

III. **The alarming accident.**—1. *The sleeper in the window.* Eutychus (concerning whose antecedents nothing is known) has often been held up—unjustly and unkindly—to reproach on account of his unseemly conduct (as it is called) of sleeping in the church. But there are times when it is wholly inexcusable to yield to the "drowsy god" when engaged in Divine worship; on the other hand, there are occasions when it may be justified, and this it may be reasonably maintained was one. (1) Eutychus was obviously a youth to whom sleep, especially at midnight, was a natural right, a physical necessity, a heaven-prepared boon which he could not be blamed for accepting. (3) The upper chamber was as manifestly crowded, and the hot breaths must have speedily produced such an atmosphere that the wonder is not that Eutychus dropped over into slumber, but that many more did not follow his example. (3) The strain of listening to Paul's preaching—in which it may be assumed Eutychus was interested—could not fail to exhaust the young man's nervous energy, and cause him to drop off through sheer weariness into a sound sleep. All who have as satisfactory excuses as Eutychus may sleep in church with easy consciences. 2. *The fall into the court.* How it happened is not explained. The window, after the manner of the eastern houses, opened into the area below. Most likely the shutter was closed when the young man ensconced himself in the recess. Perhaps the fastening gave way while he leant upon the shutter, or wakening with a start from his deep sleep he may have unwittingly pressed against and burst it open. In any case he fell from the third flat to the ground, a distance probably of twenty feet, and was taken up, not as, but really—dead.

IV. **The gracious miracle.**—1. *The young man's restoration.* (1) By whom it was effected. Really, of course, by God, but instrumentally by Paul. (2) How it was effected. Though not so mentioned, doubtless by prayer. Paul went down and fell upon the young man as Elijah (1 Kings xvii. 21) and Elisha (2 Kings iv. 34) did, using, it may be supposed, words borrowed from the former, "Lord! let this young man's soul come into him again." 2. *The credibility of the story.* Baur and his disciples find in this miracle only a counterpart of the raising of Dorcas by Peter (ix. 36-42), and accordingly pronounce it unauthentic. But the reality of the miracle was attested by those who saw the young man after he had been restored to life while the truthfulness of the account is vouched for by the extreme likeliness of the narration, and can only be disputed by those who are unwilling to believe in the supernatural.

Learn.—1. The duty of Christians to assemble for worship on the Lord's day. 2. The place assigned to both the preaching of the word and the administration of the sacraments in the edification of believers. 3. The justification accorded to long sermons, at least on special—*e.g.*, sacramental occasions. 4. The danger of sleeping in church, since if not always sinful it may sometimes be hurtful. 5. The inferiority of modern preachers, who, if they excel Paul in the art of setting men to sleep, fall immeasurably below him in the power of working miracles. 6. The reality of the communion of saints. 7. The solemnity and sadness of earth's farewells.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 7. *Light from Early Christian Practice.*

I. **On the sanctity of the Lord's day.**—That they kept the first day of the week as a memorial of Christ's resurrection is apparent, though it is more than likely Jewish Christians, for a considerable time after, continued also to observe the seventh day as a day of rest. Gentile Christians may not

have been able to devote the first day entirely to rest; the narrative shows they consecrated its evening hours to worship.

II. **On the nature of Christian worship.**—This consisted: 1. *In the administration of the Lord's Supper*—which perhaps has not so high a place as properly belongs to it in modern Christian worship. 2. *In listening to edifying discourse upon the gospel*—which also in some modern Churches is not accorded the place to which it is entitled. 3. *In the enjoyment of Christian fellowship*—which, again, is largely overlooked in modern congregations of believers. Without reviving the love-feasts of those early times, that which they pointed to and promoted, the spirit of love and the sense of brotherhood, should be diligently cultivated.

III. **On the length of gospel sermons.**—These should be: 1. Neither *so short* as to admit no room for the utterance of any valuable doctrine, or the expression of any holy feeling. 2. Nor *so long* as to exhaust the physical, mental, and spiritual energies of either preacher or hearer. 3. But always *suited to the audience and the occasion.* Some audiences and occasions require long, and others short discourses.

The First Day of the Week.

I. **A solemn religious assembly.**—1. The time was the first day of the week. 2. The occasion was the observance of the Lord's Supper. 3. The place was an upper room with many lights—obscure, but not secret.

II. **The preacher.**—1. The preacher was Paul. 2. He preached a farewell sermon. 3. He preached a long sermon.

III. **A careless hearer.**—1. His infirmity. 2. His death. 3. His restoration to life.—*G. Brooks.*

Vers. 7-12. *Communion at Troas.*

I. **The congregation.**—The disciples at Troas. Who were: 1. *Probably many.* May be inferred from the fact that Paul had previously visited and preached in Troas. 2. *Certainly poor.* Their meeting place, an upper chamber or room in a top story, showed this. 3. *Obviously eager.* Longed to hear the word, not afraid of long sermons. Not a good sign when Christians are impatient of preaching. 4. *Intensely sympathetic.* Their hearts beat in unison with both the service and the preacher.

II. **The preacher.**—Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles. An object of interest from: 1. *His personal character and history.* A man of feeble body but of tremendous spiritual power. 2. *His missionary labours and travels.* No doubt full information about these would have been imparted during the week, if not by Paul himself, at least by his companions. 3. *His previous visit and preaching.* Most likely all regarded him in the light of an old friend, while many would behold in him their spiritual father.

III. **The sermon.** — About which many things were worth noting; as, *e.g.*, that it was: 1. A *spoken* sermon. Not read, but delivered face to face. Read discourses neither unlawful nor unprofitable; but not the best for either preacher or hearer. 2. A *farewell* sermon. Therefore without doubt uttered with much tender and solemn feeling, and listened to with avidity. Compare farewell address to elders at Miletus (ver. 17). 3. A *communion* sermon. Whence the subject may be guessed. Not the story of his travels, but the story of the cross. Not himself the hero but Christ. 4. A *long* sermon. Probably three hours to begin with. And yet the Troans wearied not, but heard for three hours more. Short sermons may be often best; but occasions surely arise when long discourses are befitting.

IV. **The miracle.**—The raising of Eutychus. 1. *The accident.* (1) The subject of it—a young man, Eutychus, otherwise unknown. (2) The manner of it. Falling from a window (see "Critical Remarks"). (3) The issue of it. Death. Sad that he should have met his death through attending Church; but better that he died so than in a

drunken brawl. (4) The effect of it. Produced great commotion in the meeting. Many lamentations over the poor boy's untimely fate, and much sympathy for his mother if she was present. 2. *The restoration.* (1) Effected by Paul, who, in recalling the lad to life, followed the example of Elijah and Elisha. (2) Attested by the people, who witnessed the miracle, saw the young man alive again, and were comforted.

V. **The communion.**—1. The *solemn impressions* under which it was celebrated. Those who took part in it had just been listening to a discourse about the risen Saviour, and had just witnessed a display of that Saviour's power. What must have been their emotions when they returned to the upper room to celebrate their memorial feast? 2. *The sacramental actions* were unquestionably those of the Lord's Supper. "Breaking of bread" alone mentioned; but "drinking of wine" implied. The narrative affords no countenance to the idea of Communion in one kind. 3. The *post communion* address was not omitted. Paul talked with his hearers a long while till break of day, about the significance of the meal, and its foreshadowing of heaven, about how they should live and walk in the world, and about their impending separation. And so the sacred service ended. With the dawning of the day the apostle departed.

Vers. 8-12. *The Night Service at Troas.*

I. **An admonitory example of Christian zeal for God's word.**—1. On the part of the apostle, who wearies not of preaching. 2. On the part of the congregation, who grow not tired of hearing.

II. **A warning example of human weakness and sloth.**—The sleep and the fall of Eutychus. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

III **A consolatory example of Divine grace and faithfulness.**—The resuscitation of the young man, the comfort of the Church.—*Gerok.*

Ver. 9. *On sleeping in Church.*

I. **Pardonable** — When it results from physical causes, over which one has no control; such as: 1. Exhaustion through previous labour. 2. The imperative demands of nature which call for such repose as sleep gives. 3. The soporific atmosphere of the church through defective ventilation. 4. The weariness induced by a too constant strain upon the mental faculties in listening to the preacher.

II. **Inexcusable.**—When it springs either: 1. From indifference to the truth that is preached; or 2. From dislike to the preacher by whom it is spoken; or 3. From lack of interest in the object which the preacher by his preaching seeks to attain.

III. **Hurtful.**—1. It disconcerts and discourages the preacher. 2. It infects and contaminates the hearers. Sleeping in Church is contagious. 3. It inflicts loss and sometimes positive hurt upon the sleeper.

IV. **Preventable.**—By removing its causes. 1. Providing comfortable and well-ventilated churches. 2. Preaching interesting and not too long sermons. 3. Preparing the heart by previous prayer and meditation, for the reception of the truth.

The young man Eutychus; an example to all the unsteadfast in the Church.

I. **By his dangerous sleep.**—In the midst of the assembled congregation, during the hearing of the divine word, the heart may be overpowered by the sleep of false security.

II. **By his terrible fall.**—From the third storey to the street pavement; an admonitory representation of the great fall from an imaginary height of faith to sin and perdition.

III. **By his miraculous deliverance.**—In the arms of a Paul, who penetrates him with his power of life and warmth of love, even the deeply fallen, he who is thought dead, may by the

wonderful grace of God again become living.—*Gerok.*

The Accident at Troas. Thoughts suggested.

I. **The uncertainty of life.**—Even to the good, and the consequent necessity of preparing for death. Eutychus, a young man, full of life, hope, and promise, employed also at the best of work, and yet he died suddenly as the result of an accident.

II. **The moral and spiritual uses of accidents.**—This accident at Troas was fitted to remind the Christians there of the propriety and duty of exercising common prudence and foresight even when engaged about the things of religion and eternal life.

III. **The power of a great calamity to open the flood-gates of human sympathy.**—How deeply the congregation was moved by the young man's death is revealed by the comfort they experienced in his resuscitation (ver. 12).

IV. **The mission and the power of the gospel.**—To quicken dead souls as Paul restored Eutychus to life. As God's power flowing through Paul's body reanimated the dead youth, so the might of God's grace streaming through the gospel can revive dead souls.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 13—16.

Sailing past Ephesus; or, bound for Jerusalem.

I. **From Troas to Assos.**—1. *When Paul and his companions left Troas.* Obviously after the assembly spoken of in the preceding paragraph had broken up, on the morning of the tenth day of April, a Monday. Possibly Paul's companions may have departed before the conclusion of the service, since they are said to have preceded him. Paul himself not only closed the meeting, but may have lingered an hour or two before setting out. 2. *How Paul and his companions reached Assos.* (1) Paul's companions went by ship from the harbour of Troas. Assos lay upon the Mysian coast, about twenty-four miles south of Troas by land, and forty by sea. The voyage would probably, with favourable winds, occupy four or five hours. (2) Paul himself went the land way to Assos, and would most likely meet the ship on arrival. The road lay "through the southern gate, past the hot springs, and through the oak woods—then in full foliage—which cover all that shore with greenness and shade, and across the wild water-courses on the western side of Ida" (Conybeare and Howson, ii. 229). 3. *Paul's reasons for selecting the land route.* These can only be conjectured. Perhaps he wished (1) to visit friends on the way (Meyer, Wendt); or (2) to enjoy the company of his Troas friends, who could convey him on the road but could not well obtain accommodation on the ship; or (3) to recruit his health (Calvin); or (4) to secure a brief interval of quiet for meditation and communion with heaven, after the exciting scenes and incidents of the week at Troas (Baumgarten, Ewald, Lange), though after all it is doubtful whether he would be allowed to make the journey alone (Zöckler).

II. **From Assos to Mitylene.**—1. *The voyagers.* Paul, on reaching Assos, at once stepped on board the ship, which was probably lying to and waiting his arrival. The missionary company, with him at its head, was complete. 2. *The voyage.* As Mitylene was distant from Assos thirty miles, the entire voyage from Troas to Mitylene, seventy miles, might easily be accomplished in one day. 3. *The port.* Mitylene (the modern city being called Castro), where the ship appears to have anchored for the night "because it was the time of dark moon" (Conybeare and Howson), was the chief city of Lesbos (now Metilino or Metelin). "The beauty of the capital of Sappho's island was celebrated by the architects, poets, and philosophers of Rome" (Conybeare and Howson).

III. **From Mitylene to Miletus.**—1. *First day's (Tuesday's) journey.* From Mitylene to Chios, the modern Scio, one of the largest and most beautiful islands

on the coast of Asia Minor. Chios, "whose green fields were the fabled birthplace of Homer" (Farrar), was celebrated both for its beauty and for its wines; in modern times the levity of its inhabitants appears to have passed into a proverb, "It is easier to find a green horse than a sober-minded Sciot" (Conybeare and Howson). 2. *Second day's (Wednesday's) journey.* From Chios to Samos, passing by Ephesus, and from Samos to Trogyllium. Samos, the island, was separated from the mainland by a narrow channel, at one point not more than a mile broad. Samos, the town, was in Paul's day a free city. Here, however, the vessel did not anchor, but pushed on a mile further south to Trogyllium, a harbour on the mainland of Ionia, at the foot of Mount Mycale, and opposite the island where it is nearest the shore. In Trogyllium the ship lay to for the night. 3. *Third day's (Thursday's) journey.* From Trogyllium to Miletus, on the confines of Caria, and twenty-eight miles south of Ephesus. Why the apostle passed by Ephesus is stated by Luke. It was not because he had not command of the ship, which he may have had (Hackett thinks he may have chartered it for himself and his friends; but see "Critical Remarks"), or because he did not long to revisit his Ephesian converts, or was afraid of the enemies he might encounter there (1 Cor. xvi. 9); but because his desire to reach Jerusalem before Pentecost rendered every delay, whether voluntary or involuntary, dangerous. Why if he anchored at Trogyllium he did not summon the Ephesian elders thither must be left unanswered (see next Homily).

Learn.—1. That persons who go on God's business may travel by sea or land with easy minds. 2. That solitude and society are alike helpful to the religious life. 3. That the geographical accuracy of Luke's narrative is an indirect argument in favour of its truthfulness. 4. That good men delight in the assemblies of the saints.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 13. *Paul alone on his Way to Assos; or, the Quiet Hours of a Much-employed Servant of God.* As hours—

I. Of **testing intercourse** with himself.

II. Of **holy communion** with the Lord.

III. Of **blessed rest** from the tumult of the world.

IV. Of **earnest collectedness** for new conflicts.—*Gerok.*

Ver. 16. *Paul's desire to be in Jerusalem at Pentecost.* The motives for this were probably various.

I. **For his Jewish brethren's sake.**—He knew that his presence at that feast would be acceptable to his stricter fellow-countrymen, and he was ready to become all things to all men to gain some.

II. **For his own sake.**—The feast of Pentecost would revive memories of the great birthday of the Christian Church, and so might perhaps inspire him with fresh zeal, since even he could not dispense without times of revival.

III. **For the gospel's sake.**—The immense gathering of foreign Jews in Jerusalem at that feast would afford him ample opportunity for bringing the claims of the gospel before his countrymen; and Paul was not the man to forget to enter in by every open door.

IV. **For the Gentile Churches' sakes.**—He may have wished to present the Gentile contributions for the poor saints in Jerusalem to the Church there, at a time when the spectacle of their liberality would be witnessed by vast numbers of his Jewish brethren, who, he may have hoped, would be favourably impressed thereby.

V. **For his future plan's sake.**—As Paul was contemplating a journey to Syria and Rome after he had visited Jerusalem, he may have deemed it better not to wait till Tabernacles, but to repair to the metropolis at Pentecost.

Hastening to Jerusalem.

I. **A proof of Paul's diligence.**—The apostle was no idler, who had time to waste, but a busy worker, who improved every moment.

II. **An evidence of Paul's wisdom.**—He wished to reach the capital at the best time for preaching the gospel—viz., when he could meet the largest number of his countrymen.

III. **A mark of Paul's love.**—If, as there is reason to believe, he was carrying the Gentile contributions above referred to, he desired not to keep them from their destined recipients a moment longer than was necessary.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 17—38.

A Halt at Miletus; or, a Meeting with the Elders of Ephesus.

I. **Introductory notes.**—1. *The parties summoned.* The elders, presbyters, or overseers (ver. 28) of the Ephesian Church. That these were not bishops in the modern Anglican sense of diocesan prelates, but only in the ministerial sense of presiding over separate congregations, is generally conceded. 2. *The place of meeting.* Why Paul did not call them to Trogyllium, which lay considerably nearer to Ephesus than Miletus, can only be conjectured. Possibly the ship's stay at Trogyllium was too short for such an interview as Paul contemplated. Perhaps the means of communication between Miletus and Ephesus were better than those between Trogyllium and Ephesus. Perhaps, according to the best text, the ship did not call at Trogyllium at all. But, in any case, Miletus, to which they were summoned, was in Paul's day a seaport of considerable importance and a strong rival to Ephesus, being the political, as Ephesus was the religious, metropolis of Western Asia (Zöckler). The locality where they assembled, though not stated by the historian, was most likely "some solitary spot upon the shore." 3. *The messenger despatched.* This also is left unrecorded, but may have been Luke himself, who, with becoming modesty, says nothing of any services performed by himself. 4. *The arrival of the elders.* The journey to Ephesus, a distance of from thirty to forty miles, would easily be accomplished in a day. If the messenger set out immediately on the ship's arrival at Miletus, which might be at noon, the elders might reach Miletus on the second day after. If they hurried off at once, they would most probably come alone. If time were allowed for the news to spread, they might easily be attended by presbyters "from the neighbouring towns where churches had been established" (Hackett). 5. *The person of the speaker.* Paul, who had laboured for three years in the city of Ephesus as their honoured teacher and beloved friend, and who was now to look upon their faces for the last time. The emotion with which both speaker and hearers confronted each other can be better imagined than described.

II. **The farewell address.**—1. *An outline of its contents.* Two main divisions. (1) Relative to Paul himself. *First*, a retrospect of his past labours at Ephesus (vers. 18-21), setting forth the character of his ministry in that city as one that had been carried on (α) with whole-hearted consecration to the Lord—*i.e.*, the glorified Christ (ver. 18); (β) with profound personal humility (ver. 18)—compare Eph. iii. 8; (γ) with fervent sympathy, amounting even to tears (ver. 18)—compare ver. 31; 2 Cor. ii. 4; Phil. iii. 18; (δ) with great bodily risk, arising from the "temptations" or "trials" which befell him from the plots of the Jews (ver. 19)—compare 1 Cor. xv. 31, 32, xvi. 9; 2 Cor. i. 8-10; (ε) with unreserved fulness, which kept back nothing from his hearers which might be spiritually profitable unto them (ver. 20), not shunning to declare unto them the whole counsel of God (ver. 27)—compare 2 Cor. iv. 2; Gal. i. 10; 1 Thess. ii. 4; (ζ) with unwearied diligence, which caused him to teach publicly in the synagogue first (xix. 8), and latterly in the school of Tyrannus (xix. 9), and privately from

house to house or in private assemblies (ver. 20)—compare Rom. xvi. 5; 1 Cor. xv. 19; (η) with unambiguous plainness, insisting on repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ as the only and the all-sufficient way of salvation (ver. 21)—compare xvii. 30, xxvi. 20; Gal. ii. 20; 2 Tim. i. 12. *Secondly*, an outlook into his future career (vers. 22-27), declaring (α) his irrepressible conviction that trials and dangers, he knew not of what sort, perhaps amounting to death, lay before him, the Holy Ghost witnessing to him to that effect in every city (ver. 23), by means of prophetic communications through others, which, though not specified, may have been made to him at Philippi, Troas, and Assos, as afterwards they were at Tyre (xxi. 4) and at Cæsarea (xxi. 11); (β) his firm determination, notwithstanding, to proceed in the path of duty which pointed towards Jerusalem (ver. 22); (γ) his absolute willingness to lay down his life rather than fail in accomplishing the ministry he had received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God (ver. 24)—compare Phil. ii. 17; 2 Tim. iv. 6-8; (δ) his perfect knowledge that he and they "amongst whom he had gone preaching the kingdom" would see his face no more (ver. 25)—compare ver. 29, and see "Critical Remarks"; (ε) his clear consciousness of having faithfully performed his duty towards them as a minister, so that with unfaltering confidence he could call God to witness he had declared unto them the whole counsel of God, and so was "pure from their blood" (vers. 26, 27)—compare xviii. 6; Ezek. iii. 18. (2) Relative to his hearers, the elders of Ephesus. *First*, a solemn caution (vers. 28-31), in which are expounded—(α) the exalted character of the Church to which they belonged and in which they were office-bearers, as the Church of God—*i.e.*, of Jesus Christ—who was thus expressly by Paul declared to be Divine (see "Critical Remarks"), as a Church which had been purchased for Himself as a possession by His own blood, and as a Church which was superintended and governed by the Holy Ghost (ver. 28); (β) the important relation in which they as office-bearers stood towards the Church and its members, being bishops, overseers, or (under) shepherds of the flock, whose great (Heb. xiii. 20) or chief (1 Peter v. 4) Shepherd Christ is (John x. 14, 16), and holding their appointment not from the flock, but from the Holy Ghost or Divine personal representative of Christ; (γ) the specific duties they were expected to perform towards the flock, not to act as lords over it (1 Peter v. 3), but to feed it with spiritual nourishment (John xxi. 15-17; 1 Peter v. 2), the tender lambs or babes in Christ with the sincere milk of the word (1 Peter ii. 2; Heb. v. 13), those of mature age with the strong meat of Christian doctrine (Heb. v. 14); (δ) the constant watchfulness they would require to exercise over both themselves and their flock (compare 1 Tim. iv. 16), lest either they or their flock should grow remiss in Christian duty, and so decline from Christian faith; (ε) the impending peril which would render necessary such faithful superintendence of themselves and those committed to their charge—viz., the certainty that subsequent to his departure, first after his sailing from them, and next after his decease, which he believed to be not distant, false teachers, whom he designated "grievous wolves" (compare Matt. vii. 15), would intrude themselves from without into the fold, not sparing but devouring the flock (compare 2 Tim. iii. 1-8), and would even arise from within (1 Tim. i. 19, 20; 2 Tim. i. 15, ii. 17, 18), speaking perverse things and drawing away disciples after them (vers. 29, 30); (ζ) the touching argument by which he hoped to incite them to watchfulness, the recollection of his own anxious ministry among them for three years, during which he "ceased not to admonish every one night and day with tears" (ver. 31). *Secondly*, a fervent commendation, in which the elders and those over whom they presided were (α) committed to the care of God and the word of His grace (see "Critical Remarks"), which (or who) was able to build them up (compare Eph. ii. 20, 21, iv. 12, 16, 29), and give them an inheritance among them who were sanctified

(compare xxvi. 18; Eph. i. 18); and (β) encouraged to eschew the sin of covetousness in discharging their sacred duties (compare 1 Tim. iii. 3, vi. 11; Titus i. 11; 1 Peter v. 2), by recalling the example of himself (Paul), who coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel, but whose own hands ministered to his necessities and those of his fellow-labourers (xviii. 3; 1 Cor. iv. 12; 2 Thess. iii. 8), and to practise the Christian virtue of liberality, the strong labouring to help the weak (Eph. iv. 28), by remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, of which perhaps he (Paul) had been wont to speak (in his preachings), how He said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (compare Matt. v. 42; Luke vi. 38). 2. *A proof of its genuineness.* That this address to the elders of Miletus was not historical, but manufactured by the writer of the Acts and put into the mouth of Paul, has been argued (Baur, Zeller, Weizsäcker, and others) chiefly on the ground that it closely corresponds in thought and language to the pastoral epistles, which it is assumed (without satisfactory evidence) were of a later date than Paul. But if, on other grounds, the Pauline origin of this speech can be established, the harmony between it and the pastoral epistles will contribute an important element in proof of the authenticity of these. Now, that this speech was actually delivered by Paul may be inferred from the following considerations: its perfect agreement with the situation as well as with the history, character, doctrine, and style of Paul, as these are set forth in the Acts and Epistles. (1) It is precisely such an address as Paul might have been expected to deliver to the elders of a Christian Church whom he had summoned to a farewell interview, and accordingly is different from all his previous addresses which were spoken in the hearing either of Jews (xiii. 16-41) or of Greeks (xvii. 22-31). (2) It agrees with the history of Paul, which represents him as having laboured for nearly three years in Ephesus, teaching in the synagogue and in the school of Tyrannus, and working with his own hands for his support (xviii. 3, xix. 8-10; 1 Cor. iv. 12; 2 Thess. iii. 10-12). (3) It harmonises with the character of Paul, manifesting the same tender solicitude as he was ever accustomed to show towards his converts (2 Cor. i. 14, 24, vi. 11, xi. 21; Phil. i. 8; Gal. iv. 19; Col. i. 29) and the same care to give no offence that the ministry might not be blamed (2 Cor. vi. 3). (4) It accords with the Pauline doctrines of salvation by grace through faith and unto holiness (Eph. i. 4-6, ii. 8-10), of redemption by the blood of Christ (Eph. i. 7), and of sanctification through the truth (Eph. v. 26; 1 Thess. ii. 13, iv. 6). (5) It bears the stamp of Paul's style, as the following examples show: "Serving the Lord" (ver. 19), found six times in Paul, occurs elsewhere only in Matt. vi. 24 and Luke xvi. 13; "Lowliness of mind" (ver. 19), five times in Paul, once only elsewhere, in 1 Peter v. 5; "Kept back" in vers. 20, 27, and again in Gal. ii. 12; "That was profitable" (ver. 20), once in Heb. xii. 20, and three times in 1 Cor.; "I take you to record," or "I testify" (ver. 26), also in Gal. v. 3 and Eph. iv. 17; "Remember" (ver. 31), seven times in Paul; "Watch" (ver. 31), elsewhere only in 1 Cor. xvi. 13.

III. **The closing scene.**—1. *The last prayer.* Kneeling down upon the sea-beach (compare xxi. 5), he prayed with them all, in words which Luke appears to have felt too sacred to report. Kneeling "was the attitude in prayer which prevailed among the early Christians, except on the Sabbath and during the seven weeks before Pentecost, when they generally stood" (Hackett). 2. *The parting embrace.* They all fell upon the apostle's neck, as Joseph did on that of Benjamin his brother (Gen. xlv. 14) and of Jacob his father (Gen. xlvi. 29), shedding tears of holy grief and kissing him tenderly again and again, with mingled love and anguish, sorrowing most of all for the word he had spoken that they should see his face no more. 3. *The final separation.* Unwilling to be parted from him till the last moment, they accompanied him to the ship (compare xxi. 5), which soon after weighed anchor and bore him from their anxious gaze.

Learn.—1. The care which a true shepherd ever takes of his flock. 2. The fidelity with which a true preacher should declare the counsel of God. 3. The affection which Christian people should ever manifest towards their teachers. 4. The grief which ever arises when true pastors are separated from their flocks.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 17. *The Elders of the Church.*

I. **Their designations.**—Presbyters. So called, because usually selected from the elder brethren.

II. **Their functions.**—1. Primarily to rule, superintend the flock, and generally guard the spiritual interests of the believing community. 2. Secondarily, to teach—more especially when and where the services of the apostles, prophets, and teachers of the early Church were not available.

III. **Their election.**—By the people. In this respect they differed essentially from the above-named apostles, prophets, and teachers who were both qualified for and called to their offices by the Holy Ghost.

IV. **Their ordination.**—By the apostles originally, afterwards by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery (1 Tim. iv. 14).

"Originally there were in the separate communities only a multiplicity of chosen office-bearers, who were promiscuously designated as Ἐπίσκοποι (overseers) and πρεσβύτεροι (presbyters or elders), as bearers of one and the same office. This office is not a branch of the apostolic teaching office, since for this had the oldest communities along with the apostles other teachers, and the work of teaching was free to all believers (later certainly the office of teaching was combined with that of bishop or presbyter), but it consisted primarily in the disciplinary oversight of the community (or congregation), in the administration of the community's goods, and the conducting of the (community's) regular worship. This community office, but not a Church constitution, did the apostles ordain." (Sell. *Forschungen der Gegenwart über Begriff und Entstehung der Kirche, Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, 1894, p. 357). "Hatch finds that the later Church constitution, bishop, college of presbyters and deacons, as distinguished from the people, is not to be explained out of an original office of community superintendence like that of presbyter-bishop, but that this organisation arose through a combination of a number of equally original institutions which had been developed according to previously existing analogies. Communities in which care of the poor, public Divine worship, and mutual fellowship of the brotherhood played a great roll, possessed administration officers, finance officers, who along with their assistants, after the analogy of the club treasurers of antiquity, looked after the important business of administering the society's goods. These officials were the Ἐπίσκοποι (overseers) and διάκονοι (deacons), who were also divided into different classes, the old, the mature, or middle aged, and the young; while for the determination of questions of manners and customs, for Church discipline, for the decision of legal controversies, and afterwards for admonition, a special order in the community—viz., the presbyters" (*Ibid.*, pp. 359, 360). "Harnack, in his edition of the *Teaching of the Twelve*, has drawn attention to this, that in the oldest believing communities, along with the bishops, deacons, and presbyters, there were other charismatically endowed persons—viz., apostles, prophets, and teachers, who, as servants, belonged not to individual congregations, but to the whole Church of Christ, and who were not chosen, but ordained by the Holy Ghost" (*Ibid.*, p. 360).

Vers. 18-35. *Paul's Address to the Elders at Miletus.* "This, the third long speech attributed to Paul in the

Acts, was certainly from a pastoral theological point of view the most important, as that in Athens was, dogmatically and apologetically considered, and that in Antioch of Pisidia when regarded in an evangelistic or missionary light. It divides itself into four sections of almost equal length :—

I. A **reminiscence** of the Apostle's long-continued and self-sacrificing labour among the Ephesians (vers. 18-21).

II. An **expression** of prophetic anticipation as to tribulation and danger awaiting him in Jerusalem (vers. 22-27).

III. An **admonition** to the elders or overseers to faithful shepherding and courageous protection of the flock (vers. 28-31); and

IV. An **exhortation** to unselfish exercise of their office, after Paul's example and in accordance with the Lord's word (vers. 32-35). Zöckler, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, p. 246.)

Ver. 19. *Minister's tears.* These may be either—1. Tears of love (ver. 31); 2. Tears of sorrow (Phil. iii. 18); or 3. Tears of joy; or thus;

Minister's tears: 1. A painful tax of human weakness. 2. A precious ornament of holy souls. 3. A fruitful seed for a harvest of joy (*Gerok*).

Vers. 19-21. *Marks of a True Minister of Jesus Christ.*

I. **Devotion** to Christ whom he serves.

II. **Humility** with regard to himself.

III. **Sympathy** with those he desires to teach.

IV. **Fortitude** in face of foes from without.

V. **Fidelity** to the truth he preaches.

VI. **Diligence** in the work he undertakes.

VII. **Authority** in the message he proclaims.

Ver. 20. *Precepts for Preachers.*

I. **The theme of their preaching.**—1. *What it should not be.* It should never be only what is new, or learned, or beautiful, or sublime, or rare. These certainly, if they can be made subservient to the highest ends of the ministry. But never these if they interfere with this. 2. *What it should be.* Only what is profitable for the hearers—for their conviction and conversion, for their edification and instruction in righteousness, for their reproof or correction, for their enlightenment and growth in grace.

II. **The manner of their preaching.**—1. With *personal humility*, counting themselves less than the least of all saints (Eph. iii. 8). 2. With *tenderness of speech*, addressing their hearers with melting tones and moving them with tears (Phil. iii. 18). 3. With *holy courage*, fearing not the face of man or the opposition of the world (Ephes. vi. 19, 20). 4. With *absolute fidelity*, keeping back nothing (ver. 20) but declaring the whole counsel of God (ver. 27), so as to be free from the blood of all men (ver. 26).

III. **The place of their preaching.**—1. In the *public assembly*, wherever men congregate, in the church from the pulpit, or in the hall from the platform. 2. In *private houses*, by a due discharge of the pastoral office.

Ver. 21. *The Substance of the Faith.*

I. **Repentance toward God.**—Implies—1. Acknowledgment of sin against God. 2 Humility of heart before God. 3. Submission of soul to God. 4. Hope of the Spirit in God.

II. **Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.**—Involves—1. Belief in the supreme divinity of His person. 2. Trust in the atoning efficacy of His work. 3. Confidence in the steadfastness of His promised word.

III. **The relations between the two.**—1. Faith without repentance is like a house without a foundation, and like a tree without either root or fruit. Faith of a saving sort springs from a sense of guilt and sin, and leads to godly sorrow and heart contrition. "The pupil of faith is a broken heart." 2. "Repentance without faith is either inconsolable and ends in despair, or

self-righteous and ends in making redemption superfluous."

Ver. 22. *Bound in the Spirit; or, the True Preacher's "Necessity"* (1 Cor. ix. 16).

I. **To go wherever the Spirit of Christ directs** (ver. 22).

II. **To leave the future in the hands of his heavenly Master** (ver. 22).

III. **To confront all sorts of peril,** even death itself, in the discharge of his ministry (ver. 23).

IV. **To be faithful unto death,** in testifying the gospel of the grace of God (ver. 24).

Ver. 24. *The Gospel of the Grace of God.*—The grace of God is—

I. The **fountain** whence the gospel flows.

II. The **burden** of the gospel message.

III. The **blessing** which the gospel bestows.

IV. The **end** at which the gospel aims. All for the glory of His grace (Eph. i. 6).

The Gospel of the Grace of God.

I. **The gospel as the gospel of the grace of God.**—1. There is grace in the method by which its blessings are secured. The substitution and sacrifice of Christ. 2. There is grace in the influence by which its blessings are applied. The influence of the Holy Spirit in the principle and in the mode of His operation. 3. There is grace in the nature of its blessings. The privileges of the righteous. 4. There is grace in the extent to which its blessings are diffused. It is fitted and designed to be a universal religion.

II. **Our duty in reference to it.**—1. We should cordially believe it. It is revealed not for speculation but for belief, and it is authenticated by the most conclusive evidence. 2. We should steadily adhere to it. Let us strenuously resist all who deny, or modify, or philosophise, or explain away the doctrines of grace. 3. We should zealously propagate it. Every Christian should be a missionary.—*G. Brooks.*

The Office of the Ministry.

I. **From whom it is received.**—The Lord Jesus. Not only is it in general of Christ's appointment (1 Cor. xii. 28; Eph. iv. 11), but in every separate instance it is of His bestowal. No man should take this office upon himself, but wait until He receives it from Christ, who will intimate His will by (1) the inward prompting of the Spirit in the individual's heart, (2) by imparting the requisite qualifications for the office, and (3) by sending him the call of his brethen to undertake the office. "No one should force himself, purchase himself, marry himself, or beg himself into the ministry and thus run and preach without a divine mission and call, but wait until he receives it and is sent" (Starke, quoted in *Lange*).

II. **For what it is appointed.**—To testify the gospel of the grace of God. Not to teach morals, science, or philosophy, but to publish to sinful men the glad tidings of salvation from sin and death—salvation proceeding from the grace of God, through the obedience unto death of Jesus Christ and the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost. "Millions of moral sermons, and folios of moral books will not, in a thousand years, bring you so far as this despised little word 'grace' will bring you in one minute, when faith understands and the heart embraces it" (Gossner, in *Lange*).

III. **How it should be executed.**—1. With self-sacrificing devotion that counts not life itself dear in order to fulfil it faithfully and truly. 2. With persevering resolution that will not slack in the sacred work till life itself ends. 3. With solemn earnestness, as realising the immediate neighbourhood of death (ver. 25).

IV. **How it will be rewarded.**—1. *With a sentence of acquittal,* declaring the faithful preacher free from the blood of all men (ver. 26). 2. *With an influx of heavenly joy,* when the

Master says, "Well done! good and faithful servant: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Ver. 28. *Take heed; or, Words of Warning for Christian Ministers.*

I. **The minister's relation to his people.**—1. *That of a shepherd towards his master's flock.* The image of a flock which had been employed in Old Testament to describe Israel was selected by Christ to designate His Church (Matt. xxvi. 31; Luke xii. 32; John xxi. 15-17), and from Him adopted by both Peter (1 Peter v. 2) and by Paul. As of this flock Christ was the good (John x. 14), the chief (1 Peter v. 4), and the great (Heb. xi. 20) Shepherd, so were the elders, or bishops, or presbyters undershepherds. 2. *That of an overseer over his master's property.* Christ's proprietorship in the Church rests on the fact that He has purchased it with His own blood (compare Eph. i. 14); hence elders, bishops, presbyters, and ministers generally cannot be owners of the flock, but only its keepers; or lords of the congregation (1 Peter v. 3), but only its overseers.

II. **The minister's duty to his people.**—1. *To take heed unto himself* (1 Tim. iv. 16). Since otherwise he cannot take heed unto them. In order to properly discharge his duty as a shepherd and an overseer, the minister must see (1) to his own personal relation to the Master whom he serves; (2) to the liveliness of his own faith; (3) to the extent and correctness of his own knowledge in religion; (4) to the purity of his own heart and life, (5) to the sincerity and uprightness of his own motives. A true minister takes heed to himself when he nourishes his own soul by sound doctrine, purifies his own heart by loving obedience to the truth, strengthens his own spirit by habitual devotion, and generally lives in inward communion and fellowship with Jesus Christ. 2. *To take heed unto his flock*—in which at least three things are comprised: (1) feeding the flock (John xxi. 15-17; 1 Peter v. 2)—*i.e.*, nourishing them up in sound doctrine (1Tim. iv. 6), instructing them with "wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ," and with "the doctrine which is according to godliness" (1 Tim. vi. 3), exhorting them with sound speech that cannot be condemned" (Titus ii. 8); (2) tending the flock, or taking the oversight of it (1 Peter v. 2), watching over the character and deportment of its several members, and administering such discipline as may serve to promote their religious welfare (1 Cor. v. 4, 5; 2 Cor. ii. 6; Gal. vi. 1; 2 Thess. iii. 6, 14, 15; 1 Tim. v. 1; 2 Tim. iv. 2; Titus i. 13, iii. 10; (3) guarding the flock against the entrance of "grievous wolves" or false teachers (ver. 29), who by promulgating erroneous doctrine should subvert the faith of the ignorant and unwary (1 Tim. i. 3, 4, 6, 7, 19, iv. 1, vi. 5; 2 Tim. ii. 18, iii. 6; Titus i. 10; 2 Peter ii. 1, 2, 3; 1 John iv. 1).

"*Take heed to yourselves.*"—A sermon for ministers.

I. **How?**—1. Lest you should be void of that saving grace which you offer to others and be strangers to the effectual workings of that gospel which you preach. 2. Lest you live in those actual sins which you preach against in others. 3. Lest you be unfit for the great employment you have undertaken, since he must not be a babe in knowledge that will teach men all those mysterious things that are to be known in order to salvation. 4. Lest your example contradict your doctrine and you lay such stumbling blocks before the blind as may be the occasion of their ruin.

II. **Why?**—Because—1. "You have heaven to win or lose for yourselves, and souls that must be happy or miserable for ever. 2. You have a depraved nature and sinful inclinations as well as others. 3. Such works as yours do put men on greater use and trial of their graces, and have greater temptations than most other men. 4. The tempter will make his first and sharpest onset upon you. 5. There

are many eyes upon you, and therefore there will be many observers of your fall. 6. Your sins have more heinous aggravations than those of other men. 7. The honour of your Lord and Master, and of His holy truth and ways, doth lie more on you than on other men. 8. The souls of your hearers, and the success of your labours, do very much depend on your taking heed unto yourselves" (Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor*, chap. I.).

A Pastor's Duty towards his Flock.

I. **To feed the flock by diligent preaching of the word.**—A work requiring—1. Spiritual wisdom and understanding in the mysteries of the gospel (1 Cor. ii. 4-7; Ephes. iii. 8-11). 2. Experience of the power of the truth (John iii. 11; 2 Cor. iv. 13). 3. Skill to divide the word aright (2 Tim. ii. 15). 4. A prudent consideration of the state of the flock. 5. Zeal for the glory of God and compassion for the souls of men.

II. **To continue in fervent prayer for the flock** (vi. 4).—1. For the success of the word among its members. 2. For their protection against those temptations to which they are generally exposed. 3. For the especial state and condition of individuals, as these become known to him. 4. For the presence of Christ in the assemblies of the Church.

III. **To administer the seals of the covenant**—*i.e.*, the sacraments. 1. At suitable times. 2. According to Christ's appointment. 3. Unto those only who are meet and worthy.

IV. **To preserve the truth or doctrine of the gospel** received and professed in the Church, and to defend it against all opposition (Phil. i. 17; 1 Tim. i. 3, 4, iv. 6, 7, 16, vi. 20; 2 Tim. i. 14, ii. 25, iii. 14-17).

V. **To labour for the conversion of souls unto God.**—To enlarge the kingdom of Christ, to diffuse the light and savour of the gospel, to be subservient unto the calling of the elect, or gathering all the sheep of Christ unto His fold, are things that God designs by His Churches in the world.—*From Owen.*, vol. xvi., chap. v.

Vers. 28-30. *Characteristics of the Church.*

I. **Owned** by God.
II. **Redeemed** by Jesus Christ.
III. **Ruled** by the Holy Ghost.
IV. **Served** by Christian elders.
V. **Assailed** by false teachers.
VI. **Betrayed** by insincere friends.

Vers. 28, 29. *Three Things of which Christian Pastors should take heed.*

I. **Of themselves.**—1. Lest preaching to others they should themselves be castaways (1 Cor. ix. 27). 2. Lest while preaching they should publish another gospel which is not another (Gal. i. 6-9).

II. **Of the flock.**—1. Lest any of them should be lost. 2. Lest any of them should be sickly or weak (1 Cor. xi. 30).

III. **Of the wolves.**—1. Lest any should arise within the fold. 2. Lest any should break into it from without.

Ver. 32. *A Pastor's Farewell.*

I. **His affectionate regard for his people.**—Designating them as his brethren, which they are in a double sense. 1. *By nature*, as being partakers of the same flesh and blood (xvii. 29): and 2. *By grace*, as being members of the same houshold of faith (Gal. vi. 10).

II. **His fervent desire for his people.**—1. That they should be edified or built up in faith, love, and holiness (Eph. iv. 16; Jude 20). 2. That they should at last obtain an inheritance among the sanctified, *i.e.*, among the spirits of just men made perfect (Heb. xii. 23).

III. **His solemn commendation of his people.**; or 1. *To God.* (1) To whom they rightly belong, being His children by creation and regeneration; (2) because He alone is able to build them up and bring them to the heavenly inheritance; and (3) has graciously promised to preserve and perfect all that trust in Him and

believe upon His Son. 2. *To the word of His grace.* Meaning not the personal word, but the truth of the gospel, and signifying that he, Paul, prayed that his brethren might be enlightened by, and sanctified through that truth, since through that alone does God advance His gracious work in the souls of His people (John xvii. 17).

Ver. 35. *The Duty of the Strong towards the Weak.*

I. Its **nature.**—To extend material aid to the poor.

II. Its **imperativeness.**—Ye *ought.* The relief of poorer brethren is not optional, but obligatory on Christians.

III. Its **motive.**—Obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ.

IV. Its **blessedness.**—It is more blessed to give than to receive.

More Blessed to Give than to Receive.

I. **Because it delivers us from ourselves.**—1. From the bonds of selfishness. 2. From the cares of superfluity. 3. From the burden of dependence.

II. **Because it unites us to the brethren.**—1. By their friendly attachment. 2. By their active gratitude. 3. By their blessed intercession.

III. **Because it brings us nearer to God.**—Making us 1. Imitators of God, the All Good. 2. Sharers in the delight of the All Loving. 3. Expectants of the reward of the Eternal Rewarder. —*From "Gerok."*

The Unrecorded Words of Jesus. —Of these Dr. Westcott (*Introduction to the Gospels*, Appendix C.) gives the following list: 1. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, How He said, *It is more blessed to give than to receive* (Acts xx. 35; compare Luke vi. 30). 2. On the same day, having seen one working on the Sabbath, He said to him, *O man, if indeed thou knowest what thou doest, thou art blessed; but if thou knowest not, thou art cursed and art a transgressor of the law* (Cod. D.; after Luke vi. 4). 3. *But ye seek to increase from little, and from greater to be less* (Cod. D.) 4. The Son of God says: *Let us resist all iniquity and hold it in hatred* (*Epistle of Barnabas*, 4). 5. Thus He (Christ) saith, *They who wish to see Me and to lay hold on My kingdom must receive Me by suffering and affliction* (*Epistle of Barnabas*, 7). 6. *Shew yourselves tried money-changers* (Origen *in Joann.* xix). 7. *He that wonders shall reign; and he that reigns shall rest* (*Ex. Ev. Hebr. Ap.* Clem. Al., *Strom*). *Look with wonder at that which is before you* (*Ap.* Clem. Al., *Strom.*, ii. 9, 45. 8. *I came to put an end to sacrifices, and unless ye cease from sacrificing* (God's) *anger will not cease from you* (*Ev. Ebion. Ap. Epiph. Hær.*, xxx. 16). 9. Jesus said to His disciples, *Ask great things and the small shall be added unto you; and ask heavenly things and the earthly shall be added unto you* (Origen, *de Orat.*, 2). 10. Our Lord Jesus Christ said, *In whatsoever I may find you in this I also will judge you* (Clem. Al., *Juisdives*, 40). *Such as I may find thee, I will judge thee*, saith the Lord (Nilus., *Ap. Anast. Sin., Quæst.*, 3). 11. The Saviour himself says, *He who is near Me is near the fire; he who is far from Me is far from the kingdom* (Orig., *Hom. in Jerem.* iii., p. 778; Didymus *in Psalm* lxxxviii. 8). 12. The Lord says in the gospel, *If ye kept not that which is small, who will give you that which is great? For I say unto you, that he that is faithful in very little, is faithful also in much* (Clem. Rom., *Ep.*, ii. 8) 13. The Lord says, *Keep the flesh pure. and the soul unspotted, that we* (perhaps ye) *may receive eternal life* (Clem. Rom., *Cop.*, ii. 8). 14. The Lord himself having been asked by some one when His kingdom will come, saith, *When the two shall be one, and that which is without as that which is within, and the male with the female, neither male nor female* (Clem. Rom., *Ep.*, ii. 12). 15. Jesus says, *For those that are sick, I was sick, and for those that hunger I suffered hunger, and for those that thirst I suffered thirst* (Orig. *in Matt.*, tom. xiii. 2). 16. In the Hebrew gospel, the Lord says to His disciples, *Never be*

joyful except when ye shall look on your brother in love (Hieron. *in Ephes.*, v. 3). 17. After the Resurrection Christ said to Peter and the apostles, *Take hold, handle Me, and see that I am not an incorporeal spirit* (Ignat., *ad Smyrn.* 3). 18. Christ said, *Good must needs come, but blessed is he through whom it comes* (Clem., *Hom.*, xii. 29). 19. It was not through unwillingness to impart His blessings that the Lord announced in some gospel or other, *My mystery is for Me and for the sons of My house.* We remember our Lord and Master, how He said to us, *Keep My mysteries for Me and for the sons of My house* (Clem. Alex., *Strom.*, v. 10-64). 20. *I will select to myself these things: very very excellent are those whom My Father who is in heaven has given to Me* (Eusebius, *Theophania*, iv. 13) 21. The Lord taught of those days (of His future kingdom on earth) and said, *The days will come in which vines shall spring up, each having ten thousand stocks, and on each stock ten thousand branches, and on each branch ten thousand shoots, and on each shoot ten thousand bunches, and on each bunch ten thousand grapes, and each grape when pressed shall give five-and-twenty measures of wine. And when any saint shall have seized one bunch another shall cry, I am a better bunch; take me; through me bless the Lord.* . . . And when Judas the traitor believed not and asked, How then shall such productions proceed from the Lord? The Lord said, *They shall see who shall come to these times* (Papias; compare Irenæus, v. 5, 33, 53). Concerning some of these it is practically certain that they were not uttered by Christ; it is extremely doubtful if any one of them was except the first, which has been recorded by Luke.

CHAPTER XXI.

Bound for Jerusalem.—The Termination of the Third Missionary Journey.

§ 1. Seven Days at Tyre; or, Impending Danger announced (vers. 1-6).
§ 2. With Philip at Cæsarea; or, Renewed Foreannouncements of Evil (vers. 7-14).
§ 3. With James and the Elders at Jerusalem; or, Mistaken Counsel (vers. 15-25).
§ 4. Arrested in the Temple; or, Long Looked for, Come at Last (vers. 26-40).

CRITICAL REMARKS.

Ver. 1. **And it came to pass that after we had gotten from them and had launched.**—Better, as well as literally, *And when it came to pass that we had weighed anchor, having departed from them.* The "we" certainly included Luke and, most probably, Trophimus (xxi. 29) and Aristarchus (xxvii. 2); the others (xx. 4) presumably proceeded no farther. Timothy may even have returned with the elders from Miletus to Ephesus (1 Tim. i. 3). **With a straight course** shows the wind to have been favourable. Compare xvi. 11. **Coos** should be *Cos*, an island on the south-west coast of Asia Minor, and forty miles from Miletus, a distance which could have been performed in six hours. **Rhodes.**—Another island lying upon the south of Asia Minor, on the coast of Caria. **Patara.**—A seaport of Lycia, near the left bank of the Xanthus, celebrated for its oracle of Apollo.

Ver. 2. **Finding a ship sailing over.**—Lit., *having found a vessel crossing over.* The reason for thus changing vessels may have been either that the one they left was not proceeding further, or was not fit for venturing far from the coast, or that the one they boarded was just leaving when they landed at Patara, so that by availing themselves of it they lost no time.

Ver. 3. **Discovered Cyprus.**—Better, sighted Cyprus. Lit., *having had it brought up to sight* or made visible. A nautical expression, the opposite of which is to lose sight of land, ἀποκρύπτειν γῆν. **We left** (or, leaving) **it on the left hand.**—This shows they sailed to the southward of the island. **Syria** in those days included Phœnicia (ver. 2), of which **Tyre** (see xii. 20) was the capital. **For there, etc.**—Lit., *for thither* (*i.e.*, having come thither), the *ship was unlading her burden.*

Ver. 4. **And finding disciples** should be *and having found out* (by searching, because they were strangers) *the disciples* who lived there, since the gospel had been preached in Phœnicia at an early period (xi. 19), and the Saviour had performed some of His miracles in the neighbourhood of Tyre and Sidon (Matt. xv. 21; Mark vii. 24). **Seven days** (compare xx. 6).—The time occupied in unloading the ship; during which time Paul would, without doubt, preach the gospel and consult for the welfare of the Syrian Church. **Go up,** ἀναβαίνειν, as in ver. 12.—The best text reads *set foot upon,* ἐπιβαίνειν.

Ver. 5. **And when we** should be *and when it came to pass that we* **had accomplished those,** or *the* **days** named in ver. 4. The days were not spent in refitting the ship (Meyer), but in refreshing the disciples. **Wives and children.**—Only mention of wives and children in the Acts.

Ver. 7. **And when he had finished our course from Tyre** might be read *but we, having finished our voyage, came down from Tyre* (Alford). From Tyre, a moderate day's journey by land and a few hour's by sea. **Ptolemais.**—The ancient Accho (Judges i. 31), the modern *Akka* of the Arabians, and Acre or St. Jean d'Acre of Europeans. With arrival at this port the sea voyage from Neapolis to Syria ended.

Ver. 8. **Cæsarea.**—The third visit (see ix. 30, xviii. 22). That the distance from Akka to Cæsarea, about forty miles, was performed on foot appears (Holtzmann and others) incompatible with the haste which would not suffer Paul to land at Ephesus (xx. 16); but the land route may have been rendered necessary because of inability to find a ship without waiting. **Philip the Evangelist.**—See on viii. 40. **Of the seven.**—See on vi. 5.

Ver. 9. **And the same man.**—Better *now this man.*

Ver. 10. **Agabus.**—In all probability the person already known (xi. 28). Whether he had heard of Paul's arrival and come to Cæsarea on that account (Baumgarten) must be left undecided. It is worth observing that Philip's daughters were not selected as the medium through which Paul was warned.

Ver. 11. Compare the symbolical actions of Old Testament prophets (1 Kings xxii. 11; Isa. xx. 2; Jer. xiii. 1; Ezek. iv. 1, etc.).

Ver. 12. **They of that place** were the Christians there.

Ver. 13. **What mean ye?**—Better, *what do ye, weeping and breaking my heart?* Compare Mark xi. 5.

Ver. 15. **We took up our carriages,** or things to be carried (see Judges xviii. 21).—ἀποσκευασάμενοι. The reading of the Received text should be translated, *having packed away our baggage—i.e.*, the superfluous part of it (Olshausen); or *having discharged our baggage—i.e.*, unpacked the matters necessary for our journey to Jerusalem. But the best reading, ἐπισκευασάμενοι, signifies, *having packed up our baggage,* and so made ourselves ready for the journey to Jerusalem (Hackett, Alford, Holtzmann, and others).

Ver. 16. **An old,** better, *an early* **disciple.**—*I.e.*, one who had long been a disciple, having been probably converted on the day of Pentecost. Whether the Cæsarean brethren brought Mnason with them to Jerusalem (Calvin, Beza, Plumptre), or brought Paul to Mnason at Jerusalem (Bengel, Olshausen, Meyer, De Wette, Holtzmann) is uncertain. Both translations are admissible. Mnason was of Cyprus, and therefore a countryman of Barnabas (iv. 36).

Ver. 17. **The brethren** were not the Church or the apostles (Kuinoel), but private Christians, such as Mnason and others (Wendt, Holtzmann, Hackett, and others).

Ver. 18. **James.**—See on xii. 17, xv. 13. The apostles, not mentioned, may by this time have been dispersed from Jerusalem, while some may have been dead. The Jerusalem Church was manifestly presided over by James and the elders.

Ver. 19. **Particularly, what things,** or *one by one, each of the things which.*—Compare xv. 4, 12. That nothing is here said about the delivering up of the collections for the poor saints at Jerusalem has been explained by supposing that the "we" sources were no more at the author's command, but may be satisfactorily accounted for by assuming that Luke did not consider this necessary to be stated. It is perfectly arbitrary to assert that—in order, shall it be said, to guarantee the apostle's good faith?—information should have been given about the final disposition of those contributions which the apostle had been collecting, and with which he hoped to appease the irritated minds of his Jewish brethren (Holtzmann).

Ver. 20. **They glorified the Lord.**—Rather, *God* (as in Gal. i. 24), on Paul's account, and not as if they themselves did not share in the general suspicion or anxiety (Holtzmann), but more likely as if they were somewhat troubled about the inferences that were being publicly drawn from Paul's Gentile mission—called his attention to the **many thousands,** or *myriads,*

of Jewish Christians, not in the world (Overbeck), but in Jerusalem and Judæa (Wendt, Zöckler), who were **all** (not "some" as in xv. 1, 5) **zealous**, not **of**, but *for* **the law**, as Paul himself had formerly been (Gal. i. 14).

Ver. 21. **That thou teachest all to forsake Moses.**—Lit., *that thou teachest apostasy from Moses.* The allegation contained an element of truth in so far as it was undoubtedly Paul's aim to persuade his countrymen to embrace the gospel, and in so far as their reception of the gospel would in due course emancipate them from the bondage of the law; but it was not Paul's object or business to inculcate on Jewish Christians the discontinuance of either circumcision or the ritual of Moses. (See further in "Homiletical Analysis.")

Ver. 22. **The multitude** (or a crowd, πλῆθος, without the article) **must needs come together.**—The best MSS. omit this clause along with γὰρ, for, and read, *they will certainly hear that thou art come.*

Ver. 23. **We have four men.**—The clause shows how closely the Jerusalem Church adhered to the ritual of Moses. That the **vow**, taken by the men, was that of the Nazarite is suggested by the reference to shaving the head.

Ver. 24. **Purify thyself with them and bear charges with**, rather, for **them.**—James, who gave this advice, was himself a Nazarite—"Drank no wine nor strong drink, neither did he eat flesh. No razor ever touched his head; he did not anoint himself with oil; he did not use the bath. . . . He would enter into the temple alone, and there be found kneeling on his knees and asking forgiveness for the people; so that his knees grew hard like a camel's knees, because he was ever upon them worshipping God and asking forgiveness for the people" (Euseb, *Hist.*, ii. 23). The term for a Nazarite vow, though not prescribed by the law, was usually thirty days; but Jewish practice had rendered it possible for one who could not undertake a vow for so long a time to join in with another in the last days of his Nazaritic period on condition of bearing all the temple charges for offerings for himself and that other. The Jews considered it a specially meritorious act to assist a poor Nazarite in this manner. Agrippa I., on obtaining the sovereignty of Palestine, paid the expense of numerous indigent Nazarites who were waiting to be released from their vows (Jos., *Ant.*, XIX. vi. 1). As Paul was a poor man, it is supposed he paid, or proposed to pay, the charges for the Nazarites out of the Gentile contributions which he brought for the poor saints in Jerusalem. Ramsay challenges the statement that Paul was a poor man, and suggests that the charges here specified, as well as the cost of his subsequent trial, were borne out of his own patrimonial estate, or hereditary property (*St. Paul the Traveller, etc.*, pp. 310 *ff*). **All may know** should be *all shall know.*

Ver. 25. The best MSS. omit the clause **that they observe no such thing.** This reference to the apostolic decrees confirms the credibility of the account in chap. xv.

Ver. 26. **Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself**, might read *took the men the next day, and having purified himself*, not by performing the ordinary ablutions required before entering the temple (Howson), but by entering with them upon the same course of dedication. **To signify** (better, declaring) **the accomplishment of the days of purification.**—*I.e.*, either that the days were fulfilled and the time come for the four men to be released from their vows (Wieseler, Conybeare and Howson), or, better, announcing his intention to fulfil along with them the (seven) days which by the law must precede the termination of the vow (Alford, Hackett, Plumptre, Spence, Holtzmann and others).

Ver. 27. **Seven days** was the ordinary period for the most solemn purifications (Exod. xxix. 37; Lev. xii. 2, xiii. 6; Numb. xii. 14, xix. 14). Of these seven days Paul observed only two, or at least four, as appears from xxiv. 11 (see "Critical Remarks"), which shows the interval between Paul's arrival in Jerusalem and his speech before Felix was only twelve days. When his arrest took place the seven days were "almost ended"—*i.e.*, they were not completed when he was apprehended. **In the temple** meant most likely in the court of the women, afterwards called **this holy place** (ver. 28), into which no foreigner was permitted to enter under pain of death. "This court was four square, and had a wall about it peculiar to itself." There was also a stone partition all round, three cubits high, whose construction was very elegant, and upon which stood pillars at equal distances from one another, declaring the law of purity, some in Greek and some in Roman letters, that "No foreigner should go within that sanctuary" (Jos., *Wars*, V. v. 2, VI. ii. 4). The correctness of this statement, which was long disputed, has been recently confirmed by Monsieur Clermont Ganneau's discovery of one of those prohibitory notices, with an inscription in Greek, of which the following is a translation: *No foreigner to proceed within the partition wall and enclosure around the sanctuary; whoever is caught in the same will on that account be liable to incur death*" (*Recent Discoveries on the Temple Hill*, p. 134).

Ver. 30. **They took**, or *laid hold on* **Paul.**—Baur and Holtzmann regard it as improbable that these Jews, among whom doubtless were many zealots for the Messiah's faith and for the law, should have seized Paul when engaged in the performance of a pious work of the law, and accordingly reject this story as unhistorical. But why should fanatical Jews always have acted in logically and religiously consistent fashion, when enlightened and sober-minded

Christians do not? **The doors** were most probably the gates which led into the women's court.

Ver. 31. **The chief captain of the band.**—*The chiliarch*, or military tribune *of the cohort*, whose name was Claudius Lysias (xxiii. 26), resided in the Castle of Antonia, a gigantic fortress on a rock or hill, about eighty-five feet high, at the north-west angle of the temple area, which communicated with its northern and western porticoes, "and had flights of stairs descending into both, by which the garrison could at any time enter the court of the temple and prevent tumults" (Robinson, *Biblical Researches*, I., p. 432. Compare Josephus, *Wars*, V. v. 8).

Ver. 33. **Two chains.**—*I.e.*, bound by a chain to a soldier on each side (compare xii. 6).

Ver. 34. **Into the castle.**—More correctly, *into the camp* or *barracks* attached to the tower.

Ver. 36. **Away with him.**—Compare xxii. 22; Luke xxiii. 18; John xix. 15.

Ver. 37. **Canst thou speak Greek?**—Lit., *dost thou know Greek?* Ἑλληνιστὶ γινώσκεις. Compare *Græce nescire* in Cicero (*Pro. Flac.*, 4) and τοὺς Συριστὶ ἐπισταμένους in Xenophon (*Cyrop.*, VII. v. 31).

Ver. 38. **That** (or, the) **Egyptian.**—Josephus (*Wars*, II., xiii. 5) mentions an Egyptian, a false prophet, who, having deluded thirty thousand men, led them round about from the Wilderness to the Mount of Olives with the view of breaking into Jerusalem from that place, and states that Felix, having fallen upon them, either destroyed or captured alive the greater portion of his followers, and dispersed the rest, while he himself escaped with a small number. In another account (*Ant.*, XX. viii. 6) the Jewish historian says that this Egyptian went to Jerusalem and advised the common people to go along with him to the Mount of Olives, which they did in vast crowds, he promising to show them the walls of Jerusalem fall down at his command; and that Felix sallied out against them with a great company of horsemen and footmen, slew four hundred, and made two hundred prisoners, but did not capture the Egyptian, who escaped. Tholuck (*Glaubwürdigkeit*, p. 169) has shown how the variations in Josephus's story may be harmonised; but even if they could not, they would only prove that Josephus, while substantially confirming Luke's account, was not so accurate a historian as Paul's friend.

Ver. 39. **Of no mean city.**—Josephus (*Ant.*, I. vi. 1) calls Tarsus the most important city in all Cilicia. "Many of the coins of Tarsus bear the title of *Autonomous* and *Metropolis*" (Hackett).

Ver. 40. That Lysias should have given Paul **licence** or *leave* to address the people need occasion no surprise. Paul had satisfied Lysias that he was no wild revolutionary, but a peaceful Cilician; and besides, Lysias may have seen in Paul's countenance from the first what convinced him his prisoner was no ordinary man. **The Hebrew tongue**, or *dialect*, was the Syro-Chaldaic or Aramean, as in John v. 2, xix. 13, the mother tongue of the Jews in Judæa at that time.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 1—6.

Seven days at Tyre; or, Impending Danger announced.

I. **The voyage from Miletus to Tyre.**—1. *From Miletus to Patara.* (1) The company of voyagers. Paul and his companions, now reduced to three, Trophimus, Aristarchus, and Luke, the others Sosipater, Secundus, Gaius, Timotheus, and Tychicus, having either remained behind at Miletus, or gone to their several homes, or departed to various fields of labour. "So part we in this world of care to meet again in dear Jerusalem." (2) The sorrowful farewell spoken on the sea-beach, with hot tears and tender embraces, and with the feeling present in every heart that never again would they all look each other in the face on earth. A presentiment which all companies may feel on breaking up. (3) The speedy voyage. The first night the vessel anchored at Cos, famous for its wines and fabrics, for its temple of Æsculapius, or school of medicine, and for its two distinguished natives, Hippocrates the physician, and Apelles the painter. The ship had made a run of six or seven hours from Miletus, which shows it must have sailed from the latter port about noon. The next day, having rounded Cape Crio, it headed eastward, a distance of fifty miles, and lay to for the second night in Rhodes, then celebrated as being "the most beautiful spot in this perhaps the fairest portion of the world," a current proverb saying that "the sun shone every day in Rhodes." From the Greek period it had been renowned for its Temple of the Sun and for its Colossus, though when Paul's ship

visited the harbour the latter was in ruins, having been overthrown by an earthquake. The day following, the barque landed at Patara, a coast town of Lycia, and a place of some importance and splendour, possessing a convenient harbour (now an inland marsh) and a celebrated temple and oracle of Apollo, which almost rivalled that of Delphi (*Herod.*, I. 182, III. 4). 2. *From Patara to Tyre.* Scarcely had the vessel anchored in the harbour of Patara when Paul and his companions found another ship, a merchantman, bound for Phœnicia, in the act of setting sail, and having taken out passages in it once more confronted the dangers of the deep. Whether the ship they left was not proceeding farther, or they were unwilling to wait for it, need not be curiously inquired after. It admirably served their purpose to embark on the one they found weighing anchor, and hurry to their destination. Passing by the island of Cyprus (iv. 36) on the left hand—*i.e.*, keeping to its south, the Phœnician merchantman steered her course for Tyre to which she was bound with a cargo. (On the commercial importance of Tyre in Old Testament times, see Ezek. xxvii.) As the distance between Patara and Tyre was 340 geographical miles, several days would most likely be consumed in this part of the voyage.

II. **The seven days' stay in Tyre.**—1. *The unlading of the ship.* The commercial greatness of Tyre. Never was a more precious cargo discharged at her wharves than when Paul and his companions disembarked, carrying with them the unsearchable riches of salvation to proclaim to its inhabitants. 2. *The search for the disciples.* Paul probably knew that already the gospel had been preached and the nucleus of a Church formed there. That the Christians were not numerous in Tyre may be inferred from the circumstance that they required to be searched out. Paul's inquiry after them arose no doubt partly from a desire of Christian fellowship in a heathen city, and partly from a wish to impart unto them some benefit by preaching among them (compare Rom. i. 11). 3. *The warning of Paul.* Given by the disciples, who, in speaking as they did, acted as the organs and mouthpiece of the Holy Ghost, who never did, and does not yet restrict His influences or communications to official persons, but imparts them to whomsoever He will (John iii. 8; 1 Cor. xii. 11). The tenor of their warning was that Paul should not set foot in Jerusalem, obviously because of the danger they saw impending.

If we ask, *Why did the Spirit through these men warn Paul?* It could not be that the Spirit did not wish Paul to visit Jerusalem, because it must already have been in the Spirit's plan that Paul should go to Jerusalem, be apprehended there, and carried thence to Rome. The only answer possible seems to be that in this way the Spirit desired to confirm the impression already made upon Paul's heart, that "bonds and afflictions" were waiting him (xx. 23), and to test if not the sincerity, at least the strength and tenacity of his faith.

III. **The pathetic farewell to Tyre.**—1. *The affectionate convoy.* The whole body of the disciples with their wives and children, unwilling to be parted from the apostle and his companions, repeated the scene which had a few days before been witnessed in Miletus, and accompanied them on their way till they reached the outskirts of the city. A scene like this attests the strength of that spiritual affection which a true minister of Christ can inspire in the bosoms of his hearers. 2. *The prayer meeting on the beach.* Recalling the similar interview with the Ephesian elders (xx. 36), and the fast of Ezra and his fellow-travellers on the Ahava (Ezra viii. 21). How much more appropriate for Christians to part at a prayer meeting than at a social banquet, with supplications and tears and solemn commendations of each other to God than with songs and laughter, wine and wassail. 3. *The final separation.* Bidding each other good-bye, they went their several ways, Paul and his companions to their ship, the Christians of Tyre to their homes. So must all earthly unions and communions be broken up

and interrupted till the heavenly union and communion arrive which will never end.

Learn.—1. How God guides His people on their journeys, whether these be by sea or land. 2. How Christ's disciples draw to one another, even in strange cities. 3. How the Spirit of Christ tries and tests the faith and patience of those He leads. 4. How providence assigns to each man his own particular sphere and work.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 1-7. *Helps and Hindrances.*

I. **Helps for Paul's journey.**—1. Favourable winds—a straight course (ver. 1). 2. Opportune events—the crossing ship (ver. 2). 3. Christian companions—"we came" (ver. 1), "we sailed," "we landed" (ver. 3). 4. Religious fellowship with the Tyrian disciples (ver. 4).

II. **Hindrances to Paul's journey.**—1. The prophecies of approaching evil. (ver. 4). 2. The tearful farewells upon the beach (vers. 5, 6). 3. The separation from Christian friends which ensued.

Ver. 4. *Seven days in Tyre.* "This peculiar period of time mentioned at Troas (xx. 6), and again at Puteoli (xxviii. 14), seems to tell us that St. Paul arranged to stay at each of these points where there was a Christian Church—Troas, Puteoli, and Tyre—for the purpose of attending one solemn meeting of the brethren on the Lord's day, and partaking, once at least, with them all of the Lord's Supper.—*Spence.*

Ver. 5. *Husbands, Wives, and Children.*

I. **All belong to the conception of an ideal home.**—All, therefore, should be bound together by ties of love. All should be mutually helpful by lovingly fulfilling the duties which each owes to the other two, and which all owe to God, to the Church, to the world.

II. **All have a rightful place within the Christian Church.**—All belong to its communion. The Church membership of wives and children no less than of husbands and fathers is distinctly recognised in New Testament Scriptures (ii. 39; 1 Cor. vii. 14).

III. **All should take part together in exercises of Christian worship.**—Whether in public assemblies or in private gatherings of the disciples, all should, like Cornelius's household (x. 33), be present. The modern practice of establishing separate Churches for children cannot be too severely condemned.

Children. Are—

I. **The heritage of the Lord,** and should be thankfully received from, and diligently trained for Him.

II. **The ornament of home,** and should be sincerely admired and tenderly cherished.

III. **The hope of the Church,** and should be carefully instructed and nourished up in the faith.

IV. **The promise of the world,** and should therefore be with much solicitude prepared for their future places in it.

Vers. 1-5. *The Power of Love to Jesus Christ.*

I. It brings the unacquainted near (ver. 4).

II. It forewarns of possible danger (ver. 5).

III. It gladly cultivates fellowship (ver. 5).

IV. It humbles itself before God in mutual prayer (ver. 5), (*Lisco, in Lange*).

Ver. 6. *Christian Farewells.*

I. Often take place under sorrowful circumstances.

II. Should always be accompanied with prayers as well as tears.

III. Ought not to hinder the prosecution of necessary duties.

IV. Will eventually give place to joyous reunions.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.

Vers. 7-14. *With Philip at Cæsarea; or, Renewed Fore-announcements of evil.*

I. **The journey from Tyre to Cæsarea.**—1. *The Voyage from Tyre to Ptolemais.* Commenced after the seven day's sojourn in Tyre and the affecting farewell upon the beach; it continued probably not more than a few hours, as Ptolemais was distant from Tyre not more than a moderate day's journey by land. 2. *The halt at Ptolemais.* Not to examine into either the antiquities or the splendours of the town, though in respect of both it was then worthy of attention. Given to Asher at the conquest (Judges i. 31, 32), Acco, the original name of Ptolemais, had never been completely cleared of the Canaanites, but remained in possession of the Phœnicians, till taken by Shalmaneszer of Assyria. In B.C. 333 it passed into the hands of Alexander the Great, and from his, when his dominions were divided among his generals, into those of Ptolemy in B.C. 320, who, having greatly enlarged and beautified it, called it Ptolemais. Ultimately it fell beneath the yoke of the Romans, and received further embellishment at the hands of Herod. At the time of Paul's visit it had been raised to the rank of a Roman colony and must have been a splendid city (see *Picturesque Palestine*, iii. 87-89). Yet none of these things attracted the apostle. What tempted him to linger a day within its borders was a desire to meet with the Christian disciples who were to be found here also as at Tyre. 3. *The walk from Ptolemais to Cæsarea.* The distance extended to nearly forty miles; while the route lay along the coast and round the head of Carmel. Why the travellers footed this instead of sailing cannot with certainty be said. The apostle may have deemed it better to hurry on overland than wait for the sailing of his ship (if it was going further) or (if it were not) for the finding of another. 4. *The arrival at Philip's house.* This Philip was the Jerusalem deacon (vi. 5), who, following the example of his brilliant colleague Stephen, became an eloquent preacher of the gospel in Samaria (viii. 5), and after being used by the Spirit for the conversion of the Eunuch (viii. 26), was last heard of as publishing the good news in all the cities on the coast northwards from Azotus (viii. 40), till he came to Cæsarea, where he finally settled, and for nearly twenty-five years fulfilled the office of an evangelist. When Paul in A.D. 58, paid his third visit to the town, Philip had four grown up and unmarried daughters endowed with the prophetic spirit (ii. 17)—*i.e.*, who gave inspired utterances and expositions of Christian truth, and also foretold future events. Whether they joined (Spence) or did not join (Hackett) Agabus in predicting Paul's approaching captivity is unrecorded; but Luke represents Paul and his companions as having been so pleased with their reception and entertainment in Philip's family circle that they "tarried there many days," perhaps longer than they at first intended. Luke himself must have here for the first time met Philip, who would no doubt supply him with much of the information about himself and others which appears in the earlier chapters of the Acts.

II. **The warning renewed in Philip's house.**—1. *The person of the speaker.* A certain prophet from Judea, named Agabus, most likely the same who fourteen years before in Antioch had predicted the coming of a famine (xi. 28), though otherwise unknown. God often sends important communications through obscure messengers. 2. *The symbolic action.* Having found his way into Philip's house, he laid hold of Paul's girdle—*i.e.*, the sash wherewith in Oriental countries the flowing robes were tied round the waist, and with it bound in succession first his own hands and then his own feet—after the manner of the Old Testament seers (see "Critical Remarks"). 3. *The prophetic utterance.* "Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles." Agabus distinctly claimed to

speak with divine authority, and Paul accepted his announcement as such. Besides solemnly confirming what Paul had previously heard at Tyre, the language of Agabus explained the exact nature of the peril which now threatened the apostle. Under some grave charge not revealed he would be delivered over by his countrymen into the hands of the Roman Government. 4. *The friendly appeal.* When Paul's companions and the inmates of Philip's house, with probably other Christians came to hear of Agabus's prediction, they entreated their beloved teacher not to proceed to Jerusalem. Agabus, it will be observed, did not join in this entreaty, though the Tyrian disciples did (ver. 4)—which shows that most likely these last overstepped the limits of what the Spirit had revealed to them (see "Critical Remarks"). The parallel between Christ and Paul, who were both dissuaded—the former by Peter (Matt. xvi. 22), the latter by his friends—from going to Jerusalem to suffer, is too apparent to escape notice. 5. *The heroic response.* "What are ye doing? thus weeping and breaking mine heart," etc. The apostle, with a fortitude which resembled that of his Master, gave his friends to understand that he perfectly realised the situation, and accepted it with unreserved submission, that he felt ready to face the worst at Jerusalem for his Master's sake, that death itself had no terrors for him, and that their tearful entreaties would have no effect in keeping him back from the fate which he saw impending. The course he was pursuing had been adopted under the Spirit's guidance, and aimed at the glory of Jesus and the furtherance of the gospel, by publishing once more the tidings in the Metropolis at the most numerously attended of all the feasts, and by seeking fresh recognition from the mother Church for his Gentile mission. Hence he could not flinch; their tears and entreaties, therefore, only rendered his separation from them the more acutely painful. When he said they were breaking his heart, he did not mean that they were lacerating his soul by conjuring up before him the bonds and afflictions" that awaited him, since he could truthfully affirm none of these things moved him, but that it broke his heart to be obliged to witness their grief and resist their weeping and supplication. 6. *The submissive acquiescence.* When his friends perceived that he could not be persuaded they desisted, saying: "The will of the Lord be done!"—borrowing their expression, it has been conjectured, from the Master's prayer, which by this time had attained to familiar and perhaps daily use among Christians. If there is a time to speak there is also a time to be silent, and this was one.

Learn.—1. The variety of offices in the Christian Church—evangelists, prophets, apostles. 2. The value of dramatic action in preaching. 3. The calm heroism of him who walks in the way of duty. 4. The preference a good man should give to duty over life itself. 5. The necessity laid on Christians to acquiesce in their Master's will.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 8. *Philip of Cæsarea.*

I. **Not an apostle** like his namesake of Bethsaida (John i. 44), but a deacon like his gifted colleague Stephen (vi. 6).

II. **Not a pastor** of a Church like James the brother of Our Lord (Gal. ii. 9), but an evangelist like Timothy (2 Tim. iv. 5).

III. **Not a celibate** like Paul (1 Cor. vii. 8 (?)), but a married man like Peter (Mark i. 30).

IV. **Not a wandering missionary** like Paul, but a preacher of the gospel having a fixed centre from which to evangelise.

Ver. 9. *Virgins which did prophesy; or, the place of Woman in the Christian Church.* The fact here stated proves—

I. **That woman has an equal standing in the Church with man.**—In

Christ there is neither male nor female (Gal. iii. 28).

II. **That woman equally with man is susceptible of receiving the highest spiritual endowments.**—Examples in Hebrew Church—Miriam (Exod. xv. 20), Deborah (Judges iv. 4), Huldah (2 Kings xxii. 14), Noadiah (Neh. vi. 14), Anna (Luke ii. 36). In the New Testament Church Philip's daughters stand alone.

III. **That though woman was not intended to rule in the Church of Christ** (see 1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35; 1 Tim. ii. 12), **nothing hinders her from exercising her gifts as a preacher of the truth** (see xviii. 26; and 1 Cor. xi. 5). As a possessor of the truth she is equally with man under obligation to disseminate it; and if God has endowed her with the gift of sweet speech there appears no sound reason why that gift should not be utilised for such a holy purpose.

IV. **That the number of women called of God and the Spirit to this work will most likely always be few.**—This a warrantable deduction from the exceptional character of the present instance.

V. **That woman may be equally helpful to the cause of Christ in other ways than by prophesying.**—Like Dorcas (ix. 39), Phebe (Rom. xvi. 1), Mary (Rom. xvi. 6), and others.

Ver. 10. *The Prophet Agabus;* or, comfort for obscure men.

I. **Obscure men are all known to God.**—Simon, the Joppa tanner, was as well known as Peter the apostle; and Ananias of Damascus as Saul the emissary of the Sanhedrim.

II. **Obscure men may become vessels of Divine grace.**—"Not many mighty, not many wise, not many noble, but God hath chosen the poor of this world rich in faith.

III. **Obscure men may be employed on great missions.**—Ahijah the Shilonite predicted the rending of the kingdom from Rehoboam and the elevation of Jeroboam to the throne of Israel (1 Kings xi. 29-31). Humble shepherds were made the first preachers of the Incarnation (Luke ii. 17). Agabus announced to Paul his impending imprisonment.

IV. **Obscure men may eventually come to high renown.**—The name of Agabus is for ever associated with that of Paul; the names of the humblest believers will for ever be connected with that of Christ.

Vers. 12, 13. *The great Modern Counterpart of Paul*—Martin Luther. "When he entered a town the people flocked together to see the wonderful man who was so brave and who dared make a stand against the Pope and all the world that held him to be a God in opposition to Christ. Some gave him poor comfort, telling him that, because there were so many cardinals and bishops at Worms at the Diet, he would speedily be burned to powder, as Huss had been at Constance. But Luther answered such men as follows: "And if they should build a fire between Wittenberg and Worms that would reach to heaven, in the Lord's name I would appear and step into Behemoth's mouth, between his great teeth, and confess Christ and let Him do His pleasure." (Frederick Myconius: quoted by Hagenbach: *History of the Reformation*, i. 133). . . . "Spalatin also, the court preacher of the Elector of Saxony, and the intimate friend of Luther, advised him by a post messenger, that he must not go immediately to Worms. It was then that Luther uttered his ever memorable speech: "And if there were as many devils at Worms as there are tiles upon the roofs, I would go thither" (Hagenbach, *Ibid*, pp. 133, 134).

Ver. 13. *Paul's Sacrifices in the Cause of Christ.* 1. Of ease. Recount his labours. Contrast them with ours. 2. Of friendship. A warm-hearted man who delighted to love and to be be loved. Sacrificed his affections at the shrine of duty. We must not allow the influence either of our relatives or of our friends to interfere with

our supreme devotion to the cause of Christ. 3. Of liberty. Value of liberty. Paul was capable of appreciating it, and did appreciate it highly. Was willing to forfeit it, and did forfeit it. His imprisonment was overruled for good. It is scarcely possible that any of us should be, in our own country at least, literally a prisoner for Christ We may be exposed to social and political disadvantages. We ought to be willing to bear them. 4. Of life. The highest proof of devotion to any cause. Paul gave it. The fact was in his case a confirmation of the truth of the religion he professed. It was, at all events, a proof of his own sincerity. A willingness to die for the cause of Christ is the best preparation for all minor trials.—*G. Brooks.*

Ver. 14. "*The Will of the Lord be done!*"

I. A **prayer** put into the Christian's mouth by Christ (Matt. vi. 10).

II. A **precept** for the Christian, illustrated by Christ (Matt. xxvi. 42).

III. A **pattern** of Christ that should be followed by His servants.

Or thus:—

I. A **vow** of becoming obedience.

II. A **confession** of believing submission.

III. A **declaration** of holy courage (Leonhard and Spiegel, from Lange).

Christian Resignation.

I. Enjoined and illustrated by Christ.

II. Exemplified and recommended by Paul and his friends.

III. Approved and rewarded by God.

Ver. 11. *Lessons from Paul's Girdle.*

I. **Apostolic fidelity.** — Christian ministers, like Paul, are bound to be faithful to their Lord.

II. **Apostolic trial.**—Christian ministers, if faithful, may expect, like Paul, to experience the hatred of the world.

III. **Apostolic zeal.** — Christian ministers, like Paul, should always be ready for whatever suffering or duty lies before them (from Gerok).

The True Bonds of a Christian.

I. Not the bonds of his own flesh and blood, which he has torn asunder by the power of the Spirit.

II. Not the bonds of human force and enmity, which cannot injure him contrary to the will of God.

III. Not the bonds of brotherly love and friendship, for whosoever loveth brethren or sisters more than the Lord is not worthy of Him.

IV. But only the bonds of love to his Lord, to whom he is bound in grateful love and childlike fidelity, even unto death (Gerok, in Lange).

Vers. 13, 14. *The Heroism of Paul; A study for the followers of Christ.*

I. **The splendour of his heroism.**—Exhibited in—1. *The calm courage he displayed in the prospect of death.*—"I am ready not to be bound only, but to die also at Jerusalem." This utterance was not made—(1) In ignorance of what suffering and death was. Paul and misfortune had been companions for many years. For twenty years he had been an object of unsleeping persecution, had experienced every sort of calamity, and had more than once been in the grips of death (2 Cor. xi. 23). (2) In secret expectation that both might be escaped. Paul had no such hope or expectation. Already it had been too clearly signified to him that "bonds and imprisonment awaited him." Agabus's words, too, left no loophole for escape. (3) In a feeling of despair, because he saw that evasion was impossible. On the contrary, humanly speaking, Paul perceived that the only thing necessary in order to escape was to keep away from Jerusalem, renounce his mission, cast off Christianity, and go back to the fold he had left. The Jews would receive him with open arms. (4) In a spirit of braggadocio. Like Peter, to gain for himself a reputation for valour, with no real intention of ever fulfilling his words. Paul maintained the same intrepidity before Festus (xxv. 11), and in writing to the Philippians from Cæsarea (Phil. ii. 17). Later he ex-

hibited the same spirit when sending an epistle to Timothy from Rome (2 Tim. iv. 6). 2. *The triumphant victory over the prospect of death which he obtained.* Not only was he calm and unmoved in the contemplation of his arrest and execution, but as it were death was so overcome that it could not hinder him from thinking about the interests of others. One would naturally have expected that with the prospect of bonds and imprisonment before him, although externally unperturbed, he would be inwardly sad and occupied with his own misfortunes. But he was not. The grief of his friends even could not thrust him in upon himself. How like his master who, when in the agonies of death, prayed for His murderers, pardoned the robber and cared for His mother! How like Stephen, who, with his latest breath, interceded for his assassins! And since then men have sometimes been found over whose heroic spirits death had no power.

II. **The secret of his heroism.** 1. *Love to the Lord Jesus Christ.* Between Paul and Jesus Christ existed such a bond of personal love and devotion as has probably never since existed. Paul's individuality was almost swallowed up in Christ. "Not I, but Christ liveth in me!" "To me to live is Christ!" Paul had such a conception of Christ's love to him—"He loved me and gave Himself for me"—that it kindled in him a responsive flame of affection that wellnigh consumed him. "The love of Christ constraineth us!" And there is no consideration or force that will transform a man into a hero sooner than this. 2. *Love for the souls of men.* When Paul said "for the name of the Lord Jesus" he practically meant "for the gospel's sake," which again signified, "for the souls of men." He wanted to go to Jerusalem to preach to his countrymen at Pentecost, and was willing to face bonds, imprisonment, and death for so sacred a cause. This the next strongest force to the love of Christ. Paul was willing to die for the gospel, not because it was the highest philosophy, or divinest theology, but because it was the power of God unto salvation to every one who believed.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 15—25.

With James and the Elders at Jerusalem; or, Mistaken Counsels.

I. **Paul's journey to the capital.**—1. The *point* of departure. Cæsarea; the abode of Philip the evangelist (ver. 8), the city of Cornelius (x. 1), the scene of Herod's death (xii. 19-23) and of Paul's subsequent imprisonment (xxiii. 31-35). The apostle little dreamt, on leaving Cæsarea, that before many days had passed he would return to it a prisoner, though, had he foreseen such, the knowledge would hardly have discomposed him (ver. 13). Paul one of those heroic spirits that rise superior to external circumstances, and when confronted by extremest danger "forget they ever heard the name of death" (Shakespeare). 2. The *time* of departure. After the interview with Agabus. The pathetic scene with the disciples (vers. 12-14), and in particular the courageous declaration of Paul, not to mention other reasons, clearly rendered it impossible for him to remain longer at Cæsarea. Had he done so, even the disciples might have begun to think, if not to say, when they recalled his spirited utterance—"These be brave words, O Paul! but where is thy performance?" And Paul was not the man to suffer any one to charge him with either timidity or inconsistency. 3. The *manner* of departure. With "carriages" or things to be carried—*i.e.*, baggage taken up—this including both articles necessary for the journey and the gifts Paul was bearing to the poor saints in Jerusalem. Paul's anticipations of sorrow for himself had no power to make him forget the contributions he had gathered for the needs of others. Paul was ever a rare example of self-forgetfulness.

II. **Paul's travelling companions.**—1. *Those who had accompanied him from Asia.* Whether all the seven mentioned in xx. 4 (Besser), or only Trophimus, Aristarchus, and Luke is debatable, though the latter opinion is the more probable. 2. *Certain disciples from Cæsarea.* Most likely Gentile converts, though they may have been Jewish Christians travelling to Jerusalem to attend the Feast of Pentecost. Wherever Paul went his noble personality, rendered more magnetic by the grace of God that was in him, drew around him circles of friends, and grappled them to his bosom as with hooks of steel. The time had not yet arrived when all men would forsake him (2 Tim. iv. 16) as they had formerly forsaken his Master (Matt. xxvi. 56). 3. *Mnason, an old or "early" disciple—i.e.,* one who had long been a Christian, having been (it may be supposed) one of the first converts, gathered into the Christian fold on the day of Pentecost. A native of Cyprus like Barnabas, he may also have been one of those "men of Cyprus" who came to Antioch and were among the first to preach the gospel to the Gentiles (xi. 20). Whether he lived at Cyprus but possessed a house as well in Jerusalem, or usually resided in Jerusalem but had been visiting at Cæsarea and was now returning home, or had not been to Cæsarea at all, but was still in Jerusalem, and Paul (according to another translation) was being conducted to him, are points concerning which no authoritative decision can be given. The one clear fact is that Paul and his companions obtained a lodging in Mnason's house, presumably because in the state of public feeling among Jewish Christians concerning Paul's Gentile mission, it might have been difficult, if not dangerous, to seek accommodation for him with one of these.

III. **Paul's arrival in the city.**—1. *The date.* That he reached Jerusalem in time for the Feast of Pentecost is apparent. His departure from Philippi took place after the days of unleavened bread, since then he had been occupied in travelling as under :—

From Philippi to Troas (xx. 6) . .	5 days.	From Tyre to Ptolemais (xxi. 7) .	1 days.
Where he abode	7 „	From Ptolemais to Cæsarea (xxi. 8)	2 „
From Troas to Miletus (xx. 13-15) .	4 „	Where he halted (xxi. 10, say) . .	6 „
Where he stayed (say)	3 „	From Cæsarea to Jerusalem . . .	2 „
From Miletus to Patara (xxi. 1). .	3 „		
From Patara to Tyre (say) . . .	4 „	In all	44 days.
Where he remained (xxi. 4) . . .	7 „		

If to this be added six for the days of unleavened bread (xx. 6), the total of fifty will be obtained, which is the interval between Passover and Pentecost. 2. *His reception.* The brethren—*i.e.,* the private Christians (among them Mnason and his friends) to whom his coming was made known welcomed him and his companions gladly—Mnason to his house and all of them to their hearts. Sympathising fervently with Paul's missionary enterprise they rejoiced to see him home again with tidings from the regions beyond.

IV. **Paul's interview with the Church leaders.**—1. *Fraternal greetings.* As on a former occasion (xviii. 22), Paul saluted or embraced the recognised heads of the Christian community, who had convened to accord him welcome. These were James the brother of Our Lord—not James the younger (Hackett)—who, ten or eleven years later, suffered martyrdom as a believer in Jesus of Nazareth, by being hurled from the pinnacle of the temple and despatched by stoning (Euseb., *H. E.*, ii. 23) ; and the elders or spiritual rulers, overseers, presbyters of the various congregations in Jerusalem. That none of the apostles are mentioned as having been present suggests that none of them at that time resided in the Holy City. Some may have set forth on missionary tours, while others may have "departed to be with Christ, which is far better." 2. *Glowing recitals.* Salutations over, the apostle, as he had done on returning from his first missionary tour (xiv. 27), declared particularly or rehearsed one by one the things

which God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry—noting specially his hearing of Apollos (xviii. 24), meeting with John's disciples (xix. 1), and successful preaching (xix. 20) in Ephesus; his journey to Macedonia and Achaia (xx. 1, 2); with the various incidents that occurred on the homeward route, in Troas (xx. 9), at Miletus (xx. 17), in Tyre (ver. 4), and at Cæsarea (ver. 8). More might be done to deepen the home Church's interest in the missionary enterprise by returned missionaries, were they to lay before their Christian brethren, in fitting language, the story of what God is at present doing among the heathen. 3. *Fervent thanksgivings.* When the assembled elders had listened to the thrilling narrative, they glorified God for having raised up such a veteran missionary within the Church, and for having performed, through his instrumentality, such wonders of grace among the Gentiles (compare iv. 21, xi. 18). Henceforth they could entertain no doubt or suspicion, more of the earnestness of the man or of the Divine authority of his mission; and whatever friction may have previously existed between the apostle and the Jerusalem leaders, at this moment it had disappeared. The anti-Gentile spirit, if it slumbered in the Church of the Metropolis, which is doubtful, was not shared in by its rulers. 4. *Mistaken counsels.* (1) The circumstances out of which these arose were two; the multitudes (myriads or tens of thousands) of Jewish Christians from all parts of the world, who were then present in the Holy City, and the misconception under which they laboured of Paul's work, which they imagined to be a crusade against circumcision and the customs of Moses, when it was no such thing. Certainly Paul taught the Gentiles that circumcision and the customs of Moses were not required for a sinner's justification so that the Gentiles had no need to embrace these with a view to salvation. To the Jews among the Gentiles—*i.e.*, to the Jewish Christians he explained that even for them circumcision and the customs of Moses formed no ground of acceptance before God; but he never insisted on the discontinuance, by Jewish Christians, of either circumcision or the customs. Doubtless Jewish Christians, who came to understand the complete religious worthlessness of circumcision, and the customs as mere external performances, would gradually lay these aside; and so the notion might (and probably did) diffuse itself that Paul directly aimed at this result by means of his gospel. It was of course an error fitted to be hurtful. (2) The motive which dictated the advice given by James and the elders was unquestionably good. They desired, if possible, to disabuse the public mind of the unjust suspicions it entertained of Paul's Hebrew orthodoxy, and to remove every stumbling block out of the way of his ministerial usefulness among his countrymen. On this principle Paul himself was always prepared to act (1 Cor. ix. 20). (3) The advice itself ran that Paul should associate himself with four poor Christian Jews who had taken on themselves Nazarite vows, which required them to let their hair grow, to abstain from intoxicating liquor, and generally to lead ascetic lives for a period usually of thirty days, from which vows they could not be released without the presentation in the temple of certain specified offerings (Numb. vi. 1-21). It was suggested that Paul should, according to a custom then prevailing, join himself to these four men during the last seven days of their vow, should along with them abstain from wine, and let his hair grow; and that at the end of these days he and they should shave their heads, while he paid for the necessary offerings to clear himself and them—again after the manner of pious Jews of a wealthier sort, who were accustomed thus to assist their poorer brethren. James and the elders believed that by so doing Paul would demonstrate to his excited countrymen that there was no truth in the information they had received, and that he, Paul, was as good and orderly a Jew as any one among themselves. To the suggestion of this course they may have felt prompted by remembering that Paul had once at least before

at Cenchrea undertaken a similar vow (xviii. 18). (4) The consideration by which James and the elders hoped to urge this course upon the apostle was that they had gone a long way in making concessions to the Gentiles, having written and concluded or given judgment, that they, the Gentiles, should observe no such thing as circumcision and the customs of Moses, but only that they should keep themselves from things offered to idols and from blood, from things strangled, and from fornication. (5) Nevertheless the advice was a mistake. What it recommended, if carried out, as it was, might not have been sinful in itself or unlawful for Paul from his point of view (1 Cor. vi. 12, x. 23), but it was certainly of doubtful policy as tending to confirm Jewish Christians in the idea that Paul did regard the law as in some fashion indispensable for salvation, while in point of fact he did not, and practically worthless, since it neither effected what they hoped for, nor averted what they feared, neither allayed the groundless suspicions against Paul, nor prevented an outbreak of hostility against him (ver. 28).

Lessons.—1. The lawfulness of Christian prudence—exemplified in lodging Paul with Mnason. 2. The duty of Christian brotherly kindness—illustrated in Paul's reception by the Christians of Jerusalem and the leaders of the Church there. 3. The doubtfulness even of Christian compromises—as seen in the course recommended by James and followed by Paul.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 16. *An Old Disciple.* — Exemplified in Mnason of Cyprus.

I. **A striking proof of Divine faithfulness.**—In preserving Mnason to be a Christian of long standing.

II. **A satisfying evidence of the reality and power of religion.**—Had Mnason not found it so, he had not adhered to it so long.

III. **A precious storehouse of Christian experience.**—One who has long been a disciple must have learnt much of the secret of the Lord.

IV. **A possible instrument of valuable service.**—To the Church and the world. As there are tasks that can better be performed by young believers, so there are offices that can be more efficiently filled by aged disciples.

V. **A deserving object of Christian honour and esteem.**—If the hoary head is entitled to respect and veneration, much more is it so when found in the way of righteousness.

VI. **A Christian pilgrim drawing near the better land.**—Heaven may be near the young believer, it never can be far off from the old disciple.

Vers. 17-20. *A Foreign Missionary's Return.*

I. The **welcome** he received.—Joyful.

II. The **salutation** he brought.—Peace.

III. The **story** he told.—The triumphs of the cross.

IV. The **enthusiasm** he enkindled—They glorified God.

Vers. 20-24. *Concessions to Weak Brethren.*

I. **Legitimate.**—1. When they can be made without violating conscience—*i.e.*, when they refer to things indifferent. 2. When they help to remove stumbling-blocks out of the weak brother's way. 3. When they assist in promoting peace.

II. **Illegitimate.**—1. When, though right in themselves, they tend to mislead the weak brother by causing him to think his position only right. 2. When adopted more from a desire of peace than with a view to promote what is right. 3. When they are calculated to offend as many as they please.

Vers. 21-24. *The World's Misrepresentations of the Followers of Christ.*

I. Are frequently wide-spread.

II. Mostly have nothing in them.

III. Always are difficult to remove.

IV. Seldom get corrected by compromise.

Ver. 26. *Doubtful Actions*; or, the inconsistencies of great and good men.

I. **State the case referred to.**—Paul's arrival in Jerusalem; welcome from the brethren; meeting with the elders and James. James's proposal and the reason of it. Danger apprehended from probable suspicions of Jewish Christians. Paul's adoption of the course recommended, and joining of himself with the four men who had a vow.

II. **Was this action wrong?**—Consider—1. *How it may have looked to James.* (1) Unless James had deemed the course recommended legitimate it may be assumed he would not have made the proposal. (2) James's motives were unquestionably right—to ensure Paul's safety by disarming the hostility of the Jews; to gain a hearing from his co-religionists for Paul's gospel; to set the apostle right with the Jewish Christians. (3) Yet the course recommended may have been wrong, though the course itself may have appeared right and the motives prompting it may have been good. 2. *How it may have looked to Paul.* (1) Of great importance to allay the wide-spread suspicion that was abroad concerning him, and to gain a hearing for the gospel. (2) No small matter to disabuse the minds of his weaker brethren of their misconceptions concerning himself and his mission. (3) Not against his principles to take a vow, since he had done so at Cenchrea (xviii. 18). (4) In harmony with his conduct in circumcising Timothy (xvi. 3). (5) Not inconsistent with his refusal to perform the same rite on Titus (Gal. ii. 3). (6) Not the same as Peter's eating with the Gentiles at Antioch and then withdrawing (Gal. ii. 11, 12). (7) It was only a carrying out of Paul's principle of becoming all things to all men to gain some (1 Cor. ix. 20, etc.). 3. *How it may look to some still.* (1) Of doubtful morality. Not that to recommend or adopt such a course of action was wrong; but that being liable to misconstruction it should neither have been recommended nor adopted without serious consideration. Neither Paul nor James believed that observance of the moral law was indispensable for salvation; but what about the multitude of Jews? Would they not reason, that if Paul observed the customs they must be absolutely binding on the conscience? (2) Of doubtful expediency. It was meant to save Paul, but did not; intended to gain the Jews, but did not; designed to recommend Christianity; but is it certain it did not rather confirm the Jews, both Hebrew and Christian, in the notion of the permanent obligation of the law of Moses?

III. **Lessons from the story.**—1. Compromises are seldom successful. 2. Good men may give bad advice and take false steps. 3. The short road to victory is ever steadfast adherence to principle.

Note.—"Surely these records of the 'Acts,' with their unflinching truth, speak with a strange mighty power to us after all these ages. We feel, while we read of the awful fall and miserable death of one of the Twelve (i. 16-20); of the sin and punishment of two of the most notable believers of the first age (v. 1-11); of the jealous murmuring and discontent of the poor saints (vi. 1); of the failure in courage of Mark and the bitter quarrel of two of the most prominent Christian leaders (xv. 38-40); and here of this doubtful compromise of Paul and James that we have before us a real picture, painted from life, of the Church of the first days, by one who never shrinks to paint the errors, the faults, and the grievous mistakes of even the most distinguished of the first believers."—*Spence.*

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 26—40.

Arrested in the Temple; or, *Long Looked for, Come at Last.*

I. **The Apostle's arrest.**—1. *Where it occurred.* In the temple—*i.e.*, the temple court, into which Paul had entered, and in one of the cloisters of which

he most likely stayed during the period of his purification. Perhaps at the moment he was in the court of the women (see below). 2. *When it took place.* On the last of the seven days (say some) when the necessary offerings were being presented for himself and the four Nazarites, but better as the seven days were running on and nearing completion, so that the offerings were not presented. 3. *By whom it was instigated.* By certain Jews from Asia who had been acquainted with his missionary activity in Asia Minor, and more especially in Ephesus, who had observed him in the city accompanied by Trophimus, an Ephesian, and who now lighted upon him in the temple court. Throughout the whole of his career the Jews (unbelieving) had been his persistent, unsleeping, and remorseless antagonists. The method they adopted in this instance to raise a tumult against him was effective. (1) They laid hands on him, as if he had been an evil doer, a criminal who they purposed to hand over to the tender mercies of the law. (2) They raised a shout against him in the temple court, which inflamed the crowd there present, and spreading abroad throughout the city, threw it into confusion, much as Ephesus had been thrown into a turmoil by the cry of Demetrius (xix. 29), and attracted an excited mob around the temple gates. (3) They pointed him out as the man—the notorious fellow—who went about everywhere teaching all (men and women) against the people—*i.e.*, of Israel—an appeal to their patriotism; against the law—*i.e.*, of Moses—an appeal to their orthodoxy; and against this place—*i.e.*, the temple, the holy dwelling-place of Jehovah—an appeal to their religion. (4) They accused him, though falsely, of sacrilege—*i.e.*, of having violated the sanctity of the holy place by bringing (as they erroneously supposed) Trophimus, the Ephesian, into not the court of the Gentiles, but the court of the women, into which none but Jews could pass under penalty of death (see "Critical Remarks"). 4. *How it was effected.* (1) Tumultuously. The crowd rushed into the temple and seized the apostle's person. (2) Violently. They dragged him forcibly outside the sacred precincts in order that these might not be stained with his blood (compare 2 Chron. xxiii. 14), which they clearly intended to shed. More than likely also this was the reason why the temple gates were so expeditiously shut behind the retreating mob, in case it should return and carry out its murderous project in the holy place.

II. **The Apostle's rescue.**—1. *Opportune.* The mode selected for the carrying out of their deadly intention was the slow one of beating (ver. 32), which allowed time for the information to spread and be carried to Claudius Lysias (xxiii. 26), the chief captain of the band, or military tribune (chiliarch) of the cohort, in the Tower of Antonia near by, whose business it was to quell all riots which might occur (and these were frequent) in connection with the Jewish festivals (see Jos., *Ant.*, XX. v. 3; and *Wars*, V. v. 8). The moment, therefore, Lysias understood the situation, he ran down upon the crowd with a company of soldiers and centurions, the sight of which at once checked their blood-thirsty fury and caused them to leave off beating the apostle. Magistrates were appointed to be terrors to evil-doers (Rom. xiii. 4), and crowds, it is well known, have a salutary fear of the ruler's sword. 2. *Incomplete.* Rescued from the hands of the Jews and from the jaws of death, he was yet not set at liberty. The chiliarch commanded him (wrongfully, as he afterwards learnt, xxii. 25), to be bound as a prisoner, with two chains, and fetched into the castle. The reason for this procedure was the impossibility of learning anything correctly from the infuriated rabble about either who the apostle was or what he had done. Those who composed that rabble could only follow after the retreating soldiers as they bore off their prisoner, and cry, "Away with him," as their fathers had thirty years before shouted in front of Pilate's prætorium (John xix. 15). Yea, so violent did they become, that Paul might have been snatched from the soldier's hands and lynched

on the spot, had not the soldiers, to whom he was bound, lifted him into their arms or upon their shoulders and borne him up the castle stairs.

III. **The Apostle's request.**—1. *The preliminary conversation.* When the top of the stairs had been reached, just before passing into the castle, the apostle, addressing the chief captain in Greek, solicited permission to "say something" to him. Surprised at hearing Greek on the lips of (as he supposed) a foreign Jew whom he did not expect to find a person of culture, he first asked the apostle if he knew Greek, and on receiving a reply in the affirmative, inquired further if he (the apostle) was not then (as the captain had concluded before he heard the apostle speak Greek) that Egyptian impostor—spoken of by Josephus *Ant.*, XX. vii. 6; *Wars*, II. xiii. 5; see "Critical Remarks")—who shortly before had stirred up to sedition and led out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers, literally, the four thousand men of the Sicarii or Assassins. To this, of course, Paul responded, that he was not that renowned brigand chief, but a Jew of Tarsus in Cilicia, and a citizen of no mean city. Honourable men are never afraid to give account of themselves and their doings. 2. *The solicited permission.* To address the people—which showed Paul had not parted with his courage, and was still as ready to fight with wild beasts as he had been at Ephesus (xix. 30; 1 Cor. xv. 32). "The request was a bold one," write Conybeare and Howson, "and we are almost surprised that Lysias should have granted it; but there seems to have been something in St. Paul's aspect and manner which from the first gained an influence over the mind of the Roman officer." In another sense, the request was a comparatively harmless one, and on its being granted Paul at once moved to the stair front, and looking into the faces of the demoniac crowd, beckoned to them with his chained hand, signalling that he wished to speak. "What nobler spectacle," exclaims Chrysostom, "than that of Paul at this moment! There he stands, bound with two chains, ready to make his defence unto 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!" (quoted by Hackett). As if startled by the heroism of the man, the angry crowd forget to shout. A great silence ensues which deepens into an intenser stillness as the accents of their old Hebrew tongue fall upon their ear.

Learn.—1. How unexpectedly evil may befall one. Paul, doubtless, never dreamt of being apprehended in the temple. 2. How difficult it is to quench the passion of hate in unrenewed hearts. The Jews dogged Paul's steps like sleuth-hounds. 3. How easily a misconception may arise. Paul's enemies had seen him and Trophimus in the city, and at once jumped to the conclusion that Paul had fetched his Greek friend into the Holy Place. 4. How quickly a lie can spread. In a few moments the slander was in possession of the town. 5. How nearly one may come to being killed and yet be rescued. A few moments longer before Lysias arrived and Paul might have been a dead man. 6. How strangely a good man may be talked of behind his back. The governor clearly had heard it said that Paul was a sort of bandit chief. 7. How bravely a Christian can comfort himself in face of peril. Not many men could have faced the mob as Paul did from the castle stairs.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 26. *Paul among the Nazarites.*

I. **Not as a slave of human ordinances,** but in the might of evangelical liberty, which has power over all things that promote the kingdom of God (1 Cor. vi. 12).

II. **Not as a dissembler before the people,** but in the ministry of brotherly

love, which bears the infirmities of the weak (Rom. xv. 1).

III. **Not as a fugitive from the cross,** but in the power of apostolic obedience, which knows to deny itself from love to the Lord (Luke ix. 23).

Ver. 27. *Unrealised Aims;* or, man proposes but God disposes.

I. **Many plans that promise well turn out ill.**—The recommendation of James and the elders, and the compliance of Paul were intended to ensure Paul's safety, but they actually led to his arrest.

II. **When a plan turns out badly it cannot be safely argued that the plan was not good.**—We agree with the view which thinks James's counsel, and Paul's practice were not, in this instance the best—we cannot pronounce them sinful; but even had they been the wisest they might have failed.

II. **The success of a plan does not necessarily demonstrate that the plan was good.**—Nothing more common than for the counsels of the wicked to prosper on earth and in time, though they will eventually be overthrown.

Vers. 27-38. *The Troubles of a Good Man.* Paul.

I. **Doubly slandered.**—1. Charged with apostasy in religion (ver. 28). 2. Blamed for committing sacrilege (ver. 28).

II. **Nearly murdered.**—1. Violently dragged from the court of the women (ver. 30). 2. Mercilessly beaten by the angry mob (ver. 32).

III. **Innocently bound.**—1. Like a dangerous criminal (ver. 33). 2. Though no one could tell for what (ver. 34).

IV. **Ignorantly suspected.**—1. Of being an Egyptian when he was a Jew. 2. Of being a leader of assassins when he was only a peaceful citizen. 3. Of having stirred up sedition when in truth he was a preacher of peace (vers. 38, 39).

Ver. 38. "*Art not thou that Egyptian?*" "A remarkable proof of the erroneous and absurd thoughts which the blind world entertains of the children and servants of God. They regard us as idiots, madmen, seducers, enemies of mankind, and under this form they hate us. Thus was Christ also numbered among transgressors" (Gerok in Lange).

"*Art not thou that Egyptian?*" or, misconceptions entertained by the world concerning the followers of Christ, who are often slandered as

I. **Disturbers of social order.**—Paul was accused of being a brigand chief. Had often been reviled as a revolutionary. On this ground the early Christians were persecuted under the Roman emperors. Usual to accuse them as evil doers (see 1 Peter ii. 12). In the days of the Stuart ascendency in our own country Nonconformists were treated as enemies of the commonwealth, because they worshipped God according to their own consciences. To-day Christians are looked upon by many, if not as open malefactors, at least as impracticable persons, who, by crying out against social evils, such as drink, gambling, licentiousness, trouble society.

II. **Self-interested deceivers.**—Lysias obviously thought Paul was one of this class. Christianity has often been represented as a huge imposture, a gigantic system of deception, invented by priests for their self-interest. This accusation, which was common last century, is not unknown in this. Believers are often maligned as persons who have adopted a profession of religion simply as a cloak for their covetousness. No doubt such abuses have existed and such individuals have been found in the Church; but Christianity is no invention of deceivers.

III. **Hypocritical pretenders.**—Giving themselves out to be "saints" when they are as wicked as other people. No doubt of some professing Christians this is true; but it is ignorant calumny to represent all as such. Still Christians should study to

approve their sincerity by a holy walk and conversation.

IV. **Impracticable visionaries.**—Doubtless the captain considered Paul such when he fancied the apostle was that Egyptian who had been aiming at upsetting the supremacy of Rome by means of a handful of Sicarii. So the world pronounces Christians visionaries, fools, fanatics, idiots, dreamers, and such like when they talk of, 1. Applying the principles of Christianity to ordinary life; 2. Bringing the whole world round to the acceptance of Christianity; and, 3. Living for the other world rather than for this.

CHAPTER XXII.

PAUL'S DEFENCE FROM THE CASTLE STAIRS OF ANTONIA: FIRST APOLOGY.

§ 1. A Retrospective Survey of his Past Career; or, what he Was and Did, prior to Conversion (vers. 1-5).

§ 2. The Story of his Conversion to Christianity; or, before and in Damascus (vers. 6-16).

§ 3. The Adoption of his Gentile Mission; or, his Interview with Christ in the Temple at Jerusalem (vers. 17-21).

§ 4. The Effect of his Oration on the Audience; or, Paul's Narrow Escape from Scourging (vers. 22-30).

CRITICAL REMARKS.

Ver. 1. **Men, brethren and fathers.**—Or, *brethren and fathers*, the use of "men" in English being unnecessary. Compare the commencement of Stephen's address to the Sanhedrim (vii. 2). Conybeare and Howson (ii. 276) "account for this peculiar mode of address" by supposing "that mixed with the crowd were men of venerable age and dignity, perhaps members of the Sanhedrim, ancient scribes and doctors of the law, who were stirring up the people against the heretic." More likely this was the usual way of addressing an assembly which included scribes and elders of the people (Spence). **Hear my defence.**—The construction is not a double genitive of the thing and the person—*hear me* and *hear my defence*, but a genitive of the thing; "my" being dependent, not on "hear," but on "defence." The defence consists of three parts.

Ver. 2. **In the Hebrew tongue** or *language.*—See on xxi. 40.

Ver. 3, which begins the first part (ver. 1-5), takes up the acknowledgment as to his own person which has just been made to Lysias (xxi. 39). The best texts omit **verily. Brought up at the feet of Gamaliel.**—On Gamaliel. See v. 34. "The scholars sat upon the ground or upon benches, the teachers upon stools (Matt. xxiii. 2)" (Holtzmann). According to this punctuation, which is commonly adopted (Calvin, Meyer, Alford, Wendt, Zöckler, Holtzmann, Westcott and Hort), Paul must have removed from Tarsus to Jerusalem when a youth (compare xxvi. 4); according to a different punctuation followed by other exegetes (Griesbach, Lachmann, De Wette, Bethge, Hackett, Conybeare and Howson), the words should be rendered, *at the feet of Gamaliel taught*—ἀνατεθραμμένος, having regard (it is said) more to physical growth, while πεπαιδευμένος refers rather to mental culture or professional training. But the way in which the sentences are built, the participle preceding its qualifying clause, appears to speak for the former translation as the more probable. Hausrath considers the story of Paul's studying under Gamaliel in Jerusalem as apocryphal (*Der Apostel Paulus*, pp. 34, 35). **The perfect** should be *the strict* **manner of the law of the fathers.**—The word ἀκρίβεια, which occurs only here (compare xxvi. 5), was the customary catchword for Pharisaic legalism (see Wisd. xii. 1; Jos., *Ant.*, IX. x. 2; *Wars*, II. viii. 14; *Life*, 38). For Paul's legal strictness see his statements elsewhere (Gal. i. 14; Phil. iii. 5). **Zealous towards God.**

Better, *for God*: like zealous for the Law (xxi. 20). **As ye all are this day.**—"A conciliatory comparison" (Alford). "Must not that have constrained the Jews to the admission: 'This man understands us, but we understand him not'" (Besser).

Ver. 4. **This way.**—See on ix. 2: "He would willingly have struck down the believers in Messiah with a stroke" (Holtzmann). **Unto death.**—Or, *as far as death.* Not the aim merely (Meyer), but the actual result (Hackett), of his persecution (compare ver. 20, xvi. 10).

Ver. 5. **The high priest** of the time (ix. 1), Caiaphas, seems to have been still alive when Paul spoke. He, along with the **elders**, composed the Sanhedrim (Luke xxii. 66). **Unto the brethren.**—Not *against the Christians* (Bornemann), but to the Jews in Damascus (Holtzmann, Zöckler, and others); specially to the Jewish rulers in the synagogues (ix. 2). **Them which were there** (ἐκεῖσε) meant those Jewish believers who, having fled thither (to Damascus) in consequence of the persecution (viii. 1), had settled there. **To be punished.**—For apostatising from the law of their fathers.

Ver. 6 begins the second part of the defence (vers. 6-16). **Was come nigh** should be *was drawing near.* The narration is the same as in ix. 3-17 and xxvi. 13-18, with a few points of difference. One of these is the note of time—**about noon**—"through which the miracle is more realistically expressed, and the matter of fact placed beyond suspicion of being an evening delusion" (Holtzmann). Another is the adjective **great** (ἱκανόν) appended to the noun **light** (φῶς), which equally excluded the idea of deception.

Ver. 7. The use of the word **ground** (ἔδαφος) (occurring only here), meaning the "base" or "bottom" of a thing, for "the earth" (γῆν) (ix. 4) may suggest the idea that he was travelling in a caravan or riding on horseback.

Ver. 8. **Of Nazareth**, or, *the Nazarene*, is an addition to Luke's account (ix. 5).

Ver. 9. **And were afraid** (see ix. 2) is omitted by the best MSS.

Ver. 10. **What shall I do, Lord?**—Does not occur in Luke's narration, according to best texts (ix. 5), or in Paul's speech before Agrippa (xxvi. 16). Yet this need occasion no difficulty.

Ver. 11. The cause of his blindness, not stated in the earlier report, is here set down as **the glory of that light**, which was "above the brightness of the sun" (xxvi. 13), a point likely to be noted by Paul rather than by Luke.

Ver. 12. Ananias a **devout** man.—The proper reading is εὐλαβής (Lachmann, Westcott and Hort), rather than εὐσεβής (Griesbach, Hackett), the former signifying "cautious," "prudent," "circumspect," "according to the Law," the latter "full of holy fear and reverence." The former occurs only in Luke's writings and in the Hebrews; the latter is used of Cornelius (x. 2, 7). (See Cremer's *Lexicon of New Testament Greek*, pp. 394, 548). Luke calls Ananias a disciple (ix. 10).

Ver. 13. **I looked up upon him.**—The verb signifies not merely to look up (Meyer, Wendt), but, as in ix. 12, 17, to recover sight (Holtzmann). The clause might be translated, *I received sight and looked up on* or unto *him.*

Ver. 14. **The God of our fathers.**—Another conciliatory touch! **That just**, or, *the righteous*, **One.**—Compare iii. 14, vii. 52; 1 Pet. iii. 18; 1 John ii. 1.

Ver. 15 declares the reason why God had revealed Himself to Paul. Compare ix. 15, and see Gal. i. 16. **All men** takes the place of "the Gentiles and kings" in Luke's account (ix. 15)—probably dictated by caution. A touch which a late writer, composing an imaginary speech, would most likely have failed to insert.

Ver. 16. For **the name of the Lord** the oldest authorities read *His name.*

Ver. 17. Begins the third portion of the defence. **When I was come again to Jerusalem.**—This visit to the Metropolis, which occurred at least three years after his conversion (ix. 26), and lasted fifteen days (Gal. i. 18), is connected with the story of his conversion (overleaping all that happened in the interval), to show why he turned to the Gentiles with his gospel, rather than to the Jews. The **trance** into which he fell, while praying in the temple, resembles Peter's in the house of the Joppa tanner (x. 10).

Ver. 18. In the trance he saw **him**—*i.e.*, Christ, the righteous One (ver. 14). This vision not the same as that referred to in 2 Cor. xii. 2. **Quickly.**—Perhaps accounts for the fifteen days of Gal. i. 18. That this vision is not mentioned in the epistle need not militate against its credibility. **Thy testimony.**—Better, *testimony of* or from *thee* **concerning me.**

Ver. 19. The reply of Paul cannot be explained after the analogy of Exod. iii. 11, but must be understood as stating either why it was natural that the Jews should not listen to him (Ewald), or why he should remain in Jerusalem—because the knowledge his countrymen had of his previous notorious character would convince them of the sincerity of his conversion (Lechler, Wendt, Bethge), and cause his words to carry greater weight (Hackett, Alford, Plumptre), or because he wished to undo the mischief he had formerly wrought (Alford). Another view sees in the reference to Paul's earlier career a reason why his mission should be carried on at a distance from the theatre of his former deeds (Holtzmann). **Thy martyr should be *thy witness.***

Ver. 21. **I will send thee far hence to the Gentiles.**—The school of Baur and Holtzmann finds in this supernatural authorisation of Paul's Gentile mission an artificial (but why artificial?) parallel to that of Peter in xi. 5-17. That both were divinely authorised presents no difficulty to those who accept the historic verity of the narrative.

Ver. 22. **Away with such** a fellow **from the earth.**—As in xxi. 36. **It is not fit.** Better, *it was not fit* **that he should live.**—Meaning that he had long ago forfeited his life.

Ver. 23. **Cast off their clothes.**—Not in preparation for stoning him, as in vii. 58 (Meyer, Zöckler), which would have been futile, seeing he was now in the custody of the Romans (Alford), but for the same reason that they **threw dust into the air**—not as a prelude to stone-throwing, but as an expression of their rage, and as an indication of what they would willingly have done to him, had they been able (Lechler, Holtzmann).

Ver. 24. **That ye might know.**—Presumably the military tribune had not understood the apostle's speech, and, desirous of ascertaining the cause of such an ebullition of wrath against his prisoner, commanded him to be fetched into the castle and examined by scourging.

Ver. 25. **As they.**—*I.e.*, the soldiers entrusted with this duty. **Bound.**—Or, *when they had tied him up* (R.V.), **with thongs** (Luther, Alford, Wordsworth, Plumptre). A different translation gives, *when they stretched him forth* and so made him ready *for the thongs* (De Wette, Meyer, Lechler, Spence, Zöckler, Holtzmann), by binding him or tying him up to a post. **Is it lawful?**—Two wrongs were about to be committed. (1) The apostle was about to be scourged, being a Roman—which Roman law (Lex Porcia; see Livy, x. 9; Cicero, *Verr.*, v. 63) disallowed; and (2) to be punished before being condemned—which equally Roman statute forbade (see on xvi. 37).

Ver. 26. **Take heed** (omitted by best authorities) **what thou doest.**—Or, *What are you about to do?*

Ver. 27. **Tell me.**—The military tribune wished to know whether the centurion's report was correct.

Ver. 28. **With a great sum** had Lysias obtained Roman citizenship. Hence he is supposed to have been a Greek. "Augustus was very sparing in conferring the freedom of the city; but the succeeding emperors were more liberal" (Adam's *Roman Antiquities*, p. 38). "In the reign of Claudius Messalina used to sell the freedom of the city, and at various prices at different times" (Alford). How Paul came to be free (or a Roman) **born** can only be conjectured. As Tarsus was simply an *urbs libera* and neither a *Colonia* nor a *Municipium*, his father or some ancestor may have obtained his citizenship either as a reward for distinguished service or by purchase.

Ver. 29. The military tribune **was afraid** both because Paul had been bound (for scourging) which he ought not to have been, being a Roman, and because he had been bound before being condemned. "Facinus est vinciri civem Romanum, scelus verberari, parricidum necari" (Cicero, *Verr.*, v. 66).

Ver. 30. The best authorities omit **from** his **bands.** These were the fetters originally placed upon him (xxi. 33). **Down** means from the castle to the chamber where the Sanhedrim were assembled. This chamber, there is reason to believe, was not their accustomed place of meeting, the Hall Gazith, or the hall of hewn stone, an apartment in the inner temple, since Lysias' soldiers would not have been allowed to enter so sacred a place, but a room in the city near the Tyropœan bridge to which tradition says they removed their sittings forty years before the destruction of Jerusalem, or about twenty-six before the events here recorded.

Note.—The preceding speech to the Jewish people has been by Baur (*Paul, his Life and Works*, i. 121, E. T.), and Zeller (*Die Apostelgeschichte*, pp. 280, 281) pronounced an invention of the author of Acts on the following grounds: 1. The unlikelihood of Lysias having granted liberty to so dangerous a character as he imagined Paul to be to address the fanatic mob that swarmed round the castle stairs. 2. The unlikelihood of the crowd having listened so long in silence to a man whom already they had adjudged to be worthy of death; and, 3. The unlikelihood of the speech having been interrupted, like that of Stephen, before the Sanhedrim, and like that of Paul before the Areopagus, at a certain point. But waiving the obvious answers that these objections are too subjective—are, in fact, not criticism, but mere arbitrary suppositions—it may be urged, with reference to the *first*, that even the worst of criminals are allowed to speak in their own defence; that Lysias did not know what sort of speech Paul intended to make, and may have imagined that Paul would only utter a few words; and that Paul having commenced his oration, Lysias may have been too deeply interested in what he heard to think of recalling his permission. As regards the *second*, the silence of the multitude is satisfactorily explained by the statement that Paul addressed them in Hebrew, and by the tenor of Paul's speech, which throughout, until the mention of the Gentiles was reached, contained nothing to ruffle their tempers. For the *third* it should suffice to reply that, if the speech was to be interrupted at all it could not fail to be

interrupted "at a certain point"; while a glance at the three speeches, of Stephen before the Sanhedrim, of Paul before the Sanhedrim, and of Paul again before the Jewish people, will show that the cause of interruption was different in each: in Stephen's the accusation of the Sanhedrim as the murderers of Jesus (vii. 52); in Paul's Areopagus oration, the mention of Jesus and the resurrection (xvii. 32); in the present speech, the emphasising of his mission to the Gentiles (ver. 21, 22). So far from suggesting systematic invention, these variations confirm the genuineness and historicity of all three speeches.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 1—5.

Paul's Survey of His Past Career; or, What He Was and Did before Conversion.

I. **His birth.**—1. *As to race.* He was not an Egyptian (xxi. 38), as the commander of the castle supposed, neither a Greek nor a Roman, but a Jew, a true son of Abraham (Rom. xi. 4), "of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews" (Phil. iii. 5). Whatever other nations thought of the Jews, the Jews had exalted opinions of themselves, as the very salt of the earth, the flower and cream of humanity. To them pertained "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the covenants of God and the promises" (Rom. ix. 4). If race is not everything in a man's make-up, still less is it nothing. Heredity goes back beyond immediate parentage to the family stock, and has its roots in the original race. The Jewish race was physically pure, intellectually high, and religiously strong. 2. *As to place.* A native of Tarsus, in Cilicia (see on ix. 30), and therefore a citizen of no mean city (xxi. 39). This circumstance explained his knowledge of Greek (xxi. 37), his acquaintance with Greek literature (xvii. 28), and his strong sympathy with the Gentiles, and fitted him in an eminent degree for his life vocation as a missionary of the cross to the Gentiles. The place in which a man is born, no less than other factors in his terrestial environment, contributes important influences, which go to shape his career and mould his character. Most men owe more to their birthplaces than they suppose. The spot in which a man first awakes to consciousness has the earliest and therefore the best chance of making an impression—favourable or unfavourable—upon his susceptible nature.

II. **His education.**—1. *His university.* Jerusalem. Though doubtless his training commenced at home in Tarsus, he appears to have at an early period removed to the metropolis of Judæa, where (this, of course, is pure conjecture) his sister (xxiii. 16) may have preceded him along with her husband. To this his parents may have assented, both because of the hallowed interest which to every pious Jew gathered round the Holy City, and because of some promise of brilliant talent which may have been detected in his opening youth. 2. *His teacher.* Gamaliel (see on ver. 34), who belonged to the school of Hillel, and had apparently great influence in the Sanhedrim (ver. 40). The Hillelites, who had been trained by their master to be both tolerant and broad, sometimes verging towards laxity, were supposed to be more favourably disposed towards Christianity than the Shammaites. 3. *His learning.* In the Law, which he was taught to regard with (1) religious respect as the Law of God, and therefore charged with absolute authority; (2) profound veneration, as the Law of the fathers—*i.e.*, given to the fathers of Israel (not to the sons, as modern criticism teaches!); and (3) dutiful submission as the law of righteousness, which called for the strictest obedience to its every jot and tittle as the only means of attaining to salvation and eternal life.

III. **His zeal.**—1. *Its nature.* It was zeal for the Law, for its outward observance, for the external performances it required, "the meats and drinks, and divers washings," "the sacrifices and offerings," "the ordinances and statutes," "the rites and ceremonies," it prescribed. In regard to all these he was a Pharisee by descent (xxiii. 6), by training (xxvi. 5), and by conviction

(Phil. iii. 6). 2. *Its object.* To secure the Divine favour. He was zealous for God —*i.e.*, his zeal for the Law rested on the conviction (1) that the Law was of Divine origin and therefore binding on the consciences of men, and especially of Jews, and (2) that obedience to its prescriptions was the only way of attaining to Divine favour. 3. *Its degree.* He was as intense in his devotion to the Law and to God as they themselves were who then gnashed their teeth against him and cried, "Away with him!" Indeed, as touching the righteousness of the Law, he claimed to be, like themselves, blameless (Phil. iii. 6)—a fine touch of conciliating speech!

IV. **His persecution.**—1. *Its object.* Directed against the Christians, the people of "this way," both men and women. He then did what they were doing now. 2. *Its character.* Ferocious, bloodthirsty, murderous. Not satisfied with scattering the disciples of the Crucified from the Holy City, he caused them to be arrested and thrown into prison, without respect to age or sex; and as if that were not enough, he pursued them even unto death. Verily he had then been "a ravening wolf of the tribe of Benjamin." 3. *Its notoriety.* This thing had not been done in a corner. The high priest of the day (probably alive when Paul spoke) and "all the estate of the elders," or "the whole presbytery"—*i.e.*, the entire body of the eldership, including the Sanhedrim and Senate—were cognisant of his activity and eminence in this respect. He had then been "a burning and a shining light," a renowned champion of the faith, a kind of Hebrew Sir Galahad, who could have boasted—

> "My good blade carves the casques of men,
> My tough lance thrusteth sure;
> My strength is as the strength of ten,
> Because my heart is pure."

4. *Its extent.* Not content with cleansing Jerusalem, or even the Holy Land, of the apostates, as he believed them to be, he had swooped down upon them in distant Damascus, bearing with him missives, mandates, warrants, from the high priest and the Sanhedrim, empowering him to arrest them in the synagogues of that city, and fetch them, bound, to Jerusalem to be punished.

Learn—1. The accuracy of Paul's life-story as narrated by Luke. 2. The vividness of Paul's recollection of his early years. 3. The courage of the apostle in making known to his countrymen the fact of his renunciation of their ancient faith. 4. The skill of the apostle in speaking so as to disarm the suspicions of his enemies. 5. The mistaken and disastrous course to which one may be led who is impelled by a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge (compare xxvi. 9; Rom. x. 2).

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 1, 2. *The Qualities Requisite for a Christian Orator.*

I. **A spirit of courage.**—Not of defiance or arrogance, but of calm fortitude which fears not man—neither his flatteries nor his frowns, neither his threatenings nor his bribes—but rests on God as its support in the wildest hurricanes of human passion and in the most alarming dangers. Such fortitude Paul possessed when he faced the mob from the castle stairs.

II. **A spirit of meekness.**—Not of cringing servility or of fawning adulation—neither of mock humility nor of affected self-depreciation, but of genuine self-forgetfulness, which overlooks all the faults and failings of its hearers, and makes nothing of their want of consideration for or even injustice towards itself. Such meekness Paul exhibited when, "though he had none but persecutors and murderers before him, he yet regarded and

addressed them as brethren and fathers, on account of the covenant and promises of God."

III. **A spirit of love.**—Not of gushing sentimentality or of sugared verbiage, but of true, manly, and religious affection, which sees in those it addresses persons who are men and brethren, of the same flesh and blood, of the same moral and religious value in the eyes of heaven, susceptible of becoming partakers of the same high blessings of salvation and eternal life as itself.

IV. **A spirit of simplicity.**—Not of triviality or frivolity, but of holy intelligibility, which seeks not for language that will dazzle by its brilliance, but for speech that will charm by its lucidity and easiness of comprehension.

Vers. 3, 4. *True Religion.* What it is not and what it is.

I. **What it is not.**—1. *Not descent from religious ancestry.* Paul, though the son of a Pharisee, was yet not possessed of true religion. Grace does not run in the blood. 2. *Not education by pious teachers.* Paul sat at the feet of Gamaliel, one of the most learned and influential rabbis of his day; yet Paul did not acquire religion. Grace is not the product of culture and training. 3. *Not acquaintance with the letter of the Scriptures.* Paul, thoroughly instructed in the law of Moses, both moral and ceremonial, was yet not religious. Grace is something more than mental illumination. 4. *Not zeal in the performance of religious duties.* Paul was so devoted to the outward rites and ceremonies of religion, and so absorbed in the pursuit of what he believed to be "righteousness," that he could without hesitation describe his conformity to the law as "blameless"; and yet he was destitute of religion, Grace is not a matter of mere external performance. 5. *Not activity in promoting and defending the faith.* Paul had both, and yet was without religion. Grace is not of works.

II. **What it is.**—The exact opposite of all these. 1. It is conditioned by *a new or second birth*—a birth from above (John iii. 3). What Paul calls a new creation (2 Cor. v. 17). 2. It is promoted by being *taught of the Spirit* (John xiv. 26), or taught by Jesus Christ (Eph. iv. 21). 3. It is nourished by a *spiritual acquaintance* with the Scriptures (John vi. 63). 4. It consists in an *inward conformity* of the soul to the requirements of God's law (Rom. vii. 22). 5. It shows itself in a sincere *desire to extend the faith*—not by force of arms, but by the power of the truth.

Vers. 3-5. *The Promising but Disappointing Youth of Paul.*

I. **The magnificent advantages he enjoyed.**—1. *In his parentage.* Having been born of Jewish parents, members of the noblest and most religious race then on earth. 2. *In his birthplace.* In Tarsus, where he came in contact with the civilisation and culture of the most intellectual people of the Old World. 3. *In his education.* Brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, the most renowned teacher of the day. 4. *In his religious instincts.* Instructed according to the strict manner of the law of his fathers, he was inwardly fired with a zeal for God and religion which gave promise of splendid results in after years.

II. **The miserable results he produced.**—1. *In the blind legalism of his religion.* One would almost have expected that a youth of culture and ability like Paul would have soared away far above and beyond the dead externalism of the Pharisaic circle in which he had been born and brought up. 2. *In the feline cruelty of his disposition.* One would have thought that so much education as Paul had received would have mollified rather than intensified, blunted rather than whetted, the natural savageism of his soul. 3. *In the low conception of his life-mission.* One might naturally have anticipated that a brilliant youth like that of Paul's would have been devoted to the purifying and refining

of his ancestral religion, and to the propagation of it by means of learned and eloquent expositions. Alas! it so degenerated as to place its splendid faculties at the service of the Sanhedrim, to be employed in the work of a common persecutor and assassin. To what base uses noblest souls may come!

Vers. 4, 5. *Paul the Persecutor; or, the Spirit of Intolerance in Religion.*

I. **Whence it springs.**—1. *From a wrong conception of religion,* which cannot be manufactured by force, and does not consist in mere external conformity to law or ritual, but must ever arise as a free product of the soul, and consist of true inward submission of the heart and life to the will of God. 2. *From a mistaken idea of human nature,* which cannot be coerced into such submission, but must be sweetly persuaded and lovingly wooed to yield, to the will of God. 3. *From a false estimate of the rights of man.* While every man has a God-given right to think for himself in religion, and to persuade his neighbour, if he can, to think along with him, no man is entitled to dictate to his brother in the sphere of conscience or punish his brother because he exercises that liberty of which he has been put in possession by God. 4. *From a defective calculation of the value of persecution,* which never yet made a true convert, though it has multiplied hypocrites as well as created martyrs.

II. **To what it leads.**—1. *Suppression of all the nobler instincts of humanity.* On the part of the persecutor, and not infrequently also on the part of the persecuted. It lets loose all the bad passions of the human heart, both in those who resort to violence and in those who resist it. It puts the persecutor down to the same level as the conspirator and brigand, murderer and assassin. It rouses within the persecuted feelings which are the opposite of meekness, gentleness, patience, long-suffering. 2. *Perpetration of indiscriminate cruelty.* It commonly shows itself, as in Paul's case, to be absolutely devoid of one grain of mercy, to be destitute of pity, to be fierce and bloodthirsty, sparing neither sex nor age, but involving all against whom it rages in common and undistinguished slaughter. In short, it is the minister of hell, rather than the messenger of heaven. 3. *Ignominious defeat of its own aims.* The more a cause is persecuted the more it multiplies and grows. "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." The religion that requires a sword for its propagation is not from above, but from beneath. Its final failure is foredoomed. "All they that take the sword shall perish by the sword" is true of the institutions for which, as well as of the persons by whom, the sword is wielded.

Ver. 5. *Mistaken Missions.*

I. To persecute the cause and the people of God.

II. To propagate true religion by means of force.

III. To disseminate error, whether by lawful or unlawful means.

IV. To run on any errand without a certainty of having Heaven's permission.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 6—16.

The Story of Paul's Conversion; or before and in Damascus.

I. **Before Damascus; or, the interview with Jesus of Nazareth.**—1. *The circumstantiality of the narration.* Different from that of Luke (ix. 1-9), the account given by Paul himself bears the stamp of having proceeded from an eyewitness. (1) Points of resemblance between Paul's account and Luke's may be noted, such as these: the fact that Jesus of Nazareth appeared to the apostle, who recognised Him by His voice (ver. 8, ix. 4), and by His form (ver. 14, ix. 7); the locality in which this interview took place—viz., nigh unto Damascus

(ver. 6, ix. 3); the manner in which this manifestation of the risen Christ occurred—suddenly, by the flashing forth of a light from heaven, which struck the apostle to the ground and filled his companions with terror (vers. 7, 9, ix. 4, 7); the words addressed by Christ to Paul, with those of Paul to Christ—"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" "Who art Thou, Lord?" "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest. . . . Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do" (vers. 7, 8, 10, ix. 4, 5, 6); the effect of the interview upon Paul, rendering him blind and requiring him to be led by the hands of his companions into Damascus (ver. 11, ix. 8). (2) Points of difference between the two accounts are observable, such as the note of time—"about noon" (ver. 6); the splendour of the light—"great" (ver. 6); the characterisation of Jesus as "of Nazareth" (ver. 8); the statements that while the companions of Paul saw the light they heard not the voice (ver. 9), and that what blinded Paul was "the glory of that light" (ver. 11); with the omission of Luke's addendum that Paul was three days without sight, and did neither eat nor drink (ix. 9). The differences—all of which are immaterial—are obviously such—both in details added and those omitted—as might naturally arise between two reports of which one was given by an eyewitness and the other by a historian. 2. *The credibility of the narration.* (1) The only conceivable grounds on which this can be challenged are: the supernatural character of the incident related; the excitable character of the apostle, which caused him, it may be contended, to impose upon himself, and to say he had beheld as external objects what were only illusions of the mind; the varying accounts of the incidents contained in the Acts; and the fact (if it is a fact) that Paul never mentions this incident in his epistles. But the first of these reasons is irrelevant, as it begs the question in debate. The second is only true to this extent, that Paul, by his own confession, had visions and revelations: that Paul was subject to illusions or delusions is not borne out by anything in his character or history. The third may he conceded without admitting that these variations invalidate the substance in which all the three accounts agree. The fourth can hardly be maintained in the face of 1 Cor. ix. 1, xv. 8; Gal. i. 16, 24; 1 Tim. i. 13; but even should Paul have preserved absolute silence in his epistles as to the interview with Christ before Damascus, that silence would not justify an inference that no such interview had occurred. (2) The arguments which serve to uphold the credibility of the narrative are such as these: the certainty that Paul was converted from Pharisaism to a belief in Jesus Christ, as was attested by the ferocity with which the Jews persecuted him to the end of his career—which conversion must have been brought about by some adequate cause; the constancy with which Paul asserted that his conversion was due to having seen the Lord Jesus Christ—which constancy is inexplicable on the hypothesis that Paul was the victim of a diseased imagination; the belief which was entertained by Paul's Christian contemporaries that Christ had appeared to him (ver. 14); and the difficulty of discovering any motive for Paul's preaching that Christ had risen if it was not a fact that Christ had appeared to him—the more so as his conversion to Christianity involved him in unparalleled labours and sufferings.

II. **In Damascus; or, the interview with Ananias.**—Here also Paul's account differs from that of Luke in subordinate details, while agreeing with that of Luke in substance. 1. *The omissions from the previous narrative.* (1) The residence of Paul in Damascus—with one Judas in the street called Straight (ix. 13). (2) The occupation of Paul while in Judas's house—praying, with the vision granted him of Ananias coming to him and placing hands upon his closed eyes (ix. 11, 12). (3) The designation of Ananias as a certain disciple (ix. 10). (4) The appearance of the Lord to Ananias in a vision (ix. 10). (5) The commission given to Ananias by the risen Lord (ver. 11), with the answer returned

by Ananias (ix. 13, 14), and the Lord's response to him (ix. 15, 16). (6) The statement that Ananias put his hands on Saul's eyes (ix. 17). (7) The mention of scales as having fallen from Paul's eyes when his sight was restored (ix. 18). Not one of these points was of special interest to the audience Paul addressed from the castle stairs, or of any use for the purpose for which Paul addressed them. 2. *The additions to the previous narrative.* (1) The character of Ananias, as a devout man according to the Law, and well reported of by all the Jews who dwelt in Damascus (ver. 12). This was signally calculated to conciliate Paul's hearers. (2) The invitation to Paul to arise and be baptised (ver. 16). The fact that this invitation proceeded from Ananias was also fitted to disarm the hostility of Paul's enraged countrymen. 3. *The variations in the two narratives.* These appear chiefly in the address of Ananias to Paul (vers. 13, 14, ix. 17). In particular, the substitution of "the God of our fathers" as the real author of his conversion, instead of "the Lord, even Jesus," was a highly politic stroke in the circumstances in which Paul then stood. So also was the supplanting of the term "Gentiles" by that of "all men." Otherwise the two addresses substantially agree. In none of these omissions, additions, or variations, lie sufficient ground for impeaching the veracity of Paul's account.

Learn—1. That two reports of the same event may differ in details, and yet be both correct. 2. That Paul's conversion indirectly confirms the truth of Christ's resurrection. 3. That Paul regarded his Gentile mission as a vocation specially assigned to him from the first. 4. That "the instruments which are to be specially useful in the Church must be ordained in heaven."

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 6. *Great Lights which Shone around Paul.*

I. **Light upon the person of Jesus.**—Henceforth Paul knew him to be the Lord of Glory.

II. **Light upon the character of the disciples.**—Henceforth Paul recognised them as intimately bound with and under the protection of Jesus.

III. **Light upon the wickedness of his own past career.**—Henceforth Paul saw that in persecuting the adherents of that way he had been persecuting the risen Redeemer.

IV. **Light upon his future work in the world.**—Henceforth Paul understood he was to witness for Christ unto all men.

Ver. 7. *Christ's Question to Saul.*—"Saul, Saul! why persecutest thou Me?"

I. **What it implied.**—1. The continued existence of Jesus Christ. 2. The cognisance by Christ of what was taking place upon the earth. 3. The right of Jesus Christ to interfere with men's actions and bring men themselves to His bar.

II. **What it suggested.**—1. That Christ was one with His followers upon earth, so that what affected them, in the same manner affected Him. 2. That the infliction of pains and penalties on men for their religious opinions was persecution. 3. That such persecution, as directed against Christ's followers, was without justification or excuse.

Ver. 9. *Fighting Against God.*

I. **The fighting described.**—How? 1. *By resisting His will* and persisting in sin contrary to better knowledge and inner conviction (Exod. v. 2). 2. *By rejecting His word*, and relying upon good works or some other human contrivance for peace of mind and rest of soul (Acts iv. 2). 3. *By refusing His way*, and by murmuring against the dispensations of His providence (Rom. viii. 28). Let us nevermore strive against God in this way (Isa. lv. 8). 4. *By renouncing His work*; or, backsliding from His service (Jer.

viii. 5). 5. *By reviling His Spirit*, or sinning against the Holy Ghost. Not only resisting His pleadings (Acts vii. 51), but actually reviling His works or strivings within (Matt. xii. 31, 32).

II. **The folly denounced.**—Why? Why is it folly, or why should we "not fight against God"? 1. *Because of God's relation to man.* Man were "nothing at all" if God were not his "all and in all." Therefore: (1) *As his Creator.* Can it be wise for man to strive against his Master and Maker? (2) *As his Benfactor.* Shall the force of an army be spent against the base of its supplies? (James i. 17). (3) *As his Redeemer.* How can a redeemed soul rebel against its Redeemer? 2. *Because of man's relation to God.* (1) *As a sinner.* It is rash presumption, for it raises still higher the wall of separation from God. (2) *As a son.* It is rank ingratitute, for the heavenly Father is the best friend to the children of men. (3) *As a servant.* It is infatuation; as well might the clay expect to prevail against the potter, the moth against the mountain, or the lamp against the sun. (4) *As a subject.* It is ripe destruction (Job ix. 4; Isa. xlv. 9, xxvii. 4). —*J. G. Boughter.*

Ver. 10. *What shall I do, Lord?*—A question for all.

I. **For the sinner.**—What shall I do, Lord, when thou risest up to judgment and callest me to account for my transgressions? Answer: "Only acknowledge thine iniquity and return unto Me."

II. **For the anxious.**—What shall I do, Lord, when my soul is rent and torn by a consciousness of guilt and sin? Answer: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

III. **For the pardoned.**—What shall I do, Lord, seeing Thou in Thy mercy hast redeemed and forgiven me? Answer: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind." Thou shalt "glorify God in thy body and thy spirit, which are His." Thou shalt "go and work to-day in My vineyard."

IV. **For the afflicted.**—What shall I do, Lord, when tossed about and tempted? Answer: Thou shalt "flee unto Me to hide thee."

V. **For the dying.**—What shall I do, Lord, when my strength faileth; when my "earthly house of this tabernacle" is being dissolved; when I am summoned to appear before Thy judgment-seat? Answer: "Thou shalt put thy trust in Me."

Ver. 11. *The Blinding Glory.*

I. **The light.**—It is not common light, nor does it operate in a common way. 1. *It is light.* A light; the light. 2. *It is a great light.* It was beyond the brightness of the sun. Noon was to it as midnight. 3. *It was a sudden light.* It did not slowly dawn. It blazed suddenly, but it remained till God's purpose was served. 4. *It was a spacious light.* Not like a star or sun, but a body or globe of light compassing them round about, as on the transfiguration hill (Acts ix. 3, xxii. 6, xxvi. 13). 5. *It was a light from heaven.* It was from above, not from beneath. The history of that light is the Christology of Scripture. No doubt this visible, physical light is connected with a higher and more spiritual light. The light which patriarchs saw, and Paul saw, was but a symbol of something more glorious—the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

II. **Its effects.**—The narrative presents several different results in the case of Saul. 1. *It blinds.* Paul is struck blind. Blinded by light! The light of heaven! 2. *It illuminates.* It does not blind in order to destroy the vision. It blinds in order to give clearer eyesight. 3. *It prostrates.* Saul is stricken to the ground. The vision is overwhelming. Man cannot stand before it. 4. *It bewilders.* It was here in the case of Saul worse than darkness, in the bewilderment produced. He needs now a guide. 5. *It guides.* We do not see this here, but

in Saul's after-history. This is his lamp. From this *outward* operation on men we learn the *inward*. For, doubtless, there were both these co-operating in the case of Paul. The first effect of the light of the gospel is often to blind and to strike down. The second is to enlighten, and to lift up, and to heal. It is with Divine light that our dark souls must come into contact. Till this takes place we are still unrenewed; still Sauls, not Pauls. The "Lamb" is the light thereof.—*H. Bonar, D.D.*

The Glory of That Light.

I. Its supernatural **origin.** A light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun.

II. Its **essential character.**—The dwelling place of Jehovah, the material symbol of His presence.

III. Its **mysterious effects.**—1. Eclipsing all natural lights. 2. Blinding all ordinary vision. 3. Imparting inward illumination.

IV. Its **permanent duration.**—Disappearing from the sky, but never withdrawing from the soul—shining in and on unto eternal day.

Ver. 13. *The Miracle in the House of Judas.*—Or, the restoration of Paul's sight, a type of the spiritual miracle of soul-illumination which takes place in the hour of conversion.

I. **It proceeded upon one who was antecedently blind.**—This goes without saying. So does the inward miracle of soul-illumination. Men's souls are naturally darkened.

II. **It was wrought by the forth-putting of Divine energy.**—The command of Ananias was really the command of Christ. Only a Divine power can illuminate the darkened souls of men.

III. **It came upon him as a free gift from Jesus Christ.**—"Brother Saul! receive thy sight." So is inward soul-illumination all of grace.

IV. **It was followed by instantaneous results.**—In that hour Paul received his sight and looked up. So when God speaks the soul sees—not until.

Ver. 12, 13. *Soul-Ministry—*

I. Should be entrusted only to good men. Like Ananias.

II. Can only rightly be performed by sympathetic hearts, who address their patients as "brothers."

III. Should always aim at the translation of such a one in darkness into God's marvellous light. So Ananias spoke to Saul: "Receive thy sight."

IV. Will not fail if undertaken in humble reliance on Christ's grace. Paul received his sight and looked up.

Ver. 14. *The Qualifications and Work of the Christian Minister.*

1. **His qualifications.**—1. *A knowledge of God's will.*—In particular so far as it relates to the salvation of sinful men. 2. *A sight of the Righteous One i.e.*, a personal acquaintance with Jesus Christ, in His character and saving offices. 3. *The hearing of a voice from Christ's mouth*; *i.e.*, the consciousness of an inward call from Christ as well as a distinct message put into his mouth by Him.

II. **His work.**—1. Its *nature*—to be a witness for Christ. 2. Its *limitation.* "Of what thou hast seen and heard." 3. Its *sphere.* "Unto all men."

The Righteous One.

I. **Descriptive of the character of Christ.**—See iii. 14, vii. 52; 1 Peter iii. 18; 1 John ii. 1.

II. **Suggestive of the work of Christ.**—Which was twofold. 1. To bring in an everlasting righteousness (Dan. ix. 24; Rom. iii. 22; 1 Cor. i. 30; 2 Cor. v. 21). 2. To make men inwardly righteous (Rom. viii. 4; Eph. v. 9; Phil. i. 11).

III. **Prophetic of the people of Christ.**—Who shall eventually be all righteous (Isa. lx. 21; 1 Peter iii. 12; 1 John iii. 7; Rev. xxii. 11).

Voices From the Mouth of Christ.

I. **A voice for the unbelieving world.**—"Why persecutest thou Me?" (ver. 7) All unbelief is a virtual persecution of Christ.

II. **A voice for the awakened**

sinner.—"Come unto Me and I will give you rest" (Matt. xi. 28).

III. **A voice for the rejoicing believer.**—"Ye shall be a witness for Me" (i. 8).

Ver. 16. *The Washing Away of Sin.*

I. **Effected by faith.**—By arising and believing.

II. **Grounded on the work of Christ.**—Calling on His name.

III. **Symbolised in baptism.**—"Be baptised, and wash away thy sins."

Calling on the Name of the Lord.

I. **The significance of the name of the Lord.**—Points to—1. The personal existence of Jesus Christ. 2. The character of Jesus Christ as revealed in the gospel. 3. The work of Jesus Christ as expressed in His names—Lord, Jesus, Christ.

II. **The import of calling on that name.**—Implies—1. Belief in the personal existence of Jesus Christ. 2. Trust in His character as a Divinely exalted Saviour. 3. Reliance on His redeeming work as an all-sufficient ground of acceptance.

III. **The result of calling on the Lord's name.**—Salvation. 1. Certain. 2. Full. 3. Free. 4. Final.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 17—21.

Paul's Adoption of a Gentile Mission; or, His Interview with Christ in Jerusalem.

I. **The circumstances** connected with Christ's appearing to the apostle. 1. The *place* where this occurred. (1) Not in Damascus, which lay outside the Holy Land, but in Jerusalem, its metropolis and centre. (2) Not in some obscure supper room while associating with the disciples, but in the temple itself, out of which they, his hearers and he, had just come, and on which they both looked with reverence. (3) Not in the court of the Gentiles while engaged in denouncing the temple worship, in which they supposed he was now constantly occupied, but in the court of the women, while praying like themselves in accordance with its accustomed ritual. All circumstances calculated to gain the favour of his hearers, or at least disarm their hostility. 2. The *time* when this occurred. After his return to Jerusalem, which took place three years subsequent to the day of his leaving it for Damascus (ix. 26). This visit is that referred to in Gal. i. 18 as having continued only fifteen days. The present narrative supplies the reason of its speedy termination. Thus both history and epistle indirectly confirm each other. 3. The *manner* in which this occurred. Paul having fallen into a trance or ecstasy, as Peter in similar circumstances had done in Joppa (x. 10), while thus withdrawn from the contemplation of "things seen and temporal," with his soul's eye open to the "unseen" and the "eternal," he beheld again the same glorified form which he had seen before Damascus' gate, and recognised it as that of his exalted Lord.

II. The **instruction** given to the apostle by Christ, whom he beheld. 1. The *tenor* of it. To depart from Jerusalem with all speed. The order, which was clear, short, and peremptory, must withal have been surprising and painful to Paul, who intensely loved his countrymen and desired their salvation (Rom. ix. 1-3, x. 1), and who doubtless had heard that Christ Himself once commanded His disciples to begin at Jerusalem (Luke xxiv. 47). 2. The *reason* of it. Because his countrymen would not receive from him testimony concerning Christ. This, too, must have sounded sad in Paul's ears—that his countrymen would not accept testimony concerning Christ from any one, and certainly not from him. It seemed like an intimation beforehand that Israel's heart was hardened and Israel's doom sealed. Yet his experience in Jerusalem (ix. 29) must have begun to prepare him for some such announcement. Only love is slow to convince that its holy purpose to bless others will prove ineffectual.

III. The **objection** offered by Paul to Christ's instruction. The exact thought which lay in the apostle's mind is difficult to determine (see "Critical Remarks"); but, accepting what appears the more probable interpretation, we may understand Paul as attempting to show cause why he should be allowed to remain in Jerusalem. 1. The *knowledge* which the inhabitants of the Holy City possessed of his previous character as a persecutor would (he believed) dispose them to credit the sincerity of his conversion, and lead them to hear what he had to state in justification of his tergiversation, which would secure him the opportunity of testifying concerning the transcendent fact of Christ's resurrection. 2. The *part* he had previously taken in persecuting the disciples—as witness his conduct in connection with the murder of Stephen—seemed (in his eyes) to establish a claim for Jerusalem that he should remain within its precincts and endeavour at least to undo the mischief he had done.

IV. The **dismissal** intimated by Christ to the apostle. 1. *Peremptory.* Depart! Talk no more of remaining. My counsel is fixed. Outside Jerusalem is henceforth to be the sphere of thy labour. Whether My grace shall ever reach Jerusalem or not, thou art not to be the channel through which it is to flow. 2. *Deliberate.* Christ had other work prepared for His servant. "I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles." What a reminiscence this must have called up in Paul's soul (ver. 15, ix. 15)! And what a vista it must have opened up before his spirit!—of wanderings, and labours, and sufferings!

Learn.—1. That heaven is never far from praying souls. Prayer a sort of window through which the soul looks into the unseen, and the unseen shines in upon the soul. 2. That Christ knows who will and who will not receive God's testimony concerning Him. 3. That Christ's ministers are not so good judges of the spheres of labour best suited for them as Christ is. 4. That the evil wrought by Christ's people before conversion can never be entirely undone. 5. That men in God's sight are chargeable with the evil they consent to, no less than with that they commit.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 1-21. *Paul's Sketch of His own Life.*—Or how a servant of God looks back upon the course of his own life.

I. **With grateful remembrance** of human benefactors (ver. 3).

II. **With penitent confession** of his own erroneous ways (vers. 4, 5).

III. **With humble praise** of the Divine gracious dealings (vers. 6-16).

IV. **With clear consciousness** of the life-call allotted to him (ver. 18-21.)—*Gerok.*

Paul's First Apology; or, his speech to his countrymen from the castle stairs.

I. **What Paul says about himself.**—1. *Rehearses the character of his early years.* (1) Claims to have been a good Jew, by birth, education, personal belief, and outward devotion (ver. 31; compare Phil. iii. 5). (2) Confesses to have been a zealous persecutor. Reminds them of his commission and mission to Damascus (vers. 4, 5; compare Phil. iii. 6). 2. *Tells the story of his conversion.* (1) Narrating where it happened, near Damascus; when it happened, "at midday;" how it happened—by the appearance of Jesus Christ (vers. 6, 8). (2) Citing, as proof that it happened, the experience of his fellow-travellers (ver. 9) and the action of Ananias (ver. 12); and (3) mentioning, as the result of its happening, his call to be an apostle, and his submission to baptism (vers. 15, 16). 3. *Explains the origin of his Gentile mission.* (1) Stating when, where, and from whom, that mission had been received (vers. 17, 18); (2) declaring his original reluctance to enter upon it (vers. 19, 20); and (3) intimating that it had been practically thrust upon him by the hand of Heaven (ver. 21). A *noble* confession: that his whole pre-Christian life, though learned, religious, and

active, had been wrong; that it had been changed by a higher power rather than by any effort of his own; and that his Christian life had begun and was being directed by Jesus Christ. A *difficult* confession: for any man, but especially for an intellectually and religiously proud Pharisee, such as Paul was. A *courageous* confession: to be made in face of a hostile multitude and by a man who was at the moment under arrest for a supposed crime. A *good* confession; such as must have brought comfort to Paul's own heart and secured for him the approbation and support of his Master.

II. **What Paul testifies about Christ.**—1. *His heavenly glory and power.* Paul's hearers imagined that Jesus of Nazareth was dead: Paul told them He was alive. They fancied Jesus had been overwhelmed with shame; he assured them Jesus was crowned with celestial glory. They conceived Jesus had been rendered for ever powerless; he reminded them that Jesus was invested with resistless power. They supposed Jesus had been only a man; he announced to them that Jesus was God. 2. *His fellowship with His persecuted disciples upon the earth.* How contemptuously Paul's hearers looked upon the followers of that way. Paul had formerly done the same. Now he understood and intimated to his hearers that Christ and His disciples stood in closest intimacy with one another—so much so that what was done to them He regarded as done to Himself. 3. *His grace to poor sinners of the human race.* Even to the worst; to himself, for example. Christ showed this in the days of His flesh by pardoning such transgressors as the woman of the city and the dying robber; after His resurrection, by commanding the eleven to begin at Jerusalem; subsequent to His ascension by converting Paul and employing him as an apostle. 4. *His world-wide plan of salvation.* Christ had no idea of restricting His gospel to Palestine or the Jews. Nor is it His mind to-day that the good news of Heaven's mercy should be published alone in Britain or in Christendom. His desire is that the gospel should be preached among all nations and to every creature under heaven.

Ver. 17. *Paul in the Temple at Jerusalem.*

I. **What he did.**—Prayed. The temple a house of prayer for all nations (Isa. lvi. 7; Matt. xxi. 13; Mark xi. 1; Luke xix. 46).

II. **What he saw.**—Christ. Who is (1) always present in His own house (Psalm cxxxii. 13, 14; Matt. xviii. 20), and (2) ever near to the praying soul (Matt. xxviii. 20).

III. **What he heard.**—Voices from the risen Christ (1) warning him of danger (ver. 18); (2) instructing him as to the reasons of his peril (ver. 18); and (3) pointing out to him the path of duty.

Vers. 19, 20. *Great Crimes Remembered.*

I. **For their forgiveness.**
II. **For self-humiliation.**
III. **For a stimulus to holy living.**
IV. **For attempts at their undoing.**

Ver. 20. *Stephen thy Martyr or Witness.*—Christian martyrs are—

I. **Christ's servants,** who go upon His errands to the world.

II. **Christ's witnesses,** who proclaim His gospel to mankind.

III. **Christ's friends,** in whom He takes a special interest.

IV. **Christ's property,** whom therefore He cannot afford to lose. Note: "It is hardly likely that the sense in which we understand the word 'martyr'—viz., 'one who dies for his religion,' belonged as yet to the Greek term μάρτυς or μάρτυρ. It would therefore be more strictly accurate to render here 'the blood of thy witness Stephen.' But there is little doubt that, very early indeed in the Christian story, the to us well-known sense of the beautiful word martyr became attached to it. Possibly the transition from the general sense of witness to the specific meaning of 'martyr' is traceable to its use in such passages as this and Rev. ii. 13, xi. 3, xvii. 6."—*Spence.*

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 22—29.

The Effect of Paul's Oration on his Audience; or his Narrow Escape from Scourging.

I. **The impotent rage of Paul's hearers.**—1. *Their sudden interruption.* From the beginning of this speech they had kept on listening till he reached the point when he proceeded to talk of his mission to the Gentiles. Then their suppressed wrath could no longer be restrained; they stopped his defence by a simultaneous yell. 2. *Their fanatical outcry.* "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live." What let loose their passion was not so much the mention of the word "Gentiles" as the idea that he should claim to have been sent by Divine authority on a mission to the Gentiles rather than to the Jews. "This, to the fanatic Jewish mind, was a startling statement, and, if true, would at once remove all reason for their jealousy of the foreigner. But could it be true that the long-expected Messiah—the peculiar glory of the chosen race—could, in their own proud house in Jerusalem, speak to this man from His glory throne in heaven, and command him to leave his own city and people and to devote himself solely to the uncircumcised Gentiles? Was not such an assertion of itself rank blasphemy? Could King Messiah send one—once belonging to their own strictest sect of the Pharisees—to these unconverted heathen to tell them that the Messiah, the Redeemer of Israel, was equally their Messiah and Redeemer? One who could say such things was surely "unworthy to live" (Spence). 3. *Their passionate demonstration.* Shouting with still more vehement cries, and stripping off their garments, they threw dust into the air—not as a preliminary to the work of stoning, since Paul now was in the hands of the Romans, but as a means of giving vent, in Oriental fashion, to their uncontrollable rage. They were simply beside themselves with indignation and fury.

II. **The perilous mistake of the castle captain.**—1. *In commanding Paul to be bound.* The captain, of course, was not aware that Paul was entitled to all the privileges of a Roman citizen, otherwise he would have hesitated to put bonds on him, and far less to order him to be tied up for scourging. But bound the apostle had been at the beginning of the uproar (xxi. 33), and now he was strapped to a post like a common criminal in preparation for the vilest indignity that can be put upon a man made in God's image—for being whipped like a dog (ver. 25). 2. *In treating Paul like a prisoner before he had been condemned.* This also offended against the majesty of Roman law, which, however, regardless of the lives of slaves and evil-doers, was infinitely jealous of the liberties and honours of those who had attained the rank of citizens in the great commonwealth. No wonder the centurion grew alarmed when he learnt that his prisoner was a *civis Romanus*, and as little that this alarm communicated itself to the captain when he heard the exact state of affairs from his subordinate.

III. **The escape of Paul from the indignity of scourging.**—1. *The captain's conversation with Paul.* Astonished at the report brought by his subordinate, the commandant of the castle at once repaired to the apostle's presence that by asking he might satisfy himself as to the truth of Paul's claim to be a Roman citizen. Finding that Paul adhered to the assertion of his citizenship, the captain expressed surprise that one in apparently so destitute circumstances should be possessed of a privilege which he, the captain himself, had procured only at a great price. He was further astonished to learn that Paul had been free born, although nothing escaped Paul as to how this had come to pass. If some suppose the captain rather easily and quickly accepted the apostle's word, it needs only to be remembered that Paul's assertion contained nothing in itself improbable, and was besides of such a sort—incurring so severe penalties if found to be

false—that no one would readily venture to make it unless if were true (see "Critical Remarks"). 2. *The captain's order to the centurion and his guards.* Unstrap the apostle from the whipping post—which they did. "Straightway they departed from him." The idea of examining him by torture they abandoned. That the fetters with which Paul had been first bound (xxi. 33) were not removed is apparent from the statement that on the morrow he was loosed (ver. 30).

Learn.—1. The fierce hostility with which men always and everywhere resent an invasion of their privileges. The Jews, in this respect, have not been without successors, even among Christians. 2. The fantastic tricks that are sometimes played by men "dressed in a little brief authority." The captain was not the first man who overrode his commission, neither has he been the last. 3. The right of every man to protect himself, by all lawful means, against unnecessary and unjust suffering. Paul's sheltering himself behind his Roman citizenship fell under this category. 4. The value of Christian citizenship, which can be purchased by no sum, but must be obtained free, and which can shield from dangers greater than those which menaced Paul. 5. The fear which all men inwardly have, or ought to have, when they do wrong.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 22. *Some Thoughts about Preachers and their Hearers.*

I. **Preachers may get a silent hearing from their audiences** without either gaining their assent or making on them any deep impression. Preachers, above all men, should guard against judging by appearances.

II. **Preachers commonly obtain a respectful hearing from their audiences** so long as they keep on prophesying smooth things. The moment they begin to touch the consciences, or challenge the privileges, of those who listen, they find the attitude of these change.

III. **Preachers must be prepared for hearing themselves denounced by their hearers**, and that in no measured terms. Their unpopularity may often be the measure of their fidelity.

IV. **Preachers may warrantably infer they are doing excellent work**, and speaking true words, when they encounter opposition from the unbelieving, worldly, or nominally religious among their hearers. Preachers should beware when all men speak well of them.

Ver. 23. *Opposition to Foreign Missions.*

I. **As much a fact to-day as it was in the time of Paul.**—Both men of the world (like the unbelieving Jews) and members of the Christian Church (like many Jewish Christians) are opposed to sending preachers of the gospel "far hence to the Gentiles."

II. **If not so demonstrative as in Paul's day, perhaps as decided** and difficult to overcome.—The cause of missions to the heathen kindles in hearts anger, and evokes from some lips words of hostile denunciation—exactly now as then.

III. **As unreasonable in our day as it was in Paul's.**—The salvation of the gospel was intended for all nations, and not simply for those presently within the pale of Christendom, any more than it was exclusively for the Jews.

IV, **As culpable in our day as it was in Paul's**, if not more so. Considering that if Paul, being a Jew, had acted on this principle Christianity had never reached the shores of Europe, and far less of Britain; and considering the clearer light now possessed by the Church, as to the world-wide destiny of the gospel, and of its fitness to bless mankind.

Ver. 25. "*Is it lawful to scourge a man who is a Roman and uncon-*

demned?"—A threefold reminder—

I. Of the **inalienable rights** of men.

II. Of the **sacred honour** of citizens.

III. Of the **inviolable dignity** of Christians.—*Gerok.*

Ver. 27. *Roman and Heavenly Citizenship.*—A parallel and a contrast.

I. **The parallel.**—1. Both might be acquired by aliens. 2. Both might be obtained by inheritance. 3. Both conferred great privileges. 4. Both ensured complete protection.

II. **The contrast.**—1. Roman citizenship now a thing of the past; heavenly citizenship a thing of the present. 2. Roman citizenship, at the best, temporal and earthly; heavenly citizenship celestial and eternal. 3. Roman citizenship might be obtained for money; heavenly citizenship can be purchased by no price. 4. Roman citizenship conferred social and political privileges; heavenly citizenship privileges that are spiritual and religious. 5. Roman citizenship protected the body; heavenly citizenship protects the soul.

Ver. 28. *This Citizenship*; conjoined with Phil. iii. 20, *Our Citizenship*; or, the superiority of the Christian citizenship.

I. **Its dignity is greater.**—No need to disparage or depreciate Roman citizenship. In Paul's day Roman citizenship was undoubtedly a great thing, an object worthy of being aspired after by persons of highest rank. Foreigners counted it a signal honour. Just as to-day to be a citizen of Great Britain is reckoned a higher dignity than to be the subject of any other kingdom or empire on earth. Yet even this is nothing when compared with being a citizen of heaven whose sovereign is the King of kings, whose vicegerent is the Lord of glory, whose ministers are angels, whose laws are righteousness and truth, whose revenues are the resources of the universe, whose mission is to bless mankind, whose influence is always on the side of peace and love, whose subjects are in one sense all the nations of the earth, in another the whole family of the redeemed, and whose dominion shall be one day universal.

II. **Its immunities are larger.**—Writers on Roman antiquities report that the rights and privileges of Roman citizens were large and varied—including liberty, family, marriage, fatherhood, property, willing and inheriting, tutelage and wardship (see Adams' *Roman Antiquities*, pp. 39 *ff.*). Yet the privileges of our citizenship surpass these. 1. *Sonship.* Not merely subjects or servants, but children of the Great King (see Gal. iii. 26; Eph. ii. 19; 1 John iii. 2). 2. *Acceptance.* Not regarded as enemies, but considered as friends (Eph. i. 6; Rom. viii. 1). 3. *Liberty.* Free use of all our powers in the service of God (2 Cor. iii. 17; Gal. v. 1; James i. 25). A Roman citizen might be sold as a slave; not so a citizen of heaven. 4. *Protection.* Roman citizenship did not shield from ordinary ills; nor does Christian citizenship. Yet this defends the soul lest it should be hurt by these (Rom. viii. 28; 1 Peter iii. 13). 5. *Property.* Romans distinguished between common and private property. So are certain things common to Christian citizens, as the common salvation and the common means of grace; and other things private possessions, as special gifts and graces. 6. *Family.* Roman citizens (originally) could not abandon the family to which they belonged, a restriction which has perpetuated itself in the modern idea of caste. Corresponding to this, Christians belong to God's family, and are not at liberty to leave it, though others may pass into it. 7. *Heirship.* A Roman citizen could will and inherit. A citizen of heaven cannot will, but shall inherit (Rom. viii. 17; Rev. xxi. 7).

III. **Its terms are easier.**—Roman citizenship could be secured in two ways: by birth or by purchase. Christian citizenship so far resembles

that of Rome, that it too may, and indeed, must, be obtained in both of these ways. 1. *By birth.* Only not physical, but spiritual. No man a child of God, a subject of grace, an heir of heaven, because his parents were these before him; heaven's citizens must be born again (John iii. 3). 2. *By purchase.* Only it must be without money and without price. Citizenship in heaven cannot be bought and sold in earth's markets, but must be accepted by all who would make it theirs as a free gift.

Lesson.—Walk worthy of this citizenship.

CHAPTER XXIII.

PAUL BEFORE THE SANHEDRIM—AN INTERRUPTED TRIAL.

§ 1. The Scene in the Council Chamber; or, Paul's Doubtful Strategy (vers. 1-11).
§ 2. The Conspiracy of the Forty; or, Paul's Life Endangered (vers. 12-22).
§ 3. Paul's Midnight Ride to Cæsarea; or, Paul's Safety Ensured (vers. 23-35).

CRITICAL REMARKS.

Ver. 1. **Earnestly beholding,** or *looking steadfastly on,* describes the eager, anxious gaze with which the apostle was accustomed to scan those to whom he spoke—perhaps arising from his infirmity of sight (Alford), but more from the intense emotion of his spirit (see xiv. 9, and compare vii. 55.) **Men and brethren.**—Or simply *brethren* (see also vers. 5, 6.) The omission of "fathers" (xxii. 1) was probably intended to suggest that he felt himself on an equality with the council. **I have lived.**—πεπολίτευμαι properly signifies to discharge one's civil and political duties, but as used here and elsewhere (Phil. i. 27) by Paul, includes his whole moral and religious conduct, or his behaviour in every respect. **In all good conscience.**—*I.e.*, in every respect, in every instance with a good conscience, or with a consciousness of integrity and sincerity (compare 2 Tim. i. 3).

Ver. 2. **The high priest Ananias.**—Not the individual of that name mentioned earlier (iv. 6; compare Luke iii. 2; John xviii. 13), but the son of Nebedæus, who succeeded Camydus, or Camithus, was nominated to the office by Herod, King of Chalcis, in A.D. 48, and entered on his duties in the procuratorship of Tiberius Alexander (Jos., *Ant.*, XX. v. 2). He was deposed from his office not long before the departure of Felix (*Ant.*, XX. viii. 8), but still retained great power, which he used violently and lawlessly (*Ibid.*, ix. 2). He was eventually assassinated by the Sicarii (*Wars*, II. xvii. 9). **Them that stood by him** were not members of the council or spectators, but most likely the servants in attendance, as in Christ's trial (John xviii. 22; compare Luke xix. 24). **To smite him on the mouth.**—Compare John xviii. 22; Jer. xx. 1, 2. "This mode of enjoining silence is practised in the East at the present day" (Hackett). "For a Jew to order a Jew to be struck on the cheek was peculiarly offensive. 'He that strikes the cheek of an Israelite strikes, as it were, the cheek of the Shekinah,' for it is said (Prov. xx. 25), 'He that strikes a man (*i.e.*, an Israelite, who alone deserves the name) strikes the Holy One'" (Farrar).

Ver. 3. **Thou whited wall!**—Thou hypocrite! Like the similar phrase, "whited sepulchre" (Matt. xxiii. 27). The prophecy here uttered against Ananias—not a wish (Kuinoel)—was fulfilled (see above).

Ver. 4. To revile God's high priest was certainly forbidden by the law of Moses (Exod. xxii. 28).

Ver. 5. **I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest.**—These words have been interpreted as meaning either: 1. That the apostle refused to acknowledge Ananias as high priest, either because he had procured the dignity by money (Grotius) or by usurpation (Lightfoot), and was therefore not the high priest in reality. 2. That the apostle declined to recognise as God's high priest one who behaved so insolently as Ananias (Calvin, Baumgarten, Stier, Meyer, Besser, Holtzmann), in which case his language would be ironical. 3. That he spoke without due reflection, and therefore rashly, and now meant to recall his words (Bengel, Wetstein,

Olshausen, Ewald, Wordsworth, Hackett). 4. That at the moment he was not acquainted with the person of the high priest, Ananias having been installed into office during his absence from the city (Chrysostom, Beza, Lechler). 5. That when he spoke he did not really know by whom the order to smite him had been given (Farrar)—which might well have been the case if his vision was as defective as is commonly supposed (Alford, Plumptre), or if Ananias was not presiding (Zöckler), because the Sanhedrim was sitting at the bidding of the Roman captain (Lechler), or if, though Ananias did preside, Paul did not know he was the high priest (who was not always required to preside: compare Schürer's *Gesch. des Jud. Volks*, p. 156 *ff*), but thought him an ordinary member of the court (Lechler, Plumptre). Of these, the first and second may be set aside as improbable, if not unworthy of the apostle. The third may contain an element of truth, to this extent, that the apostle ought, perhaps, to have been sure who the person was against whom he uttered so severe a prophecy. That he knew and spoke in anger, "in an outburst of natural indignation" (Conybeare and Howson), we think unlikely in the case of one (1) who had just been claiming that he had lived before God in all good conscience up till that day (ver. 1); (2) who had the day before exhibited such presence of mind; (3) who possessed, along with his brother apostles, the promise of the Holy Spirit's help as to what he should say when brought before kings and councils; and (4) who afterwards, when confessing his wrong-doings before the council, made no mention of this supposed ebullition of wrath (xxiv. 20, 21). In our judgment this last consideration is fatal to the theory that Paul spoke unadvisedly with his lips. The fourth and fifth explanations appear in all respects the most satisfactory. **It is written.**—The passage (Exod. xxii. 28) applies to any civil magistrate as well as to the high priest.

Ver. 6. **Sadducees.**—See iv. 1, v. 17. **Pharisees.**—See v. 34. For both see "Homiletical Analysis." **Men and brethren.**—Or, simply *brethren.* **The son of a Pharisee.**—According to best codices, *a son of Pharisees.* **Of,** or *touching*, **the hope and resurrection of the dead.**—*I.e.*, touching a hope (which I have), even that there shall be a resurrection of the dead (compare xxiv. 15, 21; and see xvii. 31). Baur, followed by Holtzmann, objects to the apostle's statement as untruthful, since he must have known that the matter for which he was called in question was not his preaching of a resurrection from the dead, but his teaching with regard to the law, that it was not binding on Gentile Christians. But in point of fact the apostle's statement was substantially correct, that whatever was the ostensible ground of complaint against him, the real cause of his apprehension was his witness concerning Christ's resurrection—since out of that rose the altered relations of both Jews and Gentiles toward the law. Besides, had the apostle here deliberately uttered an untruth, or been guilty of an evasion, it is hardly likely that the recollection of this would not have troubled his conscience afterwards when his remembrance of having set his judges at variance did (xxiv. 20, 21).

Ver. 7. **A dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees.**—Here again Baur "can scarcely imagine that a single expression undesignedly" (Baur himself holds it was deliberately) "let fall by the apostle could have kindled so fierce a fire" as to blind both parties to their own interests, and Weizsäcker thinks it "far from being in the least probable that Paul should have attempted to set the Pharisees and Sadducees against each other, or that he should in point of fact have succeeded in doing so"; but Josephus (*Life*, 29) relates a similar procedure of himself when his life was threatened at Taricheæ, which was followed by a similar result, the division of his enemies, which ended in his life being spared.

Ver. 8. **The Sadducees** denied the doctrine of a resurrection and the existence of either angel or spirit. "They have been called materialists. . . . But there is no proof that they denied what in our day we call the invisible world. They were only opposed to new speculations. They believed firmly in Mosaism, and adhered to the letter of the Scriptures. The resurrection, they said, was not supported by a single text in the law. The Sadducees, for the same reasons (the silence of Moses), discouraged Messianic hopes. . . . The Sadducees were the living proof that the Old Dispensation was drawing to a close" (Stapfer, *Palestine in the Time of Christ*, pp. 319, 320). **The Pharisees** confessed both. They "had formulated, under the Maccabees, the doctrine of the resurrection of the body," by which they "did not intend merely the survival of the soul, the immaterial part of man, or even of a spiritual body, as St. Paul afterwards teaches, but a reunion with the very body which had been laid down" (*ibid.*, p. 318). The Pharisees "believe that souls have an immortal vigour in them, and that under the earth there will be rewards and punishments according as they have lived virtuously or viciously in this life"—the vicious being "detained in an everlasting prison," but the virtuous having "power to revive and live again." The Sadducees hold "that souls die with the bodies" (Jos., *Ant.*, XVIII. i. 3, 4).

Ver. 9. **The scribes** should probably be *some of the scribes.* **But if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him.**—Supply, What then? The allusion obviously is to Paul's vision in the temple (xxii. 17). The best texts omit **let us not fight against God.** They were probably an interpolation from Gamaliel's speech (v. 39).

Ver. 10. "The fear of the chiliarch was naturally heightened by his knowledge that he was responsible for the life of a Roman citizen" (Plumptre).

Ver. 11. The oldest authorities omit **Paul.** For the phrase **be of good cheer,** in which the verb is *θάρσει* (Christ's), compare Matt. ix. 2, xiv. 27; Mark vi. 50; John xvi. 33. For the same phrase with a different verb, *εὐθυμεῖτε* (Paul's), see xxvii. 22, 25. The vision announced the close of the first and the beginning of the second of Paul's proposed journeys (xix. 21).

Ver. 12. The Jews (rather than **certain of the Jews**) who banded themselves together **under a curse** to kill Paul were not the members of the Sanhedrim, who had forgotten their opinions in the council (vers. 6-9), and were again united as one man against the apostle (Holtzmann), but the Jewish populace, or at least forty of them (ver. 13), who came to the chief priests and the elders (ver. 14)—*i.e.*, to the Sadducean members of the council (De Wette, Meyer), who were hostile to Paul—with the information that they had bound themselves under a great curse to take him off. Josephus (*Ant.*, XV. viii. 3, 4) mentions a similar conspiracy of ten Jews, who bound themselves by a solemn oath to assassinate Herod the Great, and relates (*Ant.*, XII. vi. 2) the story of Matthias, the founder of the Maccabean dynasty, who slew an apostate Jew who offered sacrifice at Modin.

Ver. 15. **Ye with the council signify.**—*I.e.*, with the consent of the council or Sanhedrim. **As though ye would inquire something more perfectly.**—Better, *as intending to investigate more accurately* (than on the former trial) *the things concerning him—i.e.*, the charges against him. The words **on the morrow** are omitted by the best MSS.

Ver. 16. Whether **Paul's sister's son** resided in Jerusalem, or had accompanied him thither, cannot be determined. Against the former supposition stands the fact that Paul lodged with Mnason (xxi. 16). Plumptre suggests he may have been one of Paul's Roman kinsmen (Rom. xvi. 7, 11) who had come to Jerusalem to attend the feast, and had heard the plot talked of in the caravanserai where he and the other pilgrims lodged. Alford thinks he may have been a young man domiciled in Jerusalem, as Paul himself had formerly been, for the purpose of attending school.

Ver. 17. **Bring this young man unto the chief captain.**—Though Paul had a promise of Divine protection, he did not neglect the use of ordinary means.

Ver. 18. The words **Paul the prisoner** show that the apostle was still chained to a soldier.

Ver. 21. **A,** or *the—i.e.*, the expected **promise** rather than "order" (Rosenmüller) or "message" (Grotius).

Ver. 23. **Two.**—Not one or two (Howson), but *some* or certain *two—i.e.*, two or three (Hackett) of the centurions. Compare "some two of the disciples" (Luke vii. 19). **Soldiers.**—Heavy armed, as distinguished from the "horsemen." The **spearmen,** *δεξιολάβοι*, "right hand graspers"—an obscure word, not yet satisfactorily explained—have been interpreted as meaning military lictors who guarded prisoners, and were so called from taking the right side (Kuinoel), but probably signified a lightly armed Roman cohort of slingers and javelin throwers (Jos., *Wars,* II. xvii. 5; III. vii. 18; IV. i. 3), hence rightly enough named spearmen.

Ver. 25. **A letter after this manner.**—Lit., *having this type*, as to verbal form, stamp, and contents. Such a writing relative to a prisoner, called an *elogium,* was required by Roman law to be sent with every prisoner forwarded to a magistrate for trial. That this was not the actual missive of Claudius Lysias, but only a free reproduction of what the writer of the Acts supposed it might be, has been argued (1) from the difficulty of understanding how the writer of the Acts would get to know what Lysias wrote, and (2) from its similarity to the introduction of Luke (i. 3), which, like it, uses the epithet "most excellent," and to the Jerusalem letter, which employs the same salutation, "greeting" (xv. 23). But as to (1), the letter of Lysias may have been unsealed and shown to Paul, if not also to Luke, who most likely accompanied him; while as to (2), it need only be supposed that Lysias, Luke, and James, knew the art of polite letter-writing. It is a gratuitous assumption to assert that the composer of the Acts is responsible for the inaccuracy which occurs in Lysias' letter (Holtzmann).

Ver. 28. **I brought him forth**—better, *down*—**into their council.**—This clause is omitted by some authorities.

Ver. 30. From the Received Text the word *μέλλειν* should be struck out, according to the best authorities; but even then two constructions are combined: (1) *μηνυθείσης ἐπιβουλῆς τῆς ἐσομένης,* and (2) *μηνυθέντος ἐπιβουλὴν ἔσεσθαι.* The sense, however is, *it having been shown to me that there would be a plot against the man.* **By the Jews** is wanting in the oldest codices. So is the concluding word, **farewell,** which was probably inserted from xv. 29.

Ver. 31. **By,** or *during* **night** the apostle with his escort travelled to Antipatris.

Ver. 32. **On the morrow** after their arrival at Antipatris. **Returned to the castle.**—Possibly one of the centurions (ver. 23), along with the footmen and spearmen.

Ver. 35. **I will hear thee.**—Perhaps *fully* should be added to convey the force of the preposition. The rule of Roman law was: *Qui cum elogio mittuntur ex integro audiendi sunt.* "The governor of a province was not to give implicit credit to the document with which a prisoner was sent to him; he must institute an independent examination of the case for himself" (Hackett).

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 1—10.

The Scene in the Council Chamber; or, Paul's Doubtful Strategy.

I. **An exalted exordium.**—1. *Delivered in a historic place.* If in the usual court room of the Sanhedrim, the Hall Gazith, in one of the temple chambers, then it was probably the spot on which Stephen had stood twenty-two years before, when Paul heard him deliver his great apology (vi. 12); on which the apostles had stood when Gamaliel, a Pharisee, spoke up in their defence (v. 34); and on which Christ had stood when Caiaphas pronounced him worthy of death (Matt. xxvi. 57). If in some apartment in the city to which their meetings had been transferred about twenty-six years before this (see "Critical Remarks" on xxii. 30), it was still the spot on which many a solemn trial had taken place. Men in general, and speakers in particular, are always more or less affected by the associations which cluster round the spots on which they stand. 2. *Presented to a venerable court.* The highest ecclesiastical and religious tribunal of the country, composed of priests and elders and scribes (iv. 5, 6), belonging to the two principal parties of the day, the Pharisees and the Sadducees (see "Critical Remarks," and below), and presided over by the high priest of the time, Ananias, the son of Nebedæus. 3. *Spoken with intense earnestness.* Realising at once the sanctity of the place, the dignity of the court, and the solemnity of the occasion, the apostle fixed his eyes with steadfast gaze upon his auditors and began to pour out upon them the transcendent thoughts with which his soul was laden. 4. *Begun with dignified self-respect.* Not cringing before them, as if he either acknowledged himself a culprit or desired to fawn upon them with flattery, but dropping the term "fathers" which he had employed on the castle stairs (xxii. 1), and addressing them as an equal, "as a former Sanhedrist to his ancient colleagues"—brothers! The man who is conscious of his innocence has no need to hang his head like a bulrush, or speak with bated breath and whispered humbleness, or forget the native nobility of his manhood. 5. *Summed up in a noble confession.* Not prompted by self-esteem or rendered possible by a self-indulgent criticism, but dictated by an inward consciousness of its truth. A confession that all his life long—not even excluding his persecuting days (xxvi. 9)—he had studied, and, so far as he could speak for himself, with a considerable measure of success, to preserve a good conscience, which could only have been done by following its dictates, in all his relationships in life, at all times, and under all circumstances, aiming at the service and glory of God (2 Tim. i. 3; Heb. xiii. 18).

II. **An unmannerly interruption.**—1. *From whom it proceeded.* From the high priest who presided over the council, Ananias, the son of Nebedæus, who was appointed to fill this ecclesiastical office by Herod of Chalcis and whose tenure continued from A.D. 47—59, when he was superseded by Ismael, the son of Phabi. Having lived after his deposition till the outbreak of the Jewish war in A.D. 66, he was murdered as a friend of the Romans by the revolutionaries. During the last years of his life, even after the demission of his office, he ruled like a tyrant in Jerusalem. His haughty disposition revealed itself in his behaviour towards Paul (see Schürer in Riehm's *Handwörterbuch des Biblischen Altertums*, ii. 62, art. *Ananias*). "Ananias" says Besser (*Bibel Stunden*, III. ii. 504), "was the third high priest whom the Spirit, poured out from the throne by the Great High Priest, Jesus Christ, called to repentance. But, like his predecessor Joseph, he was a legitimate successor of Caiaphas." 2. *How it was expressed.* By commanding the officials of the Sanhedrim who were standing by to smite Paul upon the mouth. To the arrogant prelate it seemed unendurable—in fact, an intolerable presumption and unspeakable insolence—that one who was

arraigned before them as a prisoner should either call them "brothers!" or advance for himself the claim of innocence. The mouth that uttered such words should be stopped. Whether the attendants obeyed or not is uncertain. If they hesitated for a moment (Besser) the probability is that they ultimately carried out their master's command and inflicted on the apostle the same brutal insult that had once been offered to his Master (John xviii. 22), and long before to the prophet Jeremiah (xx. 1, 2). 3. *What response it evoked.* Unlike his Master who, when one of the officers standing by struck him, meekly answered, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou Me?" (John xviii. 22, 23), Paul replied with an indignant outburst—"God shall smite thee, thou whited wall; and sittest thou to judge me according to the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law." (1) So far as Ananias was concerned the language was both strikingly correct and richly deserved. Sitting there as Jehovah's representative, clothed, perhaps, in his white priestly raiment and pretending to be a judge of offences against Heaven's law, he was little better than a whited wall, beautiful without, but coarse within, "daubed over with untempered mortar"—an expression which perhaps had been borrowed from the similar phrase of Jesus Christ, "whited sepulchre" (Matt. xxiii. 27; Luke xi. 44), and had become current among the early Christians as a fit designation for hypocrites, of whom Ananias was a magnificent specimen. That the phrase did not express a malediction or imprecation must be assumed, since such would have been altogether unbecoming on the lips of one who professed himself a follower of Jesus, and who had claimed to have lived up till that moment in all good conscience before God. The terrible utterance is best understood as a prophetic denunciation (Zöckler), which, according to Josephus (*Wars*, II. xvii. 19), was ultimately fulfilled, the Sicarii or assassins in the revolutionary war having entered Jerusalem and, after burning Ananias's palace, dragged him, along with his brother Hezekiah, from concealment and murdered both. The rebuke as to his judging Paul contrary to the law was thoroughly deserved. (2) So far as Paul was concerned, there was nothing wrong in either of the statements, unless it was wrong to denounce a scoundrel like Ananias, and foretell his fate. If anything was wrong about the utterance it was the passion (if there was such) with which it was accompanied. "It was certainly some disadvantage to Paul that (although provoked and unjustly smitten) he called the high priest 'whited wall'; he was glad to excuse it by his ignorance. We may not be too bold or too forward to speak in a good matter, lest we overshoot" (Trapp.) But is it not rather easily assumed that Paul lost his temper and burst into a rage? Had he done so, it seems to us Paul would have not only acknowledged his offence when he cooled down—which some say he did (but see below, and "Critical Remarks" on verse 5)—but when recalling this scene afterwards would not have omitted to mention this unchristian outburst (if it was such) as one of the mistakes he had committed—which, however, he did not (see xxiv. 21). 4. *How it ended.* Challenged by the attendants for reviling, as they called his scathing sentence, God's high priest, as they styled the painted and decorated hypocrite who presided over the assembly, Paul replied that he wist not that the person whom he addressed was the high priest. This statement is generally interpreted as an acknowledgment on Paul's part of having spoken unadvisedly with his lips. It ought, however, rather to be accepted in its plain and literal sense, as an intimation that, from some cause or other—defective sight, or an uncertainty as to whether the president of the court was the high priest—he did not know the exalted dignity of the person he addressed (see "Critical Remarks"). Had he known that Ananias was the high priest, rather than seem to violate the law of Moses—"Thou shalt not speak evil of a ruler of thy people"—he would have borne the indignity in silence. This does not appear to us as an admission

that he had spoken rashly, except perhaps in so far as he ought to have made sure who the object of his denunciation was before launching against him such a scathing judgment and rebuke. But the judgment and the rebuke fell on the right head, and Paul, if he erred, only showed he was still a man and not the equal of his Divine Master (see "Hints").

III. **A dexterous strategy.**—1. *The occasion of it.* The mixed character of the council, which consisted of Pharisees and Sadducees. (1) The Pharisees at the time of Christ formed a compact, important, and influential party inside the Jewish people—representing that tendency which was generally peculiar to post-exilic Judaism, and which in them (the Pharisees) received its sharpest and at the same time its most correct expression, viz., the tendency to transform religion into merely external legal service. That tendency drew after it as a necessary consequence this, that the external action rather than the moral disposition became the decisive factor in determining the quality of an action. Hence the Pharisees laid great stress upon oral legal tradition as supplementing the written law. The Pharisees were the democratic, popular party in Palestine. (2) The Sadducees, deriving their name originally, it is believed, from Zadok the high priest in David's and Solomon's times, consisted principally of the members and adherents of the high priestly family, and formed in consequence the aristocratic party in Jerusalem, whose chief distinction lay in this—that they rejected the Pharisaic principle of legalism and with that the oral tradition which their rivals valued. (3) Their dogmatic differences were principally these: that the Pharisees believed in and the Sadducees denied, the resurrection of the body and future punishment, the existence of angels and spirits, the doctrine of an overruling providence, which superintended and controlled the seemingly free actions of men (see Schürer in Riehm's *Handwörterbuch*, arts. *Pharisäer* and *Sadducäer*; and Langhans's *Biblische Geschichte und Literatur*, ii. 431-435). 2. *The nature of it.* A sudden exclamation by Paul that he was a Pharisee and a son of Pharisees, and that he was that day being called in question for the hope and resurrection of the dead (see "Critical Remarks"). Both statements were true, although the latter may not have been so obvious to his hearers as it was to himself. It was undoubtedly a clever stroke, and perhaps illustrated that serpentine wisdom combined with dovelike harmlessness which Christ recommended to His followers (Matt. x. 16). "Religion," says Trapp, "doth not call us to a weak simplicity, but allows us as much of the serpent as of the dove. The dove without the serpent is easily caught; the serpent without the dove stings deadly. Their match makes themselves secure and many happy." 3. *The effect of it.* It divided the circle of his enemies into two opposing camps. Some of the scribes of the Pharisees' party immediately protested that they found no evil in Paul. If a spirit or an angel had spoken to him, what then? That was by no means impossible or incredible; and, if it really was so, it might be dangerous to meddle with the prisoner. Of course to the aristocratic Sadducean party, who regarded spirits and angels as nursery legends, creatures of the fancy, such a suggestion sounded ridiculous. The deeply seated antagonism which parted the two sects rose to the surface and flamed out into angry dissension. In their violent attempts, on the one hand to release, and on the other part to detain, Paul, he was like to be torn in pieces between them. 4. *The end of it.* The commandant of the castle, who had once more got to hear of the turmoil and feared for his prisoner's safety, despatched a company of soldiers to the council chamber to rescue the apostle and fetch him into the fortress. 5. *The rightness of it.* That the apostle's bold stroke terminated in his release may seem to many to be justification enough of the course adopted; but on subsequent reflection Paul himself was not perfectly sure about it (xxiv. 21). At least, without expressly granting that he had done wrong, he owned him-

self ready to admit that his action might wear the appearance of wrong. Possibly he was not himself certain that he had not erred from that straight path of conscientious duty he had up till that moment endeavoured to tread. His exclamation was perhaps secretly dictated less by an effort to vindicate himself or advance his Master's cause, than by an endeavour to set his judges at loggerheads. If so, he would himself pronounce it wrong. What a sensitive conscience the apostle must have had!

IV. **A sweet consolation.**—1. *Its opportune arrival.* The night following that exciting scene in the council, which again had ensued on a day of equal agitation in the temple and on the castle stairs. At a time when the apostle's soul and body both were exhausted by the terrible conflict through which he had passed, and when perhaps through natural reaction he might have been disposed to subside into deep depression. But man's extremity is ever God's opportunity (compare xxvii. 24). 2. *Its heavenly origin.* It came direct from the Lord—*i.e.*, the risen and exalted Christ, who instead of sending consolation to His wearied servant by a messenger, either human (2 Kings iv. 42), or angelic (1 Kings xix. 5), came Himself, stood by that servant, discovering His presence and speaking to that servant with His own lips. This circumstance showed both the importance of the occasion and the need of Paul. 3. *Its cheering burden.* It was practically an assurance that neither would his life be taken nor his career ended by this outrageous assault upon his person. The purpose he had formed would be fulfilled. As he had testified for his Master in Jerusalem, he would live to do the like in Rome (see "Hints" on ver. 11).

Learn—1. That a good conscience is a strong support in time of trouble. 2. That good consciences are not always fully enlightened. 3. That mistakes, when discovered, should be frankly acknowledged. 4. That good men should study not to let their good be evil spoken of. 5. That wicked men who hate each other often combine against the good. 6. That materialism is an old heresy. 7. That a good man may defend himself by all honest means.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 1. *A Good Conscience.*

I. **From what it proceeds.**—1. True faith in Christ, which obtains the forgiveness of sins. 2. The assurance of Divine grace and eternal life. 3. The renewal of the Holy Ghost to a new life and conduct. 4. The faithful performance of our calling.

II. **To what it contributes.**—1. The possession of inward peace before God. 2. The establishment of the heart in the hour of danger. 3. The strengthening of the soul for the performance of duty.

Note.—Those who attribute to Christianity a gloomy condemnation of, and a certain injustice towards, the natural man, and that which is good in him, or even those real devotees who, going beyond the truth, think badly of and inveigh against themselves and their former life, may learn here from Paul's example that a regenerate man may rejoice before God and man even in his former relatively good conscience when in a position of error and sin, if his present conscience in Christ bears him witness that he has not belonged to the class of gross hypocrites.—*Stier.*

Ver. 2. *The Three Ananiases in Acts.*

I. **Ananias of Jerusalem,** the insincere disciple (v. 1); or, the detection and doom of false professors. A warning to Church members.

II. **Ananias of Damascus,** the true disciple (ix. 10, xxii. 12); or, the ministry and reward of a humble Christian. An encouragement to Christian workers.

III. **Ananias also of Jerusalem,** the Sadducean high priest; or, the

criminality and judgment of those who, acting as God's vicegerents, nevertheless misrepresent Him. An admonition to Christian ministers.

Ananias and Paul. A parallel and a contrast.

I. **Resemblances.** — Both were— 1. *Men.* Probably both were (certainly one was) possessed of intellect and education. 2. *Jews.* Members of the Hebrew nation and of the covenanted people. 3. *Representatives.* The one of Jehovah, whose priest he was; the other of Jesus, whose apostle he claimed to be.

II. **Differences.**—In their—1. *Offices.* The one a high priest, the other an apostle, as above stated. 2. *Characters.* The one a hypocrite, the other sincere. 3. *Beliefs.* The one a Sadducee, the other a Pharisee. 4. *Positions.* The one judge, the other prisoner. 5. *Conduct.* The one violent, the other resentful.

III. **Lessons.**—1. The differences between men are commonly more than their resemblances. 2. The best men do not always occupy the highest social positions in life. 3. The providence that makes prisoners of moral princes like Paul, and judges of mean reptiles like Ananias, though not wrong, is nevertheless mysterious. 4. Well-nigh intolerable are—

> "The insolence of office, and the spurns
> That patient merit of the unworthy takes."
> *Shakespeare.*

Ver. 3. *God's Judgment on Whited Walls.*

I. **A striking characterisation of hypocritical professors.**—Whited walls. "Holy offices, spiritual titles, priestly dignities, are nothing else than white lime, by which the internal impurity of a carnal heart is covered."

II. **A solemn prediction of Divine judgment on such professors.**—"God shall smite" them! If not by temporal calamities, by eternal punishments. In the great day of the Lord the secrets of all hearts shall be exposed.

III. **A significant instance of moral retribution.**—What will eventually happen in the case of hypocritical professors will also be the fate of other sinners. Their iniquity will be recompensed. Their wickedness will return upon their own pate.

Ver. 5. *Sins of Ignorance—*

I. **Are not permissible.**—No excuse for a violation of the law of God to plead that it was done in ignorance.

II. **May be disastrous in their consequences.**—To the individual who commits them, and to those who are affected by them.

III. **Should always be frankly confessed** when discovered by him who has committed them, as was the case with Paul.

IV. **May be forgiven.**—As was the inadvertent mistake of the apostle.

Ver. 6. *The Hope* (of Israel) *and the Resurrection of the Dead.*

I. **The hope of Israel involved the resurrection of the dead.**—See Psalm xvi. 9, xvii. 15, xlix. 15; Isa. xxv. 8, xxvi. 19; Ezek. xxxvii. 12; Dan. xii. 2; Hosea xiii. 14.

II. **The hope of Israel was guaranteed by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**—This proved that a resurrection of the dead was possible, and would become actual in the case of the followers of Christ. See iv. 2; John xi. 25, xiv. 19; Rom. viii. 10; 1 Cor. xv. 23.

III. **The hope of Israel and the resurrection of the dead form the burden of the gospel message.**—"Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. i. 28).

IV. **The hope of Israel and the resurrection of the dead will reach their culmination at the last day.**—See John v. 25, 28, vi. 39, 44, 54, xi. 23, 24; 2 Cor. v. 14; Phil. iii. 21.

Vers. 1-6 with John xviii. 19-24, *Jesus and Paul before the Sanhedrim;* or, the Master and the disciple before unrighteous judges.

I. **Wherein the Master and the disciple resembled each other.**—1. The

same unmerited disgrace was inflicted on both. 2. Both maintained their Divinely bestowed dignity.

II. **Wherein the Master was above the disciple.**—1. The holy self-consciousness of Jesus was more than the good conscience of Paul. 2. The calm answer of Jesus was more heavenly than Paul's human vehemence.—*Gerok.*

Spots in the Sun; or, some things about Paul's character that call for explanation.

I. **Magnificent self-conceit, or spiritual pride.**—"I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." Does not this seem a pretty high claim for even a Paul to advance? Does it not come tolerably near the violation of one of his own precepts (Rom. xii. 3)? Justifies it not Paul's statement that he was a Pharisee? What was it, if not a manifestation of that self-righteousness so vehemently condemned in them? Well—1. Paul could not have meant to assert that he had lived a sinless or blameless life (see Rom. iii. 9, 10), either before his conversion (see 1 Tim. i. 13) or after it (Phil. iii. 12). 2. Paul was certainly not conscious at the time that he was doing wrong in making such an allegation, as afterwards he was not in the least degree troubled about it (xxiv. 20). 3. Paul could only have signified that he had, throughout his entire career, endeavoured to follow the dictates of his conscience, as he afterwards explained to Timothy (2 Tim. i. 3). Possibly in so saying Paul may have been mistaken; but a mistake cannot be catalogued as a sin.

II. **Unchristian anger, or lack of meekness.**—"God shall smite thee, thou whited wall!" Was this like obeying his Master's words—"Whosoever smiteth thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matt. v. 39). And what about his own precepts?—"Be ye angry and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath" (Eph. iv. 26); "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but give place unto wrath" (Rom. xii. 19). To these interrogations it may be answered—1. That anger is not always sinful, and, if ever there was an instance in which it was justifiable, it surely was when Ananias, God's vicegerent, commanded Paul to be unjustly smitten. 2. That even Christ did not abstain from complaint when unjustly smitten by Annas (see John xviii. 23). 3. That as Paul was acting under the Spirit's guidance when he stood before the Sanhedrim (Luke xii. 12), we cannot doubt that his language about the high priest was justified, and was intended by the Holy Ghost as a Divine judgment, which, ten years later, was fulfilled. 4. That as the Lord, when He appeared to Paul that night, did not find fault with His servant, so neither should we.

III. **Deliberate untruth or unworthy equivocation.**—"I wist not that it was the high priest." How could Paul say so when he knew that he was standing before the Sanhedrim? In addition to the last two observations under the preceding charge, which apply to this with equal force, the various explanations offered in the "Critical Remarks" and "Homiletical Analysis" may be consulted.

IV. **Worldly policy, or cunning craft.**—"I am a Pharisee . . . touching the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question." How, it is asked, could Paul describe himself as a Pharisee when he knew that he had utterly and permanently broken with them; and how could he, as a good man, resort to the device and trick of a vulgar demagogue? Well, it is noticeable that this is the only point about Paul's conduct that did cause him uneasiness. Yet (1) it was perfectly true that he was a Pharisee in so far as he held with them the doctrine of a resurrection; and (2) if he did throw an apple of discord among his enemies it is not quite clear that this was sinful.

Ver. 7. *Divide and Conquer; or, Paul's Happy Stroke!*—Surely no defence of Paul for adopting this course

is required, but all admiration is due to his skill and presence of mind. Nor need we hesitate to regard such skill as the fulfilment of the promise, that in such an hour the Spirit of wisdom should suggest words to the accused which the accuser should not be able to gainsay. All prospect of a fair trial was hopeless; he well knew, from fact and present experience, that personal odium would bias his judges, and violence prevail over justice; he, therefore (Neander) uses, in the cause of truth, the maxim so often perverted to the cause of falsehood—*Divide et impera.* —*Alford.*

Ver. 8. *The Creed of the Sadducee.*

I. **A hopeless and melancholy creed.** —1. *No resurrection.* Then (1) Christ is not raised and Christ's people will not be raised hereafter. If Christ still exists, and if Christ's people do not cease to be at death, in both cases existence is apart from the body. (2) We are yet in our sins, and Christ's death has not been an atonement for the sins of men. (3) The Christian gospel is a fiction, the Christian's hope a delusion, and the Christian himself of all men most miserable (1 Cor. xv. 13-19). 2. *No angel.* Then (1) man is the highest created being in the universe, which may say much for man, but does not speak highly for the universe, considering what man has in practice shown himself to be. (2) Scripture, both old and new, which talks of principalities and powers in the heavenly places and even represents them as having at times appeared to men, must be set down as largely mythical, a conclusion which may not disturb rationalising critics, but which will unquestionably disconcert sincere Christians. 3. *No spirit.* Then (1) man is not a composite being, consisting of soul and body, but a simple organism, consisting of body only; and the materialists of to-day and yesterday are right. (2) There can be no immortality for man, since nothing remains after the earthly house of this tabernacle has been dissolved. (3) It is doubtful if there can be any Holy Ghost or any God distinct from His works, in which case the dogma of pantheism must be accepted as correct, a result which philosophers might hail as the highest expression of wisdom, but which ordinary reasoners would not be able to distinguish from atheism.

II. **An unproved and unproveable creed**—1. *Unproved.* No dialectician, whether scientist or philosopher, has ever demonstrated that man is the most exalted being in the universe, that he consists only of material particles, and that when he dies he can never again return to life. Arguments to that effect have been frequently advanced, but it is doubtful it they have convinced more than a few. At the bar of impartial reason the verdict sounds that the Sadducean thesis has not been established. 2. *Unproveable.* Except on the hypothesis that there is no personal God, and before one could convert that hypothesis into a truth he must have roamed the universe and demonstrated by personal examination that no such being as God anywhere existed—in other words, must himself be God.

III. **A refuted and exploded creed.** —1. *By the consciousness of man,* which attests that his "I" is something totally distinct from his material body, that angels are at least conceivable beings, and that the doctrine of a resurrection is in perfect accord with the deepest instincts of his nature. 2. *By the testimony of Scripture,* which announces the fact of a resurrection (1 Cor. xv. 52), certifies the existence of angels (Luke xv. 10; Gal. iii. 19) and pre-supposes the reality of man's spiritual nature (Job xxxii. 8; Rom. viii. 10). 3. *By the resurrection of Jesus Christ,* which places the doctrine of a future resurrection beyond dispute, and in so doing guarantees the existence of man's spirit as a separate entity from his body. If it does not certainly prove that there are angels, it at least shows, by what occurred in connection with the rising of Christ, that there are

intelligences in God's world superior to man.

Note.—The inconsistency of the Sadducees, in denying the existence of angels and spirits and yet adhering to the Pentateuch, which contains so many narratives of angelophanies, and practising the temple ritual, which certainly proceeded on the assumption that for man there was a future life, has been thus explained: The great body of the higher priestly class were mere Sadducees and were carried along by one of the great waves of thought which were then passing over the ancient world, and were Epicureans and materialists without knowing it, just as the Pharisees were, even to the eye of a writer like Josephus (*Life*, iii.), the counterpart of the Stoics.—*Plumptre.*

Ver. 11. *Paul's Midnight Visitor.*—"And the night following the Lord stood by him." What did this signify?

I. **Christ's fidelity towards His servant.**—When Christ called the persecutor Saul to be an apostle, He did not send him forth alone and unprotected, but put him under the same promise as had been given to the eleven: "Lo! I am with you alway!" The present appearance of Christ to Paul in the castle prison showed that Christ intended to keep His word.

II. **Christ's sympathy with His servant.**—Even had Christ not expressed His sympathy in words, His presence could not have failed to indicate it. Perhaps also Paul remembered the words which Christ formerly spoke to him upon the way to Damascus—"Saul! Saul! why persecutest thou Me?" If he did, he must have felt solaced by the reflection that as Christ had sympathised with His persecuted followers when they were cast into prison by him, Saul, so now did his Lord sympathise with him, Paul, in his bodily sufferings and mental anxieties.

III. **Christ's approbation of His servant.**—Remarkable that no word of fault-finding or rebuke falls from the lips of Christ. Rather, the absence of any such word signified approbation. What a comfort to Paul! who always affirmed it was a small matter for him to be judged of his fellow-men so long as he secured a favourable judgment from his Master (1 Cor. iv. 3). So should Christians labour to be accepted of Him (2 Cor. v. 9).

IV. **Christ's protection of His servant.**—"Thou must bear witness also at Rome!" Then Paul could not be left for ever in the hands of his enemies. Already Paul had conceived the idea of visiting Rome (xix. 21). Now he learns that his Master had included that in His plan also. Henceforward Paul knew that he would lead a charmed life until his work was done. So may the Christian reason.

V. **Christ's use for His servant.**—Paul was not to be cast off, but promoted to higher service. "Thou must bear witness for Me at Rome also." All Paul's past experiences had only been training him for his last place of ministry—Rome. So Christ leads His people and educates them for higher and nobler service. Often true on earth; certainly true of all earth's discipline, which is a preparation for nobler service in heaven.

Illustrations.—*Saints in Prison.* 1. *Paul.* Not the first time this that the apostle had been imprisoned. "In prisons more abundant" (2 Cor. xi. 23) formed one important item in his life-record. A memorable instance occured in Philippi (xvi. 23). Nor was this the first experience Paul had of being visited during night by Christ in a season of dejection. On an earlier occasion in Corinth (xviii. 9) Christ had appeared to him with words of cheer. 2. *Master Philpot.* This eminent martyr under Mary wrote to his friends that his loathsome and horrible prison was to him as pleasant as the walk in the garden of the King's Bench, because, though in the judgment of the world he was in hell, he nevertheless felt in the same the consolation of heaven. 3. *Samuel Rutherford.*

Dating his letters from Christ's palace in Aberdeen, within which he was detained as in a prison, this holy man thus wrote to a friend: "The Lord is with me; I care not what man can do. I burden no man. I want nothing. No king is better provided than I am: sweet, sweet and easy is the cross of my Lord. . . . My well beloved is kinder and more warm than ordinary, and cometh and visiteth my soul. My chains are over-gilded with gold. 4. *Madame Guyon.* This illustrious lady, imprisoned in the castle of Vincennes in 1695, not only sang but wrote songs of praise to her God. "It sometimes seemed to me," she wrote, "as if I were a little bird whom the Lord had placed in a cage; and that I had nothing now to do but sing. The joy of my heart gave a brightness to the objects around me. The stones of my prison looked, in my eyes, like rubies. I esteemed them more than all the gaudy brilliancies of a vain world."

The Midnight Vision in the Castle; or the Master speaking words of cheer to His servant. These words assured him of three things:—

I. **Of a safe issue out of his present troubles.**—So they upheld and comforted him in the uncertainty of his life from the Jews.

II. **Of an accomplishment of his intention of visiting Rome.**—So they upheld and comforted him in his uncertainty as to liberation from prison at Cæsarea.

III. **Of the certainty that, however he might be sent thither, he should preach the gospel and bear testimony at Rome.**—So he was upheld and comforted in the uncertainty of his surviving the storm in the Mediterranean, and in that of his fate on arriving at Rome. So may one crumb of Divine grace and help be multiplied to feed five thousand wants and anxieties.—*Alford.*

Comfort for Christ's Suffering Servants.

I. **Christ's presence with them.**—As Christ appeared to Paul in the castle, so is He ever beside His faithful servants in the hour of their tribulation. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" "If He undertake our protection, we may set those that seek our ruin at defiance" (Henry).

II. **Christ's words to them.**—"Be of good cheer." Christ desires His people to be happy under all circumstances. Because (1) He is ever with them. "God is near thee; therefore cheer thee, sad soul!" (2) All things work together for good to them that love Him. "Who, then, is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?"

III. **Christ's plans for them.**—1. That they should serve as His witnesses, wherever they might be. 2. That their lives should not terminate till their work was finished. 3. That their own purposes for Him, if for His glory, should be fulfilled.

Vers. 1-11. *The Best Advocates of a Servant of God before the Judgment-Seat of an Unrighteous World.*

I. **The comfort of a good conscience in his breast.**

II. **The curse of an evil thing in the ranks of the enemy.**

III. **The sympathy of the honest and unprejudiced in the world.**

IV. **The gracious testimony of a righteous judge in heaven.**—*Gerok.*

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 12—22.

The Conspiracy of the (more than) Forty; or, Paul's Life Endangered.

I. **The plotters.**—1. Their *persons.* Jews; not members of the council, but zealots among the outside crowd who had been disappointed at the seeming failure of proceedings against Paul. 2. Their *number.* Over forty. Nothing symbolic in the number, which might have been any other. The conspirators having been so many were a formidable band as to strength, but a weak conclave

as to secrecy. When two have possession of a secret it becomes liable to escape into publicity; how much more when it is shared in by nearly half a hundred? 3. Their *aim.* To kill Paul—which probably they considered could not be compassed in any other way than by secret assassination, since the Sanhedrim had lost the power of inflicting capital punishment, and to all appearance Rome had thrown her shield over the apostle's person. 4. Their *oath.* Not to eat or drink anything until they had accomplished their purpose. To this course they had bound themselves by a solemn imprecation before God. A rash experiment it might have turned out for them had not a loophole been provided for escaping from their vow, in case it should prove unsuccessful or impossible to be fulfilled. But, according to the Talmud, one who had taken on himself a rash vow might be released from it on application to the wise men of the time. "He that hath a vow not to eat," said the Jewish doctors, "woe to him if he eat, and woe to him if he eat not; if he eat he sinneth against his vow; if he eat not, he sinneth against his life. What must one do in such a case? Let him approach the wise ones, and they will release him from his vow, as it is written, 'The tongue of the wise is health' (Prov. xii. 18)." (*From the Talmud; quoted by Lightfoot, Horæ Hebraicæ et Talmudicæ*).

II. **The plot.**—1. *Its disclosure to the chief priests and the elders.* These were manifestly the Sadducean members of the Sanhedrim, who were hostile to Paul. The plan discovered to these, was (1) cleverly contrived by the would-be assassins. It possessed at least one mark of sagacity—it was simple and not difficult to understand. The chief priests and elders should call a second meeting of the council, propose to amicably forget their yesterday's bickerings, lay aside their mutual jealousies and recriminations, unite against their common foe and request the military tribune to fetch down his prisoner a second time into their council chamber, when they would promise with due care and becoming seriousness to make an accurate investigation into the charges which had been preferred against him. If they did this, the military tribune would hardly refuse their request; and then they, the confederates, the "Invincibles" of Jerusalem, would be in readiness, as the apostle was being conducted back to their chamber, most likely under a small escort, to fall upon him by the way and despatch him with their knives. It appears to have been told out, as well as contrived, in cold blood. The conspirators seemingly were not troubled with qualms of conscience, or secret fears, but talked about their infernal project like a matter of common business. The plan, moreover, appears to have been (2) complacently listened to by those "holy scoundrels" into whose ears it was poured. Not one of all these venerable priests and elders expressed themselves as shocked at the proposal. Had they but "shook their heads" and "made a pause" when those villains told their tale, or "turned an eye of doubt" upon their faces, "deep shame had struck" them "dumb," wrought in them fears, and caused them to break off their purposed deed of blood. But no! the dark communication whispered into their ears made secret joy within their guilty bosoms. When, having assented to the project, they laid it before the full council, it was (3) silently accepted by all, probably also by the Pharisees, who may have felt that they had gone too far in throwing their shield over a prisoner so hateful as Paul. "The miserable rulers, who scruple neither to smile nor slay contrary to the law, accept this bold proposal just as willingly as they embraced Judas's offer against Jesus" (Stier). 2. *Its detection by Paul's nephew.* How he came to be in Jerusalem, and how he obtained a knowledge of the conspiracy against his uncle, are points that have not been reported by Luke. But he may have lived in Jerusalem with his mother, Paul's sister, or been a student at some Rabbinical school in the city, as Paul himself had formerly been, or arrived in the Metropolis from Rome as a feast pilgrim; while it is scarcely

necessary to inquire how a secret got out which was first shared in by forty unprincipled ruffians like the conspirators, and then told to a circle of bloodthirsty hypocrites like the Sanhedrists (see "Critical Remarks"). Anyhow, the diabolical project having come to his ears, he carried it to his uncle (to whom he appears to have found easy access), who, calling to him one of the centurions, requested that the youth might be conducted to the chief captain, for whom he had a communication of importance. This done, the chief captain having taken him aside, listened to the story—which possibly did not startle him, knowing, as he must have done, the characters of both the Sanhedrists and of the lawless zealots, with which the city at the time was full, but which he cautioned the young man to keep to himself, along with the fact that he had discovered it to him, the chief captain. 3. *Its defeat by the chief captain.* With a promptitude which showed he regarded the young man's story as antecedently probable, and intrinsically credible, and the situation as highly critical both for his prisoner, who might lose his life, and for himself who might be punished for neglect of duty in allowing a prisoner under his charge to be assassinated, he issued instant orders for the preparation of an escort of two hundred heavy armed soldiers, with seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen (see "Critical Remarks"), to start at the third hour of the night—*i.e.*, about 9 p.m., to convey Paul to Cæsarea, which order was executed and by which Paul was rescued.

Learn—1. The depths of Satan which exist in the hearts of men—not always excepting those who profess to be religious (Rev. ii. 24). 2. The ease with which God can bring secret things to light, and disappoint the devices of the crafty. 3. The safety of those whom Christ shields. 4. The duty of those whom God has promised to protect not to neglect the use of ordinary means. 5. The great service—to God, Christ and men—which may be rendered by a youth.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Vers. 11, 12. *The Two Covenants against Paul and For Him.*

I. **The murderous covenant of Paul's enemies.**—Powerful. 1. By their number—forty against one. 2. By their design—sworn to kill him. 3. By their craft and dissimulation.

II. **The gracious covenant of Paul's Lord.**—More powerful. 1. He discloses the designs of the conspirators. 2. Against powerful enemies He stirs up yet more powerful protectors. 3. He brings Paul uninjured out of the den of murderers.—*Gerok.*

Vers. 12-23. *The Foes and the Friends of Paul.*

I. **The foes stirred up by Satan.**—1. The forty, and more, conspirators sworn to kill Paul. 2. The chief priests and elders aiders and abetters of their murderous scheme. 3. The high priest and the Sanhedrim who gave it their co-operation.

II. **The friends raised up by God.**—1. Paul's sister's son, who happened to hear of the plot. 2. The chief captain, who took measures for Paul's transportation to Cæsarea. 3. The soldiers—footmen, horsemen, and spearmen—who escorted him on the way.

The Hand of Providence, as seen in the circumstances that led to the defeat of the conspiracy and the rescue of Paul.

I. **The number of the conspirators.**—This made its secrecy practically impossible.

II. **The discovery of the plot** almost immediately after it was made.—This gave time for counterplans.

III. **The presence in Jerusalem of Paul's sister's son.**—Had he not got to hear of the conspiracy, access might not have been so easily found to the apostle's presence.

IV. **The kindness of the chief captain.**—Otherwise he might either not have listened to or not believed in the young man's story.

V. **The credence given to the tale.**—

This led the military tribune to take instant measures for the apostle's safety, probably before the Sanhedrim had approached him with a request for the re-hearing of Paul's case.

VI. **The strength of the escort.**—This rendered it certain that no surprise attack upon the road would succeed in doing hurt to the apostle.

How the Lord Laughed at Paul's Enemies.—By delivering Paul—

I. **From the heart of a powerful,** determined, and promising **conspiracy.**

II. **At the moment when his destruction seemed imminent** and inevitable.

III. **By means of a boy,** whose promptitude of action did more for Paul than all the plotting of the zealots and Sanhedrists did against him.

IV. **With the aid of the instrument they hoped to employ for his destruction**—viz., the chief captain.

Vers. 12-24. *A Defeated Plot.*

I. **The formation of the plot.**—The depths of Satan. 1. *The conspirators.* (1) The Jews, or the Jewish party, in particular forty of them, hot-headed zealots, "the Orangemen of Judaism." (2) The chief priests and the elders, the leaders of the party who were supposed to have influence with the Sanhedrim. (3) The council, or Sanhedrim, who, without question, acquiesced in the diabolical project. 2. *The conspiracy.* (1) Its object: to kill Paul. So ten zealots conspired to assassinate Herod the Great because he had built a theatre and held gladiatorial shows in the Holy City. (2) Its motive. Partly chagrin at being defeated in the council on the previous day, but chiefly hatred of Paul as an apostate. So Matthias slew a Jew who had offered sacrifice at Modin (See "Critical Remarks"). (3) Its bond. An oath neither to eat nor drink until their project should be realised. (4) Its plan. To persuade the captain to fetch down Paul to the council, so that he might be stabbed on the road.

II. **The discovery of the plot.**—The folly of sin. Clever people frequently outwit themselves. 1. *The conspirators were too many.* Moral: when you want a secret to be kept, tell it to no one. 2. *The plan was too good.* The conspirators were so captivated with the ingenuity of their scheme that they could not refrain from talking about it. 3. *The result was too sure.* So certain were the plotters of success that they omitted the most ordinary precautions for safety. They paid no attention to who was listening while they were talking; and so it came to pass that Paul's nephew came to hear of it.

III. **The defeat of the plot—the counsel of the Most High.**—1. *The young man conveyed the information to his uncle.* A proper and courageous thing to do. Indicated presence of mind and promptitude of action. 2. *Paul requested a centurion to take the lad to the captain.* A mark of the influence which Paul had acquired, even over his keepers. Superiority of character will shine forth, even in a prison. 3. *The captain heard the story, and charged the lad to hold his tongue.* Remark upon the captain's courtesy and prudence. Even heathens may exhibit some virtues. 4. *Lysias arranges for Paul's transmission to Cæsarea.* Thus defeating the devices of the apostle's foes.

Ver. 18. *Paul the Prisoner.*

I. In the mouth of the centurion **a colourless designation of condition.**

II. In the lips of his enemies **an angry speech of degradation.**

III. In the language of Paul **a boasted title of honour.**—Eph. iii. 1, iv. 1; Phil. i. 9; 2 Tim. i. 8. "Paul the prisoner; but therein happier than any potentate with all his chains of gold. Said Ignatius, 'My chain is my honour, my links pearls.' One hour changed Joseph's fetters into gold chains, his stocks into a chariot, his gaol into a palace, Potiphar's captive into his master's lord, the noise of his gyves into *abrech.* So, and much more than so, will it be with all Christ's

prisoners at His coming. . . . This made Chrysostom say that he had rather be Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ, than Paul rapt up into the third heaven" (Trapp).

This Young Man; or, What a Youth may Be and Do.—Discovered in the characteristics and conduct of Paul's sister's son.

I. **Characteristics.**—Five noble qualities in any, but specially in a youth. 1. *Intelligence.* Paul's nephew walked not through the world or the city of Jerusalem sleeping or dreaming, but kept his eyes and ears open, and picked up the plot which had been formed against his uncle. 2. *Affection.* On what footing religiously he stood with his uncle cannot be told. Perhaps, like his uncle, he was a Christian disciple, though just as likely he was not. Yet in the sudden peril which confronted his mother's brother, he forgot not his blood relationship, and felt imperilled to make a bold stroke for his rescue. 3. *Promptitude.* Much depended on the swiftness of his action. Had he delayed in making known his discovery, his uncle's life might have been lost. But the instant he became acquainted with the gruesome plot he took measures for its frustration. 4. *Courage.* Had he been timid he would have shrunk from the difficulties that opposed his forward movement. But animated by a holy affection he brought to the execution of his purpose a lofty and undaunted fortitude. First, he found or forced his way into the castle to see his uncle, and next he boldly proceeded to the governor's presence; and finally he told out his story, seemingly without pausing to inquire whether it would be believed. 5. *Discretion.* Counselled to keep his secret to himself and to reveal to no one the communication he had made to the governor, he did so, and thus both escaped the danger to which his own life would have been exposed, had it got abroad that he had foiled the plans of the conspirators, and enabled the governor to carry out his scheme for the safety of Paul.

II. **Conduct.**—1. *He frustrated a wicked plot.* Rendered futile and vain the murderous designs which had been formed against Paul. By being shrewd and wide-awake, prompt and decisive, loving and considerate, courageous and fearless, prudent and cautious, he defeated forty villains who had plotted together, and bound themselves under a curse, to commit a dark deed of blood, and delivered the Sanhedrim from being partakers of the awful crime. 2. *He saved a noble life.* The noblest life that that day existed in Jerusalem; the life of the greatest man that had arisen within the Christian Church; the life of one who under God had proved himself one of the grandest benefactors of his nation and of the world. 3. *He furthered a Divine purpose.* How little men know when they serve as instruments in God's hands. It was in the Divine purpose and plan that Paul should preach at Rome, and consequently that he should escape from this peril. Yet neither of these facts were known to the youth, who simply carried out his own thoughts, and in so doing advanced the Divine design. 4. *He secured for the Church and the world a rich legacy of religious literature.* Had Paul's life been taken as the result of that conspiracy, both the Church and the world would have been poorer to-day by the lack of those immortal letters which were written from Cæsarea and from Rome.

Learn—1. That young men may be used by God for the loftiest purposes; and 2. That in order to be so used they should cultivate for themselves the noblest qualities of mind and heart.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 23—35.

The Midnight Ride to Cæsarea; or, Paul's Safety Ensured.

I. **The departure from Jerusalem.**—1. *The time.* "The third hour of the night;" *i.e.*, about nine o'clock in the evening. The military tribune obviously

lost no time. Neither had God. The conspiracy had been hatched in the early hours of the morning. In the course of the forenoon it might be laid before the council. In the afternoon it was public talk in the inns. In the evening by nine o'clock, it was defeated. Well says Russell Lowell in his "Biglow Papers":

"And you've got to get up early
If you want to take in God."

2. *The escort.* Two hundred footmen, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen. A large guard for the protection of one man. From this may be inferred the military tribune's sense of the danger arising from the reckless daring of the Sicarii which infested the country. Besides, the Roman citizenship of Paul rendered it necessary that no risk should be run of harm coming to him while in the tribune's care. "Or, perhaps, finding Paul to be a very extraordinary man, the chief captain was proud to have him his prisoner and under his protection; and the mighty parade with which he sent him off intimates as much" (Henry). 3. *The destination.* The soldiers were simply told they were to go to Cæsarea. Even the centurion was not informed at first of the reason of this midnight march. His instructions ran to provide beasts of burden, either horses or mules—to carry packages he might infer, but, as Luke indicates, to set Paul on one of them, and so convey him safe to Felix. 4. *The accompanying letter.* (1) Its writer. Claudius Lysias, concerning whom nothing is known beyond what is here recorded. (2) Its recipient. Felix (Antoninus), at that time Roman Procurator of Judæa, to which office he had been appointed A.D. 53. A freedman of the emperor Claudius, and brother of Pallas the favourite of Nero, he "exercised his power as a prince with the spirit of a slave" (Tacitus, *Hist.*, v. 9), while Josephus (*Ant.*, XX. viii. 5) relates that under this rule "the affairs of the Jews grew worse and worse continnally." Suetonius affirms that he was the husband of three queens: (*a*) Drusilla, the daughter of Juba, king of Mauritania and Selene, the daughter of Antony and Cleopatra; (*b*) another Drusilla, the daughter of Herod Agrippa I., sister of Herod Agrippa II., and wife of Azizus, King of Emesa, whom she left to marry Felix; and (*c*) a royal lady, whose name is unknown. This immoral governor ruled over Judæa for seven or eight years, was recalled by Nero in the year A.D. 60 or 61, and accused by the Cæsarean Jews, but acquitted on the intercession of his brother Pallas (Jos., *Ant.* XX., viii. 9). He was succeeded by Festus. Tradition reports that along with Drusilla and their son he perished in an eruption of Mount Vesuvius, in the days of Titus Cæsar. (3) Its contents. After a courteous salutation (ver. 26), it explained how Paul had come into his hands (ver. 27), and why Paul was now forwarded to him (ver. 30). The apostle had been rescued by him (Lysias) when in danger of being slain in the temple (ver. 27), because he (Lysias) had come to know that he (Paul) was a Roman—an incorrect statement, which Lysias makes to represent his own conduct in the most favourable light, and which indirectly confirms the genuineness of the letter (Meyer). The apostle had been examined before the council of his countrymen, with the result that nothing had been found against him worthy of death or of bonds, but only certain charges about questions of their law had been advanced to his discredit (vers. 28, 29). The apostle's life had become imperilled in consequence of a conspiracy against him, which had come to his, the tribune's ears, and which was the reason why Paul had been forwarded to Cæsarea, that if his accusers had aught to urge against him they might do so before a regular tribunal.

II. **The arrival at Cæsarea.**—1. *The halt at Antipatris.* This town, built by Herod the Great, on a site called Kaphar-saba (Jos., *Ant.*, XIII. xv. 1; XVI. v. 2)—the modern Kefr Sâba—and named Antipatris in honour of his father, was forty miles from Jerusalem, on the direct road to Cæsarea, and might easily

be reached, by a forced march of four miles an hour, by seven or nine o'clock a.m. Here the cavalcade halted for the day, and on the morrow—*i.e.*, the day after arriving at Antipatris—the horsemen and spearmen proceeded on their journey to complete the twenty-six miles that remained between Antipatris and Cæsarea, the soldiers returning to Jerusalem, as the most dangerous part of the road was then passed. 2. *The presentation of the letter and the prisoner to Felix.* This was done on reaching Cæsarea. Felix, on perusing the document, put only one question, inquiring to what province the prisoner belonged. "Felix was not the principal Roman official in that part of the empire. The proconsul of Syria bore supreme authority over Judæa. Felix was proconsul, or deputy, of Judæa under that great official. . . . Felix deemed it expedient to inquire respecting the nationality of the prisoner, as it might have been desirable to have him sent at once to the seat of the government of some other procurator or proconsul" (Spence). Compare Pilate's action in sending Christ, a Galilean, to be judged by Herod (Luke xxiii. 6, 7). 3. *The decision of Felix concerning Paul.* Having learnt that Paul belonged to Cilicia, Felix determined to investigate his cause himself. "The political motives which induced him to retain a Cilician in Judæa are to us now unknown" (Spence). When Paul's accusers should arrive the trial would be opened. Meanwhile the apostle was commanded to be kept in Herod's judgment-hall, pretorium, or palace—originally a mansion, erected by Herod for his accommodation, but then used as an official residence by the Roman governor. Most likely a part of this edifice was set apart for the lodging of state prisoners, and in any case it is apparent that in Cæsarea Paul was not treated like a common criminal, but allowed a large amount of liberty, his friends being permitted to visit him (xxiv. 23), during the two years of his confinement in that city.

Learn—1. The respect which Christians, when sincere, exact, even from men of the world. This shown by the numerous guard provided to escort Paul. 2. The disrespect to truth which is often exhibited by men of the world. This instanced by Lysias' inaccuracy in his letter. 3. The possibility of finding virtue in the hearts of those who have not been renewed by Divine grace. As in Lysias.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 25-30. *Lysias' Letter to Felix.* "This epistle, which is a good specimen of the Roman method of writing letters, may be considered as a model of brevity, simplicity, and perspicuity. The customary title of respect to a superior, and expression of good-will, are *once only* made use of; and in this it differs exceedingly from modern epistles to persons of high rank and authority, which are generally encumbered with multiplied compliments and ascriptions of honour. Lysias, however, was careful not to intimate to Felix that he had bound Paul, in order to scourge him; and as we suppose this to have been an exact copy of the letter, it appears he was willing Felix should conclude that his interposition in Paul's favour arose from a *previous* knowledge that he was a Roman citizen, though it is evident this was not the case. In other respects, the account was fair and candid; and we cannot wonder that a heathen should state his conduct in that light which was most favourable to his own reputation and advancement, and not likely to injure any man" (Scott). "This letter shows us that Claudius Lysias has granted protection to the Roman citizen without being attracted by the witness of the Lord Jesus Christ. The respect of a Roman, which he demands of the Jews, he wilfully emphasises, by so representing the matter as if he had rescued Paul from the Jews, after having learnt of his Roman citizenship. Through this crafty report he expected

to receive from his excellency Felix the governor the more praise, while we see that Lysias was a man of not more than heathen virtue. The more powerfully also through this showed the hand of the Lord, which can deliver from the wisdom of the mighty and can make all things, even the ambition of a heathen officer, work for the good of poor Christians" (Besser).

Ver. 31. *The Apostle's Ride to Antipatris.*—A modern counterpart of this has been found in Luther's conveyance to Wartburg by his friends after the Diet of Worms. "He was enjoined not to preach on his way home. Declaring, however, that the word of God was free, he preached, despite the injunction, at Hirschfeld and Eisenach. As he was making a little *détour* from the latter place, in order to visit some of his relatives and friends at Möhra, near Salzungen, he was suddenly fallen upon, in the neighbourhood of Altenstein and Waltershausen, by a company of horsemen, lifted out of the waggon, and whilst his companions, Nicholas Amsdorf and James Luther, were suffered quietly to go on their way, he was set upon a horse, driven about for some hours in the forest, and finally, at eleven o'clock at night, brought to the castle of Wartburg, near Eisenach, which had formerly been the seat of the old landgraves of Thuringia. It soon became evident that this sudden capture, which, in all probability, was ordered by the elector, was intended to secure the well-being and personal safety of the Reformer" (Hagenbach's *History of the Reformation*, i. 138, 139).

Paul's Midnight Escapes.

I. **From Damascus.**—By being let down over the city wall in a basket (ix. 25).

II. **From Thessalonica.**—After the uproar in that city, by being sent away to Berœa (xvii. 10).

III. **From Jerusalem.**—To Antipatris and Cæsarea.

Paul's Last Departure from Jerusalem.

I. **A mournful departure of a witness for the truth,** whose message of salvation his blinded people have rejected.

II. **The glorious, triumphant march of an anointed servant of God,** whom the Lord leads victoriously through the midst of enemies.

III. **The solemn homeward journey of a warrior of Christ,** who goes to meet his last fight, his last victory, his last reward.—*Gerok.*

Vers. 33-35. *Paul's First Interview with Felix.*

I. **Presented to the governor.**—The representative of the Lord of the whole earth to the plenipotentiary of Cæsar, the minister of heaven to the servant of Rome, the noblest man that ever stood in Herod's palace to one of the worst that ever found in it a home.

II. **Questioned by the governor.**—As to what province he was of. Perhaps out of mere curiosity, more likely because he wished if possible to shirk an unpleasant duty by handing him over to some other official. The least important question Felix could have asked.

III. **Accepted with the governor.**—So far, at least, as not to be condemned by him without a hearing. Even Felix accorded him what his countrymen so often denied him—permission to defend himself. He should not be pronounced a criminal without a fair trial. Sometimes heathens may teach their more enlightened fellows lessons in morality and goodness.

IV. **Lodged beside the governor.**—Kept in Herod's palace. "Another trace of the faithful care of God for His servant, as He granted him time and rest to pray and strengthen himself in the Lord;" but also an unconscious tribute of respect and honour paid by Felix to the illustrious prisoner who stood before him.

CHAPTER XXIV.

PAUL BEFORE FELIX—THE FIRST TRIAL AT CÆSAREA.

§ 1. The Indictment of Tertullus; or, the Vapid Eloquence of a Heathen Lawyer (vers. 1-9).

§ 2. The Answer of Paul; or, the Lofty Oration of a Christian Apostle (vers. 10-23).

§ 3. The Interview with Felix and Drusilla; or, a Notable Discourse and its Effects (vers. 24-27).

CRITICAL REMARKS.

Ver. 1. **After five days.**—Reckoned from Paul's departure from Jerusalem (Kuinoel, Meyer, De Wette, Hackett, Alford, Plumptre), though some (Holtzmann, Lechler, Zöckler, Olshausen, and others) prefer to count from Paul's arrival at Cæsarea. The former agrees better with the statement that twelve days had elapsed since his arrival in Jerusalem (ver. 11). **The elders.**—*I.e.*, the Sanhedrists, who were probably represented by certain of their number. The oldest authorities read "some of the elders" which, however, has the appearance of being a correction (Hackett, Alford, Lechler). **A certain orator,** rhetorician, or advocate, acquainted with the forms of Roman law, which were not understood by the people of the provinces, who therefore had to employ such barristers or rhetoricians (=*oratores fœrenses* or *causidici publici*) to plead for them before Roman tribunals. **Tertullus.**—A diminutive from Tertius. Probably a Roman. Had the trial been conducted in Latin, which cannot be proved, Luke would most likely have noted it (compare xxii. 2). **Who.**—*I.e.*, not Tertullus, but Ananias and the elders through him. **Informed the governor against Paul.**—*I.e.*, lodged their complaint against him.

Ver. 2. **Called forth.**—Or, simply *called.* After the charges against him had been lodged, and before the evidence was produced. Roman law secured that no prisoner should be condemned without hearing and having an opportunity to answer the indictment preferred against him (see xxv. 16). Tertullus's indictment, which consisted of three charges—sedition, heresy, and sacrilege, or profanation of the temple (see vers. 5, 6)—was prefaced by the most undisguised flattery, in the hope of inducing Felix to condemn Paul. **Great quietness,** or *much peace.*—"The administration of Felix did not present much opening for panegyric, but he had at least taken strong measures to put down the gangs of Sicarii and brigands by whom Palestine was infested (Jos., *Ant.*, XX. viii. 5; *Wars*, II. xiii. 2), and Tertullus shows his skill in the emphasis which he lays on "quietness." By a somewhat interesting coincidence, Tacitus (*Ann.*, xii. 54), after narrating the circumstances caused by a quarrel between Felix, backed by the Samaritans, and Ventidius Cumanus, who had been appointed as governor of Galilee, ends his statement by relating that Felix was supported by Quadratus, the president of Syria "et quies provinciæ reddita" (Plumptre). For **very worthy deeds,** κατορθωμάτων—*i.e.*, things successfully achieved, the best MSS. read διορθωμάτων, improvements, emendations, betterments—*i.e.*, corrections of evil (R.V.). How much truth there was in this the statement of Josephus (*Ant.*, XX. viii. 9) shows, that after his removal from office "the principal of the Jewish inhabitants of Cæsarea went up to Rome to accuse Felix," and that "he had certainly been brought to punishment unless Nero had yielded to the importunate solicitation of his brother Pallas, who was at that time had in the greatest honour by him." **By thy providence.**—"*Tuâ providentiâ, providentia Cæsaris*, is a common inscription on the coins of the emperors" (Spence).

Ver. 3. **Always and in all places** are better connected with "accept" (Hackett, Zöckler) than with "done" (Holtzmann, Wendt, Besser). **Most noble Felix,** κράτιστε Φῆλιξ: compare κράτιστε Θεόφιλε (Luke i. 3).

Ver. 4. **A few words** refer not to the flattering preamble (Meyer), but to the subsequent plea.

Ver. 5. **A pestilent** *fellow.*—Better, *a pest,* or *plague*; used as in English. **The world** meant the Roman empire. **The sect of the Nazarenes.**—A contemptuous expression, for the first time transferred from the Master to the disciples (compare ii. 22, vi. 14; John i. 46). The name is still applied to Christians by Jews and Mohammedans. During the Indian Mutiny of 1855 the Mohammedan rebels, it is said (Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible:* art. *Nazarene*), relied on a supposed ancient prophecy that the Nazarenes would be expelled from the country after ruling for a hundred years.

Ver. 6. **Who also hath gone about** or *assayed* **to profane the temple.**—Shows that the original charge had been modified (see xxi. 28). **Whom we took** or *laid hold of.*—Through the change of construction at "whom" the preceding participial clause (ver. 5) becomes an anakolouthon. The remaining words of this verse, with verse 7 and first part of verse 8, are omitted in the most approved texts. It is difficult to perceive why they should either have been inserted or left out. If genuine they show that Tertullus, instructed by the Sanhedrim, who were exceeding bitter against Lysias, wished to turn the tables against him by suggesting that had it not been for his interference the whole matter would have been disposed of without troubling the governor. **Would have judged according to our law.**—Does not square well with the facts as related in xxi. 31, xxvi. 21.

Ver. 7. Represents Lysias as having rescued Paul **with great violence,** which also scarcely comports with truth (xxi. 32).

Ver. 8. **Whom.**—Has for antecedent Paul, if the intermediate clauses be rejected; but either the accusers (as the A.V. suggests), or more probably Lysias (as the Greek text indicates), if the clauses be retained.

Ver. 9. A better reading than **assented,** συνέθεντο, is **assailed** him **at the same time,** or *joined in assailing him,* συνεπέθεντο, by asserting that the charges were true.

Ver. 10. **Many years** meant about six or seven, since Felix became procurator about A.D. 52 or 53 (Jos., *Ant.*, XX. vii. 1). Before his elevation to the procuratorship of Judæa he had governed Samaria under his predecessor Cumanus.

Ver. 11. The charges against him might be the more easily and accurately investigated since they were not of long standing, but of recent date. The **twelve days** were thus accounted for: 1. The day of arrival in Jerusalem (xxi. 17). 2. The interview with James (xxi. 18). 3. The assumption of the vow (xxi. 26). 4, 5, 6, 7. The keeping of the vow, which was interrupted before its completion. 8. The appearance of Paul before the Sanhedrim. 9. The plot of the Jews and the journey to Antipatris (xxiii. 12, 31). 10, 11, 12, 13. The days at Cæsarea, on the last of which the trial was proceeding. The day of the trial would not be counted among the twelve (Hackett, Meyer, and others).

Ver. 12. **Raising up the people.**—Lit., *making or causing a concourse of the people,* ἐπισύστασις ὄχλου; though the more approved text reads ἐπίστασις ὄχλου, a stopping of the people, of course so as to form a crowd.

Ver. 13. Some texts insert *to thee* after **prove.**

Ver. 14. For **heresy** translate *sect* as in ver. 5, and for **worship,** *serve.* **In,** *according to* (R.V.), but better "throughout" (Hackett, Holtzmann), **the law**—*i.e.*, of Moses.

Ver. 15. **Which they themselves.**—*I.e.*, his accusers, who appear to have been mostly Pharisees, so that the breach between them and the Sadducees (xxiii. 7) must have been made up. **Allow,** rather, *look for,* expect, or entertain.

Ver. 16. **Herein.**—*In this,* as in John xvi. 30. Meaning either "in anticipation of such a day" (Hackett), or "since such is my religious position" (Holtzmann), or "in this belief" (Plumptre).

Ver. 17. **After many years.**—Viz., of absence from Jerusalem. It was now A.D. 58 or 59. **My nation** really signified the believers in its midst. **Alms.**—Not Paul's usual way of referring to the collections he had taken for the poor saints at Jerusalem (see Rom. xv. 25; 1 Cor. xvi. 1-4; 2 Cor. viii. and ix); but the auditors to whom he spoke were widely different from the readers for whom he wrote. **To bring alms and offerings.**—The first mention in the Acts by Paul that he had been taking up contributions from the Gentile Churches for the relief of the poor Christians in Jerusalem.

Ver. 18. **Whereupon.**—Lit., "in which"—*i.e.*, while presenting which offerings, some MSS. giving ἐν αἷς (to agree with "offerings") instead of ἐν οἷς. The translation in the R.V. is more accurate. "They"—*i.e.*, the Jews of course, "found me . . . ; but there were certain Jews from Asia." The abrupt manner in which this sentence breaks off was unquestionably designed to suggest that these Jews from Asia, and not he had been the true authors of the tumult.

Ver. 19. "These also should have been present in court **to object** or (better) *to make accusation,* as they, the instigators of the riot, were the persons to testify how it arose" (Hackett).

Ver. 20. In default of them **these same** here, or, *these men themselves—i.e.*, the high priest and the elders should say, not **if they have found any evil doing,** since εἰ "if" is unauthorised, but *what wrong-doing they found* **in me.**

Ver. 21. **Except it be for this one voice.**—The sentence is framed as if τί ἄλλο ἀδίκημα had preceded (Meyer, De Wette, Holtzmann).

Ver. 22. **Having more perfect,** or *exact* **knowledge of** *that,* rather "the" **way.**—This Felix could easily have got during the six or seven years of his procuratorship. Such knowledge as he had of Christianity enabled him to perceive that the Sanhedrists' account of Paul was not to be accepted without more minute investigation. Consequently **he deferred them**—*i.e.*, put off both parties till Lysias should come down to Cæsarea.

Ver. 23. **A**, better *the*, **centurion** was the officer who had charge of Paul—not necessarily the same who had conducted him to Cæsarea. **Liberty** meant *indulgence*, such as the next clause indicates. Imprisonment among the Romans was of three kinds: 1. *Custodia publica*, or confinement in the common cells, which Paul and Silas suffered at Philippi (xvi. 23). 2. *Custodia militaris*, in which the prisoner was bound or chained to the soldier who kept him, as Paul was in Rome (Eph. vi. 20; Col. iv. 3). And 3. *Custodia libera*, or free custody, such as was frequently practised with persons of high rank. Paul's Cæsarean imprisonment was obviously of the second sort.

Ver. 24. **When Felix came**, or *Felix having come*, not to Cæsarea, after a temporary absence, but into the place of audience (Hackett), rather than into the prison (Holtzmann). **Drusilla.**—See "Homiletical Hints." As a daughter of the first and sister of second Herod Agrippa she could hardly have been unacquainted with the main facts of the history of the new society of Christians. "She must have known of the death of James and of the imprisonment of Peter (xii.), and may have connected her father's tragic end at Cæsarea with the part he had taken in persecuting the preachers of the faith of which one of the chief preachers was now brought before her" (Plumptre).

Ver. 25. **Righteousness.**—Including the duties man owes to man, as well as those man owes to God—*i.e.*, the obligations of both tables of the law. **Temperance.**—In its widest sense of self-control.

Ver. 26. **That money should have been given him.**—Possibly he had an eye to some of the gold referred to by Paul in ver. 17. Greed of gain in the very act of administering justice was the root of evil in his weak and wicked character.

Ver. 27. **After two years.**—Lit., *when two years were fulfilled, Felix received as successor Porcius Festus* (A.D. 60 or 61), who suppressed the outrages of the bandits or robbers, and restored tranquillity to the province, but died in the second year of his office (Jos., *Wars*, II. xiv. 1). To him Felix, with characteristic baseness, **willing to show the Jews a pleasure**, or *desiring to gain favour*—lit., to deposit a favour *with the Jews*, which should not be without return; "an investment in iniquity" (Plumptre) which did not turn out well (see on ver. 2)—handed over Paul as a prisoner. How these two years in Cæsarea were spent by the apostle can only be conjectured (see "Hints" on ver. 27).

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.

Vers. 1-9. *The Indictment of Tertullus:* or, *the Vapid Eloquence of a Heathen Lawyer.*

I. **The judge upon the bench.**—1. His *name.* Felix. "One of the worst of Roman officials" (Ramsay). See on xxiii. 24. 2. His *dignity.* Governor of the province of Judæa. Representative of Roman law and justice. Who should therefore have treated Paul with strictest equity—which he did not. 3. His *character.* Immoral, tyrannical, covetous, unjust. The opposite to that ascribed to him by Tertullus (see "Homiletical Analysis" on xxiii. 23-35).

II. **The prisoner at the bar.**—Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, who had just been rescued from the violent hands of his countrymen, and who was now to be impeached in their name on three serious charges, of every one of which he was innocent. Had his countrymen only known they might have said, with perfect truthfulness, "This is the noblest Roman of them all." Looking back upon his great career, impartial posterity can testify—

> "His life was gentle, and the elements
> So mixed in him, that Nature might stand up,
> And say to all the world—*This was a man!*"
> —SHAKESPEARE, *Julius Cæsar*, Act v., Sc. 5.

III. **The prosecutors and their indictment.**—1. The *prosecutors* were Ananias the high priest (see xxiii. 2), and the elders who had come down from Jerusalem to Cæsarea for the purpose of accusing Paul before the governor. Their state of mind may be imagined from the circumstance that they had, five days before, conspired with forty ruffians to assassinate the apostle, who only escaped their toils by a specially providential deliverance. 2. The *indictment* they were prepared to move against him consisted of three counts. (1) Sedition. They alleged that the prisoner at the bar was a pestilent fellow, and a mover of

seditions among all the Jews throughout the world—an old charge, which had been preferred against the apostle at Thessalonica (xvii. 6, 7), which had never been established, and which was absolutely false. (2) Heresy. They accused the prisoner at the bar of being a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes, by which phrase they sought to pour contempt upon the followers of Christ, because of His supposed birth at Nazareth, which, in their judgment, stamped Him as a false Messiah. This charge the apostle did not seek to deny (ver. 14). (3) Sacrilege. They accused him of having profaned the temple. They asserted, not as they had done before (xxi. 28), that Paul had desecrated the holy place, but that he had attempted to do so, by introducing within its precincts Trophimus, the Ephesian—which the narrative shows he had not done.

IV. **The advocate and his oration.**—1. The *advocate.* Tertullus by name, a diminutive from Tertius, was a Roman lawyer or rhetorician, whose trade it was to plead in courts of law throughout the empire. He was probably (1) a person of considerable talent, else his services would not have been sought by the Sanhedrim, though if he was, his genius and eloquence might easily have been employed in a better cause than seeking the conviction of an innocent man. He was certainly (2) a man of untruthful character, since he not only openly and unblushingly flattered the judge, in the hope of carrying his suit, but most likely also knowingly misrepresented the facts of the case he had in hand (if the clause about Lysias be retained). And in any case (3) his employment by the Sanhedrim was a melancholy proof of the unspirituality of that high court, that it called in a heathen orator to help their bad cause by his crafty speech (Besser). This, remarks Bengel, is the only place in the whole of sacred Scripture in which the name of the orator is to be found. "The preachers of God," adds Besser, "are not reciters of learned words, but witnesses of revealed things. The orator Tertullus steps forward to help the Godless Jews in place of the absent Holy Spirit." 2. The *oration* which Tertullus pronounced consisted of three parts—flattery, falsehood, and misrepresentation. (1) The flattery was offered as fragrant incense to the judge, to intoxicate his senses, becloud his understanding, pervert his judgment, and captivate his will. Felix was actually invited to believe that in the estimation of his admiring and devoted subjects he had been a veritable *pacator provinciæ*—yea, a kind of little god, through whose benign providence the welfare of his dependents had been highly advanced, and whose gracious clemency the speaker humbly entreated while intruding on his awful majesty with a few more words. It showed Tertullus to be far from a bungler at his trade that he contrived so smoothly to slide over "the difficult narration of the procurator's misdeeds," and to convert what was abominable cruelty into gracious clemency; and considering how dearly most men love to be flattered, when "the candied tongue" is not too apparent, one wonders that Tertullus did not meet with more success. Either there was in Felix, after all, some fragment of a noble manhood which taught him to despise the compliments he knew to be as insincere as they were undeserved, or there was a loftiness of thought and speech in Paul's defence which completely neutralised the effect of the heathen lawyer's rhetoric. (2) The falsehood consisted in the repetition of the threefold charge of sedition, heresy, and sacrilege, which had been put into his mouth by the high priest and his unprincipled confederates. That Paul, who preached the gospel of peace and showed to men the way of salvation, promoted civil tumults and social revolutions, though an old charge (xvii. 7), was as ridiculous as it was untrue (compare Rom. xiii. 1). That he was chargeable with heresy or schism could only be maintained by those who knew themselves to be in innermost accord with the truth, which Ananias and Tertullus were not—else, alas! for the truth. If to be a ringleader among the Nazarenes, as the Christians were then beginning to be styled (see Critical Remarks) was to be a heretic—which, how-

ever, Paul denied (ver. 14)—then undoubtedly their allegation was true, and no lie. That he had attempted to desecrate the holy place by bringing Trophimus within its precincts strayed as widely from the truth as the assertion that he had actually committed this unholy deed. Well might Paul have exclaimed as he listened to the glowing periods of the orator—

> "O hateful error . . .
> Why dost thou show to the apt thoughts of men
> The things that are not!"
> —SHAKESPEARE, *Julius Cæsar*, Act v., Sc. 3.

(3) The misrepresentation lay in this, that Tertullus, instructed presumably by his employers, endeavoured to lay the blame of this intrusion on the noble Felix's leisure on Lysias, the commandant of the Castle of Antonia, who, said the orator, stating incorrectly what had taken place, had pounced down upon the Sanhedrim and violently torn Paul from their hands when they were peacefully attempting to judge him according to their law. Whether Tertullus believed his own story may be doubted; that Felix did not, especially after hearing Paul's defence, is almost certain—even though it was backed up by the strong asseverations of the high priest and the elders that the charges preferred against Paul, and the statements relative to Lysias, were correct.

Learn—1. The badness of the cause that cannot establish itself without the help of worldly wisdom. 2. The weakness of the indictment that needs to be prefaced by flattering the judge. 3. The exaggeration which characterises the most of the world's charges against Christians. 4. The violence which accusers commonly exhibit when they feel that they have no case.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 1. *One Tertullus.*

I. **An obscure man** providentially lifted into doubtful fame. Better for his reputation and character it would have been had he never emerged from the oblivion into which he had been born.

II. **A lawyer, not without ability,** employed in a bad cause.—His legal knowledge and forensic eloquence might easily have been consecrated to a nobler task than prosecuting Paul.

III. **An undisguised flatterer,** whose honeyed words were seen through.—Most men who use this contemptible weapon expect to succeed by it. So, doubtless, did Tertullus; but he did not.

IV. **A paid advocate,** who lost his cause.—From whatever motive, Felix, if he swallowed the flattery, did not condemn the apostle.

Ver. 5. *The Sect of the Nazarenes;* or *the value of nicknames.*—This appellation, like those applied to Christ—"The Nazarene," "Friend of Publicans and Sinners," etc., defeated its own end, which was to overwhelm the early Christians with shame and contempt. On the contrary, it was—

I. **The confirmation of a valuable historical truth.**—Viz., that Christ was brought up at Nazareth.

II. **The recognition of** what to them who uttered it must have been **an unpleasant fact.**—Viz., that the cause which Jesus of Nazareth represented had not been extinguished by the crucifixion, but had, since that appalling tragedy, increased its hold upon the minds of the community.

III. **The publication of what those against whom it was directed counted their highest honour.**—Viz., that they were followers of the Nazarene. To this day the name of the Nazarene stands highest among the sons of men, and no commendation can be more acceptable to a sincere Christian than

the suggestion that he is worthy of the name he bears.

Ver. 2-5. *Mistaken Judgments.*

I. **Bad men are often credited with good deeds they never do.**—Witness Felix, whom Tertullus lauded as a peace-maker and social reformer.

II. **Good men are as often blamed for evil deeds of which they are entirely innocent.**—For instance, Paul, who was charged by Tertullus with being "a mover of insurrections," "a heretic" and "a profaner of the temple."

III. **These mistaken judgments,** though considered just at man's tribunals, **are all wrong at God's,** and will eventually be reversed.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 10—21

The Answer of Paul; or, *the Lofty Oration of a Christian Apostle.*

I. **The unvarnished exordium.**—1. *A frank recognition.* Paul declines to imitate the heathen orator in burning incense before his judge. Neither does he rush to the opposite extreme, and denounce Felix as one utterly unworthy to sit upon the bench or pronounce a verdict upon him. Remembering his own doctrine that "the powers which be are ordained of God" (Rom. xiii. 1), and following his own precept "to speak evil of no man" (Titus iii. 2), though doubtless aware of the personal and public character of the governor, he passes over it in silence and contents himself with frankly acknowledging that for many—at least six—years Felix had been a judge unto the nation and could neither be ignorant of the forms of judicial process nor unqualified to sift the merits of causes when these were brought before him. In this sounded neither flattery nor depreciation, but respectful acceptance of his fellow-man at his best. 2. *A cheerful assent.* Paul might easily have had, and probably could have wished, a better man than Felix to try his cause; but such as Felix was, Paul willingly laid before him a plain and unadorned statement of his proceedings since he arrived in Jerusalem till that moment when he stood on his defence. Out of these proceedings his alleged offences were said to have arisen, and Felix could understand them as well as anybody else. Paul had nothing to conceal, and required no arts beyond those of an honest mind and a truth-loving tongue.

II. **The simple refutation.**—1. To the charge of *sedition* he had merely to state that, so far as his accusers were concerned, they could not have much personal or direct knowledge of his revolutionary procedure, since not more than twelve days had elapsed since he went up to Jerusalem to worship, which worship he performed with so much quietness and order that neither they nor others found him either in the temple, or in the synagogues, or in the city, creating a disturbance—either disputing or stirring up a crowd. As for the allegation that he was a pestilent fellow and a mover of insurrections among the Jews throughout the world, that lay beyond their ability to prove, for the reason that it accorded not with fact. That his preaching had aroused excitement among the Jews he could not and would not deny, but that he had never breathed a syllable which could be construed into hostility to Cæsar he would with equal readiness maintain. 2. To the charge of *heresy* his answer was that he certainly adhered to the despised sect of the Nazarenes, but that in doing so he had not departed from the ancestral law which his countrymen observed. These might scornfully denounce him as a heretic, but precisely like themselves he believed "all things" which were "according to the law" and which were written in the prophets, "and like them had hope toward God, that there should be and would be a resurrection both of the just and the unjust." The gospel preached by him deviated not from that true Judaism which his persecutors (the most of whom must have been Pharisees) professed, but fulfilled its innermost spirit, while the resurrection which formed its culminating theme constituted the very hope for which they

themselves were looking. And so far from repudiating this hope, or deviating from it, he made it his constant endeavour with regard to it to have a conscience void of offence both toward God and toward men. 3. To the charge of *sacrilege* he replied that the thought of violating the sanctity of the temple had never entered his mind. His presence in the sacred edifice could easily be explained. He had brought with him to Jerusalem money contributions from the friends amongst whom he had laboured for many years, to be expended in relieving his poor brethren in the city and in the presentation of offerings in the temple. These offerings he was busily engaged in presenting in the temple, with no tumult or noise, with not even a crowd around him, when certain Jews from Asia, having entered, seized him and gave occasion to the tumult. Why were these Asiatic Jews not present? These could have told better than he the cause of the uproar, for they had made it; and in any case they should have been in court to accuse him if they had aught to lay to his charge. Nothing could have been more noble, manly, straightforward, or convincing, than this candid and ingenuous statement. Conduct like Paul's needed no apology.

III. **The noble confession.**—1. *The implied assumption.* That no one had been able to establish any charge of wrong-doing against him. (1) The orator had not been successful. He had only repeated, parrot-like, what had been put into his mouth by his employers, the high priest and the elders. (2) The high priest and the elders had not, because they knew nothing about Paul's doings throughout the world, and had not come upon the scene in Jerusalem till after he had been rescued by Lysias. (3) The Jews from Asia had manifestly nothing they could prove against him, else they would not have been conveniently left behind in Jerusalem, but would have been fetched down to Cæsarea along with Tertullus. 2. *The courageous challenge.* If the high priest and elders had anything to urge against him with reference to that part of his conduct which came under their inspection, he was willing they should not keep it back, but openly advance it. Let them say what wrong-doing they found in him when he stood before the council. He was not afraid to hear the worst that could be alleged against him; if he could not honestly and honourably reply to it, he would promptly and humbly acknowledge his offence. 3. *The manly avowal.* So far from putting obstacles in their way, he would cheerfully assist them. There was one part in his behaviour on that memorable occasion to which they might wish to take exception. He referred to the voice which he cried among them, "Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question before you this day." That voice had set his judges at variance with one another, and had practically resulted in his release for the moment from their grasp. He did not admit that it was only and wholly wrong for him to have so acted. But possibly on reflection it may have seemed so to them. To them perhaps it was not so clear as it was to him that the real gravamen of his offence was his preaching the doctrine of the resurrection. Then he was ready to concede that it may have seemed to them that his voice about the resurrection had been dictated not so much by a desire to enlighten them as by a perception (which suddenly flashed upon him) that the mention of this word would divide their counsels. If it was so (and he was not careful to deny this impeachment), it was wrong. A man who was solicitous about keeping a conscience void of offence towards both God and man would not have acted so. Beyond this, however, he was conscious of no fault on that trial-day before the council.

IV. **The disappointing result.**—Felix deferred giving judgment, on the pretext that he wished to wait for the coming down of Lysias, the chief captain, and recommitted Paul to confinement in Herod's palace, at the same time issuing orders to the centurion who kept him to grant him indulgence and not forbid any of his friends to minister unto him. This result must have been disappointing to all

concerned. 1. To *Tertullus* the hired advocate, who had lost his case, whose eloquence, though sweetened with flattery, had not carried conviction to the judge's judgment, and whose plausible invectives had all been swept aside by the plain, unvarnished tale of the prisoner at the bar. 2. *To the high priest and the elders*, whose designs against the apostle had been thwarted, in, to them, a most unexpected manner, first by Claudius Lysias and then by Felix, both of whom, though the high priest and the elders knew it not, were in the hands of a higher than themselves, even of Him who holdeth men's hearts in the hollow of His hand and turneth them whithersoever He will. 3. *To Paul*, who probably expected to be set at liberty, though he was only granted a mitigation of his imprisonment—which was something, no doubt, to be thankful for, though vastly less than what he was entitled to. To be sure, Paul had learnt in whatsoever state he was to be content (Phil. iv. 11), yet must he have been more than human if he felt no pang of regret that his trial had not resulted more favourably for himself. 4. *To Felix.* Had Paul himself, or his friends, proposed to purchase his freedom by means of a bribe, there can be little doubt that Paul would have won the day and obtained a verdict in his favour. As much as this may almost be inferred from Felix's well-known covetous disposition (ver. 26). That no such proposition was made by the apostle may well be imagined was a grief of heart to the money-loving procurator.

Learn.—1. That truth is always the Christian's best defence. Paul's simple story proved more successful than Tertullus's polished rhetoric. 2. That charges which cannot be established are often advanced against Christians. Accusations are not the same things as convictions. 3. That doctrines which are developments of recognised truths are not heresies. A proposition is only, then, heretical when it contradicts accepted truth. 4. That good men may habitually act according to conscience, and yet go astray. Conscience sometimes requires to be enlightened, and its voice may occasionally fail to be heard. 5. That Christians have often to put up with and be thankful for less than they deserve. Paul ought to have been set at liberty, but only got indulgence in his captivity.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 11-17. *Some Thoughts about Divine Worship.*

I. The **place.**—This should always be that which God Himself has pointed out. Under the Hebrew economy, Jerusalem and the temple were the chosen spots in which Jehovah elected to be honoured (Psalm cxxxii. 13, 14); under the Christian economy God may be worshipped anywhere, provided the subjective conditions of worship are present in the individual heart (John iv. 23, 24).

II. The **manner.**—Neither noisily nor tumultuously, but ever orderly, quiet, and reverent. "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools" (Eccles. v. 1). "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. xiv. 40).

III. The **form.**—1. *In accordance with the appointments of Scripture.* For Hebrew worship the law and the prophets constituted the sources of authority; for Christian worship these give place to the gospels and epistles. Whatever lies outside of these is will worship (Col. ii. 23). 2. *In harmony with the continuity of the Church.* Unless where the Church has for a time gone wrong. The probability, however, is that the individual, rather than the Church, will err. Hence any form of worship that essentially deviates from that observed by past ages of God's people is, *ipso facto*, open to suspicion.

IV. The **spirit.**—1. *Faith.* Believing in the Scriptures—*i.e.*, in the facts and doctrines revealed therein. As the Hebrew worshipper believed all

things which were according to the law and written in the prophets, so must the Christian worshipper credit all things that accord with the gospel of Jesus Christ and that are contained in the writings of His apostles. 2. *Hope.* With the Christian as with the Hebrew all true worship had an outlook towards the future life, and in particular towards a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust. Blot out this hope or fear from the minds of men and it will be difficult to impel either good men or bad to worship. 3. *Charity.* A spirit of love and good-will towards all, but especially towards the household of faith, an indispensable characteristic of acceptable worship.

Ver. 14. *Paul's God and Paul's Religion.*

I. **Paul's God.**—1. *Not a new, but an old God.* The god of his fathers, the god of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, of Moses, Joshua, and Samuel, of David, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, etc. Christianity not a new religion, but the full development of that which was first revealed in Eden. 2. *Not a false, but the true God.* Not always an advantage to have an old god: not always wrong to have a new god. Depends on whether the old be the true and the new the false god. If men's old gods are false, they should be abandoned. So said Elijah. If men's new god is true he should be embraced. So teach Christian missionaries. Paul's God was old and true. 3. *Not a manufactured, but an inherited God.* Paul's God was received by him from his fathers. What a tremendous advantage for a child to receive a knowledge of the true God from his parents! What a responsibility for parents to see that they hand on the knowledge of God to their children! What a powerful argument for God when parents so live as to recommend Him to their children! What a grip God gets upon children to whom He is recommended in this way! 4. *Not a blindly accepted, but a deliberately chosen God.* Paul had made his father's God his own by personal choice. This was indispensable. Many have no higher reason for believing in God than just that their parents did so before them. Every one is responsible for making an intelligent and free choice of his own God.

II. **Paul's religion.**—Contained three things. 1. *Faith.* "Believing all things," etc. Paul accepted all that was asserted in the law and the prophets about the ancient history of Israel. So must the Christian accept all that is written in the gospels and epistles about Jesus Christ and His salvation. Religion rests on faith; faith on revealed truth. 2. *Hope.* "Having hope towards God," etc. Paul believed in a future resurrection of just and unjust. Believed it to be taught in Scripture, and looked forward to it as the goal of history. A terrible thought for sinners (Heb. x. 27), but not for believers (1 John iii. 3). 3. *Charity.* Paul's religion impelled him to works of faith and labours of love (ver. 17). 4. *Holiness.* Paul studied to keep a conscience void of offence (ver. 16).

Ver. 15. *The Doctrine of a Resurrection.*

I. **Involved in the Mosaic legislation.**—If not expressly stated therein, that was because of the peculiar character of the Hebrew economy, which regarded the nation as a whole rather than its component parts as individuals. But the ideas of sin and forgiveness which lay at the foundation of that economy must have been entirely meaningless if the individual had no other existence than this terrestrial and temporal one. This, however, it may be urged, only proves a doctrine of continued existence after death, a doctrine of immortality without involving the notion of a bodily resurrection. But as it is certain that this latter notion was not unknown to the Egyptians, it is at least highly probable that though unexpressed in the Pentateuchal Legislation, it was

tacitly assumed to lie at its foundation.

II. **Proclaimed in the writings of the prophets.**—As, for instance, by David (Psalm xvii. 15); by Isaiah (xxvi. 19); by Ezekiel (xxxvii. 1-14); by Daniel (xii. 2); and by the writer of the Book of Job (xix. 26). It was far, indeed, from being either clearly or widely apprehended in pre-Christian times; but that the finer and more religious spirits of the nation apprehended it, at least dimly, can hardly be questioned.

III. **Taught by Christ and His apostles.**—By Christ in such statements as these (Matt. xxii. 31; Luke xiv. 14; John v. 28, xi. 23); by Peter (iv. 2; 2 Peter i. 11); by Paul (xvii. 18, xxvi. 8; Rom. vi. 5, viii. 11; 1 Cor. xv. 20, 21; 2 Cor. iv. 14; Phil. iii. 20; Col. iii. 3; 1 Thess. iv. 15, v. 23); by John (I., iii. 2); and by the writer to the Hebrews (vi. 2).

IV. **Confirmed by the resurrection of Christ.**—Which not only demonstrated the possibility of a resurrection, but guaranteed at least the rising of all His people (1 Cor. xv. 20, 21; 1 Thess. iv. 14).

Ver. 18. *Certain Jews from Asia; or, Men who Make Reckless Charges.*

I. **Such men never stop to think whether their charges are true before making them.**—The Asiatic Jews in question, having seen Paul in the city along with Trophimus (xxi. 28, 29), jumped to the conclusion that Paul had taken his Greek friend into the holy place, or women's court, and so desecrated Jehovah's sanctuary. Had they inquired—and this they probably would have done had they not been actuated by malice against Paul—they would have ascertained that their conclusions were incorrect. Yet thousands of persons, not excluding Christians, unwarned by their example, have done the same thing, hurled baseless charges at the heads of their fellow-men, with regardless indifference as to their truth.

II. **Such men never reflect beforehand upon the consequences that may result from their reckless procedure.**—Had these Asiatic Jews foreseen the complications that arose from their baseless outcry, they would probably have paused. No doubt they were hostilely disposed towards Paul, and intended to do him hurt; but they probably never imagined it would involve such troubles as had been set in motion. Perhaps they designed no more than that Paul should get a good beating; but no sooner had they unleashed the hounds of persecution than Paul came near to losing his life, and probably would have lost it in reality, either by open or secret assassination, had not a watchful Providence protected him. Even so, persons who allow their tongues to run faster than their judgments seldom consider how great a fire a small spark may kindle (James iii. 5).

III. **Such men are seldom at hand when wanted to undo the mischief they have raised.**—The Asiatic Jews, had they been present at Cæsarea, could easily have confirmed Paul's story, and shown that they, and not he, had been the real authors of the uproar in the temple. But, like most of their kidney who scatter abroad firebrands and cry, "Am not I in sport?" they took good care to save their own skins by keeping out of the way and leaving the innocent man to suffer. What cared they, the cowards? Unfortunately, mean cowards of their type have not disappeared from among men.

Vers. 22, 23. *Good Points in Bad Men.*—Few persons are utterly bad. Not even Felix, who surpassed both Tertullus and his employers, Ananias and the elders, in—

I. **Knowledge.**—He knew more exactly than they did the truth about the Way. He had probably taken more pains than they to ascertain the doctrines and practices of the Nazarenes.

II. **Honesty.**—They wished to push the trial to a verdict against Paul

without troubling either Felix or themselves about evidence; he declined to proceed to an issue until the case was more investigated. This showed that Felix had still some rag of conscience within his bosom.

III. **Kindness.**—They would have hurried off the apostle to the stake without compunction, or at least would have loaded him with more and heavier chains. Felix commanded the centurion who kept Paul to grant him as much indulgence—lighter chains, and visits from friends—as was consistent with safety. "The attribute of 'clemency' on which the orator had complimented Felix was not altogether dead, but it was shown to the accused and not to the accusers" (Plumptre).

Ver. 23. *Paul's Imprisonment at Cæsarea.*

I. Its **occasion.**—The accusation preferred against him by the Jews.

II. Its **reason.**—Ostensibly that Felix might be able, on the arrival of Lysias, to determine more accurately the truth of the charges preferred against the apostle; really, that Felix might induce either Paul or his friends to purchase his liberty.

III. Its **continuance.**—Two years, which meant two years' endurance of unjust oppression, and two years' arrest of his missionary labours—the second a greater trial to the apostle than the first.

IV. Its **mitigations**—1. A relaxation of the customary severities inflicted on prisoners—such a relaxation of his chain at meal times, for instance, as Josephus (*Ant.*, XVIII. vi. 10) says was granted to Agrippa at Rome; and 2. The permission of friends to visit him.

V. Its **utilisation.**—That Paul allowed this period of enforced retirement from his active missionary propagandism to pass unimproved cannot be supposed. How he employed it may even be conjectured with some degree of probability. 1. *In meditation and prayer.* Communing with his own heart (Psalm lxxvii. 6), searching the Scriptures (xvii. 11; John v. 39), and pouring out his heart before the Lord (Phil. iv. 6; 1 Thess. v. 17); thus advancing his own personal sanctification (Phil. iii. 12-14), and preparing for whatever service he might afterwards be summoned to (compare Rom. i. 15). 2. *In holding intercourse with his friends.* Who these friends were are not named. But probably his companions who had been with him at the time of his arrest should be reckoned to their number—Silas, Trophimus, Luke, Mnason, and others, with not a few of the Christian disciples at Cæsarea. Sympathy from, and converse with, these would alleviate the apostle's bonds. 3. *In writing letters to the Churches.* If the epistles to the Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon were not, as some suppose (Meyer, Reuss, Hausrath, Hilgenfeld and Weiss), composed during this period of incarceration, it is not a violent hypothesis that he who had the care of all the Churches on his heart (2 Cor. xi. 28) was frequently consulted by his spiritual children, the infant communities he had founded, or in which he had laboured, and that he wrote to them letters full of counsel and admonition, which, though they have not been preserved till our day, were then received by those to whom they were sent as messages of love from their spiritual father and instructor. 4. *In instructing Luke about the details of gospel and apostolic history.* Which have been set down—perhaps under Paul's immediate superintendence—in the gospel of Luke and in the Acts. "The ideas that the narrative of St. Paul's journeys, or at least parts of it, had an independent existence before it was utilised or incorporated in the Acts," and that this, "Travel-Document," as it is styled, was composed under the immediate influence of Paul himself (Ramsay, *The Church in Asia Minor*, pp. 6, 7), shed light on a part, at least, of Paul's occupation during the two years of imprisonment at Cæsarea.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 24—27.

Paul's Interview with Felix and Drusilla; or, *a Great Discourse and What Came of It.*

I. **The magnificent auditorium.**—Herod's palace at Cæsarea, which the great Idumean had constructed for himself as a residence when at the height of his glory, but which was now occupied by the Roman procurator as a mansion for himself and a barracks for his troops. "A wonderful building, with bloody recollections. 'Many phantoms glided through the empty rooms.' Here had Herod uttered the death-sentence upon his sons. Here was their betrayer, the ruthless Antipater, imprisoned. Before these gates, for five days and five nights, had the complaining Jews lain and besought Pilate not to desecrate their temple. Here had Herod Agrippa breathed out his hypocritical soul, and before his windows had the crowd, howling and weeping and kneeling, lain in the dust and prayed for the soul of the pious (!) king. So adhered numerous historical images to this place, and from the days of Herod downward blood stuck to every stone." (Hausrath, *Der Apostel Paulus*, p. 458). In a marble hall attached to this palace was a sermon about to be preached such as seldom is poured into the ears of men, and least of all into those of powerful state dignitaries. No doubt the eloquence of the preacher was stimulated by the aforesaid terrible reminiscences, of which he was not entirely ignorant—rather of which he was fully cognisant.

II. **The distinguished hearers.**—1. *Felix.* The Roman governor, whose character on its worst side was also perfectly understood by Paul (see on xxiii. 24). Its hideous cruelty and rapacity, which caused him to be pronounced by Josephus the worst ruler that ever swayed the destinies of Judæa, and even after his deposition to be followed by his quondam subjects to Rome with bitter complaints against his administration, were so notorious that Tertullus was obliged to hide their loathsomeness by fulsome flattery (ver. 2). Its shamefaced profligacy had intruded into the palace hall, and stared on the apostle with unblushing countenance. 2. *Drusilla.* Felix's wife, whose evil reputation was hardly less than his own. The daughter of the first Herod and the sister of the second, Drusilla—diminutive of Drusus—had been married at an early age to Azizus, King of Emesa, who, in order to obtain her hand, had become a Jewish proselyte and accepted circumcision; but her fascinating beauty having inflamed the libidinous desires of the Roman procurator, he employed the services of a Jewish magician named Simon, to proceed to Emesa and seduce her from her husband. In this unholy errand the magician, whom some have endeavoured to identify with the sorcerer of Samaria (viii. 9), proved lamentably successful; and "the daughter of Herod Agrippa, who had much to endure at the hands of her sister Bernice on account of her beauty" (Hausrath, *Der Apostel Paulus*, p. 459), having deserted her lawful husband, became the third wife of Felix, who had formerly been a slave, but was then the governor of Palestine.

III. **The fearless preacher.**—Paul, who at the request of Drusilla had been fetched up from his place of confinement into the judgment hall. As a Jewess she could not have been entirely ignorant of the new sect of Christians that had arisen in the land. As a daughter of Agrippa I. she may have been desirous of hearing one of the chief preachers of those Christians whom her father had persecuted, and with whom, in some way, she may have connected her father's death. But from whatever motive summoned, Paul, when he appeared, evinced no timidity. Having the Lord upon his right hand (Psalm xvi. 8), he presented as valiant a front as David did to his enemies, or as Daniel did before Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. iv. 19-27) and Belshazzar (Dan. v. 22-28), or as afterwards John Knox of Edinburgh did in the presence of Queen Mary of Scotland. The

man who had fought with wild beasts at Ephesus (1 Cor. xv. 32), who had confronted the mob from the castle stairs in Jerusalem (xxii. 1), who had bearded the Sanhedrists in their Star-Chamber (xxiii. 1), and who had already appeared before the representative of Roman law and majesty (ver. 10), was not likely to quake at the sight of a beautiful adulteress.

IV. **The alarming sermon.**—1. The *theme* of it was generally "the faith in Christ Jesus," which would doubtless lead Paul to dilate upon the main facts and doctrines of the gospel, and in particular upon the death and resurrection of Christ, pointing out how in both the truth of His Messiahship was confirmed. In this the apostle furnished a noble example to all preachers who, whatever the rank or character of their hearers, should resolutely determine to know nothing among them save Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. ii. 2). The faith in Jesus Christ is the highest need of the human soul, in whatever sort of body that soul may be enshrined. 2. The *application* of it brought the noble Christian orator to closer quarters with the consciences of his hearers. (1) He spoke to them of righteousness—that awful demand for upright and holy living, both toward God and toward man, which the Divine law, familiar at all events to Drusilla, demanded, which the consciences of both proclaimed to be just, and which the faith of Jesus Christ declared to be indispensable to all who would partake of the Messianic salvation Christ had come to introduce among men; perhaps pointing them to the gracious provision in the gospel, by and through Jesus Christ, for first bestowing upon men and then reproducing within men that righteousness of the law which no man could furnish of himself (Rom. iii. 24, 25, viii. 1-4). (2) Next he reminded them of temperance or self-control, that sacred chastity or mastery of the lower appetites and passions which religion in general, but especially the faith that is in Christ, requires of its devotees (Tit. ii. 11), but of which the illustrious pair before him were sadly wanting. That the apostle had a powerful ally in the bosoms of his hearers need not be questioned. (3) And finally, he lifted up his hearers and himself to the judgment to come, that overwhelmingly awful tribunal before which all men—kings and princes no less than common men, judges and prisoners alike—must one day stand (Rev. xx. 12, 13)—a tribunal over which that Jesus of whom he spoke should preside (Matt. xxv. 32; Acts xvii. 31; 2 Cor. v. 10), at which the secrets of all hearts should be laid bare (Rom. ii. 16), and from which impartial awards should be made to every man according as his works should have been (Rom. ii. 6). 3. The *effect* of it. What impression this weird sermon from a weirder preacher had on those who heard it, and for whom specially it was intended, is only recorded in part. What Drusilla thought of it the pen of inspiration has not revealed. Did the remembrance of her first husband recur to her? or the revolting character of her present wickedness disturb her? Did the gleaming fires of the impending judgment-day startle her half-dead conscience within her, fast-bound in the cords of lustful sleep? Or, did she hear as though she heard not? Did she steel her bosom against the soul-piercing words of the Lord's servant? Did she drown the still small voice that whispered within her bosom and wooed her to better things? These are questions to which no reply can be given. So far as Drusilla is concerned an unbroken silence will encompass her until the trumpet of the great day shall sound. But for Felix no such doom has been reserved. How he felt, as the weary, weather-beaten missionary of the Cross, becoming animated as he warmed to his theme, and fixing on his listener that intense look which was so characteristic of the apostle (xxiii. 1); how Felix felt, as the unearthly words echoed through his spirit, and raised up before his imagination ideas that were awe-inspiring in their ghostly grandeur;—how he felt, and what he said, has been set down in burning letters that he who runs may read. Felix trembled at the picture which this strange man—with a solemn

eloquence which held him spellbound—had painted on the canvas of his soul. He could see the great white throne, with the Judge whose eyes were like a flame of fire (Rev. i. 14); he could see the assembled multitudes, and himself among them, undistinguished by any earthly greatness, in all the hideous nakedness of his guilty soul; he could hear the booming of the thunders and the glancing of the lightnings which proclaimed the commencement of the business of that awful assize; and as he realised the wickedness of his past and present life—its utter lack of righteousness, and horrible defilement through lust—he grew terrified with that terror which ever seizes on the guilty when their wickedness is on the eve of detection, and said "Go thy way, for this time; and when I have a convenient season I will call thee unto me."

V. **The pitiful conclusion.**—It ended in three sad things. 1. *Delay.* Felix had some shadow of excuse for procrastination in the preceding instance, when Paul defended himself before his bar—this, namely that he had been unexpectedly summoned in Providence to decide between Paul and his accusers, and might naturally plead that he wished to be better informed before delivering judgment. In this case no such ground for putting off existed. Felix was called to decide in a matter which affected himself alone, and for which the materials lay at hand. For him the clear duty of the moment was to repent and humble himself before God, to separate himself from the beautiful but wicked woman at his side, to break off his flagitious courses in life, and turn to God in righteousness and holy obedience. But, alas! he deferred again, as he had deferred before—he put off giving judgment between himself and God, as he had previously delayed pronouncing a verdict between Paul and his prosecutors. He would settle his own case, as he had promised to settle Paul's—at a more convenient season. In Paul's that more convenient season would arrive when Lysias should come down; in his own, when he should have more inclination or leisure to turn from dalliance with the fair creature by his side and think of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. Let it be noted that, as in Paul's case no reason remains for believing that Lysias ever came down to Cæsarea, so is there good ground for holding that for Felix's own case the convenient moment never arrived. 2. *Resistance.* Felix, it appears, had frequent interviews with his prisoner, but never again allowed his peace of mind to be disturbed, or his better nature to be aroused. Rather, he strenuously fought his convictions down. He fell back upon the evil demon of cupidity within his breast, called up into the field the spirit of avarice to do battle against the spirit of repentance and righteousness that had been temporarily awakened in him. "He hoped withal that money would be given him of Paul." He never proposed to Paul the question of the Philippian gaoler —"What must I do to be saved?" 3. *Rejection.* Whatever promise of good may have been in Felix's soul, when he trembled under Paul's preaching, it ultimately died away. Felix decided neither Paul's case nor his own, but left the brave apostle, whom he knew to be innocent, to languish in prison for two whole years; and when at length, his own reign of iniquity coming to an end, he was recalled by his imperial master, he still delayed doing justice to the servant of Jesus. Thinking to ingratiate himself with his much-abused subjects, and hoping to shut their mouths against him at the bar of Cæsar—in which, however, he was deceived—he left Paul in bonds.

Learn—1. The possibility of hearing the gospel without being saved. 2. The danger of trifling with one's convictions of sin. 3. The wisdom of deciding for God and Christ at the earliest moment. 4. The probability that opportunities for being saved, once neglected, will not return. 5. The almost certainty that he who deliberately turns from the light will stumble on and down into deeper darkness.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 24. *The Character of Felix.*

I. **An unjust ruler.**

II. **A licentious voluptuary.**

III. **An inveterate procrastinator.**

IV. **An avaricious money-hunter.**

V. **A crafty promoter of his own interests.**

VI. **An unprincipled trampler on the rights of others.**

Drusilla, the Wife of Felix. — A woman—

I. **Of highly exalted birth.**—The daughter of kings. Noble parentage, when good, is an incalculable blessing, and entails great responsibilities. *Noblesse oblige.*

II. **Of ripe personal beauty.**—Her loveliness the ruin of both herself and Felix. Physical grace and elegance—a precious gift of Heaven—not always prized as such, but often bought and sold, like meat upon the shambles.

III. **Of deeply depraved character.**—At the moment when she heard Paul living in open sin, being the runaway wife of one man and the adulterous paramour of another.

IV. **Of manifestly trifling disposition.**—No reason to think she was in earnest, either in sending for or listening to Paul; probably actuated by no higher motive than to see the distinguished preacher (compare Luke xxiii. 8), or to gratify her curiosity about the new faith, or to while away a few leisure moments in her frivolous and wicked life.

V. **Of palpably seared conscience.**—Sitting beside her husband, whose innermost soul quaked beneath the searching words that spake of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, she heard unmoved. At least, she evinced no sign that the arrow of conviction had reached her womanly breast. Fast asleep in the depths of sin, her soul heard not the awakening voice of truth.

Paul before Felix.—The scene introduces us to four things :—

I. **A celebrated preacher.**—Paul. After Jesus Christ, who "spake as never man spake" (John vii. 47), no nobler representative of the Christian ministry has ever appeared in the world or the Church. When he stood before Felix, three virtues shone forth conspicuously in him. 1. *Unwearied zeal* in embracing every opportunity to advance the cause of his Master. Seldom have circumstances been less favourable for the exercise of the preacher's gift than were his that day in Cæsarea—hardly even when confounding the Jews who dwelt at Damascus (ix. 22), fighting with wild beasts at Ephesus (xix. 31 ; 1 Cor. xv. 32), or addressing his countrymen from the castle stairs in Jerusalem (xxii. 1); and yet, no sooner was he invited than he began to pour forth the wondrous story of his crucified and risen Lord. 2. *Unflinching courage* in shaping his discourse to suit his hearers. Not to please, but to profit; not to flatter, but to rebuke; not to lull into drowsy stupor, but to awaken from the trance of spiritual death. And yet he flinched not an instant in his task. Not a quaver of fear, though possibly more than one of affection, was heard in his oration. Like Daniel before Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. iv. 27), he told out his message without trepidation. 3. *Irrepressible hopefulness* in despairing of no man. Paul not ignorant of the characters of Felix and Drusilla, yet, when invited to discourse to them about the faith of Christ he declined not, on the plea that such sinners were beyond the reach of mercy or inaccessible to the power of grace.

II. **A pattern discourse.**—1. *A sermon on the right theme*—the faith that is in Christ Jesus. This held the place of honour in all Paul's preaching, whose unvarying subject was Jesus Christ and Him crucified. 2. *Intensely practical in its contents.* With such topics did it deal as "righteousness, temperance, judgment to come"—topics too often absent from modern

ministrations. 3. *Directly personal.* Shaped so as to meet the characters, rebuke the sins, and arouse the torpid spirits, of his hearers. 4. *Eminently rational.* Paul reasoned, declaimed not, but pressed home upon his listeners arguments which flooded their intellects with light, touched their hearts with emotion, and stirred within their conscience the voice of truth and right.

III. **Illustrious hearers.**—1. *Persons of high rank.* No better or more valuable in God's sight than people of obscure position. Equally with these in need of salvation. Often more so. 2. *Notorious sinners.* Less heinous offenders are still transgressors in the sight of Heaven and such as require to be called to repentance and faith. 3. *Deplorably indifferent.* So are multitudes of those to whom preachers are called to present the gospel. The number of those who truly long for salvation, and thirst after righteousness, is few.

IV. **Disappointing results.**—1. *Only one of Paul's hearers impressed.* Only Felix—not Drusilla; and yet she, having been a Jewess, ought to have possessed a better understanding of Paul's message than her husband had, while, having been as wicked as her husband, she had as much cause for trembling as he. So it often happens under the ministry of the gospel. One is taken, the other left; one touched, the other unmoved. 2. *That one only impressed, not improved.* Felix convicted, not converted; merely trembled, did not turn. This also a not unusual phenomenon under a faithful ministry. Souls are alarmed who do not eventually prove to be saved. 3. *The impressed one trifled with, but did not embrace, the gracious opportunity which came before him.* Felix, had he fostered the convictions awakened in his soul, might have been recovered from his sinful condition; but he procrastinated, allowed his better impulses to subside, and was lost. So thousands permit their day of merciful visitation to pass, to their everlasting hurt. "The Holy Ghost saith, To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart" (Heb. iv. 7).

The Faith in Christ Jesus.—Is—

I. **Heavenly in its object.**—Directing its look, not to the historical, but to the crucified and risen Christ—the Christ whom Paul preached.

II. **Reasonable in its character.**—Capable of being set forth in such terms as to command the assent of the understanding and judgment. So Paul presented it to Felix.

III. **Holy in its demands.**—Though not requiring righteousness and temperance as grounds of justification, insisting upon these as indispensable to salvation.

IV. **Alarming in its operation.**—Awaking in the souls of them to whom it is presented conviction of sin and fear of judgment.

V. **Saving in its results.**—When accepted in humility and penitence, trustfulness and obedience, it issues in the blessing of complete redemption from the curse and power of sin.

Vers. 24, 25. *A Preacher such as Paul* (before Felix) *should be*—

I. **Ready for every call to preach that presents itself in providence.**—Paul interposed no objection when Felix sent for him, declined not the invitation proferred him to expound the principles of the gospel, but heartily embraced the opportunity to advance his Master's cause. *Semper paratus* should be the minister's motto.

II. **Courageous in facing every audience on whom he looks.**—This he will be if he preserves a lowly estimate of himself, conjoined with an exalted idea of the Master he serves and of the message he bears, as well as a lively sense of that Master's presence.

III. **Evangelical in the truths he proclaims.**—The proper business of the pulpit is neither to teach science or philosophy, nor to disseminate the elements of ordinary knowledge, but to publish the everlasting gospel.

IV. **Direct in the manner of his**

teaching.—A good sermon, besides having a good text and good matter, should be appropriate and personal—not in an offensive and impertinent, but in a heart-searching and conscience-touching, sense. Preaching that lacks point in front, and has no push from behind, is not likely to result in conversions.

Paul, Felix, and Drusilla; or, Three Phases of Conscience.

I. **The courage of a good conscience.**—Exemplified in Paul, who reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, before the adulterous pair. Compare John the Baptist before Herod (Matt. xiv. 4).

II. **The alarm of a guilty conscience.**—Illustrated in Felix, who trembled as the vision of a judgment-day arose upon his mind's horizon. Compare Herod, the Baptist's murderer (Matt. xiv. 2).

III. **The insensibility of a hardened conscience.**—Exhibited in Drusilla, who heard, unmoved, the heart-searching words of Paul. Compare the behaviour of her sister Bernice (xxvi. 30). Both instances of that most awful psychological phenomenon—a conscience past feeling (Eph. iv. 19).

Ver. 25. *Convenient Seasons—*

I. **Are always present to those in earnest about religion.**—To such as are (1) convinced of their own guilt and sin; (2) alive to the necessity and importance of salvation; (3) aware of the uncertainty and shortness of life.

II. **Never come to those indifferent about religion.**—To those who are (1) in love with sin and its pleasures (Tit. iii. 3); (2) blinded by the god of this world (2 Cor. iv. 4); (3) unconscious of their perilous condition.

Ver. 26. *The Love of Money, as Exemplified in Felix.*

I. **Rooted, presumably, in his corrupt and unprincipled heart.**—Mammon, the god of this world (Matt. vi. 24).

II. **Fostered by his wicked life.**—For his personal extravagance and licentious indulgence he needed money, and this need kept the demon of avarice awake.

III. **Obstructive of higher impulses.**—It stifled his conscience, hardened his heart, destroyed his soul. It prevented the entrance into his soul of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

IV. **Productive of other sins.**—In Felix's case it led to procrastination or trifling with his own highest interests; to the infliction of injustice on Paul, by continued imprisonment; to the practice of hypocrisy, in pretending to commune often with Paul about the faith, when secretly "he hoped that money would be given him of Paul." "The love of money is the root of every kind of evil" (1 Tim. vi. 10).

CHAPTER XXV.

PAUL BEFORE FESTUS—A SECOND TRIAL AT CÆSAREA.

§ 1. The Succession of a New Governor; or, the Revival and Defeat of an Old Plot (vers. 1-5).
§ 2. Paul before Festus—an Appeal to the Emperor (vers. 6-12).
§ 3. Talked about by State Dignitaries; or, Festus's Conversation with Agrippa about Paul (ver. 13-22).
§ 4. A Third Hearing before Agrippa and Bernice; or, Festus's Excuse for calling for his Prisoner (vers. 23-27).

CRITICAL REMARKS.

Ver. 1. **Having come into the province**, or *having entered upon his province—i.e.*, his procuratorship (see on xxiii. 18)—Festus, after three days, **ascended**, or *went up* (contrast the reverse, "went down," in xxiv. 1), from Cæsarea to **Jerusalem**, the metropolis of the dominion over which he had been appointed ruler.

Ver. 2. The renewal of the complaints against Paul, which were made by the **high priest**, or, according to the best MSS., *the chief priests* and **the chief**, or *the principal* (R.V.)—lit., "the first" of the Jews, showed that the Sanhedrim had been greatly dissatisfied with the result of Paul's trial before Felix. Their present movement was probably dictated by the hope of succeeding better with a new procurator, who, knowing their power as it had been displayed in procuring the recall of his predecessor, might naturally be disposed to exhibit towards them a greater degree of complaisance. The high priest at this time was Ismael, the son of Phabi, who succeeded Ananias (Jos., *Ant.*, XX. viii. 8).

Ver. 3. Their proposal that Festus should send for Paul to Jerusalem was, like the proposal of the forty (xxiii. 15), designed to afford them an opportunity of cutting him off by secret assassination on the road from Cæsarea.

Ver. 5. Festus, however, whether he had heard from Felix or Lysias, or others of the former plot, refused their reqnest, and invited those amongst them who were **able**—*i.e.*, not physically able (Bengel), or to whom it was convenient (Grotius, Calvin) or talented, but powerful, *δυνατοί*, clothed with official authority, *i.e.*, their rulers (Meyer, Alford, Holtzmann, Zöckler) to go down with him to Cæsarea, whither he was shortly to proceed, and accuse him if there was **any wickedness**, better *anything amiss*, or out of place, in his behaviour. The best MSS. omit *τούτῳ*, this.

Ver. 6. **More than ten days.**—According to the most reliable authorities this should be *not more than eight or ten days.*

Ver. 7. The **many and grievous complaints**, or charges, against Paul, which his accusers could not prove, were no doubt the same which had been preferred against him by Tertullus (xxiv. 5, 6).

Ver. 8. Paul's defence shows that the accusations now put forward were the srme old charges to which he had already answered, only perhaps in a different order—heresy, sacrilege, sedition.

Ver. 9. **Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem and there be judged?**—The proposal of Festus not merely to shift the venue or place of trial from Cæsarea to Jerusalem, but to substitute an ecclesiastical for a civil court, with himself present merely as a spectator (which seems to be the import of **before me**), was perhaps dictated by two motives—a desire to please the Jews (see on xxiv. 27), and a wish to rid himself of a troublesome responsibility. It had also an appearance of being fair to Paul in that it offered him a trial before a court of his own nation, with the presence of the procurator to see that no injustice was done. Only as Paul had been handed over as a Roman citizen to a Roman tribunal, the proposed change could not take place without the prisoner's consent.

Ver. 10. **I stand**, or *am standing*, **at Cæsar's judgment seat.**—Paul knew that his doom was sealed should his case be remitted back to Jerusalem, and hence claimed to be tried as a Roman citizen before a Roman court. It can hardly be that Paul intended to say, "I stand already in mind and purpose before the Emperor's court, for God has shown me by a special revelation that I am to preach the gospel at Rome, and my trial there is accordingly part of the divinely ordered course of things which cannot be altered" (Wordsworth). **As thou very well knowest.**—This complete insight into the worthlessness of the charges brought against him, which Paul ascribes to Festus, may appear to conflict with Festus's own statements in

vers. 18, 19, 20, 26 (Holtzmann); but both assertions may easily enough have been correct. Festus may not have perfectly comprehended the precise points in which Paul was alleged to have violated Jewish law; but he had discernment enough to perceive that sufficient to establish anything against his prisoner had not been advanced.

Ver. 11. **I refuse not to die.**—*I make no entreaty against dying*, I beg not myself off by prayers. "Not mercy, but only justice, asks Paul of Cæsar" (Besser). "We make no request for favour; if any one can convict us of wrong, be it little or great, we refuse not the sharpest punishment" (Athenagoras in his *Apology for the Christians*, addressed to Marcus Aurelius). **No man may deliver me unto them,** or *give me up to them as a favour.*—"Not even Festus, if he will do what is right" (Besser). **I appeal unto Cæsar.**—"These important words were spoken by Paul," says Stier, "being certainly impelled by the suggestion of the Holy Spirit" (compare xxiii. 11). So did the Christians in Bithynia in Pliny's time do. "Paul felt indeed what a curse his people had brought upon themselves by compelling him to appeal to Cæsar" (Besser).

Ver. 12. **Conferred with the council.**—*I.e.*, with the Roman assessors who assisted him at the trial. The subject of consultation manifestly was as to whether the appeal should be admitted or refused. Appeals appear not to have been admitted in every case. Chap. xxviii. 18, 19 shows that Festus was disposed to release Paul, and probably would have done so had not the Sanhedrists objected. Weizsäcker comments upon the fact that Paul was *thrice* in danger of his life (xxi. 31, xxiii. 12, xxv. 3), *thrice* accused by the Jews (xxiii. 28, xxiv. 1, xxv. 2, 15), and *thrice* rescued by the Romans (xxiii. 30, xxiv. 22, xxv. 12), and finds in this word "thrice" a proof of manufactured history. This requires no refutation.

Ver. 13. **After certain days,** or *certain days having gone by*; how many is unknown. **Agrippa the king** was Herod Agrippa II., the son of Agrippa I., mentioned in xii. 1-6, 19-23, and the Jewish vassal-prince of Rome, who, on his father's death, was considered too young to succeed to the sovereignty of Judæa, which accordingly was placed under procurators, though on the death of his uncle Herod, King of Chalcis, in A.D. 48 or 50 (Hackett), he received the sovereignty of that region from Claudius, along with the superintendence of the temple and the nomination of the high priests. Four years later "he received the tetrarchies of his great-uncles, Philip and Lysanius, with the title of king" (Plumptre). In A.D. 55 some Galilean cities were added to his kingdom by Nero (Jos., *Ant.*, XIX. ix. 1, XX. i. 3, viii. 4). He died under Trajan in A.D. 100, at the age of seventy-three. **Bernice,** or Berenice—perhaps Macedonian for Pherenice—was his sister, and the sister of Drusilla. The eldest daughter of Herod Agrippa I., she had been married while a young girl to her uncle Herod of Chalcis, on whose death, while ostensibly living as a widow, she became, according to public rumour, the incestuous paramour of her brother Agrippa II. Afterwards Polemon, the King of Cilicia, in order to obtain her hand in marriage, professed himself a convert to Judaism, and, as Azizus had done for Drusilla, accepted circumcision. The union, however, was quickly dissolved. It was subsequent to this that she accompanied her brother to Cæsarea. Eventually she followed Titus to Rome as his mistress, in the hope of marriage which he had promised; but this was more than the Senate could tolerate, and he was forced reluctantly to part with her (Sueton., *Titus*, c. 7; Tacit., *Hist.*, ii. 81; Jos., *Ant.*, XX. vii. 3). To **salute** Festus probably meant to formally acknowledge him on entering on his procuratorship, as the representative of his (Agrippa's) overlord (Cæsar).

Ver. 14. **Declared,** better, *laid* **Paul's case,** or *the matters concerning Paul*, **before the king.**—Festus might naturally conclude that Agrippa, being a Jew, would understand the points in dispute, and be able to enlighten him about them. Weizsäcker sees in the bringing of Paul before Agrippa an exact parallel to the removing of Jesus to Herod Antipas by Pilate (Luke xxiii. 8-12), and pronounces both unhistorical, but without reason.

Ver. 16. It is not **the manner,** rather *custom*, of the Romans (if it is of the Jews!), **to deliver any man to die,** should read, *to give up any man*, the words *to die*, literally "unto destruction," being a gloss, which is not found in the best MSS. "The use of the same verb (χαρίζεσθαι) as that which Paul had used in ver. 16 shows that the arrow shot at a venture had hit the mark. Festus is eager to repel the charge" (Plumptre).

Ver. 18. **Against.**—Better, either *concerning* (R.V.), or *round* (Alford, Hackett). In the former case the clause should be corrected with "brought"; in the latter with "stood up."

Ver. 19. **Superstition.**—Better, *religion*. Festus designedly, perhaps, using a word which might be interpreted either in a good or bad sense as Agrippa pleased. **One Jesus.**—Hackett remarks on Luke's candour in recording this contemptuous remark.

Ver. 20. **Doubted.**—The verb describes something stronger than doubt or uncertainty, and is more happily rendered "perplexed" (R.V.). This, however, was hardly the motive why Festus asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem to be judged (see ver. 9). Festus doubtless wished to set the matter in the best light for himself.

Ver. 21. **Augustus.**—Sebastos. A title first conferred on Octavianus by the Roman Senate, and afterwards borne by all succeeding emperors. The emperor in question was Nero, the stepson of Claudius, who married his mother Agrippina, the wife of Ahenobarbus, and the

daughter of Germanicus. Nero succeeded Claudius, A.D. 54. Nero's inhuman character is too well known to require detailed mention.

Ver. 22. **I would also hear.**—Meaning not that he had formerly cherished such a desire (Calvin), but that he was then wishing such a thing had been possible as that he might hear.

Ver. 23. **The chief captains** were the chiliarchs or commanders of the cohorts stationed at Cæsarea—which cohorts were five in number (Jos., *Wars*, III. iv. 2).

Ver. 24. **All the multitude of the Jews**, the procurator says, had dealt with or made suit to him because the Jewish rulers in their action had only interpreted the popular outcry against the apostle (Hackett), or because a crowd may have gone with them to the procurator's residence in order to enforce their application by clamouring for the same object (Meyer).

Ver. 25 supplies a valuable attestation of the governor's conviction that Paul had committed nothing worthy of death—*i.e.*, was practically innocent of the charges preferred against him.

Ver. 26. **No certain thing to write.**—In cases of appeal "it was necessary to transmit to the emperor a written account of the offence charged as having been committed, and also of all the judicial proceedings that may have taken place in relation to it. Documents of this description were called apostoli or literæ dimissoriæ" (Hackett). **My Lord**, κύριος, *Dominus*, was a title which neither Augustus nor Tiberius would accept because it implied the relation of master and slave, and because properly it belonged only to the gods (Tacit., *Annals*, ii. 87; Suetonius, *Aug.*, 53), Caligula and all the emperors who followed him had no such scruples. The use of it now by Luke, when a few years earlier it would have been inappropriate, is another mark of historical veracity.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 1—5.

The Succession of a New Governor; or, the Revival and Defeat of an Old Plot.

I. **The old plot revived.**—1. *What the plot was.* To effect Paul's removal by assassination. Nothing could more convincingly have attested the success of the apostle in establishing Christianity among his countrymen than this unappeasable thirst of the leaders of the Jewish people for his removal. So long as he was alive and at liberty to continue an active propaganda, it seemed to them there could be no security against the overthrow of their national faith. They had the sagacity to perceive that a death-struggle had commenced between the Old Faith and the New, in which one or other must go down. Their implacable hostility was also a gruesome revelation of the malignity of their hearts as well as of the secret conviction they entertained that victory was inclining to the side of "the Way." 2. *Why the plot was revived.* Because of the failure of the first attempt to carry it out, through the midnight withdrawal of Paul to Cæsarea by Lysias's soldiers (xxiii. 31-35), and because of the collapse of the subsequent proceedings against Paul before Felix at Cæsarea (xxiv. 22, 23). The enemies of Paul and the instigators of the present conspiracy had hoped by fair means or foul to effect their murderous design, but thus far Providence had thwarted its execution. For two years they had brooded over their disappointment, but had not departed from their purpose. "Travailing with iniquity and conceiving mischief" (Psalm vii. 14) all that time, they lay in readiness at the proper moment to bring it forth anew. 3. *When the plot was resuscitated.* On the occasion of Festus's visit to Jerusalem. Festus, the new procurator, had just entered upon his duties, and come into his province in succession to Felix, who had lately been recalled. Festus, being a new governor, would naturally feel disposed, so Paul's enemies reasoned, to ingratiate himself with his Judæan subjects, and all the more that he probably knew both how troublesome these were to rule, and how powerful they had shown themselves in being able to bring about the deposition of his predecessor. Besides, from Festus's inexperience they most likely anticipated better results, than they had obtained from Felix's longer and wider knowledge of themselves and their craft. Accordingly, no sooner had Festus paid his inaugural visit to the capital, than the Sanhedrists embraced the opportunity of reviving the old charges against their arch-enemy, the apostate Rabbi then in captivity at Cæsarea. 4. *How the plot was designed to be carried out.* Under the pretext of wishing to have the apostle brought to a fresh trial,

it was arranged that a deputation from the Sanhedrim should wait upon the governor and ask him to send for Paul from Cæsarea, that the charges standing against him might be re-examined in the metropolis, and, in the event of this request being complied with, that they should have a band of hired assassins lying in wait to despatch him while on the way. By no means a clever trick, it was merely the old scheme of the forty Sicarii revived. It was another proof that villains have not always at command sagacity or genius equal to their ferocity. Neither much insight nor much foresight was required to defeat the plot. How it prospered the next paragraph will show.

II. **The old plot defeated.**—1. *By a simple statement.* That Paul was a prisoner at Cæsarea, whither he himself, Festus, was about to depart; which meant that as Paul was under military custody there was no danger of him escaping, and that as he himself (Festus) was about to proceed northwards to Cæsarea, there was no need to be at either the trouble or expense of fetching Paul to Jerusalem. Whether Festus had got an inkling from Lysias, the commandant of the castle, of the previous conspiracy against Paul by these venerable fathers of the people, and stood upon his guard against another stratagem, can only be conjectured; but his answer was a death-blow to their device. 2. *By a fair proposal.* That a number of themselves, the rulers, clothed with official power should return with him to Cæsarea, and prefer their indictment against the apostle there—if indeed there was anything wrong about either the man or his conduct, which (one almost reads between the lines) he hardly believed there was. How they relished the new governor's proposal can only be imagined. Clearly it was not the answer they expected to their innocent suggestion. Unless they were either fools or blind, they must have seen that their secret machinations were understood. Concealing their chagrin as best they could, they retired from the governor's presence, and began their preparations for a second journey to Cæsarea and a third attack upon Paul.

Learn.—1. How hard it is for evil thoughts and purposes to die within the heart. 2. How difficult it is to kill those whom God wants to keep alive. 3. How easy it is to see through and thwart the designs of the wicked when God is against them.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 1. *Changes in Government.*

I. **Occur mostly at unexpected times.**—Felix hardly dreamed, when desiring to gain favour with the Jews he left Paul bound, that within two years his term of office would be finished.

II. **Always entail new responsibilities upon the new governors.**—Festus, on assuming the reins of government, had to make himself acquainted with his new dominions and their peoples.

III. **Commonly bring new experiences to the governed.**—Hardly any rule could have been worse than that of Felix; and Festus's was for the Jews a happy exchange. But sometimes the change is from good to bad or from bad to worse.

IV. **Unconsciously advance the purposes of Heaven.**—He who is higher than the highest, whose kingdom ruleth over all, and who holds the hearts of kings as well as common men in His hand, worketh out the counsel of His own will by all the governments that rise and fall. Festus's accession to the procuratorship, and coming into Judæa, was the opening of a new chapter in the history of Paul.

Vers. 2, 3. *Wickedness in high places;* or, the horrible iniquities of those who were, or should have been, good men—exemplified in the conduct of the chief priests and principal men of the Jews.

I. **Malignity.**—For two whole years they had nursed their wrath against

Paul. Thus showed they themselves to be little else than human sleuth hounds.

II. **Deception.**—They pretended to Festus that they only wished to have the apostle brought to a fresh trial. Thus they attested themselves to be double-dyed hypocrites.

III. **Assassination.** — Their secret purpose was not to try the apostle but to kill him. They were black-hearted if not red-handed murderers.

Lesson.—The heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.

Vers. 5, 6. *The Lord reigns!* let the earth be glad and let His people rejoice. God appears here:

I. As the **providential governor** of the world.

II. As the **adversary and counter-worker** of the wicked.

III. As the **friend and protector** of His people.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 6—12.

Paul before Festus—an Appeal to the Emperor.

I. **The court constituted.** 1. *Some things the same on this as on the former occasion.* (1) The judgment hall—a room or chamber in Herod's palace (see on xxiv. 24, "Homiletical Analysis"). (2) The prosecutors—the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem, and who may have been as before "Ananias with certain of the elders" (xxiv. 1), including "the chief priests and the principal men of the Jews" (ver 2). (3) The prisoner—Paul, who had already so triumphantly vindicated his innocence, and been so wonderfully protected by God. (4) The charges—many and grievous things which could not be established against him (ver. 7). 2. *Some things different on this from what were on the former occasion.* (1) The judge.—Felix had given place to Porcius Festus, about whom little is known—though, like Felix, it would appear, he was not above pandering to the wishes of the Jews in the hope of currying favour with them (ver. 9). (2) The mode of procedure. On this occasion Tertullus was conspicuous by his absence. The prosecutors believed themselves able to dispense with the services of a hired advocate. Roman flattery and eloquence had not done much for them at the previous trial; perhaps clamour and vehemence would serve them better at this. At least this was the method adopted. "The Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood round about Festus, bringing against Paul many and grievous charges." (3) The order of the charges. Though in substance the same, the presentation of them appears to have been somewhat varied (see below).

II. **The indictment preferred.** 1. *The old charges were revived.* Sedition, schism, sacrilege; treason against the state, against the faith, against the temple; revolt against Cæsar, against Moses, against Jehovah; revolution—a serious civil crime; innovation—a heinous ecclesiastical offence; irreligion or impiety—a deadly sin. Had Paul been guilty of these he must have been a monster of wickedness indeed. 2. *The new order in which the charges were presented.* Schism, sacrilege, sedition. Not without craft had this alteration been made. At the first trial the high priest and the elders had hopes of enlisting the jealousy and power of Rome against Paul, and with this end in view they placed in the forefront of their indictment the charge of sedition. What more likely to gain the ear of a representative of Cæsar, than the allegation that the prisoner at the bar had been "a pestilent fellow and a mover of insurrections among all the Jews throughout the world" (xxiv. 5), saying "there is another king, one Jesus" (xvii. 7)? That card, however, had been tried and failed. It was now, therefore, their aim, if possible, to withdraw the prisoner from beneath the shelter of the Roman Ægis, and

accordingly they shove the charge of sedition into the background, and advance into the purview of the procurator those of schism and sacrilege. They hoped in this way to persuade the new governor that the case was one which fell more within their jurisdiction than his, that it belonged to an ecclesiastical and spiritual rather than to a secular tribunal. The distinction between things secular and sacred, courts spiritual and ecclesiastical, and courts civil and criminal, was a sound one, but in their mouths it was being used not to secure right and justice, but to perpetrate cruelty and wrong.

III. **The defence offered.** 1. *On every count in the indictment, as before, Paul pleaded not guilty.* "Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Cæsar" had he offended. He was no schismatic or heretic in the proper sense of that expression; what he preached was only a legitimate development and necessary fruit of the Hebrew faith. He had not violated the sanctity of the temple; the allegation that he had done so contradicted fact. He was no revolutionary against Cæsar's throne; neither by word nor deed had he taught men to rise against the powers that be. From first to last Paul had been consistent in maintaining his innocence. 2. *On every count in the indictment, as before, evidence in its support was wanting.* Paul would be sure to call the attention of his judge to this, and Festus, it is clear, discerned that the charge of sedition was a bogus affair altogether (ver. 18), while about the heresy he was simply at sea—that belonged to another sphere than the one in which he moved (vers. 19, 20). The sacrilege allegation he probably dropped out of view entirely, as an unfounded assertion, or as a matter too insignificant to be noticed. Nevertheless, baseless as the charges were, Festus wanted courage to sweep them aside, and liberate his prisoner. Precisely as Felix failed, so did he. Neither had the fortitude to follow conscience and do what was right.

IV. **The proposition made.** 1. *A specious compromise.* (1) To drop the charges of sacrilege and sedition and restrict further investigations to the one point of divergence from the laws of the Jews. This would practically be a decision two-thirds in Paul's favour. (2) To proceed to Jerusalem, that the strictly religious question might be examined into by a court of his own people. This also, while it had the appearance of being fair to Paul, would be a virtual concession to what Festus understood to be the real wishes of the Jews. (3) To have the trial conducted in the procurator's presence as a guarantee that the prisoner would have even-handed justice. 2. *The secret motive.* (1) The motive stated was to gain favour with the Jews. This was probably natural, considering that he was a new governor, and that they were a troublesome people, who had it in their power to impeach him, as they had impeached Felix his predecessor, before Cæsar—if not for real, for imaginary crimes, since, as he could see from Paul's case, they were by no means fastidious as to the character of the weapons with which they struck a man down. (2) The unrecorded motives probably were to shield Paul, if possible, and in any case to shift from himself all responsibility for his condemnation.

V. **The appeal taken.** 1. *To whom?* Cæsar, *i.e.*, Nero. Paul demanded to be tried by the emperor himself. "Theoretically the emperor was but the *imperator*, or commander-in-chief of the armies of the state, appointed by the Senate, and acting under its direction. Consuls were still elected every year, and went through the shadowy functions of their office. Many of the provinces were directly under the control of the Senate, and were accordingly governed by proconsuls. But Augustus had contrived to concentrate in himself all the powers that in the days of the Republic had checked and balanced the exercise of individual authority. He was supreme pontiff, and as such regulated the religion of the state; permanent censor, and as such could give or recall the privileges of citizenship at His pleasure. The *tribunicia potestas*, which had

originally been conferred on the tribunes of the *plebs* so that they might protect members of their order who appealed to them against the injustice of patrician magistrates, was attached to his office. As such he became the final court of appeal from all subordinate tribunals, and so by a subtle artifice, what had been intended as a safeguard to freedom, became the instrument of a centralised tyranny" (Plumptre). 2. *For what reason?* Because he was already standing before Cæsar's judgment seat—*i.e.*, was already pleading before a Roman tribunal, and no one, not even a procurator, had a right to withdraw him therefrom and hand him over to the Jews without his consent—which, of course, Paul was unwilling to give, for the following reasons. (1) That as a panel at a Roman tribunal he was entitled to receive from that tribunal a verdict on his case. (2) That he was perfectly prepared to accept that verdict, whatever it might be. Should he be found to have done wrong, and to have committed anything worthy of death, he refused not to die; but should, on the other hand, his innocence be established, he was entitled to be acquitted. (3) That he was not amenable to any Jewish tribunal, since he had not violated any Jewish law, as Festus himself knew. (4) That Paul also understood his doom would be sealed the moment he was handed over to the tender mercies of the Sanhedrim. 3. *With what result?* That his appeal was allowed. Having conferred privately with his own council of Roman assessors (see "Critical Remarks"), Festus, "with something like a sneer" in his words, intimated his acceptance of Paul's decision. "He knew, it may be, better than the apostle to what kind of judge the latter was appealing, what long delays there would be before the cause was heard, how little chance there was of a righteous judgment at last" (Plumptre).

Learn.—1. That false witnessing against good men and good causes is an old and common, as well as heinous sin. 2. That the desire of gaining popular favour often leads statesmen, judges, and private individuals to perpetrate acts of great injustice. 3. That Christians are not debarred by their religion from defending themselves against persecution and oppression by all lawful means. 4. That nothing inspires a man with courage in presence of his adversaries like a consciousness of innocence. 5. That God's people are (or should be) ever ready to render due satisfaction for whatever evil deeds can be proved against them.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 6-12. *A Court Scene in the Olden Time.*

I. **Infuriate and reckless pursuers.**—1. A multitude against one. 2. Men of power against a weak prisoner. 3. Persons regardless of truth against an individual who tried to keep a clean conscience.

II. **A friendless but unmoved defender.**—Strong in—1. The consciousness of his innocence. 2. The justness of his claim—to be judged where he was. 3. The superiority of his soul to death.

III. **A discerning but unprincipled judge** — 1. Faithless to conscience. Knowing his duty, but declining to act upon it. 2. Showing respect of persons. Preferring the favour of the powerful and rich wicked to the rights of the humble but poor good. 3. Trampling on the weak. Sending Paul to Rome instead of granting him liberty.

Ver. 8. *A Model Defence.*

I. **Short.**—Consisting of one sentence.

II. **Simple.**—Containing no intricate reasoning or doubtful chicanery.

III. **Direct.**—Resting satisfied with a plain denial of the charges advanced.

IV. **Exhaustive.**—Leaving none of these untouched, but repudiating all alike.

V. **Effective.**—If it did not procure acquittal it at least showed the charges to be false.

Vers. 8-10. *Christian Fortitude.*—As exemplified in Paul.

I. **Unlike the effrontery of the hypocrite.**—Paul grounds his defence on solid fact and absolute truth.

II. **Different from the defiance of the wicked.**—Paul declines not to be examined once and again, having nothing to be ashamed of or conceal.

III. **Having no resemblance to the obstinacy of the litigious.**—Paul submits to every just decision, being willing even to die if he had done anything for which capital punishment is the only expiation.

Ver. 10. *Cæsar's Judgment Seat and Christ's.*—A contrast. In respect of—

I. **The authorities by which they have been appointed.**—Cæsar's by the kings and emperors of earth. Christ's by the King of kings, the Lord of eternity, and Sovereign of the universe.

II. **The judges who have been entrusted with their procedure.**—In the case of Cæsar's mortal, fallible, and sinful men.; in that of Christ's, the Divine Son, who liveth evermore, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and with whom is no respect of persons.

III. **The businesses which are transacted thereupon.** In the case of Cæsar's tribunal, the earthly and temporal affairs of men, so far as they affect men's mundane interests; at Christ's the concerns of the soul and the transactions of the life.

IV. **The verdicts which are issued therefrom.**—From Cæsar's often such as are false and oppressive; from Christ's always such as are just and true. The first may call for an appeal: the second are irreversible and final.

V. **The parties who appear before them.**—Some may never stand at Cæsar's, but all must eventually stand at Christ's, judgment-seat.

Ver. 11. *Paul's Appeal to Cæsar.*

I. **Evidenced a conscience void of offence toward God and man.**—Had the apostle not been conscious of innocence he would hardly have ventured on this step, which was not the last stroke for liberty on the part of a despairing criminal, but the sober act of a good man who knew himself to be wronged.

II. **Signalised a humble submission to divinely ordained authority.**—Had the apostle not regarded Cæsar's tribunal as in some respects invested with divine authority, he would scarcely have proposed to lay his case before it.

III. **Showed a laudable desire to avoid unnecessary martyrdom.**—Had Paul deemed it sinful to keep himself alive as long as possible, or right to throw away his life without an effort to preserve it, it is doubtful if he would have resorted to this tedious method of obtaining justice.

IV. **Proved an unwearied zeal for the extension of the kingdom of God.**—Having already been assured by God that he would preach the gospel at Rome also, Paul probably saw in this appeal which he took a means of attaining to what was already a burning passion in his soul.—*From Gerok in Lange.*

Difficulties connected with Paul's Appeal to Cæsar.

I. **How does this harmonise with Christ's doctrine of non-resistance** (Matt. v. 39)? Answer: Paul, in appealing to Cæsar, does not propose retaliation, but only self-preservation, which is the first law of life, and is not forbidden to a Christian.

II. **How does this accord with Paul's exhortation** to Christians **not to go to law before the unrighteous but only before the saints** (1 Cor. vi. 1)?—Answer: Paul does not propose to drag his accusers before the law, but only to vindicate his own character in the eyes of the law—which is always permissible to a Christian.

III. **How does this square with Paul's knowledge that Christ was with him and had promised to protect him?**—How does his conduct compare with that of Ezra—*e.g.*, who, in a time of

difficulty and danger, refused to lean upon a secular arm (Ezra viii. 22)? Answer: This may have been Christ's way of protecting Paul.

IV. **How does this comport with Paul's doctrine that the state has nothing whatever to do with judging spiritual matters** (1 Cor. ii. 15)?—Answer: Paul does not propose to submit to Cæsar the question of his religious opinions, but only that of his civil deportment.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 13—22.

Talked about by State Dignitaries; or, Festus's Conversation with Agrippa about Paul.

I. **The royal visit to the governor.**—1. *The illustrious pair.* (1) Their names: Agrippa and Bernice. II. Herod Agrippa, the royal personage here referred to was the son of Herod Agrippa I., who had perished so suddenly (A. D. 44, 45) in Cæsarea, and the great-grandson of Herod the Great, the founder of the Idumean princes, "vassals of Rome who played so distinguished a part in the story of Israel during the last fifty years of the existence of the Jews as a separate nationality" (Spence). Bernice was his sister and the sister of Drusilla, the wife of Felix (xxiv. 24). Like Drusilla, Bernice was a woman of great beauty, whose story reads "like a terrible romance or a page from the chronicles of the Borgias" (Plumptre). Agrippa and she were both illustrious for their rank, if for nothing else, though history reports them to have been not undistinguished for intellectual ability as well. (2) Their characters. Rather infamous than illustrious, living at the time, as was currently believed, in unholy relations with one another (see "Critical Remarks"). When high station and lofty character go together, they lend a glory to each other, which makes both more attractive; when high station is conjoined with gross wickedness, the former is degraded and the latter rendered more heinous and despicable. 2. *The object of their visit.* To exchange courtesies with the new procurator on the assumption of his office. Whether it was dictated by genuine politeness or by self-interest which suggested the propriety of keeping "on terms of intimacy and friendship with the powerful Roman lieutenant commanding in the provinces of which he was nominally the sovereign" (Spence), may not be known; but the visit itself was proper and becoming to be made. Men, simply as men—how much more as Christians (1 Peter iii. 1)—owe each other civilities which, when sincerely paid, tend to sweeten social intercourse.

II. **The governor's communication to the king.**—1. *Concerning Paul.* No doubt he would mention Paul's name (see ver. 19). But the main facts reported with respect to him were these: (1) That he had been left behind in Cæsarea as a prisoner by Felix, the late procurator, without any statement of the reason of his imprisonment or the nature of his offence. (2) That he had been bitterly accused by the chief priests and the elders of the Jews, who laid before Festus, when at Jerusalem, a criminal indictment against Him demanding his instantaneous surrender to punishment. (3) That he had been formerly placed upon his trial, and opportunity given to his accusers to make good their allegations against him, with the result that no actual crime had been brought home to him, but only an assertion of his had been proved—viz., that one Jesus, whom his opponents affirmed to be dead, was really alive. (4) That rather than accept an offer which had been made to him to go to Jerusalem to be judged of these matters, he had appealed to be kept for the decision of the emperor. If—which does not appear from the narrative—Festus recited to Agrippa Paul's magnanimous declaration about refusing not to die, if he had done anything worthy of death (ver. 11), one would like to know what impression such a display of moral heroism made upon

the royal bosom! And (5) That he was now in gaol waiting till he could be conveniently despatched to Rome. 2. *Concerning himself.* (1) That he had rather snubbed the ecclesiastical dignitaries of Jerusalem, when these had approached him, by reminding them that it was not the custom of the Romans, if it was of the Jews, to hand over any man—"to destruction," though a gloss, correctly interprets the sense of Festus's words—until he should have had opportunity to meet his accusers face to face and reply to the charges these preferred against them. (Festus may really have said this, though Luke does not incorporate the observation in his preceding paragraph (vers. 4, 5); as Festus, in rehearsing the story to Agrippa, omits to state that he had invited the Sanhedrists to come to Cæsarea). (2) That he had nevertheless given them the fullest opportunity to establish their case against Paul, but that they had failed to bring out anything more tangible than this, that on the religious—hardly "superstitious," since courtesy must have taught him better manners than so to insult his guest (see "Critical Remarks")—questions above referred to, he, Paul, took a different side from them, and maintained Jesus was alive, while they as positively alleged He was dead. (3) That he had been altogether at a loss how to deal with such a problem, and had proposed that it be laid before the High Ecclesiastical Court of the nation at Jerusalem, which might discuss the question, if not under his presidency, at all events in his presence. (4) That, as Paul had declined this offer, and had appealed to Nero, he (Festus) was now waiting a convenient opportunity to have him forwarded to the imperial court. It is obvious that Festus would rather Paul had not appealed to Augustus. It was a step the exact issue of which for himself the governor, as well as for Paul the prisoner, no one could foresee. It need not be doubted that the calmest bosom of all connected with this affair was that of Paul.

III. **The king's reply to the governor.**—1. *A wish expressed.* "I would also hear the man myself." Better, "I also was wishing," meaning, as some suggest, that he had not for the first time heard of Paul, and had even before this been secretly desirous of both looking on and listening to the great Nazarene preacher, as Herod Antipas had formerly been with regard to Christ (Luke xxiii. 8). Reports of the apostle's doings, both in Palestine and in Asia Minor, could hardly fail to have reached the ear of Agrippa II.; and, being the son of Agrippa I. who had so fiercely persecuted the Jerusalem Christians, and who had so soon after miserably died at Cæsarea, it was not surprising that, like Drusilla his sister (xxiv. 24), he should have inwardly cherished a longing to see and hear the wonderful Jewish Rabbi who had so suddenly apostatised from the law of his fathers, and so powerfully agitated the world ever since. 2. *The wish granted.* Festus, out of courtesy towards his guest, and out of a secret hope, it may be conjectured, that Agrippa would be able to assist him in his perplexity, promised that next day an opportunity should be afforded him of both seeing and hearing the distinguished man whom Felix had left in bonds, and against whom the Sanhedrists were gnashing their teeth, but over whom, though Festus knew it not, a watchful Providence, even more than Augustus's soldiers, was keeping guard.

Learn.—1. That courtesy becomes all men, but especially Christians. 2. That Christ's witnesses, even when in prison for their Master's sake, do not cease to be men talked about and wondered at. 3. That Christ's people are not always careful to avoid condemning others unheard. 4. That when other people's interests are at stake no delay should intervene to hinder setting things to rights. 5. That the world's charges against Christians are, for the most part, untrue. 6. That the unenlightened understanding has a difficulty in comprehending questions in religion. 7. That the grand problem of all the Christian centuries concerns the resurrection of Jesus. 8. That Christians have sometimes

a better chance of getting justice at a civil tribunal than in an ecclesiastical court. 9. That wicked men have often a secret respect for ministers of the gospel. 10. That to hear the gospel out of curiosity alone is not a promising occupation.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 13. *Christian Salutations.*

I. Are **becoming** on the part of Christ's followers towards each other (Rom. xvi. 16).

II. Are **due** by Christ's followers even to such as are unbelieving (Matt. v. 47).

III. Are **regarded by Christ** as a high proof of sincerity in religion (Matt. v. 48).

IV. Are **calculated to win the favourable regards** of those who might otherwise be hostile to religion.

Agrippa and Bernice.

I. **Possessors of a common nature.**

II. **Descendants of a common parentage.**

III. **Sharers of a common dignity.**

IV. **Partners in a common wickedness.**

V. **Actors in a common ceremony.**

VI. **Partakers of a common privilege** (ver. 23).

VII. **Rejectors of a common salvation** (xxvi. 30).

Ver. 14. *Paul's Case.*

That of a follower of Christ.—

I. **Accused of crimes he had not committed.**

II. **Suffering persecution for conscience' sake.**

III. **Consigned to prison against all law and justice.**

IV. **Compelled to appeal to the world's tribunals for protection.**

Ver. 16. *Not the Custom of the Romans!* Neither should it be of Christians.

I. To punish a man before he has been found guilty.

II. To pronounce a man guilty before he has been heard in his defence.

III. To ask him to defend himself before he knows the evidence against him.

IV. To refuse a man the right of appeal from a lower court to a higher. Yet all these violations of natural right have been perpetrated in times past in the name of religion.

Ver. 17. *No delay!* Cases in which there should never be procrastination.

I. In doing justice to one's fellowmen.

II. In relieving the cry of human distress.

III. In listening to the call of duty.

IV. In accepting the invitation of the gospel.

V. In making known Christ's salvation to others.

VI. In fleeing from the presence of temptation.

VII. In preparing for death and judgment.

Ver. 18. *"As I supposed"; or, the World's Misconceptions about Christianity.*

I. **About its founder.**—The world supposes Him—(1) to have been "one Jesus" and nothing more, whereas He is the Son of God and one with the Father. 2. To have been merely a good man and wise teacher, whereas He was the sinless One and the Truth. 3. To have died as a martyr to His own cause, whereas He laid down His life as a propitiation for our sins. 4. To be dead, whereas He is alive again for evermore.

II. **About its tenets.**—The world supposes—1. That so far as these are intelligible they are only the discoveries of the natural reason, whereas they claim to be the revelations of eternal wisdom. 2. That they may be better (though, in the world's judgment, that is questionable), but are not really different from the tenets of other religions, whereas they claim to supersede those of all other religions. 3. That they will have their day, by-and-by

become obsolete, and ultimately be forgotten, whereas they will endure while the world lasts. 4. That they are no more fitted to promote the happiness of mankind than the teachings of other religions, whereas they alone have power to permanently enlighten the understanding, purify the heart, quicken the conscience, and redeem the will.

III. **About its preachers.**—The world supposes—1. That they are the victims of an intellectual delusion, whereas they are the subjects of true mental illumination. 2. That they are the teachers of an idle superstition, whereas they are the bearers to mankind of the highest saving knowledge. 3. That they are troublers of society and disturbers of the peace of commnnities, whereas they are real restorers of order, and promoters of social well-being. 4. That they are interested self-seekers, whereas they are, when true to their vocation, disinterested apostles of goodwill and grace to men.

Ver. 19. *One Jesus—Dead or Alive*—the great question of the day.

I. **Dead.**—In support of this may be urged—1. That *death*—without resurrection following—*is the ordinary lot of man*, and that Jesus, whatever else He was, was a *bonâ-fide* man. The exceptions to this law recorded in the Scriptures—such as the raisings mentioned in the Gospels (Matt. ix. 25; Luke vii. 15; John xi. 44)—must meanwhile be left out of view. 2. *That since the* so-called *resurrection of Jesus no one else of the human race has been recalled to life.* Here again the instances of Dorcas (ix. 40) and Eutychus (xx. 12) must be meanwhile withdrawn from consideration. The exceptional character of Christ's resurrection is in one aspect of it a difficulty in the way of assenting to its truth. 3. That *Jesus*, if He died—and of this by the supposition no doubt exists—*could not have been restored to life without a miraculous interference with the uniform order of nature*, and, so far as man's experience goes, the occurrence of a supernatural is less probable than that of a natural phenomenon. 4. That *no one is reported to have ever seen Jesus after His alleged resurrection except those who were interested in believing He had risen* —such as Mary Magdalene, the women who went to the sepulchre, the ten disciples, James and the five hundred brethren. 5. That *the so-called appearance of the risen One are all explainable by natural means*, without calling in the aid of a supernatural occurrence, such as the reanimation of a dead body. Whatever objections may be urged against the swoon theory or the deception hypothesis, the supposition that all the appearances of the forty days were of the same sort as that made to Paul—viz., visionary—is quite sufficient to account for the rise in the early Church of a belief in the resurrection of Jesus.

II. **Alive.**—This alternative is based on the following considerations: 1. That, if Christ rose not from the dead, then *His prediction about Himself was falsified.* He distinctly claimed that after three days He should rise again. Of course an ordinary man's predictions about himself might fail without any consequence relative to himself being deducible beyond this, that he must have been in error; but with the failure of Christ's predictions about Himself collapses the entire superstructure of His pretensions. 2. That if Christ rose not from the dead, then *He could not have been what He gave Himself out to be*, not only the Messiah of Israel but the Son of God, and therefore must have been an impostor—an inference which is contradicted by all that is written concerning Him in Scripture. 3. That if Christ rose not from the dead, *the origin of the Christian Church is perfectly inexplicable.* Rationalists may hold that the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus is sufficiently accounted for by the illusion or delusion of Mary Magdalene and of the enthusiasts whom her contagious ecstasy affected; but the persistence for nineteen centuries of an

idea which was cradled in the excited brain of a female, and the propagation by means thereof of the Christian Church throughout these centuries cannot be explained without assuming that the resurrection of Christ was a fact. 4. That if Christ rose not from the dead, then *the apostles who staked their lives on the truth of this assertion were not only of all men the most deluded, but were besides the most transcendent fanatics the world has ever seen.* That one man, or even two, should have acted in the fashion in which the apostles are represented as having done might be credible, that twelve men, and much more, that five hundred men should have done so, is incredible. 5. That if Christ rose not from the dead then *all the experiences of those who claim to have become conscious of a spiritual life derived from the risen Christ, must be set down as pious imaginations.* We must frankly admit ourselves not prepared for this (see "Hints" on i. 3).

Ver. 20. *Perplexing Things about Christianity to Worldly Men.*

I. **The supernatural character of its founder.**—Attested by His resurrection from the dead.

II. **The spiritual character of its doctrines.**—Religious questions generally are in great part beyond the grasp of men of the world (1 Cor. ii. 14).

III. **The lofty character of its adherents.**—These, whether teachers or professors, when true to its spirit, appear actuated by motives which are more or less incomprehensible to ordinary minds.

Ver. 22. *Agrippa's Wish.*—"I also could wish to hear the man" may have been one of three sorts.

I. The wish of a **supercilious curiosity**, which seeks nothing more than a passing entertainment. Of such sort as are not unfrequently the motives which lead men to attend Church, hear sermons, and read good books.

II. The wish of a **worldly desire of knowledge**, which is only concerned about interesting information. Occasionally also this ambition leads men to wait on Christian preachers, frequent religious assemblies, and study theological works.

III. The wish of a **pious thirst for salvation**, which fills the need of spiritual instruction. Happily there are not wanting those who are actuated by the noblest impulses in seeking to hear gospel ministers and observe Christian ordinances.—*From Gerok in Lange.*

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 23—27.

A Third Hearing before Agrippa and Bernice; or, Festus's Excuse for calling forth his Prisoner.

I. **The brilliant assemblage.**—The persons composing it were the most illustrious of the day, the *élite* and fashion of Cæsarea. 1. *A Roman governor.* Porcius Festus, Felix's successor, who had recently entered on his procuratorship over Palestine (A.D. 60-62), nd who in some degree succeeded in restoring order to the country which had been seriously disquieted during his predecessor's reign (Jos., *Ant.*, XX. viii. 9, 10). Of these Roman governors generally, not inaptly styled "a splendid series of provincial administrators," it has been said "we can find among them examples occasionally of cruelty, occasionally of rapacity, but never of incompetence" (Waddington, *Fastes des Provinces Asiatiques*, p. 18; quoted by Ramsay in *The Church in the Roman Empire*, p. 174). 2. *A royal pair.* Agrippa II., the last of the Herods (born in 27 A.D., made King of Chalcis A.D. 50, died A.D. 100, in the third year of Trajan), accompanied by his beautiful sister Bernice, who had once been, through marriage with Polemon, Queen of Cilicia, Paul's native province (see preceding "Homily and Critical Remarks" on ver. 13). Kingly dignity and queenly loveliness are gifts bestowed on few. When attended

by moral elevation and grace, they become both worthy of admiration and powerful in influence. When dissociated from these, and much more when allied with depravity, as was the case in Agrippa and Bernice, they attract towards themselves the scorn and contempt of all good men and women. 3. *A company of officers.* Five in number, these were the military tribunes, or commanders of the imperial forces stationed at the garrison, who waited on and served the procurator, and whose presence on this occasion was, no doubt, intended to put honour on Festus's distinguished guests, if not to overawe the lonely prisoner who was about to be summoned forth before such august notabilities. If the former, it was all the honour the sinful pair were worth receiving, and perhaps all they could have appreciated; if the latter, it signally failed in accomplishing the end for which it was designed. 4. *A group of magistrates.* The principal men of the city, the civic authorities of Cæsarea, were probably accustomed to receive invitations from the governor when great occasions were going forward in the palace.

II. **The splendid auditorium.**—The palace of Herod (see on xxiii. 35). 1. *A scene of magnificent displays.* It was within this gorgeous chamber that the kings and governors of past days had been wont to hold their celebrations, when, as on the present occasion they exhibited all the pomp and paraphernalia that were supposed to lend lustre to their royal and imperial majesties. The account of what took place on this memorable day reads like a description given by one who had been an eyewitness of the scene: "The splendour of the procession and the glittering appearance of the court, crowded with those royal and princely personages and their retinue, Roman and Jewish guards, the Sanhedrim officials, the stately garb of the high priest and his fellows, the head of the hierarchy of Israel" (it is doubtful, however, if these were present), "must have been very striking; all honour on this occasion was evidently shown to King Agrippa II., the last Jew who legally bore the royal title" (Spence). 2. *A hall of bloody memories* (see on xxiii. 35). It would hardly be possible for Agrippa to forget the tragic associations which adhered to the place in which they were then assembled. The blare of trumpets might dull, but would not be able to altogether shut out the cries of murdered men and women that in imagination he heard echoing through the hall. The magnificence of the scene before him would not prevent him from seeing on its marble pavement stains of blood, which to other eyes may have been invisible. 3. *A place of gracious opportunities.* Such an opportunity had been given to Felix and Drusilla when Paul reasoned before them of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come (xxiv. 24); and such another was about to be afforded to the gay company then assembled within its walls.

III. **The noteworthy prisoner.**—Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, now the prisoner of Jesus Christ (Eph. iii. 1). Remarkable for three things: 1. *The evil reputation he enjoyed at the hands of his countrymen.* "All the multitude of the Jews," both at Jerusalem and at Cæsarea, cried out that he was no longer worthy to live. Could they have obtained their desire he should instantly have been torn to pieces, or stoned to death. And yet he was the noblest man that Palestine had produced—whether for excellence of talent, nobility of soul, or beneficence of life! Verily the world does not always know its great or good men. Paul at this moment might have taken to himself for consolation the eighth beatitude (Matt. v. 11). 2. *The baseless character of the charges preferred against him.* Three times over he had been put upon his trial—before the council (xxiii. 9, 29), before Felix (xxiv. 22), and before Festus (xxv. 18)—and each time the verdict had been practically given in his favour. He had committed nothing worthy of death, or of imprisonment. And yet he was remanded to confinement! "God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to

perform." Paul had still to preach the gospel to Agrippa, and to his countrymen at Rome; and for both reasons he was yet, in God's providence, detained as a prisoner. 3. *The noble courage he had all through displayed.* Never quaking through fear of man, never shrinking from the severest ordeals, never apologising for the message he delivered, never pleading with his persecutors for mercy, but always only for justice, never hesitating to proclaim the glorious truths of Christ crucified and risen, of which he had been appointed a witness and herald; but always calm, heroic, self-forgetful, earnest, tender, and confident. Probably a more sublime testimony to the efficacy of Divine grace in supporting a faithful minister of the gospel amid weakness, weariness, pain, shame, hardship, and oppression has never been furnished to the Church or the world!

IV. **The trumpery excuse.**—After a pompous harangue the governor pretends to give an explanation to his guests of the reason why he had commanded the apostle to be fetched from his confinement. The excuse was—1. *Ostensibly good.* Having determined to forward Paul to Rome, it was unreasonable to send on a prisoner for judgment without specifying the charges that had been brought against him. No doubt; and it was illegal as well, since Roman law demanded that such a document should accompany every case that was transmitted to the emperor. Then he had nothing certain to write about the case and hoped that Agrippa, being a Jew, might assist him to the better understanding of its intricacies. This, too, was a proper course to follow, if it really was so that he felt at a loss what to report to the Emperor. 2. *Barely true.* Festus understood perfectly that Paul had committed nothing worthy of death—that was one certain thing he could have written. Festus knew that Paul's offence was neither social nor political, but only ecclesiastical and religious, and that as yet the policy of Rome was not to intermeddle with such disputes—which was a second certain thing he could have reported to Augustus. Besides, Festus knew that the real reason for Paul's production was to afford Agrippa and Bernice an opportunity of hearing that remarkable man. Hence, in a strict sense, Festus's explanation was not precisely in accordance with truth.

Learn.—1. The mystery of Divine providence, which seats an Agrippa upon the throne and consigns a Paul to a prison. 2. The insignificance of earthly pomp when compared with the glory of moral and religious worth, as seen in the external decoration of Agrippa and Bernice, when set alongside of the inner graces of Paul. 3. The truth of Jesus Christ's predictions that His servants should suffer persecution (Matt. x. 18; Mark xiii. 9; Luke xxi. 12), and in particular that Paul should bear His name before kings (ix. 15). 4. The infatuation which sometimes impels communities to hate and even slay their best men. Seen in the conduct of the Jews towards Paul. 5. The involuntary testimony that the world is often compelled to bear as to the moral excellence of Christians—illustrated by Festus's declaration concerning Paul. 6. The disregard for strict truth which is often found in great no less than in mean men. 7. The unreasonableness of continuing a man in prison against whom it is difficult to find a charge that will bear writing down.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 23. *A Christian Service in a Strange Place.*

I. **The cathedral,** church, or chapel. The judgment hall in Herod's palace. This hall had been built by wicked hands, had been often stained with blood, had frequently echoed to the cries of despair and the shouts of bacchanalian revelry, and had more than once reverberated to the sound of Paul.

But any place will do to preach the gospel in.

II. **The congregation.**—1. *Brilliant.* Consisting of the civic and military dignitaries of Cæsarea, the aristocracy and fashion of its population. 2. *Mixed.* Comprising persons of royal birth, and persons of low degree, statesmen and rulers with their servants and subjects. 3. *Sinful.* All alike needful of the gracious blessings of the gospel. Of different degrees of wickedness, they were one in this, that all needed salvation.

III. **The preacher.**—1. *A shackled prisoner.* Paul, when he stood before that gay throng which crowded Herod's judgment hall, was chained by his right hand to a Roman soldier. 2. *A spiritual freeman.* In all that company Paul alone was possessed of true liberty.

> "He is the freeman whom the truth makes free
> And all are slaves besides" (*Cowper*).

3. *A fearless prophet.* Conscious of innocence, and depending on his Lord, Paul was not abashed before so much material splendour and earthly glory. 4. *An eloquent orator.* Sufficiently proved by the oration he delivered when called upon to speak in his defence (xxvi.).

IV. **The sermon.**—The apology he uttered, setting forth: 1. The *groundless character* of the charges advanced against him. Thus confirming the conclusion at which Festus had already arrived (ver. 25). 2. The *supernatural character* of the call which had transformed him into a Christian apostle. Thus explaining that his countrymen, in seeking his death, were practically fighting against God. 3. The *necessary character* of his mission to the Gentiles. Thus showing that in all he did he was acting under the impulse of a higher will than his own (see chap. xxvi).

Ver. 24. *Behold this Man!* (Compare John xix. 5: Behold the Man!)

I. **An Israelite indeed, and yet hated by his co-religionists.**—They had lost the inner kernel of the Old Testament religion, and were trying to live upon the husk; they had abandoned the spirit, and were become slaves of the letter. He, on the other hand, had cast aside the letter, and was living on the spirit of it, had thrown away the husk, and was retaining the kernel.

II. **An innocent man, and yet consigned to prison.**—In this certainly he was not worse treated than his Master had been, who, though He did no sin, was yet put to death as a common malefactor. Though the law was not made for a righteous man but for the unrighteous (1 Tim. i. 9), yet its penalties and prisons often fall to the righteous rather than to the wicked.

III. **A friendless prisoner, and yet a fearless confessor.**—Though Paul had friends in Cæsarea whose visits cheered and relieved his captivity (xxiv. 23), it is not certain that they were permitted to stand beside him in Herod's palace on that memorable day. Nevertheless, it need not be doubted that the Lord stood by him (Matt. x. 19, xxviii. 20), and that the presence of this heavenly friend was more to him than ten thousands of human allies and supporters, enabling him to say with the Hebrew Psalmist: "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm xxvii. 1)

Ver. 26. *No Certain Thing to Write; or, the Uncertainties of Infidelity.*

I. **Whether there be no God.**—The fool may say in his heart that there is no God (Psalm xiv. 1). The transgressor may wish there were no God. The materialist may assert and imagine he has proved there is no God. But neither fool nor philosopher can be sure that their conclusions are right.

II. **Whether Jesus of Nazareth was only a man.**—That He was a man all—believers and unbelievers—are agreed. That He was only a man has been vehemently and persistently affirmed by rejectors of His divinity. But they can never demonstrate to the satisfac-

tion of others that such a thing as an incarnation is impossible.

III. **Whether there be no hereafter.**—This also has been blatantly proclaimed by the champions of infidelity; but as no one has ever returned from the grave they cannot positively know that there is no conscious existence beyond.

IV. **Whether there be no hell.**—By many it is confidently maintained that eternal punishment is only an imagination of mediæval theologians; but until the great hereafter comes with its awakening experiences, it will be impossible with regard to this to cherish more than a hope. N.B.—If Christians were uncertain that the things most surely believed among them were realities, they would be in no worse position than the unbelievers are who reject them; but Christians can say with reference to their faith in God, Christ, Immortality, Heaven, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables" (2 Peter i. 16).

Ver. 27. *Unreasonable Things*, whoever does them.

I. To commit a man to gaol who has done no wrong.

II. To punish a man on account of his religion.

III. To oppress the single and defenceless in order to please the many and the strong.

IV. To expect to crush a good cause or a good man by means of persecution.

Ver. 23-27. *Festus's Audience Chamber at Cæsarea.*

I. **A drawing-room** of worldly glory; constituted such by the splendour of the assembled nobility (ver. 23).

II. **A lecture room** of holy doctrine; constituted such by the testimony of the Apostle (xxvi. 1-23).

III. **A judgment hall** of Divine majesty; constituted such by the impression of the apostolic discourse, which discloses the secrets of all hearts (xxvi. 24-32).—*Gerok in Lange.*

CHAPTER XXVI.

PAUL BEFORE KING AGRIPPA II.—THIRD APOLOGY.

§ 1. Paul's Appeal to his Past Life; or, a Vindication of his Jewish Orthodoxy (vers. 1-8).

§ 2. Paul's Rehearsal of an Old Story; or, the Secret of his Conversion Explained (vers. 9-18).

§ 3. Paul's Subsequent Career as a Christian; or, How He Turned to the Gentile Mission (vers. 19-23).

§ 4. Paul's two Distinguished Listeners, Festus and Agrippa; or, Two Souls Struggling Against the Truth (vers. 24-32).

CRITICAL REMARKS.

Ver. 1. **Agrippa said unto Paul.**—On this occasion Agrippa, not Festus, presided over the tribunal. The "stretching forth" of the hand was the gesture of an orator preparing himself to speak, and differed from the act of "beckoning" or shaking "with the hand" (xii. 17, xiii. 16, xxi. 40), which was a signal demanding silence. The act is thus described: "*Porrigit dextram et ad instar oratorum conformat articulum, dubousque infimis conclusis digitis ceteros eminentes porrigit*" (Apuleius, *Met.*, ii. 54, quoted by Meyer). The hand which

Paul raised was chained (ver. 29). **Answered for himself.** *Made his defence*, or apology. This was the third occasion on which Paul had vindicated himself—the first having been when he addressed the Jews (xxii. 1), and the second when he stood before Felix (xxiv. 10). The present speech (vers. 2-23) divides itself into three parts. In the first (vers. 2-8), the apostle sets forth the solidarity of his own faith with that of his countrymen, in so far as each is a religion of hope; in the second (vers. 9-18) he explains the origin of his call to the apostolate; in the third (vers. 19-23) he shows how he was led to direct his apostolic activity towards the Gentiles.

Ver. 2. The best MSS. omit "the" before Jews, as in vers. 7, 21, xxv. 10. Paul would represent the accusation as purely Jewish in its character, and indeed as proceeding from some only, not from all, of the Jews.

Ver. 3. **Especially** gives the reason why Paul counted himself fortunate, not the quality or quantity of Agrippa's knowledge, though "Rabbinic writers speak of Agrippa as having excelled in a knowledge of the law" (Hackett). **Thee to be expert.**—The words in Greek are anakolouthic. Instead of an accusative, a genitive might rather have been expected. **Patiently.**—Paul obviously proposed a somewhat extended oration.

Ver. 4. **My manner of life from my youth up.**—This appears to imply that Paul had been brought to Jerusalem at an early age (compare xxiii. 3), though he was seemingly absent from the Metropolis during the three years of our Lord's ministry (2 Cor. v. 16).

Ver. 5. **From the beginning.**—The same idea as that contained in "from my youth up." **I lived a Pharisee.**—Observe the succession of the clauses, which state (1) how long the Jews had known Paul—from his youth up, or from the beginning; (2) where they had known him—in Jerusalem; and (3) what they had known about him—that he had lived a Pharisee (compare xxii. 3, xxiii. 6).

Ver. 6. **I stand here and am judged.**—Better, *I stand* here, *being judged*. Paul's complaint was that he was being tried, not for heterodoxy, but for "orthodoxy"—for the hope, etc.

Ver. 7. **Our twelve tribes.**—Paul, like James (i. 1), considered the then existing Jewish people to be the legitimate representatives of the Twelve Tribes. Like James, he ignored "the legend, so often repeated and revived, that the ten tribes of the northern kingdoms of Israel, after they had been carried away by Shalmaneser, had wandered far away, and were to be found, in disguise, in far-off regions of the world. The earliest appearance of the fable is in the apocryphal 2 Esdras xiii. 40-46, where they are said to have gone to 'a country where never mankind dwelt, that they might there keep the statutes which they never kept in their own land.' The apostle, on the contrary, represents the whole body of the Twelve Tribes as alike serving God" (Plumptre). While it is certainly true that the main body of the home-returning exiles consisted of members of the two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, it is equally indubitable that amongst them were members of other tribes, as, *e.g.*, of Ephraim and Manasseh (1 Chron. ix. 3).

Ver. 8. **Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you?**—Another interpretation gives "What! is it judged incredible with you?" (Griesbach, Kuinoel, De Wette, Conybeare and Howson). **That God should raise the dead?**—Lit., *if God raises*; εἰ presenting the question as one a sceptic might controvert, and ἐγείρει being present, because the resurrection of Jesus was regarded by the apostle as illustrating "a permanent attribute or power on the part of God" (Hackett). The precise force of the question has been differently explained. Connected with the preceding verses, it has been understood as giving the inner kernel of the promise made unto the Jewish fathers, and as replying to a look of incredulity perhaps at the moment visible on the faces of his hearers (Holtzmann); regarded as introductory to the ensuing paragraph, it has been interpreted as signifying either that, since no Jew could hesitate to believe in the resurrection of the dead, what the apostle was about to rehearse should likewise be accepted as credible (Overbeck), or that the apostle's faith in the Messiah, of which he was about to speak, had exactly that for its presupposition which no Jew would think of controverting—viz., that God was able to raise the dead (Wendt). Perhaps the first connection is the better.

Ver. 9. Commences the second part of Paul's apology. Paul would not despair of converting his countrymen from doubt to belief, since he himself had undergone a similar mental revolution, and had become a believer in, and a preacher of, the resurrection of Jesus. **I ought.**—Paul acted from what he deemed a sense of duty when he "persecuted the Church of God" (1 Cor. xv. 9), which may be taken as his interpretation of the clause, doing many things "contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth."

Ver. 10. **The saints.**—This designation, intelligible only to Christians (see ix. 13), Paul did not use when addressing the Jews, but now employs before Agrippa, perhaps because he deemed caution no longer necessary, and wished both to put honour on the followers of the Nazarene and to aggravate his own guilt (compare Birk's *Horæ Apostolicæ*, vii. viii.). The disciples of the Crucified were "the 'holy ones' of God's people, Israel—what the Chasidim, or 'devout ones' (the 'Assideans' of 1 Macc. vii. 13; 2 Macc. xiv. 6), had been in an earlier generation" (Plumptre). **I gave my voice**—lit., *I cast my voting stone*, calculum

adjeci, **against them.**—Whether this should be taken literally, as signifying that Paul actually voted against the Christians (Conybeare and Howson, Alford, Holtzmann, Hausrath, Plumptre), or figuratively (Bengel, Kuinoel, De Wette, Meyer, Lechler, Zöckler, Hackett, Stier), that he assented to their condemnation, is debated. If the former interpretation be the right one, then the probability is that Paul had been a member of the Sanhedrim, and over thirty years of age, as well as married and the father of a family. As, however, Paul's age at the time of Stephen's murder is uncertain, and as Scripture does not mention either wife or child of the apostle (but see Hints on ver. 10), it is held by others that the latter interpretation should be preferred.

Ver. 11. **I . . . compelled them.**—Lit., *I was compelling them—i.e.*, I strove to make them—**blaspheme.**—It does not follow that he succeeded, though "that among the many who suffered this violence, every one preserved his fidelity, it would be unreasonable to affirm" (Hackett). Pliny (*Ep.*, n. 97) speaks of ordering the Bithynian Christians—*maledicere Christo*—but adds that it could not be done—*quorum nihil cogi posse dicuntur qui sunt revera Christiani.* **Strange** cities were *foreign* cities, outside of Palestine, like Damascus.

Ver. 12. **Whereupon.**—Lit., *in which* (persecutions) being engaged. Compare xxiv. 18.

Ver. 13. **At midday.**—A note, omitted in Luke's narration (ix. 3) but corresponding to Paul's previous statement "about noon" (xxii. 6). **A light from heaven.**—As in ix. 3; spoken of as *great* in xxii. 6, to which corresponds the next clause, **above the brightness of the sun.**—This light is now said to have encompassed, not Paul alone (ix. 3, xxii. 6), but his companions as well.

Ver. 14. Remarks that these companions, as well as the apostle, were all struck to the ground in terror, though they appear to have recovered from their fright earlier than he (ix. 7). The **voice** which Paul heard, Luke says they also heard (ix. 7), though Paul affirms they heard it not (xxii. 9), as conversely Luke reports they saw no man (ix. 7), while Paul asserts they beheld the light (xx. 9). On these supposed contradictions see ix. 7, and xxii. 6, and compare Dan. x. 7, 3 Macc. vi. 18, and John xii. 29, which all seem to imply that heavenly voices and visions are understood and seen only by those for whom they are intended. Paul mentioned that the voice spoke to him **in the Hebrew tongue,** because he was then himself speaking in Greek, not in Hebrew, as in xxii. (see Hints on ver. 14). **It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.**—Or, *goads.* The meaning was that his resistance to the cause and will of Christ would be foolish and unavailing, as well as painful to himself. The ox-goad, six or eight feet long, and pointed with iron, was held by the Oriental ploughman in one hand, while the other grasped the one-handled plough. The refractory animal, when pierced or pricked with the iron-pointed goad, would, of course, kick against it. Examples of this proverb have been produced from Greek and Latin writers (see Æschylus, *Agam.*, 1624: πρὸς κέντρα μὴ λάκτιζε; and Terence, *Phormio*, I. ii. 27: "*Nam quæ inscitia est advorsum stimulum calces*").

Ver. 16. **Which thou hast seen.**—According to the best authorities this should be *wherein thou hast seen Me.*

Ver. 18. **To turn** them should be *that they may turn* **from darkness to light,** the verb being intransitive (see ver. 20, xiv. 15).

Ver. 19.—Begins the third part of Paul's defence, and furnishes the reason for his Gentile mission. **Whereupon.**—Lit., *whence*, wherefore, accordingly—*i.e.*, having been so instructed.

Ver. 20. **Showed first unto them of Damascus.**—(Compare ix. 20.) No contradiction to Gal. i. 17, which does not assert that Paul's evangelistic work did not commence till after his return from Arabia (Holtzmann).

Ver. 21. **Works meet for repentance.**—*I.e.*, such works as proved repentance to be sincere. It is simply ridiculous to find in this an evidence of non-historicity, since Paul's doctrine was that of justification by faith alone (Zeller).

Ver. 22. **Witnessing.**—If μαρτυρούμενος (Received Text) be correct, then the rendering should be "borne witness to" (see vi. 3, x. 22, xxii. 12); but, as Paul was not witnessed to, but accused by small and great, the reading μαρτυρόμενος (Revised Text) is to be preferred, in which case "witnessing," "testifying," is an accurate translation.

Ver. 23. **That Christ should suffer.**—Better, *how that*, or if, or whether—εἰ presenting the points—ζητήματα questions (xxv. 19)—as Paul was wont to discuss them. 1. Whether the Messiah, not must suffer, but is capable of suffering—παθητός, *passibilis* (Vulgate); *i.e.*, not whether He should have a nature capable of suffering, but whether the idea of suffering was possible to be harmonised with the conception of Messiah laid down in the Old Testament. And 2. Whether by rising from the dead (1 Cor. xv. 22; Col. i. 18) He should be the first to show (or proclaim) light unto the people and to the Gentiles (Eph. ii. 17). As the revelation contained in the law and the prophets had been called (Isa. ii. 5), so was the gospel (2 Cor. iv. 4) now styled, "Light."

Ver. 24. **As he thus spake for himself.**—Lit., *he speaking these things in his defence*—ταῦτα, these things, being the words just uttered about the resurrection, rather than the entire speech. The notion of a resurrection appeared as absurd to Festus as it had done to the

Athenians (xvii. 32), and caused him to think Paul **beside himself**, *raving*, or mad, and to say so, not in jest (Olshausen), but in earnest, at the same time ascribing his insanity to his **much learning**—πολλὰ γράμματα, which, among the Jews, meant much theology (John vii. 15; 2 Tim. iii. 15).

Ver. 25. **Most noble.**—Powerful, or excellent (κράτιστε), as in xxiii. 26, xxiv. 3; Luke i. 3.

Ver. 26. **Before.**—Better, *unto* **whom.** Paul, with fearless confidence, appealed to Agrippa, who knew perfectly that the doctrines just referred to, of a crucified and risen Christ, on which his, Paul's, gospel was founded, were not fancies, illusions, the ravings of a madman, but words of truth and soberness, because relating to facts which had been done and events which had taken place, not in a corner, but in the metropolis of Palestine, and therefore publicly.

Ver. 28. **Almost** (ἐν ὀλίγῳ = propemodum, a meaning of which no other example can be given) **thou persuadest me to be** or become (γενέσθαι) **a Christian** (Chrysostom, Luther, Grotius, Bengel, Stier, Spence); or, *with but little persuasion thou persuadest me to become*, or, according to a different reading, *thou believest* (thyself able) *to make of me a Christian*; *i.e.*, thou wouldest fain make me a Christian (R.V., Tischendorf, Meyer, Alford, Plumptre, Holtzmann, and others); or, *in a little time* (*i.e.*, if you go on speaking thus) *you will persuade me to become a Christian* (Calvin, Olshausen, Neander, De Wette, Robinson, Hackett, and others). The third is admissible, but does not so well suit the apostle's answer (see below). The second fits best if the alternative reading, ποιῆσαι for γενέσθαι be adopted. The first, though perhaps grammatically doubtful, harmonises best with the seriousness which Paul's oration was calculated to inspire. The second and third are more or less ironical.

Ver. 29. **Both almost and altogether.**—Ἐν ὀλίγῳ καὶ ἐν πολλῷ (the best texts have ἐν μεγάλῳ), in little and in much. It must be admitted that this reply does not fit in well with the first of the above renderings, while it suits admirably the second and third, as thus: either, I would to God that whether with little or with much, or whether in a little time or in a great time, not thou only, etc. In spite, therefore, of the seemingly ironical character of the second and third, one or other of these should be preferred. **These bonds.**—(See xxiv. 23, 27.)

Ver. 30.—Unwilling to hear more, the auditors rose up in order, according to their rank.

Ver. 31.—After conferring with one another Festus and Agrippa came to the same conclusion as had already three times been reached concerning Paul—first by the Pharisees (xxiii. 9), next by Lysias (xxiii. 29), and lastly by Festus (xxv. 25).

Ver. 32.—Agrippa adds that but for his appeal to Cæsar the apostle might have been set at liberty.

Note.—The authenticity of this and the two preceding chapters relating to Paul's imprisonment at Cæsarea has been questioned on the following grounds: 1. That the two trials—before Felix and before Festus—have been artificially constructed by the author, and manifestly on the same plan, according to which in each the same incidents recur—the same motives for the accusation, the same murder-proposal of the Jews, the same appearing of Paul's enemies before the Roman tribunal with their complaints, the same hearing before a regularly constituted court, the same failure in the evidence offered, the same protection and recognition of his innocence at the hands of the Roman procurator, and the same style of defence—viz., that Paul was an orthodox Jew, and indeed a Pharisee, who had been constrained by a irresistible Divine impulse to enter on his Gentile mission (Baur, Zeller, Holtzmann). 2. That the position adopted by Paul was more in accordance with that taken by the second-century apologists (Holtzmann). 3. That everything appears directed to show how Paul, who was persecuted by the fanaticism of the Jews, was protected through the righteousness of the Romans (Pfleiderer); and 4. That so completely is his innocence established, over against both Roman policy and Jewish hate, that his continued imprisonment (Weizsäcker) and deportation to Rome (Holtzmann) are simply inconceivable. But to all this it suffices to reply—1. That similarity between two judicial processes does not necessarily establish the unreality of both or of either—and all the more if the processes were conducted by the same parties, against the same individual, about the same charge, and with the same evidence. 2. That second-century apologists may well have learnt how to defend themselves, by a careful studying of Paul's defences. 3. That the favour shown by the Roman Governors to Paul accords with what is known of the Roman policy towards Christianity in the first century, and not with what is known of her policy in the second century (Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire*, p. 194); and 4. That Paul's continued imprisonment requires no explanation different from that given in the text—viz., the unwillingness of the Roman governors either to please the Jews by punishing Paul or to displease them by setting him free; while after his appeal to Cæsar had been allowed, it would probably not have been safe for either Festus or Agrippa to have disregarded it. But, even if they did, that would only show they had failed in their duty, not that the narrative in the Acts was unhistorical.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 1—8.

Paul's Appeal to His Past Life; or, *a Vindication of his Jewish Orthodoxy.*

I. **Paul's happiness in entering on his defence.**—One might naturally have supposed that Paul by this time would have felt it irksome to be called up to speak for himself, having already twice attempted to vindicate his innocence, before the Sanhedrim (xxii. 1) and before Felix (xxiv. 10), but with no good result—only with this, that for two long years he had been detained in bonds. Spirits of less noble mould than Paul's would have been crushed—would have renounced both faith in God and hope for themselves; but he, "as sorrowful yet always rejoicing" (2 Cor. vi. 10), as "perplexed but not in despair, persecuted but not forsaken, cast down but not destroyed" (2 Cor. iv. 8, 9), continued bright and cheerful, never losing heart or hope, constantly confident that all things were working together for his good (Rom. viii. 28), as well as for God's purpose (Eph. i. 11), and therefore always ready to enter any door of service that might be opened, not so much for the vindication of himself as for the furtherance of the gospel and the cause of his Master. In particular, he welcomed the present opportunity of appearing before Agrippa and answering the charges that had been brought against him. 1. *Because Agrippa was a king,* and a king, it was written, should ever love judgment (Psalm xcix. 4) and practise righteousness (Isa. xxxii. 1), yea, righteous lips should be his delight (Prov. xvi. 13), while to search out a matter was his honour (Prov. xxv. 2), and to do wickedness should be to him an abomination (Prov. xvi. 12). 2. *Because Agrippa was an expert in all Jewish customs and questions,* and would be able to comprehend the point or points at issue between him, Paul, and his countrymen—points which had somewhat disconcerted the Governor (xxv. 20). "That Paul here praises the king's eminent knowledge of Jewish religion and morals is no empty flattery, but appears to rest on this, that Agrippa, more than any other member of his family, occupied himself with the people's ecclesiastical affairs, although nothing definite concerning this has been handed down by tradition" (Zöckler). Rabbinic writers speak of Agrippa II. as having excelled in a knowledge of the law; and "as the traditions which these Rabbinic writers follow could not have flowed from this passage, they confirm the representation here given by an unexpected agreement" (Hackett). Possibly Agrippa II. had been carefully instructed in them by his father, Agrippa I., who was "famous for his rigid observance of all Jewish customs and rites" (Spence). 3. *Because Agrippa was acquainted* with the Scriptures, which formed the ultimate standard of judgment for all controverted points in religion. Though Paul made no mention of this in his courteous exordium, it lay clearly in the background of his consciousness (see ver. 27). Notice, that in all this Paul introduces no word in flattery of the young sovereign. Paul doubtless understood that—

> "They do abuse the king that flatter him,
> . . . . . .
> Whereas reproof, obedient and in order,
> Fits kings as they are men, for they may err."—*Shakespeare.*

II. **Paul's request for a patient hearing of his case.**—1. *Because heretofore he had in every instance been interrupted and prevented from making a full statement of his defence.* By the Jews, when he spoke from the castle stairs in Jerusalem (xx. 22); by the high priest, when he appeared before the Sanhedrim (xxiii. 2); by Felix, when he stood before that governor (xxiv. 22)—though not stated, this seems to have been the exact state of matters; by Festus, who succeeded Felix (xxv. 9). And now, before beginning, he bespeaks a different treatment from the Jewish sovereign. 2. *Because he desired to make a complete presentation of his*

cause, without which justice could not be done either to himself, the accused party, or by Agrippa, whose opinion on his case was sought. If, through his imperfect exposition of the exact situation, Agrippa failed to apprehend the matter requiring judgment, then neither would Agrippa be able to return nor himself be likely to receive a righteous verdict. To a fair hearing and an honest sentence even the worst of criminals is entitled.

III. **Paul's appeal to the knowledge of his contemporaries.**—"All the Jews" referred to were obviously all the Jews of Jerusalem and Judæa; and these, the apostle urged, had intimate acquaintance with him. 1. *Where they had known him.* In Jerusalem, and therefore at first hand; not simply by report, as one living at a distance, say in Tarsus, outside the limits of the Holy Land. In the very Metropolis of Judaism, and therefore in the place where those lived who were most capable of observing and judging of his character (see on xxii. 3). 2. *How long they had known him.* From his youth up. Not merely at one or two brief particular times. This statement implies that Paul had in early life, for some reason unknown, removed from Tarsus and settled at Jerusalem, where he was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel (see "Critical Remarks" on xxii. 3). 3. *As what they had known him.* Not as a heretic, or unbeliever, but as one who lived after the straitest sect of their religion, as a Pharisee, as a member of that community of which Josephus writes: "The Pharisees are a Jewish sect who appear to be more religious than others, and who appear to interpret the law more strictly" (*Wars*, I. v. 2), and again: "they are supposed to excel others in the accurate knowledge of their country" (*Life*, 38). All this the Jews knew, and, were they willing—of which Paul was manifestly not sure—could testify concerning him. That any of the "grave and dignified members of the Sanhedrim" were "present in that great assembly that morning" (Spence) cannot be gathered from the narrative, but had they been, they could, had they chosen, have bowed their heads in acquiescence to what Paul was stating to Agrippa.

IV. **Paul's exposition of the charge preferred against himself.**—1. *An explanation.* The offence for which he, a chained prisoner, was being presently examined and judged consisted, not in his having committed any civil crime, political misdemeanour, or religious aberration, but in his having cherished the hope of the promise which had been (1) made unto the fathers, and which in Paul's judgment was contained in the sacred Scriptures as well as embraced more than the prediction of a Divine Messiah, even the announcement of a resurrection, and of a future glorified life (see "Hints" on ver 6); and (2) was cherished at that moment by all the Twelve Tribes, who earnestly served God day and night with a splendid ritual worship, the ultimate end and aim of which was to secure for them that eternal life, through the advent and work of Messiah, to whom their sacrificial ceremonialism and symbolism looked forward. He was therefore in complete harmony with the faith of his countrymen, and differed from them solely in this, that he held that promise to have been fulfilled in the historical appearing of Jesus of Nazareth, and that hope to be realised through His resurrection from the dead. 2. *A defence.* Did they question what he now asserted? Did they deem what he now preached a delusion? If he took for granted that God could raise the dead, why should that be pronounced by them incredible? Had their sacred books never spoken of a resurrection? Was so marvellous a phenomenon as the resuscitation of a dead body altogether unknown to them? It ought not to be, if they had read that sacred volume with sufficient care (see 1 Kings xvii. 17-23; 2 Kings iv. 18-37, xiii. 21). His allegation, then, that he had seen the risen Christ ought not to be lightly waived aside, or the doctrine of a resurrection contemptuously rejected (see "Hints" on ver. 8).

Learn—1. The cheerfulness in trial which Divine grace can inspire. 2. The

value of a wide and accurate knowledge in religion. 3. The advantage to be derived in after years from a well-spent youth. 4. The fundamental basis of all acceptable worship—the promise of God. 5. The reasonableness of faith in the resurrection, and of hope of eternal life.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 1. *Permitted to Speak for Himself.*

I. **A dangerous temptation.**—Before which all ministers require to be on their guard, lest, like false teachers, they should speak merely for themselves, for their own glory, or their own profit.

II. **A painful duty.**—Which ministers sometimes need to perform, as when their ministerial usefulness is threatened by some prevailing calumny, or they are charged with offences they have not committed, and which, if not disproved, would bring their office into disrepute (2 Cor. vi. 3).

III. **A blessed privilege.**—Which all ministers have, and true ministers delight to avail themselves of, when it means to speak for their Master, Christ—for His glory, for the advancement of His cause, for the diffusion of His truth, for the extension of His kingdom.

A Chained Prisoner on His Defence.—A series of marvels.

I. **Speaks before the great ones of the earth without trepidation.**—An example of holy courage (Psalm xxvii. 1; Isa. li. 12).

II. **Descants upon a lofty theme without faltering.**—A proof of high endowment (Psalm xxxvii. 30; Prov. viii. 6).

III. **Seeks the glory of God without a thought of self.**—A sign of great grace (John viii. 50).

IV. **Enters on his task in sublime cheerfulness,** without a symptom of despondent dulness.—An instance of exalted faith.

V. **Rises into glowing eloquence,** without a taint of sordid speech.—A mark of complete self-control.

Ver. 2. *The Secret of Paul's Joy in Addressing Agrippa.*

I. **What it was not.**—Neither (1) *gratification* at being honoured to speak before a king, since Paul would as cheerfully have spoken before a common man; nor (2) *satisfaction* at being able to clear his character from the charges brought against him, though Paul of course was by no means indifferent to this; nor (3) *delight* at the opportunity of exposing the malice of his foes, which richly merited both exposure and rebuke, not to say punishment; nor (4) *expectation* of thereby obtaining his release, since Paul knew that he must go to Rome.

II. **What it was.**—1. *The prospect of being able to testify concerning and for Christ* before one "to whom the circumstances of the Jewish nation, the promises made to the fathers, and the history of Christ, were not unknown"; and 2. *The hope of gaining at least one convert,* perhaps more than one, to the faith of his exalted Lord. "Paul, stretching forth his hand, approached the king, and aimed at his heart" (Besser).

The Character of Paul's Defence.

I. **Humble without servility.**
II. **Fearless without pride.**
III. **Powerful without passion** and rancour.
IV. **Mild without laxity.**
V. **Prudent without art.**
VI. **Simple, yet not without skill.**

Ver. 3. *A Patient Hearing.*

I. **Due to preachers of the gospel**—always supposing them to be faithful and earnest. Because of—1. The Master they serve—Christ. 2. The message they bring—the good news of reconciliation. 3. The end at which they aim—the salvation of their hearers.

II. **Frequently denied to preachers.**—Because of—1. Dislike of both the preacher and his Master. 2. Disinclination towards both the subject and the aim of his message. 3. Dissatisfac-

tion with the manner or the method of the preacher. 4. Pre-occupation with other thoughts or things.

Ver. 4. *My Manner of Life from My Youth Up*; or, *an Aged Christian's Retrospect of his Past Career.*

I. **Sometimes necessary.**—This was the case with Paul when before Agrippa. It was needful for the vindication of himself to appeal to his previous history, from his youth upwards, to show that he had never really been out of harmony with the faith or practice of his people, as his enemies alleged. So Christians have sometimes to establish their own consistency by calling up their manner of life in former years.

II. **Always difficult.**—Even Christians, like other people, are not above the temptation of dealing gently with themselves. It requires great grace to enable even a good man to be faithful in appreciating his own character, not to over-estimate his virtues or under-estimate his defects. Paul was eminently successful in this work of self-examination. What he claimed before Agrippa was not that his past life had been sinless in the sight of God, but merely that it had been externally faultless in the eyes of men.

III. **Often profitable.**—When it leads to self-humiliation and repentance before God on account of shortcomings; when it shows that the past has been at least constantly conscientious, if not completely correct; when it enables one to see the guiding hand of a gracious Providence leading on from step to step towards the goal of conversion and salvation.

IV. **Not always satisfactory.**—It was not so with Paul. He recognised that his past career had been outwardly correct and inwardly conscientious; but he found that notwithstanding he had been a persecutor and a blasphemer—in short, the chief of sinners.

Ver. 6. *The Promise Made to the Fathers.*

I. **Divine in its origin.**—Made by God. Had the author been man, the promise would have been worthless.

II. **Ancient in its date.**—Going back to the fathers of the faithful, yea, even to the first father of the human family.

III. **Gracious in its character.**—Prompted by the spontaneous love and kindness of God.

IV. **Great in its contents.**—A promise of salvation.

V. **Varied in its form.**—1. To Adam, the promise of a woman's seed who should bruise the serpent's head (Gen. iii. 15). 2. To Abraham, the promise of a land (Gen. xii. 1), of a seed (Gen. xiii. 15), of a son (Gen. xv. 4). 3. To Israel under Moses, the promise of a law-giver like unto Moses (Deut. xviii. 18). 4. To David, the promise of a son who should sit and reign upon his throne for ever (2 Sam. vii. 12). 5. To Israel in the time of Isaiah, the promise (1) of a virgin's child, whose name should be called Immanuel (Isa. vii. 14), Wonderful Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace (Isa. ix. 6): (2) of a suffering servant of Jehovah, who should bear the sins of many and make intercession for the transgressors (Isa. liii. 11, 12). 6. To Israel, in the days of Jeremiah, the promise of one who should be called the Lord our Righteousness (Jer. xxxiii. 15, 16). 7. To Israel, in the era of Ezekiel, the promise of a shepherd king like David to rule over his people (Ezek. xxxvii. 24). 8. To Israel, after the return from captivity, the promise of one called "the Branch" (Zech. iii. 8).

VI. **Sure in its fulfilment.**—This involved in the fact of its being the promise of a God who cannot lie.

VII. **Realised in the person and work of Christ.**—This the burden of the gospel message, as it was the theme of Paul's preaching.

Ver. 8. *Raising the Dead*—credible or incredible?

I. **Incredible** only on one or other, or all, of the following suppositions:

1. *That the dead have entirely ceased to be.* In this case they could not be raised, though other beings might be created in their stead. 2. *That there is no power adequate to effect their resurrection.* This will require to be admitted if there is no God, since a power less than Divine will not suffice. 3. *That it is impossible for a Divine power*, should there be such, *to interfere with the ordinary laws of nature.* This the position occupied by those who hold that the supernatural must never transcend the limits, but always restrict itself to the channels, of the natural. 4. *That the Divine power*, assuming such exists, *has distinctly declined to interfere with natural law.* This, however, God has nowhere done—certainly not in Scripture. 5. *That the Divine Being has expressly asserted no such event as a resurrection will ever take place.* This also He has nowhere affirmed.

II. **Credible.**—1. *If the dead are still living*, though they have passed beyond this mortal scene (Matt. xxii. 32). 2. *If there be a God*, as all nature cries aloud through all her works, as Scripture throughout asserts, and as man's own nature attests there is. 3. *If God has distinctly promised that He will raise the dead.* This He has most certainly done. Both Old and New Testaments supply texts in confirmation. 4. *If Christ has already risen from the dead.* That He has is what Paul asserted. For the sake of the truth of this his fellow-apostles as well as himself were willing to stake, and actually did stake, their lives. 5. *If in the idea of a resurrection nothing contrary to reason exists.* Whatever objections may be taken to its credibility, it cannot be asserted that the notion of a resurrection is either inconceivable or irrational. 6. *If a resurrection would raise man to a higher stage of being than before.* Were it certain that man's future rising would be a backward step, it might be difficult to credit the occurrence of any such event in the future. 7. *If a resurrection would furnish to the universe an additional proof of the Divine glory.* This assuredly it would. It would exhibit at once the glory of His grace and power.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 9—18.

Paul's Rehearsal of An Old Story; or, *the Secret of his Conversion Explained.*

I. **The character of his pre-Christian life.**—Briefly, one of opposition to the name of Jesus, and to all who bore it. 1. *Conscientious.* Paul distinctly claimed that at that time he was as truly conscientious as he had been since his conversion. He imagined, ignorantly of course (1 Tim. i. 13), that in so opposing, hindering, persecuting, and destroying Christians, he was actually doing God service. He did not avow that, though acting, as he believed, from conscientious motives, he was thereby free from guilt; otherwise he could not have written, "Howbeit I obtained mercy." Paul had by this time arrived at the perception of this fundamental principle in morals, that while man is responsible for acting in accordance with conscience, he is no less accountable for the education and enlightenment of his conscience. It is only conscience enlightened by the word of God which is an absolutely safe guide for the Christian. 2. *Active.* His hostility towards the name of Jesus and its bearers was not confined to the region of sentiment and feeling, but was no sooner formed than translated into word and deed. Having concluded in the court of conscience that he ought to harry out the Christians from Jerusalem and Judæa, and hunt them, if that were possible, from off the face of the earth, he adopted every method in his power to give effect to his ferocious purpose. Armed with authority from the chief priests, he became a furious inquisitor, persecutor, and oppressor—(1) shutting up the saints in prison wherever and whenever they fell into his clutches; (2) voting against them when they were put to death, either

actually, as a member of the Sanhedrim, or metaphorically, by mentally assenting to their condemnation, thus constituting himself *participem criminis*, or (to use a Scottish law phrase) "art and part," a sharer in the wickedness of shedding their innocent blood; (3) punishing them in every synagogue in which they were found, in order to make them blaspheme that holy name wherewith they were called (Jas. ii. 7); and even (4) following them to strange cities, such as Damascus, in order to arrest them and fetch them, bound, to Jerusalem. 3. *Passionate.* Nor was it merely as an unpleasant task that this ferocious and bloody occupation was undertaken and carried through by him, but as a business into which he had enlisted all the energy and enthusiasm of his soul, and from which he derived the most intoxicating and fiendish delight. He was mad exceedingly, and, as Luke reports, breathed out threatenings and slaughter against them. 4. *Extensive.* His efforts were not restricted to Jerusalem or Judæa, but passed beyond the limits of the Holy Land, even to foreign cities. From Paul's description of his early career we can see that Luke's account (ix. 1-18) is in no degree exaggerated, while Agrippa might have inferred, had he wished, that something extraordinary must have happened to produce the change in Paul which he and all men beheld—a something hardly less supernatural than that which Paul next proceeded to relate—viz., the appearance to him of the risen Christ.

II. **The story of his miraculous conversion.**—1. *The place where it occurred.* In the vicinity of that very Damascus to which he had been journeying on the unhallowed errand just described. Paul was not likely to forget a spot so sacred as that on which he passed so suddenly, completely, and for ever from the darkness of sin and Satan into God's own marvellous light. It can hardly be supposed that the Eunuch would ever cease to remember the desert road to Gaza, where he met with Philip the evangelist and found the key to the Bible in the person of the Saviour (viii. 26); or that Lydia would ever become unmindful of the place of prayer by the river side in Philippi, where the Lord opened her heart to attend unto the things that were spoken by Paul (xvi. 13). 2 *The time when it happened.* "At mid-day, O king." This also was engraven ineffaceably on the tablets of his memory, as was the tenth hour on the memory of Andrew (John i. 39). Many who have undergone the same spiritual change as Paul, the change of conversion, find it difficult to state precisely the moment when the blinding scales of ignorance and unbelief fell from their eyes, and the light of saving truth flashed in upon their understandings. But no such uncertainty could exist with Paul, any more than with the just named Lydia (xvi. 14), or with the Philippian gaoler (xvi. 34). 3. *The instrumentality that effected it.* "A light from heaven." (1) That this was no mere flash of lightning or other natural phenomenon, but a supernatural illumination, is proved by four things: its splendour, which was above the brightness of the sun; its time, which was mid-day, when the sun is at its brightest, and lightning, should it occur then, is scarcely visible; its locality, which was not the broad expanse of the firmament, but the vicinity of the apostle and his companions—the light shone round about them; its effect—it hurled the apostle and his companions to the ground, probably threw them from the beasts on which they rode, filling the apostle's companions with terror, and striking the apostle himself with blindness (ix. 7, 8), though the apostle does not now deem it necessary to introduce these details into his speech. (2) That the light was the glory nimbus of the exalted Saviour is apparent from the circumstances next narrated by Paul—that he heard a voice issuing from it which he afterwards recognised to be that of Jesus, whom he had been persecuting, and that he carried on a conversation with that same Jesus, whose glorified form he discerned in the midst of the light. 4. *The power that wrought it.* This was not the light, which was

simply the radiant symbol of Jesus presence, or the alarm into which he, no less than his companions, had been thrown, since, though fear may awaken conviction, it cannot convert; but the grace of Him who had, in this mysterious fashion, appeared to him on the way. "It is the Spirit (of Christ) that quickeneth" (John vi. 63). Souls are born again, "not of flesh or of blood, or by the will of man, but by the power of God" (John i. 13). 5. *The process by which it was completed.* The conversation carried on by Christ with his soul. (1) The double form of address—"Saul! Saul!"—indicative of earnestness; the pathetic interrogation—"Why persecutest thou Me?"; and the solemn declaration, "It is hard for thee to kick against the goads";—made it evident that he was standing before One who not only knew his name and the details of his past career, but was acquainted with the interior history of his soul, and understood the moods of mind through which he had been passing on the road to Damascus, and probably ever since he had witnessed the trial and execution of Stephen. If Paul on that day remembered the words of Scripture at all, it is far from unlikely that these were the words which instinctively leapt into his thoughts: "O Lord, Thou hast searched me and known me . . ." (Psalm cxxxix. 1-12). (2) The answer returned by Christ to his question, "Who art Thou, Lord?"—"I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest"—must have discovered to his mind three things of which he had been previously unaware, and up to that moment had presumably not imagined could be true: that Jesus of Nazareth was no longer dead, but risen, as the Christians affirmed, and was the Messiah; that his conception of himself and his past career as highly pleasing to God was fundamentally and totally wrong; and that in persecuting the followers of the Way he was practically fighting against God. All which must have humbled him in the dust of penitence and self-abasement. (3) The command of Jesus that he should rise, stand upon his feet, and proceed upon a different mission—not against, but for, the cause he had been seeking to destroy—could not fail to inspire within him hopes of pardon and acceptance, notwithstanding his heinous wickedness and sin. When Paul found that Jesus did not strike him into death, confound him with terrors, or declare against him bitter and relentless enmity, what could he conclude but that Jesus was willing to forgive the past? If doubt lingered in his soul, it must have been for ever banished when Christ proceeded to talk about employing him as a preacher of the faith?

III. **The tenor of his apostolical commission.**—This was—1. *Based upon* the fact that Christ had now appeared to him, as to all the other apostolic persons. Paul afterwards relied on this as a sufficient guarantee of his apostolical authority (1 Cor. ix. 1, xv. 8). 2. *Defined as* a witness-bearing about the things in which Christ both had appeared and would appear to him. In conformity with this Paul constantly claimed that his gospel had not been derived indirectly from man, but had been communicated to him directly by Christ (Gal i. 12). 3. *Directed to* the Gentiles—not exclusively, but ultimately and chiefly. It is not in accordance with fact that Paul originally did not contemplate a Gentile mission (Baur, Hausrath), but was only reluctantly compelled by circumstances to adopt this, because of the refusal of his countrymen, the Jews, to hear the gospel (xiii. 47). That Paul did not start at once with a Gentile mission constituted no proof that that formed not his intention from the first, or that he was not aware of his Divine designation for such an enterprise, but only attested his wisdom in (1) waiting for heavenly leading to open up his path, and (2) seeking a point of connection for himself and his gospel with the heathen, through the synagogues, in which these mingled as proselytes with the Jews. Besides, had Paul not commenced with the Jews he would have both given to his hearers an erroneous impression of his gospel, which was no entirely new religion, but the necessary, because Divinely arranged, development of the old faith of the Hebrews, and

would have lacked a congenial soil for it to fix its first roots in. 4. *Designed for* the salvation of the heathen: by (1) opening their eyes—*i.e.*, imparting to them spiritual illumination (Luke i. 79; Eph. i. 18); (2) turning them, as the result of such enlightenment, from darkness unto light (Eph. v. 11; Col. i. 13; 1 Peter ii. 9), and from the power of Satan unto God (Eph. ii. 2; Rom. xvi. 20); (3) bestowing on them forgiveness—*i.e.*, remission of sins (Rom. iii. 25); and (4) securing for them an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in Christ (xx. 22; Eph. i. 11, 14, 18; Col. i. 12; 1 Peter i. 4). "An excellent description of St. Paul's commission to preach, by the five ends or effects of it, viz., conversion, faith, remission of sins, sanctification, salvation" (Trapp). 5. *Accompanied by* a promise of protection against the machinations of both Jews and Gentiles, a promise which his past history and present position showed had been marvellously fulfilled.

Learn—1. That to follow conscience (unless it is enlightened) is no guarantee that one will not commit sin and incur guilt. 2. That men have justified the greatest wickedness by appealing to the dictates of conscience. 3. That men's judgments on their characters and lives differ greatly according to the standpoints from which they are pronounced. 4. That Divine grace can change the worst of sinners. 5. That nothing transpiring on earth is or can be hid from the eyes of Jesus Christ (Heb. iv. 13; Rev. i. 14). 6. That when Christ appoints a messenger He gives him a message. 7. That the grand end of the ministry is the salvation of them that hear (1 Cor. i. 21; 1 Tim. iv. 16).

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 9. *Paul's Mistaken Thoughts.*

I. **That Jesus of Nazareth was an imposter.**—Not a few regard Christ in this light still. Many consider Him to have been a mere man, and Divine in no sense, in which others may not also be Divine.

II. **That the followers of Jesus should be persecuted** and put to death.—This opinion is not yet extinct. Many who would tolerate Christianity hold that other religions should be put down and their professors suppressed by force. To punish men for their religious views, besides being a blunder, is a sin.

III. **That the favour of Heaven could be secured only by them who obeyed the law, and observed the ritual, of Moses.**—Thousands still hold that none can be saved outside of their sect, and thousands more that salvation is possible only to them who seek it through the works of the law—both of which opinions are delusions.

IV. **That the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth was a fiction.**—So numerous unbelievers still hold. But as Paul was undeceived on this point, so will they eventually be.

Ver. 10. *Was Paul a Member of the Sanhedrim?*—The answer to this question largely turns on the other, **Was Paul married?** That he was, Luther and the Reformers generally inferred from 1 Cor. vii. 8: "But I say to the unmarried and to widows, It is good for them, if they abide even as I." "That the unmarried are widowers is clear from this, that Paul has already spoken to the unmarried (ver. 1), and married (ver. 7), and now comes to the widowed (ver. 8). Accordingly, the apostle appears to reckon himself in the category of widowers, and already Luther's sound judgment has discerned that directions concerning the married life, such as are given immediately before ver. 8, are suitable only in the mouth of a man who is, or was, married, and who knows from his own experience that of which he speaks. An impartial reading of 1 Cor. vi. 12, vii. 10, cannot but confirm this judgment of Luther's; and many other passages in the Pauline letters, as, *e.g.*, 1 Thess. ii. 7, v. 4; 1 Cor. iii. 2, iv. 15, vii. 14, manifest so deep a feeling for the family life, and so rich experiences out of the same,

that this impression is only confirmed" (Hausrath, *Der Apostel Paulus*, p. 47).

Ver. 13. *Memorable Moments.*—Paul never forgot the hour when the glorified Redeemer first appeared to him, shattered with a glance and a word the entire superstructure of his past life, and transformed him into a new man.

I. **Such moments occur in the lives of men.**—Such are those, *e.g.*, in which Christ, through His word and by His Spirit, for the first time looks in upon a soul, awakening within it a sense of sin, shining into it with His gracious countenance, translating it out of darkness into light, and turning it from Satan to serve the living and true God.

II. **Such moments should not be forgotten.**—Should be remembered by men rather—1. For the eternal praise of the Lord whose grace has been so signally displayed in them. 2. For the continual instruction of themselves, reminding them of the grace they have received and the gratitude they should feel. 3. For a permanent memorial to the world, to rebuke them in their sins and call them to the way of salvation.

Vers. 14, 15. *Did Christ speak Hebrew?*—Compare Christ's words to Paul in ix. 4, 5. That on this occasion He did, Paul distinctly states. Whether this was Christ's language on earth is debated. The probability is that He could use both Greek and Hebrew. Brought up, as He had been, in a Jewish household, it is hardly supposable that He could not think, read, write, and speak, in Hebrew. It is even likely that when He taught in the synagogues, the language used by Him was Hebrew. Occasionally when working miracles, as the Gospel records show, He used Aramaic terms, such as "Talitha cumi," "Ephatha"; while on the cross He cried: "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabacthani." At the same time, as Greek was at this period commonly spoken in all those countries which were washed by the Mediterranean waters, it is just as reasonable to conjecture that Christ could speak Greek. Whether He employed this tongue in ordinary intercourse with His countrymen will most likely never be determined. Nor is it of much consequence. The instance here given of Christ speaking from heaven to a mortal is a solitary one, and not much can be founded on it in the way of argument for one conclusion or another. Some think that John's revelations were given to him in Hebrew. But this is, of course, conjectural.

Vers. 16-18. *True Ministerial Ordination.*—Illustrated in the case of Paul.

I. **Proceeds from Christ.** — Prayer and the imposition of hands, whether by bishop or presbytery, does not make an unconverted man a minister of Jesus Christ.

II. **Appoints to personal service.**—Not to temporal or ecclesiastical dignities, or even to wealth and comfort, but to lowly labour in witness-bearing for Jesus Christ.

III. **Guarantees spiritual illumination.**—When Christ ordains a man to be His witness He reveals Himself to that man's soul, not only at the beginning, and as a necessary condition of being ordained as a minister, but from time to time, as his work of witness-bearing requires.

IV. **Promises adequate protection.**—As Christ shielded Paul from his adversaries, so can and will He guard His faithful minister and witness so long as his service is required.

V. **Contemplates lofty aims.**—1. The enlightenment of souls—"to open their eyes." 2. The conversion of sinners—"that they may turn from darkness to light." 3. The bestowment of pardon—"that they may receive remission of sins." 4. The preparation of those who are enlightened, converted, pardoned for glory—"that they may receive an inheritance among them that are sanctified." 5. The implantation of faith—"through faith that is in Me."

Ver. 18. *The Way to The Inheritance.*

I. **No inheritance without sanctifica-**

tion.—(See xx. 32, and compare Heb. xii. 14). "Follow holiness," or, the sanctification without which "no man shall see the Lord."

II. **No sanctification without faith.**—Since justification must precede, and justification is impossible without faith (Gal. ii. 16), while Christ can be made of God sanctification only to them who believe (1 Cor. i. 30).

III. **No faith without Christ.**—*I.e.*, without the crucified, risen, and glorified Christ, who alone is the proper, personal object of faith (xx. 21; Col. ii. 7; 1 John iii. 23).

Faith in Christ.

I. **The object of faith.**—Christ: Christianity not merely a system of truths about God, nor a code of morality deducible from these, but the affiance of the whole spirit fixed upon the redeeming, revealing Christ.

II. **The nature and the essence of the act of faith.**—Faith is not merely the assent of the understanding to certain truths, or the persuasion of the reality of unseen things; it is not even merely the confident expectation of future good; it is the personal relation of him that believes to the living person its object; in other words, faith is trust.

III. **The power of faith.**—1. We are saved—*i.e.*, justified and sanctified—by faith. But 2. The power that saves comes, not from the faith, but from the Christ in whom faith trusts. It is Christ's blood, Christ's sacrifice, Christ's life, Christ's intercession, that saves. Faith is the channel through which the Divine fulness flows over into the soul's emptiness.

IV. **The guilt and criminality of unbelief.**—1. Because, assuming that God is to be the author of salvation, no other way can be conceived in which the Divine fulness should pass over into the soul than that of receiving what God has provided. 2. Because the difficulties in the way of exercising faith are not intellectual, but moral, and lie, not in the region of the understanding, but in that of the heart. 3. Because the fact that a man will not believe proves his nature to be turned or turning away from, and setting itself in rebellion against, God's love.—*Alexander Maclaren, D.D.*

A Sermon on Conversion.

I. **How it is effected.**—1. By the grace of God. 2. Through the instrumentality of the Word. 3. With the active concurrence of the human will.

II. **What it implies.**—A turning. 1. From darkness to light. 2. From the power of Satan unto God.

III. **What it secures.**—1. Remission of sins. 2. Inheritance among the sanctified.

"*Faith that is in Me.*" *Saving Faith is Faith in Christ.*—1. It is faith in Christ as a Person. There is assent to a proposition, an acknowledgment of its truth. There is reliance on a Person as able and willing to do what He has undertaken. Saving faith is such a belief of the inspired testimony concerning the Person as leads to sincere trust in Him for salvation. 2. It is faith in Christ as a Person who has accomplished a work. Christ has not only delivered a system of theological and ethical doctrines. He has *done* something. It is what He has done—His sufferings and death—that constitutes Him the proper object of saving faith. It contemplates Him, not as a Teacher, but as a Saviour. 3. It is faith in Christ as a Person who has accomplished a work which has a Godward aspect. True it is that His work has a manward aspect—exercises a moral influence on men, as drawing them to God. But it has also a Godward aspect—has a legal value, as satisfying the claims of the Divine government. Take away the latter, and you remove the basis of the former. 4. It is faith in Christ as a Person who, after having accomplished by His death a work which has a Godward aspect, is now alive. There may be a dead faith in a dead Saviour. There may be a dead faith in a living Saviour. There ought to be a living faith in a living Saviour.—*G. Brooks.*

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 19—23.

Paul's Subsequent Career as a Christian; or, *how he turned to the Gentile Mission.*

I. **The hidden impulse of his ministry.**—The heavenly vision of the glorified Saviour who had appeared to him, pardoned, called, and appointed him to his special life-work. Captivated by that "vision" he felt himself to be no longer a freeman, but the bond-slave of Jesus Christ (Phil. i. 1). It remained in and with him, a memory unfading, which cheered him in solitude and depression, strengthened him in weakness and weariness, and generally rendered it an absolute necessity to preach the gospel and keep ever moving on towards regions beyond (1 Cor. ix. 16; 2 Cor. x. 16). It accompanied him wherever he wandered, supplying him at every stage and in every time of need with fresh inspiration, zeal, and courage. Whatever he had been and done since that memorable day, he told the king, had been due to that "heavenly vision" to which he had not been disobedient. Did Christ's people evince the like joyful submission to, and cheerful following of, the "heavenly visions" which shine in upon their souls, they might emulate, if they could not rival, the apostle in lofty characters and noble deeds.

II. **The wide extent of his ministry.**—1. *It commenced in Damascus.* There he preached in the synagogues and confounded the Jews, proving that Jesus was the Christ (ix. 20, 22). 2. *It advanced to Jerusalem.* There he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Grecians (ix. 29). 3. *It extended throughout Judæa.* Not before or immediately after his first visit to Jerusalem, when he retired to Syria and Cilicia (see Gal. i. 22). Perhaps when he repaired to the Metropolis on the occasion of the famine (xi. 30), or when he visited the capital between his first and second missionary journeys (xviii. 22). 4. *It passed to the Gentiles.* First in Antioch of Pisidia (xiii. 46), and ever afterwards, as opportunity presented, in Iconium (xiv. 1), in Lystra (xiv. 15), in Philippi (xvi. 17), etc. Note the ever-widening circles of the apostle's usefulness. First in Damascus, where he had been converted; next in Jerusalem, where he had been known from his youth up (ver. 4); then in Judæa, among the homes and haunts of his countrymen, for whose salvation he ardently longed (Rom. ix. 3, x. 1); and lastly in the heathen world, beyond the confines of Palestine.

III. **The unvarying burden of his ministry.**—1. *That the Messiah predicted by Moses and the prophets had come*, as was testified by the correspondence between their writings and Christ's sufferings, death, and resurrection. If Paul attempted to establish Christ's Messiahship by finding in the Old Testament allusions to His death and resurrection, this cannot, with reasonable fairness, be ascribed to the apostle's Pharisaic Bible studies and vivid imagination, but must be set down to the fact that such allusions are really in the Old Testament, although prior to the illumination shed upon these by the events in Christ's history, they were not perceived by him any more than by the other apostles (John ii. 22). 2. *That Christ by His resurrection had brought light to both Jews and Gentiles,*—light they did not possess and could not have possessed until after that event, as, *e.g.*, (1) upon the personality of Christ Himself, showing Him to be both the Messiah and the Son of God (Rom. i. 4); (2) upon the purpose and plan of salvation, which had ever been through grace and by faith (Rom. iii. 24-26); (3) upon the character and value of Christ's death, which was thereby declared to have been an atonement for sin (Rom. iv. 25); and (4) upon the reality of a resurrection to eternal life and glory (Rom. viii. 11; 2 Tim. i. 10). 3. *That Jews and Gentiles both should repent and turn to God*, doing works worthy of repentance. This had been a never-failing theme in Ephesus (xx. 21), in Athens

(xvii. 20), in Thessalonica (1 Thess. i. 9), and elsewhere—as, indeed, it could not have been otherwise, if his mission were to be executed in accordance with instructions received (ver. 18).

IV. **The enormous difficulty of his ministry.**—This arose from—1. *The severe labours it entailed* in travelling from place to place, on long and arduous journeys, amidst severe bodily weakness and much infirmity. 2. *The manifold dangers it involved*, of which the apostle furnishes an affecting enumeration in 2 Cor. xi. 23-27. But chiefly from 3. *The ferocious enemies it aroused*, who were principally found amongst his own countrymen, the Jews, the Gentiles having seldom opposed him except when stirred up by these. **Note.**—"There are three chief points in the writings of the prophets. Christ's sufferings, Christ's resurrection, and the publication of them among all nations. And it was precisely these three points that the Jews were most against; they were offended at the first, denied the second, and grudged the third" (Starke). And 4. *The deadly persecutions it raised* against him, from the period of his first evangelistic labours in Damascus (ix. 23) till the day when the Jews apprehended him in the temple at Jerusalem, and sought to kill him (ver. 21). Only a man of heroic spirit could have undergone the fatigues, hardships, oppositions, and persecutions, that fell to the lot of Paul; and not even he, any more than Paul, could have done it in his own strength.

V. **The secret support of his ministry.**—The help of God. As he claimed to be what he was solely by the grace of God (1 Cor. xv. 10), so he arrogated to himself no credit or glory for what he had done in the ministry of the gospel, but ascribed all to God's power, which had been graciously vouchsafed to him (Phil. iv. 13). Never before had the nothingness of human strength in the domain of religion been realised as it was by Paul, and certainly no one has surpassed, or even rivalled, him since in the feeling of dependence upon God. Paul, in all that he became, all the soul-grandeur which he exhibited, was like plastic clay in the hands of the potter; in all that he achieved he served as a passive instrument in God's hand. "Not I, but the grace of God which was with me," constituted his explanation of both phenomena. "That which impels him is never caprice; egoistic, subjective interests are wholly wanting in him. What impels him is to him always something higher than himself. The objective rules over him. His personality is only the 'vessel' for the heavenly contents" (Hausrath, *Der Apostel Paulus*, p. 51). At every stage in his life's journey Paul could have sung:—

> "Here I raise my Ebenezer,
> Hither by Thy help I'm come;
> And I hope, by Thy good pleasure,
> Safely to arrive at home."

Learn—1. That the first act of a converted heart is faith. 2. That the first sphere of labour for a convert should be amongst his own. 3. That the first word in the gospel message should be "repent and turn to God." 4. That the first sign of repentance should be forsaking old sins and performing new works. 5. That the first trial which a convert will encounter will be the opposition of the unbelieving world. 6. That the first qualification requisite to constitute Christ a Saviour was His resurrection from the dead. 7. That the first thing demanded by a Christian for the successful performance of his duty is the help of God.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 19. *The Heavenly Vision.*

I. **The highest privilege that can possibly be conferred upon a soul.**—To see Christ by the eye of faith is to see God revealed as a Saviour, and is therefore the beginning of new life to the soul.

II. **The most powerful force that**

can operate upon a soul.—The soul that beholds that vision is immediately changed in its whole inner nature, lifted out of its old grooves of thought, feeling, and action, and started upon a new career, which will terminate in eternal life and glory.

III. **The sublimest message that can be uttered by a soul.**—Nothing greater can be told by human lips than what such a vision of the Divine love, grace, and pity, means for fallen man.

Was Paul's Vision of Christ an Objective Reality?—"It is incontrovertible that Paul felt convinced that Jesus had there (*i.e.*, before Damascus) stepped forth to meet him objectively, visibly, and audibly. He does not at all compare this appearance with the visions which, according to his own and others' faith, continued even at a later time to be possible, and which he himself, along with others, actually shared —or with the wonderful subjective experiences in which, when in a condition of ecstasy, he saw and heard the Lord, or in which, without knowing whether he was in the body or out of the body, he found himself rapt up into the heavenly paradise (2 Cor. xii. 2 *ff*) —but exactly with those appearances of which the Evangelists have reported to us the details, and concerning which Paul clearly supposes and presupposes as generally recognised, that they are now closed, since he says that to him as the last of all (1 Cor. xv. 8) had Christ become visible. And just this appearance of the Risen One with the word addressed to him by that Risen One was the power which brought him, the persecutor of the Christian Church, to faith in Christ."—Köstlin: *Der Glaube und seine Bedeutung, etc.*, p. 40.

Visions of Heavenly Things.—"Wherefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision" (ver. 19). "For, see, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern that was shewed thee in the mount" (Heb. viii. 5). These words bring before our minds the work of two of the very greatest men in the world's history, and they suggest an important analogy of experience, as fitting them for their work. The work of Moses, it is true, might easily be under-estimated. We might think of him as the lawgiver of but one nation; that nation, moreover, being very restricted in its domains, and of comparatively small numbers. We have rather to think of the unique mission of Israel as a people that should ultimately pervade the world with their influence, and of the work of their lawgiver as fitting them to fulfil this mission well. It is impossible, however, to do justice to the work of Moses without taking into consideration, along with it, the work of his great successor, Paul. For it was in the mission of the apostle that the mission of Moses was continued and fulfilled. The Jews were already scattered abroad in many lands; "for Moses from generations of old hath in every city them that preach him" (xv. 21). Thus was his law more or less penetrating the nations with its influence. And in that day, when "the fulness of the Gentiles" shall have "come in, and all Israel shall be saved" (Rom. xi. 25, 26), it shall be more than ever manifest how great is the world's debt to these two men of God. In either case, the work was extremely difficult. Think of the condition of Israel at the time when Moses was entrusted with his great responsibility. Think, again, of the condition of the Roman world at the time when Paul received his commission. In such work, moreover, there is one element of inspiration, one secret of strength, without which no mere enthusiasm of feeling, or power of devotion, can be effectual—viz., the inspiration and strength of a Divine Ideal.

I. **Great ideals are the glory of man.**—No other creatures here can have them; only men may receive an inspiration that shall raise them above themselves. This being so, whence comes the ideal? It is not of man himself, obviously, but of God. So

Moses could have no inspiring ideal of what Israel might be, and should be one day, an ideal that should possess his imagination and fill his soul with a holy glow of hope, abiding with him day and night, and making him strong to endure and to do, unless *the pattern* had been shown him *in the mount.* But there God unveiled to him all the possibilities of that people of Israel, and thenceforth Moses set himself, by God's help, to make the vision real. In like manner, Paul could not have portrayed for himself the glowing picture of a regenerate Roman world, all bowing in adoration to the Crucified, had not the glory, beyond the brightness of the sun, shone from the heavens, blinding, for a while, the natural vision, but photographing itself indelibly on the soul; so that thenceforth only "one thing" could he do—traverse city and country, land and sea, toil tired but untiringly, and endure infamy and death, if only he might reduce vision to fact, and make his high imaginations actual realities. So all man's true ideals, of personal life and of service for man's sake, are of God. They may come to us mediately, indeed; for they shine before us in the lives of noble men, they burn with quenchless fire in the poems of the ages, they lift their fair beauty before our view in the manifold Scriptures of God, and they show themselves as at once ideal and real in the glory of the Only-Begotten, "full of grace and truth" (John i. 14). But, mediately as these ideals may thus be presented to us, they must take immediate hold of our imagination, and kindle the fervours of our own soul—even as though we ourselves were in the mount, alone with God, or were struck by the sudden glory from the skies. Otherwise their Divine purpose will be unfulfilled, and our life largely unblessed.

II. It has been already partly assumed, but must now be more strongly emphasised, that the great ideals which are intended to ennoble and transfigure human life **are not ideals of mere happiness,** as though we were to be only dreamers dreaming of our own joy, although there shall be a supreme happiness as the inevitable result of making our life according to the pattern shown us in the mount, and of obeying the heavenly vision. But such happiness comes only when it is not sought for its own sake, its delicate bloom being spoiled, and its very essence perishing, if we snatch at it greedily. The ideal, so far as it pertains to ourselves, is an ideal of character, a revelation to ourselves of what, by the grace of God, it is possible we may become. And just in so far as it is a revelation of possibilities of character, it is a command to us that we do our utmost to make the possible an accomplished fact, saying to us ever, with a more august and sacred behest than that of mere words, "Thou shalt!" Thus the true ideal of man's life is the law of life. But human character, at its best, is possible only through service, loving and loyal service rendered to man, for man's own sake and for God's. For even character may be made too exclusively an end in itself, as an achievement of our own, and as meaning the ennoblement merely of our personal manhood; in which case its nobleness is tarnished, being vitiated by the selfishness of our motive and aim. Our own character cannot have true worth save in so far as it is in true relation to the characters of others, and to the one perfect character of God. And such relation implies service—the service of loyal love.

III. **The ideals of life are necessarily progressive, partly on account of the material which has to be fashioned by them, and partly through their own nature.**—The material will not always allow of the ideal being at first so perfect as it shall be afterwards. The pattern of what Israel was to become, as a people, did not show all the possibilities of ultimate good; nor did the heavenly vision, perhaps, reveal immediately to the apostle all that was in God's heart for the world. Enough, if, for the present, the ideal can accom-

plish its present work. King Alfred's ideal of what England might be made, as a nation, was perhaps not such as may be cherished by the successors of his spirit, discerning the needs and the possibilities of our country in the light of later history. In like manner, the ideal of our personal life will not be so full, perhaps not so imperious, in the immaturer days of life; it will rather be according to our needs and our capabilities. The ideal grows in significance as the material which is to be fashioned by it becomes more susceptible more responsive. But in its own nature the ideal is necessarily growing and progressive. It grows with all our growth; but it grows likewise because it is intrinsically infinite, and must always make larger demands on our faith and loyalty the more fully we yield to the demands already made. Let us learn, however, the solemn truth that, just as surely as our ideals will grow and live, if we believe in them and live by them, so surely will they dwindle and die, if we are untrue to their Divine claims and promises. Yes; the pattern may lose its beauty, the vision may fade; the inspirations of life may die away.—*T. F. Lockyer, B.A.*

Ver. 20. *Works Worthy of Repentance.*—Are works—

I. **Springing from a spirit of repentance.**

II. **Attesting the sincerity of repentance.**

III. **Accomplishing the purpose of repentance.**

IV. **Disclosing the beauty of repentance.**

Ver. 21. *Men Whom the World Sometimes Seeks to Murder.*

I. **Those who would lead it into higher truths.**—Too often verified in other spheres than that of religion. Prophets and preachers with new ideas have commonly had a poor reception from the world.

II. **Those who decline to be partners in its wickedness.**—When a man enters upon the path of holiness, all who walk in sinful ways interpret his behaviour as a silent protest against, and rebuke of, their ungodliness and dislike, if they do not hate and persecute him accordingly (1 Pet. iv. 4).

III. **Those who have conferred upon it most good.**—The world has never been kind to its philanthropists and social benefactors, but for the most part has killed them, if not by open assassination by cold and cruel neglect (see Eccles. ix. 15).

Ver. 22. *Paul a Model Witness of Gospel Truth.*

I. **Through whom does he witness?**—Through the Lord, whose strength is perfected in his weakness.

II. **Before whom does he witness?**—Small and great, the people and the Gentiles—*i.e.*, all who have ears to hear.

III. **Of whom does he witness?**—Of Christ, promised, manifested, crucified, raised, preached.—*Gerok.*

Vers. 22-23. *The Glory of the Gospel of the Grace of God.*—This consists in the following facts, that the Gospel is—

I. **Designed for all.**—1. *All ranks and conditions of men.* Small and great—*i.e.*, high and low, rich and poor, young and old. 2. *All times and climes on earth.* For pre-Christian ages, since it was substantially contained in the Hebrew prophets and in Moses; for the Christian centuries, since it was meant to be published among the Gentiles.

II. **Adapted to all.**—Proclaiming as it does—1. *An atonement for sin,* which all need. This involved in the idea of a suffering Messiah (Isa. liii. 5, 6, 10). 2. *A resurrection from the grave,* which all desire. This guaranteed by the resurrection of Jesus (1 Cor. xv. 20).

III. **Offered to all.**—This a necessary consequence of the public proclamation of the gospel, both to the people (the Jews) and the Gentiles, since it is inconceivable that men should be called upon to accept, and punished for re-

fusing, what was not really offered to them. Compare Mark xvi. 15; Rom. i. 16, iii. 22.

IV. **Bestowed on all.**—All who believe without distinction become partakers of its light and life.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 24—32.

Paul's Two Distinguished Listeners, Festus and Agrippa; or, *Two Souls Struggling against the Truth.*

I. **Paul and Festus**; or, the apostle and the governor.—1. *The exclamation of the governor.* "Paul, thou art beside thyself," or, thou art mad!—"much learning doth make thee mad," or, doth turn thee to madness. So far as Festus was concerned, Paul, by his lofty oration, had effected this only, that Festus esteemed him a lunatic. Strange perversity of the world! When Paul of Tarsus raved against God, blasphemed Christ, and breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the Christians, his contemporaries counted him both wise and prudent; now that, as Paul the aged, he talks in sublime strains of a crucified and risen Saviour, the world, as represented by the Judæan procurator, sets him down for a madman, or, at least, for one whose brain had been touched by overmuch study. Paul! much learning doth turn thee to madness. To the governor it seemed incomprehensible that one should not only rave about such transcendental delusions, but should actually risk his life in preaching them. Doubtless at the present day many hold with the governor that earnest and enthusiastic Christians, who base their prospects of present happiness and future felicity on such (as the world thinks) imaginary facts as the incarnation, propitiation, and resurrection, of Jesus Christ, are idle dreamers, foolish visionaries, crack-brained enthusiasts, half-mad fanatics who simply mistake the vague and shadowy creations of a disordered or diseased fancy for solid and substantial truths, and who accordingly sacrifice themselves for whims and crotchets. But for all that numbers of those who affect to regard Christians in this light have their secret misgivings that the Christians are right. That Festus felt uncomfortable beneath the glowing utterances of Paul is a plausible deduction from the fact that he rather shouted at than calmly expostulated with the apostle. Had he really believed the apostle to be beside himself, he would not have flamed forth into a rage against him, but would have pitied him, and perhaps spoken gently to him, or at least would have not troubled himself about his utterances. And so the circumstance that men of the world habitually become vehement and angry when denouncing the faith of Christians is a proof they are not inwardly convinced of its error. 2. *The reply of the apostle.* "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness." In repudiating the charge of the governor, Paul fell back upon two defences. (1) The testimony of his own consciousness, which enabled him to assure Festus that he was neither "beside" nor beneath nor outside of himself, as insinuated, but in full possession of his faculties—not at all the victim of an ill-balanced judgment, an exuberant fancy, or an unbridled imagination, but the master of a calm, clear intellect and a sober, regulated reason, which understood well the thoughts it was thinking and the words it was uttering. (2) The unchallengeable truthfulness of his assertions, in support of which he confidently appealed to the wide publicity which had been gained by the main facts of gospel history, the death and resurrection of Christ, which had not taken place in some remote corner of the country, but had occurred in its very centre and heart, the Metropolis itself, Jerusalem, and which therefore could not be unknown to the king, to whom accordingly he next directed his address. The apostle meant that if the story of Christ's death and resurrection had not been true, it could easily have been demonstrated false, as the people of Jerusalem were well aware of all that had

transpired. But so far from being exposed as an idle fiction, the report of the resurrection—of the crucifixion denial was impossible—had kept on spreading and gaining adherents during the last quarter of a century, which it could hardly have done had it been false.

II. **Paul and Agrippa**; or, the apostle and the king.—1. *The fervent appeal of the apostle.* "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest." Whether the apostle, "who had studied psychology in the school of the Holy Ghost" (Leonhard and Spiegel) discerned in the king's heart a secret inclination to yield to the truth as set forth in the apostle's oration, must be left undecided. (1) The ground on which Paul's appeal rested appears to have been the assumption that Agrippa II., as a Jew, must have been perfectly cognisant of the fact that the Hebrew Scriptures predicted the coming of a suffering, dying, and rising Messiah. That they did so has been frequently pointed out. (2) The force of Paul's appeal lay in this, that Agrippa, having been possessed of such knowledge, ought to have had no difficulty in recognising the reasonableness of Paul's words, which simply declared that such predictions as were contained in the prophets had been fulfilled by the death and resurrection of Jesus. Paul's interpretation of the connection between these events and the Scripture prophecies might be at fault—nay, Paul's assertion about the resurrection might be incorrect; but in the statements themselves no impartial judge could find evidence of unreason or folly. 2. *The ambiguous answer of the king.* "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian"; or, "with but little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Christian" (R.V.); or, in a little time (at this rate) you will persuade me to become (or, you believe you can make of me) a Christian (see "Critical Remarks"). According to the first of these renderings, Agrippa was supposed to admit that Paul had almost carried the citadel of his judgment, and that only a little more was wanting to gain him altogether for the Christian cause. According to the second, his meaning ran that Paul must not imagine he could convert a Jewish sovereign like him with so little show of argument, or so inconsiderable effort. According to the third, that if Paul went on as he was doing he would soon make of him, Agrippa II., a Christian. The first had its source in incipient seriousness, the second in supercilious contempt, the third in superficial levity. Those who wish to think the best of Agrippa naturally prefer the first interpretation of his words, notwithstanding the grammatical difficulty attaching to them; those who adhere to the best text select the second or third interpretation of Agrippa's words, though these charge him with feelings—either of irony or of jest—which certainly look incompatible with a situation so grave and solemn as that in which they were spoken. 3. *The sublime ejaculation of the apostle.* "I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds"; or, "I would to God that whether with little or with much . . ." (R.V.); or, "whether in a little time or in much time"; or, adopting another reading, "whether with a little effort or with a great effort, not only thou, but also all that hear me this day," etc. (see "Critical Remarks"). Taken either way, the sense of the apostle's utterance practically amounted to this: (1) that he wished, not only Agrippa, but all who listened to him that day, to be, like himself, Christians; (2) that, could he only hope to see that wish fulfilled, he would willingly spend a long time or a short, and put forth a great effort or a small, as the case might be; and (3) that the sole point in which he did not ask God that they might resemble him was "these bonds," which he held up before them. The magnanimity of this reply has evoked never-failing admiration from all hearts capable of understanding and appreciating true heroism. 4. *The response of the king.* Obviously Agrippa's was not a heart of the order just depicted. No sooner had the apostle's words died away

in the hushed atmosphere of the marble hall than Agrippa II. rose from his seat, followed by the governor, Bernice, and all that sat with them. Having withdrawn from the audience-chamber and talked amongst themselves, they came to the conclusion that Paul had committed no offence worthy of death. Most likely all concurred in pronouncing him a harmless fanatic. What they said to one another about his last words is not recorded. Possibly all were silent, each afraid to reveal to his neighbour the thoughts that had been stirred within his bosom. Only one more item of the conversation has been preserved. Agrippa II. expressed his mind to the governor, that, had Paul not appealed to Cæsar, he might forthwith have been set at liberty. The result of this "may have been that Festus modified his report and commended the apostle to the clemency of the court at Rome" (Hackett).

Learn—1. The outrageous slanders that are sometimes propagated against Christians. 2. The certainty that truth and soberness lie rather with the Christian than with the worldling. 3. The fearlessness with which Christianity can make appeal to the court of enlightened reason. 4. The unwisdom of those who decline to allow themselves to be persuaded to become Christians. 5. The fervent desire true Christians possess that others should share the salvation of which they are conscious.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 24-29. *Paul and His Princely Hearers*; or, the different attitudes of men toward the gospel.

I. **Festus,** who turns entirely aside from it—"Paul, thou ravest!"

II. **Agrippa,** who is half turned towards it—"Almost thou persuadest me!"

III. **Paul,** who entirely lives in it—"I would to God that all who hear me were such as I am."—*Gerok, in Lange.*

Ver. 24. *Which is the Madman?*—Paul or Festus? the Christian or the non-Christian?

I. The **Christian** who believes in a personal God—a God of power, who has made the universe, and a God of love, who has devised a way of salvation for man? Or the *non-Christian* who, if he acknowledges a God at all, conceives of Him as either hostile to, or indifferent about, man?

II. The **Christian** who believes that God has made known His mind and will to man for his salvation in the sacred Scriptures? Or the *non-Christian* who holds that God has never placed Himself in communication with the human race at all?

III. The **Christian** who believes that man, even in his sin, is a child of God, and a possible heir of immortality? Or the *non-Christian* whose creed is that man is nothing more than an animated clod which will in course of years mingle with the other (unanimated) clods of the valley, and be never more heard of, in this or any other world?

IV. The **Christian** who believes that Jesus of Nazareth was God's Son incarnate, who died and rose again, bringing life and immortality to light? Or, the *non-Christian* whose faith is that Jesus was a common and therefore a sinful man, who never rose from the dead, and that the grave will never open to restore a single form that goes down into its gloomy chambers!

V. The **Christian** who believes in a hereafter and lives for it? Or, the *non-Christian* who knows of no world but this, and lives and dies as if there were none?

Ver. 25. *Words of Truth and Soberness.*

I. **Such were Paul's words to all who heard his gospel.**—1. *Proved from the past history of the Church.* For the words of Paul remain to this day, whereas the wit of Festus has long since died away. 2. *Confirmed by Chris-*

tian experience. Since honest hearts in all ages have found in Paul's words (written) their clearest light, best strength, and sweetest comfort. 3. They will likewise be *placed in the light at the great day of eternity.* Inasmuch as heaven and earth will pass away, but the word of God endureth for ever.

II. **Such should be the words of preachers still** to all who listen to their teaching.—And such they will be—1. *If they discourse upon Paul's theme,*—a crucified and risen Saviour. 2. *If they speak with Paul's earnestness,*—which all can imitate, though all cannot equal. What is wanted in preaching is not "sound and fury, signifying nothing," but deep-toned and full-hearted fervour. 3. *If they seek Paul's aims,*—the glory of Christ and the salvation of souls. None but words of truth and soberness will accomplish these.

Ver. 27. "*Believest thou the prophets?*"

I. **A great question.**—For modern readers of the Bible no less than for Agrippa. 1. *Believest thou the Hebrew prophets were inspired?* This question lies at the foundation of Christianity. If the Hebrew prophets were only statesmen, somewhat more far-seeing than their contemporaries, but in no sense channels of Divine communication for their age and generation, then it is vain to attempt to derive from their utterances any evidence in support of the Messiahship of Jesus. It was clearly in the faith that Old-Testament Scripture prophesied beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow that Paul appealed to them so confidently in support of his gospel; and those who think the foundations of the Christian system will remain undisturbed if the credibility of Old-Testament literature is impaired, have not reflected deeply enough on this momentous problem. As the New-Testament Scriptures are the flower and fruit, the crown and apex, of the Old, so are the Old-Testament Scriptures the root and support of the New. 2. *Believest thou what the Hebrew prophets teach?* Men might, and many do, believe the Hebrew prophets to have been inspired, who nevertheless disregard the testimony they furnish concerning the person and work of Christ. But the Christological argument derived from the Messianic prophecies was, in Paul's judgment, and is in the estimation of many Bible scholars of to-day, one of the most powerful factors in demonstrating the truth of the New-Testament declarations with reference to Christ's divinity, atoning work, and resurrection. 3. *Believest thou that what the Hebrew prophets taught concerning Christ has been fulfilled?* This practically means, Believest thou that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah of Israel and Saviour of the world? Believest thou that He was God's Son incarnate, that He died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, and that He rose again according to the Scriptures? (1 Cor. xv. 1-4). 4. *Believest thou for thyself, individually, in the Christ of whom the prophets spoke?* All believing that stops short of this is worthless for saving.

II. **A powerful argument.** — Of which the following are the several steps: 1. *He who believes in the prophets of the Old Testament should also believe in the apostles of the New.* The authors of the New-Testament writings can produce as good claims to be inspired as could the prophets of the Old. 2. *He who believes in the Messiah, foreshadowed by the prophets, should likewise believe in the Christ preached by the apostles.* The first was the type of the second; the second is the antitype of the first. If the prophets spoke the truth when they said Christ should suffer and rise again, so did the apostles teach no falsehood when they affirmed that Jesus was the Christ, since they alleged that He both suffered and rose. 3. *He who believes that Jesus is the Christ should likewise for himself believe in Him for salvation.* This, after all, is the great question: Dost thou believe on the Son of God?

(John ix. 35). The man who accepts the testimony of both prophets and apostles should feel himself shut up to the acceptance of Christ as his personal Saviour.

Ver. 28. *Almost Persuaded.*—A condition of soul—

I. **Frequently attained.**—The heart touched, the mind enlightened, the will moved, the spirit trembling on the verge of a decision for Christ; nothing wanting but—the decision. Many reach this position as well as Agrippa.

II. **Highly responsible.** — Seeing that only a little is lacking to carry the spirit over into faith, the obligation to supply that little is the greater. What guilt will they incur who refuse or omit to take the final step that is necessary for salvation.

III. **Extremely perilous.**—Besides being in itself an unsafe condition, it is also an unstable one. No soul can remain permanently in the position these words describe. Either it will move on and become fully persuaded, or it will drift back and become less persuaded.

Almost a Christian.—A position—

I. **Of gracious privilege.**—Implying that one has been brought near the kingdom, and enabled to understand somewhat of its nature, of its terms of membership, of its duties, and of its blessings.

II. **Of hopeful promise.**—That the "almost" shall, before long, be converted into an "altogether." That the one step wanting to make one a Christian shall be taken.

III. **Of solemn responsibility.**—That the one "almost" shall become "altogether" a Christian. That he shall not remain on the borders of the kingdom, but cross the boundary and enter in.

IV. **Of great danger.**—Lest one should be satisfied with being "almost" without becoming "altogether" a Christian.

Vers. 28, 29. *The Shortcomings of Agrippa.*

I. **What they were.**—1. *He only says "almost,"* not yet "altogether," and thus at once recalls what he appears to allow. He remains standing without the doors of salvation, and will not enter in. 2. *He only says, "Thou persuadest me"*; but a persuasion is much less than faith or conviction, and may, as in this case, come to an end with the words which called it forth. 3. *He only says, "to be a Christian,"* meaning, to join thy party, in an external way, instead of saying, "I believingly accept thy testimony about Jesus."

II. **How they were answered.**—1. By suggesting that *much more than he thought was still deficient in him.* Every "almost," like Agrippa's, implies that much is still wanting. 2. By expressing a desire *that*, whether much or little was lacking, *all might be fully persuaded.* At whatever stage of nearness or distance they stood from the kingdom, he longed for the salvation of all. 3. By reminding him, and all who listened, that becoming a Christian meant more than joining the party of the Nazarenes, *meant becoming like him, Paul*, in everything except his bonds, meant becoming a lowly and devoted follower of Christ. —*Compiled from Stier.*

CHAPTER XXVII.

PAUL'S VOYAGE TO ROME—SHIPWRECK AT MALTA.

§ 1. Setting Sail; or, from Cæsarea to Fair Havens (vers. 1-8).
§ 2. Caught in a Storm; or, from Fair Havens to the Coast of Crete (vers. 9-14).
§ 3. Drifting on the Deep; or, Preparing for the Worst (vers. 15-26).
§ 4. Nearing the Breakers; or, a Night of Anxiety (vers. 27-36).
§ 5. Running Aground; or, Escaping Safe to Land (vers. 37-44).

CRITICAL REMARKS.

Ver. 1. **Determined.**—By Festus. Not as to purpose (xxv. 12), but as to time, which was late in autumn, A.D. 60, and manner, which was by sea. **We.**—Last used (xxi. 15-18). Here including, besides Paul, Luke and Aristarchus of Thessalonica (ver. 2, xix. 29, xx. 4). Luke's presence on shipboard accounts for the liveliness of the ensuing narration. **Certain other**—additional, not necessarily different in character (Meyer, Zöckler, Plumptre)—**prisoners.**—This shows (Lardner, Paley) that it was customary to forward accused persons to Rome to be tried; an inference confirmed by Josephus (*Life*, § 3). **Julius.**—Tacitus (*Hist.*, ii. 92, iv. 11) mentions about this time a centurion of this name, Julius Priscus, one of the prætorians, who, seven years afterwards, was promoted by Cæsar Vitellius to be Prætorian Prefect, and who, when his royal patron died a miserable and dishonourable death, declined to survive, and committed suicide by falling on his own sword. Hausrath (*Der Apostel Paulus*, p. 466) conjectures he may have come to Palestine on some important mission, and been entrusted with command of the prisoners about to be despatched to Rome. **Augustus'**, or, *the Augustan* **band** to which he belonged has been supposed to be (1) a cohort of soldiers from Sebaste or Samaria (Kuinoel), in support of which is cited the mention by Josephus (*Ant.*, XIX. ix. 2; XX. vi. 1) of a squadron of Sebastene cavalry; or (2) a bodyguard organised by Nero, and called by him Augustani (Suet., *Ner.*, xx. 25) or Augustiani (Tacit., *Ann.*, xiv. 15), which would harmonise with the preceding statement from Tacitus (Wieseler); or (3) an auxiliary cohort belonging to Agrippa's army, and bearing the name Augustan in honour of the emperor, as many other cohorts did (Holtzmann, Ramsay); or (4) an independent cohort which waited on the procurator, and was styled the Augustan because it corresponded to the emperor's life guard at Rome (Hackett). That it was identical with the Italian cohort mentioned in x. 1 (Meyer, Ewald) is doubtful (Zöckler).

Ver. 2. **Adramyttium.**—Not Hadrumetum in North Africa, but a seaport of Mysia in Asia Minor, situated at the head of a bay of the same name, and on the River Kysos; called to-day Adramiti or Edramit. To this port the ship on which Paul embarked at Sebaste, the harbour of Cæsarea, belonged, and was a coaster homeward bound. It was obviously Julius's intention either to trans-ship for Italy at the Asian harbour, or from that point to take the land route to Rome (see "Homiletical Analysis"). **Meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia.**—The best authorities for μέλλοντες read μελλοντι, which was about to sail, not along the coasts, but for the places on the coast of Asia.

Ver. 3. **Sidon**—Hebrew, Sîdôn (meaning, perhaps, fisher town); on Assyrian monuments *Sidunu*—was situated on the Mediterranean coast, not far from Lebanon, and only five miles north of Tyre. In ancient times the most important of the Phœnician towns, it named itself upon its coins "The Mother of Tyre." The modern town of *Saida* stands upon the site of the old, from which numerous relics of antiquity have been recovered, the most remarkable being the marble coffin of the Sidonian king, Eschmunazar, B.C. 350-300. (See Riehm's *Handwörterbuch des Biblischen Altertums;* art. *Sidon.*) **Refresh himself.**—Lit., *to meet with*, or *receive attention* from his friends. By obtaining from them that outfit for the voyage which, on account of the official precision of his custody at Cæsarea, he could not there be provided with (Alford, Holtzmann).

Ver. 4. **Cyprus.**—See on iv. 36.

Ver. 5. **Sea of** (better, *off*, or *along*) **Cilicia and Pamphylia.**—On the reverse voyage (xxi. 3) Cyprus was passed upon the left hand—*i.e.*, the ship sailed south of the island. The neighbourhood of **Myra**, two or three miles from the coast, is full of magnificent ruins. Its haven was the neighbouring *Andraki*. In later times it became celebrated as the seat of the supposed bishopric of Nicolaus at the time of the council of Nice, A.D. 350.

Ver. 6. **A ship of Alexandria.** Probably belonging to the Alexandrian fleet in the Imperial

service, (Ramsay).—See "Homiletical Analysis." That part of her cargo was wheat is obvious (ver. 38), though she may have carried other goods (ver. 18), which were cast overboard before the cereals were thrown away.

Ver. 7. **Scarce.**—Better, *with difficulty.* **The wind not suffering us** may mean not suffering the ship to get to Cnidus to find shelter in its harbour (Hackett, Hausrath, Holtzmann), or not suffering it to get any quicker over against Cnidus—explaining the preceding clause (Alford, Lechler), or not suffering it to proceed farther (Conybeare and Howson, Revised Version, Spence).

Ver. 8. **Hardly passing it** (Crete) should be *with difficulty coasting along it.* The participle is a nautical term. The harbour of **Fair Havens**, though mentioned by no ancient writer, was undoubtedly that still known by the same name (Kali) on the south of Crete, a few miles to the east of Cape Matala, beyond which the land suddenly springs towards the north. "The harbour consists of an open roadstead, or rather two roadsteads contiguous to each other, which may account for the plural designation." The epithet "fair" may have been given to it in joke, on account of its unfavourable character, ver. 12 (Zöckler). The town of **Lasea,** probably mentioned as better known, is still recognisable by "two white pillars, masses of masonry, and other ruins," which "occur on the spot" (Hackett). Its discovery by "a Scotch yachting party may be classed among the really valuable geographical evidences of the truth of the Bible which have been accumulating of late years" (Spence).

Ver. 9. **Sailing** meant the further prosecution of the voyage. **The fast** signified the Great Day of Atonement (Lev. xvi. 29*ff.*, xxiii. 26*ff.*; Jos., *Ant.*, XIV. xvi. 4), which the Jews celebrated on the 10th Tisri—*i.e.*, about the beginning of October, after which season, according to Philo, no prudent man thought of putting to sea. "The Greeks and Romans considered the period of safe navigation as closing in October and recommencing about the middle of March" (Hackett). Accordingly Paul **admonished,** or exhorted them—*i.e.*, the shipmaster, shipowner, and Julius (ver. 11)—to remain in "The Fair Havens."

Ver. 10. **Hurt.**—ὕβρις, not to be taken in a moral sense as meaning "presumption" (Ewald, Meyer), a meaning unsuitable for ver. 21, but in a physical sense, as signifying violence—as, *e.g.*, of the waves (Zöckler, Holtzmann), a significance the word has in Josephus (*Ant.*, III. vi. 4, ἀπὸ τῶν ὄμβρων ὕβρις) and in 2 Cor. xii. 10. Compare *nisi ventis debes ludibrium* (Hor., *Odes*, I. xiv. 15). **Loss** expressed what would result from the "violence."

Ver. 11. The **master** of the ship corresponded to our steersman or captain; the **owner** was the person to whom the ship belonged. Ramsay says the owners of private merchant ships were called ἔμποροι, as distinguished from ναύκληροι, who were captains of the Imperial fleet (*St. Paul*, etc., p. 324).

Ver. 12. **The more part** showed that the situation had become critical, and that a general consultation had been held. **Phenice,** rather *Phœnix*, was a haven situated on the south of Crete, a little to the west of Fair Havens. Strabo (x. 475) mentions a harbour with this name on the south of Crete, and Ptolemy (iii. 17), a town called Phœnix, with a port which he names Phœnicus. Smith, whom Alford, Conybeare and Howson, and Plumptre, follow, Zöckler, and Hertzberg in Riehm's *Handwörterbuch*, identify the port with the modern *Lutro*, which, as seen from the sea, **lieth towards the south-west** (λίψ, Latin *Africus*) **and the north-west** (χῶρος = Caurus), lit., *looking down the south-west and the north-west winds—i.e.*, looking north-east and south-east (R.V.). Hackett, Lechler, Zöckler, and Holtzmann, regard this interpretation as incorrect, and understand Luke to say that the haven looked towards the south-west and the north-west, while the lands encompassing it were directed towards the north and the south.

Ver. 13. **Loosing thence.**—Better, *having weighed anchor.* **Close by Crete** meant *close* in to the shore, nearer (ἄσσον) than usual.

Ver. 14. **Euroclydon,** or *Euraquilo* (according to the Sinaitic text), was an east-north-east wind of great violence—lit., *a typhonic wind*—a hurricane, which either struck **against it,** the ship (A.V., Hackett, Lechler, Winer, Zöckler), not the island (Kuinoel, De Wette, Meyer), or hurled itself **down from it**—viz., Crete, the island (Alford, Howson, Humphrey, Wordsworth, Plumptre, Spence, Holtzmann).

Ver. 15. The result was that the vessel **could not bear up into the wind**—lit., *could not look into,* or face *the wind*—a remarkably expressive phrase, considering that in ancient ships eyes were painted on each side of the bow; English sailors still call the "bow" the eyes of a ship (Conybeare and Howson)—so that the sailors **let** her **drive** or gave way to her, and were driven (R.V.)—lit., *having given up* the vessel to the wind, *we were borne along* at its mercy.

Ver. 16. **Clauda,** or, according to best authorities, *Cauda* or Gauda; Claudos (Ptolemy); presently named Gaudo by the Greeks, and Gozzo by the Italians; an island twenty-three miles south-west of Crete, "different from the similarly-called island near Malta" (Holtzmann). **Much work to come by the boat.**—Lit., *we were able with difficulty to become masters of the boat—i.e.*, to get possession of it; which, however, they did, hoisting it up on board so that it might not be dashed to pieces in the storm, and might serve as a last means of escape (ver. 30).

Ver. 17. **Helps, undergirding the ship.**—*I.e.*, ropes, chains, and such like, for putting over the gunwale and under the keel, so as, by drawing them together, to strengthen the hull and keep it from falling to pieces. The term for this in the English navy is "frapping." Com-Hor., *Od.*, I. xiv. 6: "*Sine funibus vix durare carinæ possint imperiosius æquor.*" **The quicksands**, or *the Syrtis*, were the Syrtis Major, on the coast of Africa, south-west of Crete, a dangerous shoal or sandbank, of which ancient mariners were much afraid (Jos., *Wars*, II. xvi. 4). Here Virgil placed the shipwreck of Æneas (*Æneid*, i. 153). **Strake sail.**—Lit. *lowered the gear*, the verb being that employed to describe the letting down of the boat into the sea (ver. 30), and of Paul over the wall of Damascus (ix. 25; 2 Cor. xi. 33). What was lowered was, either (1) the sails, so that the vessel scudded along under bare poles (Meyer, De Wette, Hackett, Lechler, Holtzmann); or (2) the great yard, or top hamper, leaving only a small storm-sail (Conybeare and Howson, Smith, Alford, Plumptre); or (3) the stern anchor, so as, by dragging, to retard as much as possible the ship's progress (Brensing). **And so were driven**, or were borne along—*i.e.*, they drifted.

Ver. 18. **They lightened the ship.**—By casting out what of the cargo could be spared. This occurred during the second day of the storm. The ship had obviously sprung a leak.

Ver. 19. On the third day **the tackling** followed. This was either (1) the yards, masts, and sails of the ship (Olshausen Ewald, Smith, Conybeare and Howson); or (2) the tables, chests, beds, and the like, the ship's furniture (De Wette, Meyer, Alford, Lechler, Hackett, Holtzmann); or (3) the baggage of the passengers (Wetstein, Kuinoel, Winer, Plumptre). The best texts read *they* instead of **we** cast out.

Ver. 20. **When neither sun nor stars in many days appeared.**—This, the overclouding of the sky, "a circumstance not unusual during a Levanter" (Conybeare and Howson), rendered ancient navigation perilous, as without a compass they had no other means of determining their position than by observation of the heavenly bodies.

Ver. 21. **Long abstinence.**—Not necessarily entire (compare ver. 33), but partial, and occasioned not by lack of provisions, but by fear and the difficulty of preparing food during the continuance of the gale. **Ye should have hearkened unto me** was said, not so much to rebuke them as to secure their attention to what he was about to state.

Ver. 22. **Be of good cheer.**—Compare xxiii. 11. "Look and tone, we may well believe, helped the words. It was something in that scene of misery and dejection to see one man stand forward with a brave, calm confidence" (Plumptre).

Ver. 24. **Fear not, Paul.**—One naturally infers from this that the apostle was not entirely free from anxiety (compare xviii. 9). **Thou must be brought**, or stand (R.V.), **before Cæsar.**—Compare xxiii. 11.

Ver. 26. This whole passage (vers. 21-26) has been pronounced an interpolation by the writer of the Acts (Zeller, Overbeck, Hilgenfeld, Holtzmann), on the ground that it does not harmonise with the statements in vers. 10 and 31. But while God's purposes are certain in fulfilment, man is not, on that account, relieved from the necessity of employing means for their accomplishment. See "Hints" on vers. 21-26.

Ver. 27. **The fourteenth night** dated from the rising of the gale, which occurred soon after leaving the Fair Havens. **The Sea of Adria.**—See "Homiletical Analysis." Though applied to the sea between Greece and Italy, it also embraced the ocean waters around Sicily and as far south as the coast of Africa. The **country** towards which the ship drifted was not the island of Meleda near the Dalmatian coast, but that of Malta, south of Sicily, so that the course of drifting was west-by-north.

Ver. 29. **They cast four anchors out of the stern.**—One advantage of doing so was that the ship was thus ready for running ashore. Besides, had they anchored from the prow, the vessel might have swung round and been dashed against the rocks. Cæsar (*De Bel., Civ.*, i. 25) secured his ships by means of four anchors: *naves quaternis anchoris destinabat, ne fluctibus moverentur*; and Nelson is said to have anchored his ships in this way at the Battle of Copenhagen, having been led to do so by reading on the morning before the battle the twenty-seventh chapter of the Acts (Conybeare and Howson).

Ver. 30. **Cast anchors out of the foreship** should be, stretch or *lay out anchors from the foreships.* The idea seems to have been to pretend to sail out from the bows in the boat with one or two anchors, so as to drop them into the sea at the full length of the cables. The intention was to escape and leave the soldiers and prisoners to their fate.

Ver. 31. On the seeming inconsistency of this verse with ver. 22 see on ver. 26. Notwithstanding Paul's previous assurance of safety, nothing but death could result if the only persons who could man the vessel were allowed to leave it.

Ver. 32. The soldiers to whom Paul gave the alarm prevented the base attempt of the sailors to desert the ship from being successful.

Ver. 33. **Paul besought** them **all to take meat**, or *food.*—Because of their long fast, and because of the labours which the dawning day might bring them. Before they could reach the shore, much fatigue would require to be endured, and for this they would need to recruit their strength by means of food.

Ver. 35. **He took bread and gave thanks.**—Neither celebrating a love-feast or Eucharist (Olshausen, Ewald), nor acting as a father of a family (Meyer, Hackett), since there is no mention made of any distribution of the bread, as in Luke xxiv. 30; but simply setting them example as a pious Jew or Christian, who asks a blessing on his food (De Wette, Zöckler, Alford)—an example which they all followed (ver. 36).

Ver. 37. **Two hundred threescore and sixteen souls.**—The number is probably correct, though some ancient authorities read *about threescore and sixteen.* The vessel must therefore have been quite equal in size to the largest class of modern merchantmen. Its keel, it has been estimated, would be about one hundred feet in length, while its carrying capacity would be about eleven and twelve hundred tons.

Ver. 38. **They lightened the ship.**—For the third time (see vers. 18, 19). Either because of its sinking condition, or because they wished it to get nearer shore. What they threw out was **the wheat,** τὸν σῖτον. Either (1) the ship's provisions (Alford, Plumptre, Holtzmann, Hausrath) which were now no longer needed—against this has been urged that by this time these must have been so reduced as to make little difference to the load (Smith), though it must not be overlooked that for the past fourteen days these provisions had been barely touched; or (2) the remainder of the ship's cargo (Smith, Conybeare and Howson, Zöckler).

Ver. 39. **A certain creek with a shore,** or *bay with a beach,* as distinguished from the island in the middle of the sea (ver, 16). St. Paul's Bay, supposed to be here referred to, "is situated at the north-west extremity of the island of Malta, and is formed by the main shore on the south and the island of Salmonetta on the north" (Hackett). **They were minded.**—Better, *they took counsel.*

Ver. 40. **They committed** *themselves* should be *the anchors* **unto the sea.**—Having no time to haul in the anchors, the sailors cut the ropes and abandoned them. **The mainsail,** ὁ ἀρτέμων is considered a wrong translation by nautical authorities, who substitute for it *the foresail—i.e.,* the sail attached to the mast nearest the prow.

Ver. 41. **A place where two seas met** was probably the channel between the smaller Salmonetta and the larger Malta (Smith). The sea flowing in from both sides would create a sand- or mud-bank, upon which the vessel ran aground before reaching the beach.

Ver. 42. The inhuman proposal of this verse, which proceeded from **the soldiers,** because they were, in a measure, answerable for the safety of the prisoners, could only be equalled by its base ingratitude, since it involved the killing of Paul, to whom they had already more than once owed their lives.

Ver. 43. **Willing** should be *wishing* **to save Paul.**—This clause shows the impression made by Paul upon his keeper, but need not, on that account, have been a later interpolation (Zeller). **Should cast themselves first into the sea** should be *having cast themselves overboard* (from the ship, ἀπὸ) *should go forth first* (ἐκ, from the sea) *upon the land.*—This would enable them to assist the others, and prevent the escape of the prisoners.

Ver. 44. It is a comfort to know that Baur and Weizsäcker recognise the historical credibility of this chapter. "Although here and there betraying another hand," says the former, "it is for the most part authentic;" the latter adds, "with this section we tread the firm ground of history"; "here everything is fresh, simple and natural, and reported with a skilful pen."

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 1—8.

Setting Sail; or, *from Cæsarea to Fair Havens.*

I. **The passengers.** 1. *The prisoners.* (1) Foremost among these was Paul, the venerable and weather-beaten missionary of the Cross, who had already, by sea and land, travelled farther, and suffered and laboured more than all the other apostles, singly or together (2 Cor. xi. 23). A veritable king of men, his moral majesty will, before this voyage ends, assert itself, and place him, though now a prisoner, high in rank above all on board ship beside him. The finest qualities of good men are evoked by situations of trial, as the stars shine clearest in the darkest nights. (2) Along with him voyaged certain other prisoners who, for various offences laid to their charge, some probably as imaginary as those advanced against the apostle, were being despatched to Rome for trial before the emperor's tribunal. That it was customary so to ship accused persons to the capital Josephus (*Life,* 3) has shown, by relating how he himself, when a young man, was wrecked in the Adriatic when proceeding to Rome for the purpose of defending "certain priests of his acquaintance, and very excellent persons they were, whom on a small and trifling occasion he (Felix) had put into bonds and

sent to Rome to plead their cause before Cæsar." 2. *The centurion.* (1) As to his identity, he was probably the Julius Priscus mentioned by Tacitus as a Prætorian officer, who may have been despatched on some imperial errand to Palestine, and to whom the company of prisoners was entrusted. (2) As to the Augustan cohort or "troop of the Emperor" (Ramsay) to which he belonged, the different views stated in the "Critical Remarks" are all worthy of consideration, though the likeliest makes him a commander either in Nero's or the procurator's body-guard. Never before had Julius been entrusted with so remarkable a prisoner as Paul—a prisoner of Jesus Christ rather than of Cæsar. Had he known that Paul was the servant of a more exalted king than Nero, an officer in a more distinguished army than that of the Augustan band, and journeyed to Rome on a more important mission than that which had brought him to Palestine, he would have hesitated before taking up such a charge as had been thrust upon him. Could he have understood the gospel of which Paul was the bearer, he would have learnt that not Paul, but he, was the real prisoner. 3. *The fellow-voyagers.* These were certainly two. (1) Luke, the writer of the Acts, who, in resuming the first person at this point in his narrative, gives his readers to understand that in all that relates to the voyage Romeward he writes as "an eyewitness." The detailed account which Luke furnishes of this voyage reveals the estimate which Luke had of its importance, in the providence of God, as a link in the chain of events which brought Paul to the capital of the world. (2) Aristarchus of Thessalonica (ver. 2), who had probably been with, or near Paul during his two years' imprisonment at Cæsarea and may have been now returning home to Macedonia, though the subsequent alteration of plan on the part of Julius (ver. 6) led to his being carried on to Rome. It would not be difficult for either Luke or Aristarchus to get a berth on board Paul's ship. Christ can raise up friends for His people in the darkest hour. *Note.*—The opinion here expressed is not that of Professor Ramsay (*St. Paul*, etc., p. 316), who thinks that Luke and Aristarchus would not find it easy to obtain a passage in the corn-ship, and must have accompanied Paul "as slaves, not merely performing the duties of slaves, but actually passing as slaves," and that in this way "not merely had Paul faithful friends always beside him," but "his importance in the eyes of the centurion would be much enhanced." The Professor, however, must surely have a different conception of Paul's character from the present writer, if he believes that Paul would assent to so much deception on the part either of himself or others.

II. **The ships.** 1. *A ship of Adramyttium.* Adramyttium, on the coast of Mysia, and opposite Lesbos, was then a flourishing city; though no antiquities have been found on its site except a few coins. The selection of this vessel, apparently engaged in the coasting trade, was due to the two facts (1) that direct communication between Cæsarea and Rome was at that time irregular, and (2) that the ship of Adramyttium was on the eve of sailing (see "Critical Remarks"). At Adramyttium, should they reach it—which they never did—it would most likely be Julius' purpose to tranship himself and prisoners into another craft going west, across the Ægean, or, to take the overland route described below. How frequently in life are man's plans overturned! Man proposes, but God disposes. 2. *A ship of Alexandria.* On reaching Myra, in the south of Lycia—or rather, since Myra stood back two or three miles from the coast, on casting anchor in the port of Myra, Andriace, which has been identified as the bay of Andraki—the centurion, no doubt counting himself fortunate, fell in with a larger vessel, an Alexandrian corn-ship, in those days much esteemed for its size and sea-going qualities, on her way to Italy, to which he forthwith transferred himself and party. At this point Besser well remarks: "Had not another than the chief officer of the imperial

troops lifted Paul and his companions into the ship, the whole ship's company would have come to grief." By this trans-shipment the number of souls on board, including crew and passengers, was brought up to two hundred and seventy-six—not an unlikely figure when it is remembered that the ship in which Josephus was wrecked contained six hundred persons (*Life*, § 3). The ship must thus have been about the size of the largest merchant vessels of modern times. (See "Critical Remarks.") That she was carrying corn from Alexandria receives explanation from the well-known fact that at that time Egypt was the granary of the world. If she left Alexandria about the beginning of August, when grain cargoes from Upper Egypt were usually shipped at that port, she might easily have reached Myra towards the end of the month, or beginning of September, and been found lying in the harbour, detained by contrary winds, when Paul's ship arrived. The west wind which enabled the Adramyttium vessel to tack along from Cæsarea to Myra might have forced the Alexandrian merchantman to hold due north till she found shelter in Myra (see Conybeare and Howson, *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, ii. 337).

III. **The voyage.** 1. *Its destination.* Rome (see on xxviii. 16). Both Jehovah and Julius concurred in this. Both were conducting the apostle thitherward, but for different ends. The way thither also God had arranged, not Julius. Julius' plan was first to sail to Adramyttium, and then proceed to Rome—either by sailing from that port, or by "the overland route, the great Via Egnatia from Neapolis through Philippi, Thessalonica, and the Macedonian towns to Dyrrachium, the port for Brundusium" (Lewin). Jehovah, however, altered that at Myra, and put the centurion, with his company, on board the corn-ship of Alexandria. Then, Julius expected, it may well be assumed, to sail direct to the port of Rome. But again Jehovah interfered. Julius and his fellow-voyagers had to drift about the Mediterranean and be wrecked at Malta before the voyage ended. Again, "Man proposes but God disposes," and none but God can count on working out the counsel of his own will (Dan. iv. 35; Eph. i. 11). 2. *Its stages.* (1) From Cæsarea, or Port Sebastus, which was left in August, A.D. 58, to Sidon. On Cæsarea see xii. 19. The latter city, Sidon, upon the Assyrian inscriptions *Sidunu*, "had anciently one of the finest harbours in the East." The rival of Tyre (xxi. 3), it was, in Paul's day, celebrated for its wealth and commerce. The present-day *Saida*, built upon the site of the old town, is pleasantly situated at the foot of the snow-capped Lebanon, and is surrounded by a circle of orchards, whose fruit is far-famed (Riehm's *Handwörterbuch des Biblischen Altertums*; art. *Sidon*). Its distance from Cæsarea, sixty-seven miles, with a favourable wind, might easily have been accomplished in a day. The ship having cast anchor in the harbour during the time in which the captain was transacting his business, either putting out or taking in cargo, an operation which occupied some hours, the centurion permitted Paul to go ashore, in company, of course, with a guard, and visit such friends as he had in the town. The narrative, it has been pointed out (Hackett), tacitly assumes that Paul had informed the centurion he had Christian brethren in Sidon, which Luke's narrative, indeed, in its earlier parts (xi. 19, xxi. 4), renders highly probable. Paul's object in making their acquaintance may have been to offer them some word of exhortation, but was more likely, as Luke states, to refresh himself, or receive attention from them—*i.e.*, obtain from them a supply of such things as he might need upon the journey (Holtzmann). (2) From Sidon to Myra. The direct course would have run to the southward of Cyprus, but as the wind continued westerly, the ship steered in a northerly direction, passing Cyprus, not upon the right (Meyer), but upon the left (see "Critical Remarks"), sailing under the lee of the long island, from Salamis to the promontory of Dinaretium, rounding which it headed westward before a land breeze usually

prevailing along the coast of Asia Minor, till it had crossed the Sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, and landed at Myra (see above). (3) From Myra to the Fair Havens. How long the voyagers stayed in the Lycian harbour of Andriace is not reported. Probably not more than a day. Having embarked on board the Alexandrian corn-ship above described, Julius and his company proceeded on their voyage, but so slowly that it took them "many days" to reach Cnidus, distant not more than a hundred and thirty miles from Myra. This slow progress was, doubtless, owing to a contrary wind from the north-west which ordinarily prevails in the Archipelago during the summer months (Pliny says it blows for forty days from the beginning of August), and which, though it permitted the ship to work up to Cnidus with difficulty, nevertheless rendered it impossible for her to proceed farther in that direction. Having, therefore, stood away southward, or rather south-south-west to the easternmost point of Crete, she rounded that island and again commenced a struggle with wind and wave along its southern coast, till the harbour of Fair Havens, near the city of Lasea, was gained (see "Critical Remarks").

Learn.—1. How all things are made to wait upon the servants of God. When God's time was come for Paul to be despatched to Rome, ships were ready to convey him, friends and companions to cheer him, winds and waves to bear him along. "More servants wait on man than he'll take notice of" (Herbert). 2. How God transforms men's plans to suit Himself. His own plans never change, but men's are often changed against their will. Julius' route was altered, that Paul's character might be further revealed, that Paul might have Aristarchus' company to Rome, that a great ship-load of immortal souls might have a better opportunity of hearing the gospel, and that God's grace and glory might be seen in all. 3. How God conducts His people by devious paths and brings them into port by contrary winds. To few, one might almost say to none, is the voyage of life all smooth and pleasant sailing.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 1. *Paul's Voyage to Italy.*

I. **Determined by Festus.**—As to time and manner—the procurator being probably guided in his judgment by the opinion of Agrippa and the presence of Julius, who was about to return to Rome.

II. **Carried out by Julius.**—The shipmasters were his servants and instruments whom he used for the execution of his plans, which he formed and altered at will.

III. **Over-ruled by God.**—Along the whole course of the voyage the hand of God can be seen interposing for higher purposes than those of either Festus or Julius. It was more God that was leading Paul to Rome than Festus that was sending him or Julius that was conducting him.

IV. **Reported by Luke.**—The liveliness of the narration indicates the pen of an eyewitness, which could be no other than that of the good physician who accompanied the apostle (see "Introduction").

V. **Endorsed by Paul.**—The second epistle to Timothy, by attesting Paul's presence in Rome, shows the likelihood at least that this voyage was performed.

Ver. 3. *Paul's Friends*—the Sidonian believers.

I. **The ground on which Paul claimed them as friends.**—Their Christian discipleship, which meant their common relationship to Jesus Christ, and as a consequence their common membership in God's house.

II. **The service Paul expected to receive at their hands.**—Refreshment, a supply of such things as might be needful for the voyage (see James ii. 16, and compare 2 Tim. iv. 13, 21).

III. **The probability that Paul's ex-**

pectations were fulfilled.—Not simply because they were disciples, to whom his name would be well known, but because in all likelihood he had personal acquaintances among them, having recently been at Tyre (xxi. 3) and at Ptolemais (xxi. 7). Besides, he may have passed through Sidon when travelling with Barnabas from Antioch to Jerusalem (xi. 30, xv. 3).

Ver. 4. *Contrary Winds—*

I. **Frequently occur** on the voyage of life.

II. Are **seldom agreeable** to the voyagers.

III. **Always useful**, furthering the designs of the chief shipmaster, God.

Ver. 8. *The Fair Havens.*

I. Many havens counted fair by man are incommodious to winter in.

II. One haven only is secure against life's storms—that of heaven.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 9—14.

Caught in a Storm; or, from Fair Havens to Crete.

I. **The advice proffered by Paul.**—1. The *purport* of it. Whether "Julius the centurion and the captain and the pilot and other naval officers, met in council," at which Paul, through the courtesy of Julius, was invited to assist (Lewin), can only be conjectured. In any case, whether asked or volunteered, Paul's counsel was, not to quit the shelter of the Fair Havens, incommodious though it was, but to spend the winter there. Though not exactly stated in the narrative, from the considerations urged by Paul it may be reasonably inferred that this was the tenor of his admonition. 2. The *reason* of it. The apostle apprehended, not from supernatural guidance, but from the exercise of his own judgment, looking to the lateness of the season—the Fast or Great Day of Atonement, which fell about the beginning of October, being past—that to proceed further with the voyage would only result in disaster to the vessel, and probably in loss of life to the crew and passengers. It is noticeable that Paul says "Our lives," since no angel had as yet given him assurance of his personal safety (contrast ver. 23). 3. The *rejection* of it. Though his advice was disregarded, the event showed that he was right at least in recommending the voyage to be arrested and the ship laid up for the winter months. His fear lest life should be lost likewise proved so far correct that only a merciful Providence prevented it from being realised.

II. **The mistake committed by the centurion.**—He "gave more heed to the master and the owner of the ship than to those things which were spoken by Paul." This was—1. *Perhaps natural.* Considering that Paul was a landsman, whereas the master (pilot, steersman, or captain) was an experienced mariner, and the owner of the vessel possessed at least some knowledge of nautical affairs, humanly speaking, Julius with whom, as the highest officer on board, the ultimate decision lay (Ramsay), could hardly be blamed for listening to their words rather than to those of Paul. Julius, however, overlooked two things—(1) that experts are not always correct in their judgments, while non-experts are not always wrong, and (2) that Paul, besides being no common man, had had considerable experience in sailing on Mediterranean waters, having once narrowly escaped from drowning, after shipwreck, by drifting about on a spar—hardly swimming (Ramsay)—for a night and a day (2 Cor. xi. 25, 26), and so was better qualified than most people to pronounce an opinion on the advisability of risking a winter voyage. Yet the centurion's mistake was—2. *Certainly serious.* It led to all the future misfortunes that befell the large ship and its crew. To proceed at the late season which had then arrived was a false step, and, like other false steps, when once taken could not be retrieved.

III. **The course recommended by the crew and passengers.**—1. The *tenor* of it. To put to sea at once and make for the harbour of Phœnix, on the south of Crete. If the Alexandrian sailors knew of the existence of such a harbour, recent geographical discovery has shown the accuracy of their information. It was long held that no spot on the south shore of Crete answered the description of Phœnix furnished by Luke; but "at length the point was entirely settled and made clear by the publication of the charts of our British surveying officers. There is no difficulty now in identifying Phœnix with Lutro in the narrowest part of the island of Crete. It is a place of admirable shelter, with deep water close under the rocks and precisely protected from south-west and north-west winds as was said in the discussion at Fair Havens" (Spence). 2. The *arguments* for it. (1) That Fair Havens was not a suitable harbour to winter in. This appears to have been the case. The anchorage there, while affording shelter from the north-west gales, was open to those from other points of the compass. (2) That Phœnix was better adapted for winter quarters. This also accorded with fact. According to Luke's narrative Phœnix looked toward the south-west and the north-west, which the best expositors explain as meaning that its two openings looked down the directions of these winds, or, in other words, that it faced the north-east and south-east (see "Critical Remarks.") "Lutro," with which Phœnix has been identified, "is an admirable harbour. You open it like a box; unexpectedly the rocks stand apart, and the town appears within. . . . There are fifteen fathoms in the middle of the harbour, diminishing gradually to two close to the village" (Conybeare and Howson, ii. 343). 3. The *adoption* of it. The majority having recommended that Phœnix should be made for, the captain, favoured by a change of wind from strong north-west to soft south-east, weighed anchor and sailed along close in shore, so little apprehensive of danger that the ship's boat was left towing astern (ver. 16). 4. The *mistake* of it. The treacherous character of the wind which had decoyed them forth from the Fair Havens soon revealed itself. Suddenly it reverted to its old quarter and swept down with hurricane fury upon the ill-fated corn-ship. Whether named Euroclydon or Euraquilo, the wind belonged to the typhonic order, an east-north-easter fierce and strong, "a sudden eddying squall," before which the vessel could not stand.

"Colder and colder blew the wind
A gale from the north-east.
The snow fell hissing in the brine,
And the billows frothed like yeast.

"Down came the storm, and smote amain
The vessel in its strength;
She shuddered and paused, like a frighted steed,
Then leaped her cable's length."

Longfellow.

"Every one," writes Ramsay (*St. Paul*, etc., p. 327), "who has any experience of sailing on lakes or bays overhung by mountains, can appreciate the epithet 'typhonic' which Luke uses"—adding that a ship captain when relating an experience of his own in Cretan waters, said, "The wind comes down from those mountains fit to blow the ship out of the water." Turning her back to the gale Paul's ship ran before the wind.

Learn—1. The danger of either always trusting to experts or always following the majority. In this case the sailors and passengers were wrong, and Paul right. 2. The almightiness of God, as seen in the elements of nature. Wind and wave are only instruments in God's hand, and vehicles of His power. 3. The wisdom of always acting with prudent foresight. Boast not thyself of to-morrow. Hurricanes may succeed south winds.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 9. *Dangerous Voyages.*—Such are those which are undertaken—

I. **At unsuitable times.**

II. **Over stormy seas.**

III. **Against advice** from the experienced.

IV. **With overweening confidence** in one's own ability.

V. In **defiance of** almost **certain risks.**—Many such voyages of a moral kind are made by souls.

Vers. 10-14. *The Counsel of the Good.*

I. **Is often despised by the world.**—1. Because it proceeds from the good. 2. Because it is unpleasant, and contrary to the world's wishes.

II. **May sometimes appear to be uncalled for.**—This probably was felt to be the case with Paul's advice to the captain and owner, which was—1. Not asked, and may have looked officious. 2. Not probable, as emanating from a landsman and a prisoner.

III. **Can seldom be neglected with impunity.**—Before the voyage was over, all on board must have wished they had hearkened to the apostle.

Ver. 12. *The Vote of the Majority.*

I. **As a general rule it is wise that the majority should prevail.**—On this principle only can social government or co-operative action proceed. To set aside the will of the majority where all have equal rights, in favour of the wish of the minority is of the essence of tyranny and oppression.

II. **There are times when the majority should bow to the minority.**—As, for instance, when the subject in debate is one upon which the minority is better informed or more likely to be able to give a right decision. To refuse to do so is not intelligence, but stupidity, not principle, but stubbornness.

III. **The vote of the majority has not unfrequently been wrong.**—Instances might be quoted from almost every department of life — business, politics, religion.

Ver. 14. *The Storms of Life.*—Are most—

I. **Unexpected** in their coming.

II. **Severe** in their operation.

III. **Long** in their continuance.

IV. **Disastrous** in their effects.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 15-26.

Drifting Upon the Deep; or, *Preparing for The Worst.*

I. **Making for shelter.**—This the storm-driven vessel found for a little under the lee of a small island named Clauda or Cauda, the modern Gozzo, about twenty miles south-west of Cape Matala. The word used by Luke "running under," it has been observed (Smith, *The Shipwreck of St. Paul,* 2nd ed., p. 100), is a striking nautical term which expresses first that the ship had the wind behind it, and secondly, that it had the wind between itself and the island. Hence the inference is that it passed to the south-east of the island.

II. **Hoisting up the boat.**—This, as already remarked, had been towing astern when the ship left the Fair Havens. Either the storm had arisen so suddenly or had not been expected to continue, so that at first no attention was turned to the boat. When the vessel was fairly caught by the hurricane, it was impossible to do anything in the way of securing the boat. In the temporary shelter afforded by the island, the sailors managed, though with difficulty, to get it brought on board. It had obviously by this time become waterlogged. It was not much of a protection for two hundred and seventy passengers; but should things come to the worst it might be the means of saving some, if not all.

III. **Frapping the ship.**—So apprehensive were the captain and owner that the violence of the storm might cause the ship's timbers to start, and the ship to spring a leak, that they resorted to a practice which, though seldom necessary, in consequence of the superior construction of modern vessels, is nevertheless still

occasionally employed by sailors in a storm. They used helps, undergirding the ship. They put chains under the keel and over the gunwale of the vessel, and probably ropes along its sides, to strengthen the hull and keep it from being battered to pieces. Mr. Smith and Conybeare and Howson mention several instances of the practice here referred to, of which the following may be cited. 1. At the battle of Navarino the *Albion* man-of-war received so much damage during the action, that it became necessary to have recourse to frapping, and the vessel had chain cables passed round her under the keel, which were tightened by others passed horizontally along the sides, interlacing them; and she was brought home in this state to Portsmouth. 2. On December 20th, 1837, the schooner *St. Croix*, fifty-three tons burden, bound for Kingston, Jamaica, encountered a severe gale from south-west and lay to for seven days. On the 26th she shipped a heavy sea, which took away about one-third of her deck-load. For the preservation of the crew, vessel, and balance of deck-load, it was found necessary to secure the top of the ship, which was done by passing a coil of four-inch Manilla rope round and round the vessel, and making them as tight as possible by means of heavers. One of the chains was also passed round and fastened with tackles and heavers, so that the top of the vessel was secured and the leak in the waterways was stopped. In this way the vessel reached its destination.

IV. **Lowering the gear.**—Considerable dubiety exists as to the exact import of this expression—some supposing it to mean that the sails were taken down so as to let the vessel scud along under bare poles, and others that the stern anchor was paid out, that, by dragging, it might impede the ship's progress; but the opinion most in favour is that the top hamper was lowered and the mast rigged with only a small storm-sail. The reason for this precaution was that the sailors dreaded being driven upon the Great Syrtis (to-day called the Gulf of Sidra), a dangerous shoal upon the coast of Africa, which was a terror to all ancient seamen—"a place terrible to such as barely hear it described," said Agrippa in his memorable speech, dissuading his countrymen from going to war with the Romans (Jos., *Wars*, II. xvi. 4)—and on which, according to Virgil, the ship of Æneas was wrecked (*Æneid*, i. 157). This might, to some extent, have been hindered, if not wholly prevented, by the second of the above methods, lowering a stern anchor—by the first not at all; but the probability is that the course adopted was that suggested by the third,—viz., lying to, with the ship's head turned towards the wind or brought as near it as possible, with as much canvas set as would prevent her from falling off into the trough of sea. Smith, Conybeare and Howson, Lewin, Penrose, and other competent authorities, are of opinion that she lay to within seven points of the wind on what is called the starboard tack.

V. **Lightening the ship**—The violence of the gale continuing, additional measures were required to ensure safety. 1. *A part of the cargo*—perhaps the deck cargo, or whatever portion of the freight could be most easily spared—was thrown overboard on the second day of the storm. That all was not thrown out appears later on (ver. 38). 2. *The tackling of the ship* followed on the succeeding day, the third of the hurricane. What the spare gear meant cannot be definitely stated. Mr. Smith conjectures it may have been the mainyard, "an immense spar, probably as long as the ship, which would require the united efforts of passengers and crew to launch overboard," and adds, "The relief a ship would experience by this would be of the same kind as in a modern war-vessel when the guns are thrown overboard." In this work of casting out "the ship's furniture" the A.V., following certain ancient MSS. represents Luke and his companions, perhaps including Paul, as taking part; but, according to the best texts the work was done by the sailors alone.

VI. **Despairing of safety.**—This was the condition of the crew and passengers for the next few days. When the ship lay to under the starboard tack she began to drift away westward, or, more correctly speaking, west by north, at the rate of (say) thirty-six miles in twenty-four hours. With a ship manifestly leaking, a wild storm raging, a grey sky overhead during day, concealing the sun, and a black pall at night shutting out the stars, so that no observations could be made of their whereabouts, it was not surprising that all on board began to anticipate the worst. Tossed about at the mercy of wind and wave, with creaking and slackening timbers, they had no more cheerful prospect than that before long their ship would founder and go down, as Josephus's vessel, with six hundred souls on board, had done in this same sea, the Adriatic.

VII. **Taking heart of cheer.**—How many days had passed before Paul interposed with his words of comfort is not told. Despair had laid its icy grasp on every heart. Nobody cared for food, and nobody could have eaten though food had been prepared. In such circumstances the apostle, the hurricane having for a moment lulled, it may be conjectured, stood forth among them, crew and passengers, to offer words of cheer. 1. He *reproved* them for not having acted on his advice when he counselled them to winter in Fair Havens (ver. 10);—which perhaps shows that Paul regarded that advice as having been founded on more than his own natural sagacity. Had they listened to his suggestion, they had not come by their present injury and loss. 2. He *assured* them that no lives would perish, though the ship would be lost. This he stated, not as an inference of his own foresight, but as the result of a communication made to him during the preceding night, direct from heaven, by an angel of the God whom he served, and in answer to prayer. That heavenly ambassador had repeated an intimation previously made (xxiii. 11), that he must go to Rome and stand before Cæsar (which implied that his life would not be lost in that storm), adding the further statement that, in answer to his supplication, God had granted him the lives of all his fellow-passengers. 3. He *exhorted* them to be of good cheer. Twice used (vers. 22-25), this expression revealed at once his earnestness and strong conviction of the truth of what he said—a conviction which arose from his faith in God, whose promises to him were Yea and amen (2 Cor. i. 20). He believed that what God had spoken to him would come to pass. Hence he could afford to dismiss all anxiety as to the issue of the voyage. Could they have believed him, as he believed God, they might have done the same. That Luke and Aristarchus were relieved of their apprehensions by Paul's address need hardly be questioned. But that the crew and passengers continued in alarm is apparent from the circumstance that when next Paul spoke to them, on the fourteenth night (ver. 33), they had not broken fast. 4. He *told* them they would be cast upon a certain island. As land was not then visible, this announcement must be regarded as having formed part of the communication made to Paul by the angel. The addition of this fact reminded the crew and passengers that, even if they did credit Paul's assurance, there was still need for caution, lest in the stranding of the vessel they should, after all, be drowned. God's promise in no way relieved them of the necessity of caring for their own safety.

Learn—1. The helplessness of man when he falls into the hands of God. Sailors and passengers realise this when caught in a storm at sea. 2. The worthlessness of material treasure when compared with life. "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath, will he give for his life." 3. The holy courage which true piety inspires. Paul lost neither heart nor head in the storm. 4. The certainty that worldly and unbelieving men receive many blessings from God for His people's sakes. 5. The assurance possessed by faith that God will keep His promise.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 15. *The Drifting Life and Its Opposite* (compared with John vi. 21). 1. The drifting life is our first subject. Its name is legion. It is not the only life of the human being—but it is the life of hundreds of thousands. "Drifting" is its superscription. Caught by the Euroclydon of chance and change, of accident and circumstance, it gives way to it, and so is driven. It drifts. Its very framework and setting—its external condition, its employment, its occupation, its profession—has perhaps been accident. It had a home, and it went to school, it did its lessons, and ate and drank, and it grew up, and it took its chance, and here it is. The outward life drifted. If this were all, something might be said of its quiet submission to a higher guidance—human guidance or even Divine. But this is not all. The life which we are describing is not only passive in the sense of submission—it is passive also in departments where it is death not to be active. For example, there is such a thing as drifting into associations, drifting into habits, drifting into a course of conduct. How else can we describe nine-tenths of the companionships, nine-tenths of the attachments, nine-tenths of the marriages, which may almost be said to have the life itself in their keeping? Drifting is the explanation of half the personal habits which make a good or a bad life. Letting alone is another word for it. Habits are only tricks on a large scale; every one knows how easy these are to fall into, how difficult to get rid of; what else are those habits of temper, habits of speech, habits of thoughts—sloth, debt, intemperance, profaneness, immorality—what else are they but negligences at first, things thought not worth attending to, so trivial, so immaterial, so easily dropped at any moment if they should go too far or become troublesome? We drift into them. There are positive habits and negative. You let your morning prayer pass one morning—you just drifted out of the good habit, as you drifted into the bad one. There are habits of the mind as well as of the life. Opinion is a habit of the mind—not least on the highest subjects. Faith itself is a mental habit—faith, and its opposite. But how few are they, by comparison, who carefully and earnestly form these mental habits. Reflect for a moment upon your reasons for thinking this, for believing that. "Be ready," St. Peter says, "to answer when men ask you for a reason for the hope that is in you"—can we obey that precept? Must we not say, most of us, I drifted into my faith—it is the religion of my home and of my country. Very sad, sometimes, is the spectacle of this kind of drifting. 2. Thus we reach the second text, and the second picture, and the second parable—that which shows us the disciples crossing the sea of Galilee through wind and storm, terrified in the midst of it first by the absence and then by the apparition of their Master, then calmed by His voice of reassurance, receiving Him into their ship, and straightway finding themselves at the land whither they went. The opposite of a life of drifting is obviously a life of aim, of purpose, of directness. A life which goes, not anywhere, but somewhither. A life with a terminus, with a destination, with a haven. A life possessing both helm and pilot, a controlling hand and a guiding will. Such a life may be, and yet be earthly. A business life may have, in terms at least, all these conditions. But how when we take into view the whole of being—eternity, as well as time? How then? We want to know what is the security against drifting when we take in two worlds. And we find it in the words, "They received Him into the ship." No life is safe from drifting unless it has religion in it. A strong will cannot prevent the ship, which is the life, from being caught by some

Euroclydon, and driven, helpless, before it.—*Dean Vaughan.*

Vers. 15-20. *The Voyage of Life.*—As depicted in that of Paul from Crete. Such as sail across the ocean of life are—

I. **Often exceedingly tossed with a tempest.**—1. Of physical affliction. 2. Of mental tribulation. 3. Of heart-anxiety. 4. Of spiritual distress.

II. **Sometimes reduced to such straits that they must part with all they count dear.**—1. With material substance. 2. With intellectual wealth. 3. With (supposed) spiritual riches. 4. With all ordinary means of saving themselves.

III. **Not unfrequently plunged into despair.**—1. About their bodily life. 2. Concerning their soul's salvation.

Ver. 22. *Good Cheer for Christian Sailors.*

I. **No soul shall be lost,** however severe may be the tempests that arise against it.

> "Let troubles rise and terrors frown,
> And days of darkness fall;
> Through Him all dangers we'll defy,
> And more than conquer all."
> *Scotch Paraphrase.*

II. **No guarantee that everything else may not be lost.**—The ship the Christian sails in may be lost. His body may perish. His creature comforts may be removed. All he confides in may be shattered. He himself shall be saved (1 Cor. iii. 15).

Four Anchors. — The message—"I exhort you to be of good cheer"—is *Christianity's message to storm-tossed souls.* When the long voyage has been one of continual storm; when you look back and see nothing but cloud, and darkness, and disappointment; when the very cargo that you ventured all upon has been thrown overboard, and there is nothing left; when you look forward and hear the surf pounding on the rocks—a sign of death close at hand;—then Christianity comes with this message: "*I exhort you to be cheerful.*" In such a time as that there are *four anchors* which the Christian may throw out while he wishes for day. They are, **Duty, Hope, Christ,** and **God.**

I. **Duty.**—When there is no longer any inspiration in life; when you can no longer see that you can do anything; when it seems that all life thus far has been a failure; when you cannot see that you can accomplish anything in the future;—then comes **Duty** to stand by your side and say, "Do not leave the ship. You are in peril with others; you are bearing a burden with others: bear the burden, and do not throw it off upon them." **Duty**—all her surliness turns to serenity, and all her serenity to peace. Let a man live for happiness—for himself, for his wife, for his children, for his home, for others—and sooner or later the time of shipwreck will come to him. Let him live for what men call honour, and honour will not leave him in the hour of shipwreck. It was duty that enabled the six hundred to make that charge at Balaclava, though some one had blundered, and they rode to death. It is duty that enables many a man to stand where honour has no reward for him, and fame no value to him, and yet to stand, and, having done all, still stand; for duty inspires him, and duty is the voice of God speaking in conscience.

II. The second anchor is **Hope**—that is, **immortal hope.** Let a man live under the impression that the horizon of this present time is the horizon of his life, and I do not see how he can help at times asking himself, Is life worth living? and shaking his head sorrowfully in reply. One is prosperous and makes money, and is wealthy—what then? What can he do with it? Life is like an ocean voyage. The man comes out in the morning from his cabin and starts to walk the deck. Whether it is a little boat or a big one does not make much difference, for after a few years he has traversed the whole deck from stern to stem, stands on the bow, and knows all the life

that is. What then? Lie down to sleep, wearied one; in the morning we shall wake in the harbour, a new continent before you, and your friends there waiting to receive you. This is the anchor that you are to throw out while you wish for day: "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Blessed are those that believe in a morning.

III. The third anchor is **Christ**—Christ as a real Saviour from sorrow and sin, here and now; Christ as the noblest example of heroism; Christ as the inspiration to right life, because one that has entered into life and borne the brunt of life's battle; Christ, the power to live the life that is worth living.

IV. And then in all these, **God.**—"My God, whom I serve, sent His angel to stand by me this night." The presence of God. God in the garden and God in the desert; God at the cradle and God at the grave; God at the wedding-feast and God at the funeral; God in the hour of plenty and God in the hour of famine; God in that voice of duty, making conscience really Divine; God in that word of hope, the God of all hope, filling us with hope; God in that Christ, coming to take man's burdens and show them how, not to get free from them, but how bravely to bear them. Christ's message to the men who are storm-tossed, whose past is one long cyclone, whose future is an unknown grave, and the only comfort in whose ears is the sound of the breakers on the shore—the message of Christ to them is: Be of good cheer; Duty still lives, though happiness is dead; Hope has come—it beckons from beyond the grave; Christ is the model of a perfect heroism and the power of a Divine life; and over all, and in all, and through all, is the Father, God.—*Lyman Abbott, D.D.*

Ver. 23. *The Confession in the Midst of the Storm.*—Paul here speaks—1. *Decidedly.* He is no waverer, no halter between two opinions. He has made up his mind. He is thoroughly decided. He speaks as one who has made his choice. 2. *Certainly.* He interposes no "if" or "perhaps," but speaks as one who knows his relationship to God. 3. *Calmly.* These are not the words of excitement or fanaticism. 4. *Joyfully.* They are the words of one exulting in the consciousness of this Divine relationship. 5. *Earnestly.* With him all connected with God is a profound reality. Such is our model! Though we be not apostles, we are to take our stand here. Nothing less than this will do. Indecision, oscillation, half-heartedness, will not do. Compromise will not do. Lukewarmness will not do. Formalism will not do. In everything relating to God there must be reality, sincerity, completeness. The whole heart must be there.—*H. Bonar, D.D.*

Paul's Personal Religion. — It is Paul's *personal religion*, then, that these words of his bring before us—not in any of its doctrinal details, but, better still, in the whole of its practical essence. We will try to read some of its features as the words reveal them.

I. First, we will note what we may call the **clearheadedness** of Paul's religion. The religion of too many is a thing of haze. They do not see through it, and they do not know their position in it. Their abounding experience is that of mist. They may be Christians, happily, but also they may not; they themselves, at least, are not clear on the subject. Yet it is in their own consciousness that the evidence ought to be strongest. Now, in Paul's religion there is not a trace of this. His religious outlook is clean and clear. He does not at this moment know very well where he is as a voyager on God's world; but he does know distinctly where He is, and what he is, as a religious being under God's government. He is a Christian as surely as he is a man. He lays his own hand on all that belongs to a Christian. There are mysteries enough without having this, too, for a mystery. "The God," says he to the hearkening crowd

on the deck, "whose I am, whom also I serve." Paul does not see what is awaiting him in Rome, but he will tell himself, and he will tell other men, that he foresees sufficiently well what is awaiting him in the heavenly "city of the great King."

II. A second thing, then, which we note in Paul's religion is its **clear-heartedness**. Paul, it is easy to see, is not embarrassed with his religion. There is nothing of load or weight in it—nothing of the entanglement of anxiety, or fear, or concealment, or shame. It is plain that he is rather proud than otherwise of his religion. These words declare his religion, throb with it, glory in it. On that long voyage he has never kept it a secret from any man how it stands between God and him. This of itself is proof enough that there is no degradation in his religious position. There can be nothing in it that is unworthy of a man, nothing that is uncongenial to the most gifted and capacious of human spirits. Does it appear to have broken his energy, or crushed his high spirit—this submission of himself and his powers to the control of his God? Nay; if all the truth were told, Paul was never Paul at his best, or anything near it, till he could say, "The God whose I am, whom also I serve."

III. A third thing we have to note about the religion of Paul is its **outward expression**—the form it presents to the observation of men. This appears in the phrase "Whom also I serve." That signifies, "To whom I do worship—to whose honour I perform all my religious rites, and at whose hands I take all my religious duties." In a word, Paul worships his God—obeys worshipping, and worships obeying. His religion, rich with reverence, seeks outward manifestation of itself, and the manifestation it finds is worship—the observance of all the prescribed yet untrammelled methods of homage which are suitable to such a God as his. Those listening men had most of them their gods, to whom they did service, gave honour, made offerings—divinities whose anger they sought to soothe, whose favour they coveted to win, whose temples they were fain to frequent. Men could thus read their religion. So it was, more finely, with Paul. His religion, much more than theirs, was a spiritual religion, but it was not left altogether bodiless. He prayed, he praised—alone, or in company with brethren.

IV. But a fourth thing which we must now note about the religion of Paul is its **inward thoroughness**—its personalness, and depth, and solidity. The essence of Paul's religion, we have said, is in this passage; we may now say that the essence of the passage is in these three words: "Whose I am." Paul, then, simply does not belong to himself, but to his God. For him, "to live is Christ," and to die is only more of Christ. But we must let these three words of Paul's mean to ourselves the whole that they meant to him. Assuredly enough, he had consecrated his life to God's will; but he had done more. He had given his whole being to God Himself—to Father, Son, and Spirit. "*Whose*," says he, "I am"—precisely meaning what he says. Of course Paul was His—His, as the flower on the mountain-side is His who made it; as the silent, far-off star is His, and all the bustling burden of our wheeling world; for they bear upon them the lines of His creating hand. Of course Paul was His, for nothing else than His all-working providence from moment to moment could have preserved Paul to this hour. True; but the words carry more intensity in them than these considerations could ever have inspired. Paul had seen more to stir him, and had seen what stirred him more, than all creation and all providence. Paul, with his vision Divinely cleansed, had looked and beheld how his God, as the Man Jesus, had girded Himself to meet the desperate needs of Paul, had pitied Paul in his helplessness and guilt, had set it before Himself to redeem Paul at any cost that stayed short of unrighteousness, and had verily redeemed

Paul at the cost of comfort, companionship, reputation, lordship, life—borne down under a great lone enduring to which the world can bring no parallel. "I am Thine: Thou hast saved me."

V. The last thing we will note about the religion of Paul is its **temporal and eternal actuality.** That we may better feel this momentous characteristic of Paul's religion, let me ask you to think again of the simple facts of the record. Paul knows that his God is great enough to be invisible, and mighty enough to be controlling all things everywhere. He knows he is the friend of his God. He is now in jeopardy. Paul's religion, then, with all its soaring sublimity, and all its nearly incredible creed, was still a system of facts, and not of fancies. His religious sentiment worked among actualities, and not among shadows. His religious reliance had a vastness of substantially behind it, and not an infinitude of cloud. Paul felt his foot firm, and had reason—firm for time, and firm for eternity. It will be little more than extending our consideration of this last characteristic of Paul's religion if, ere we close, we turn our our eye upon the first three of this messenger's words—the keynote of his message—"Fear not, Paul." Absolutely speaking, this is the key-tone of the whole religion of Christ, and it is the key-tone of no other—hardly a tone at all of any other. Not the best of other religions can even pretend to carry into the very heart of a man such strong self-possession. But do not these three words bring a breath of good cheer to every Christian of us who, like Paul, is on lines of duty set for him by a gracious Providence, and on those lines is meeting with what is adverse, threatening, dangerous? As obedient Christians, as dutiful men and women of Christ, the last thing for us to do is to fear.—*J. A. Kerr Bain, M.A.*

Ver. 23, 24. *The True Greatness of the Christian.*—Whether minister or private believer.

I. **His exalted character.**—He belongs to God—"whose I am." 1. By right of creation. 2. By title of purchase. 3. By act of voluntary dedication.

II. **His noble profession.**—He serves God—"Whom I serve." 1. Intelligently, not blindly. 2. Heartily, not grudgingly. 3. Constantly, not intermittently.

III. **His heavenly privilege.**—1. *Visited by angels*—"There stood by me this night an angel of God." "Are they not all ministering spirits?" etc. (Heb. i. 14). 2. *Admitted to the throne of grace.* Paul had obviously been praying for his fellow-voyagers.

IV. **His wide-reaching influence.**—He becomes a means and a cause of blessing, even to those who love neither him nor his God. "God hath given thee all them that sail with thee" (compare Matt. v. 13).

Ver. 24. *Paul's God.*

I. **His glorious majesty.**—1. Served by angels. 2. Worshipped by men.

II. **His wondrous condescension.**—1. In noting the drifting ship. 2. In visiting His suffering servant. 3. In answering that servant's prayer.

III. **His regal sovereignty.**—1. Over the sea. 2. Over the lives of men. 3. Over the course of events.

IV. **His absolute faithfulness.**—In keeping His promised word to Paul—that he should stand before Cæsar.

V. **His boundless mercy.**—In granting the lives of all on board the ship, of whom most knew Him not, and many loved and served Him not.

The divine "Must"; or what the Angel's words signified.—Six things.

I. **Three to Paul.**—1. *That his life would be spared.* Against all the probabilities of opposing nature, whoever else might perish, he would not. "All things possible with God"; and "Our times in His hand,"

> "Not a single shaft can hit
> Till the God of love sees fit."

2. *That his appeal to Cæsar had not been wrong.* If Paul had ever felt

misgiving as to whether he had followed the right course in claiming to have his cause determined by the Emperor, the angel's words must have reassured him, must in fact have led him to conclude that his action had been dictated by the Spirit of God, and was accordingly approved by God as right. To a good man it ever is a source of highest consolation to know that his footsteps are being guided by the Lord. 3. *That the issue of his trial would be favourable.* The angel who said "Fear not" could hardly have intended that the Emperor would condemn him.

II. **Three to Paul's fellow-voyagers.**—1. *That Paul was under the special protection of heaven.* This must have imparted considerable importance to Paul in their eyes, and perhaps convinced them of his innocence. God is able to exalt his servants before men, however strongly appearances may set against them. 2. *That Paul was in God's sight the principal person in the ship.* The real steersman and commander, while all the rest only sailed with him. How differently are men's positions even in this world estimated, when God is the judge! 3. *That Paul would be to them a better protector than either Julius or the captain.* For Paul's sake were the whole ship's company to be saved. The men of the world little know how many benefits they receive at God's hand, simply because God's servants are among them.—*Compiled from Stier.*

Ver. 25. *God and the Believer.*

I. **God's promises** to the believer are—1. Great. 2. Clear. 3. Comforting. 4. Saving.

II. **The believer's faith** in God is—1. Simple. 2. Hearty. 3. Undoubting. 4. Sustaining.

Vers. 21-26. *Adrift upon the Deep; or, Paul's Heroism in the Storm.*

I. **The magnificent spirit he displayed.**—1. *Calmness.* The only man on board the tempest-tossed merchantman that lost not his head, but whose coolness was equal to, and even superior to, the occasion, was Paul. Of the two hundred and seventy-six souls that formed the vessel's living freight—master and owner, centurion and prisoners, sailors, soldiers, and passengers, perhaps not even excepting Luke and Aristarchus—it is obvious that all were filled with alarm, plunged in despair, preparing for the worst, expecting every moment to go to the bottom. Of course these were not to be blamed. It is easy to be cool when sailing over placid seas; but to be caught in a Euroclydon, which whistles through the canvas, makes the cordage rattle, strains the timbers or iron plates of the ship, and tosses it about upon the boiling waters like a plaything—is sufficient to try the nerves of the strongest, bravest, and best men. Even the disciples in similar circumstances were afraid (Matt. viii. 23-27). Yet Paul was self-possessed and cool, prisoner though he was, working all day (ver. 19) and at night not sleeping, though he could have done so more peacefully than Jonah (i. 5), but waking, visited by angels and communing with heaven, praying for himself and his fellow-voyagers. Might it not be said, "And he thought of Christ, who stilled the wave on the Lake of Galilee"? Not every Christian could behave so in a foundering ship! 2. *Courage.* Having stepped forward amidst the crowd that were huddled on the deck he reproved the captain, centurion, and passengers, for not listening to his advice, when he besought them not to leave Fair Havens (ver. 10). To some it may look as if it were rather an irrelevant, if not unbecoming and boastful, not to say cruel, speech to make at a moment when all were standing face to face with death. But it was none of these. Rather it was needful to be said if Paul was to gain a hearing for what he had next to communicate; and it was manly, fearless, and noble. 3. *Confidence.* He had no doubt as to the truthfulness of what he next told them—that all would eventually go well with them; that their fears were

unnecessary; that though the ship would be lost they would not; that the ship would be wrecked upon a certain island (God had not promised him the safety of the ship, ver. 22)—what island he could not say—but that not a life would be lost. It seemed all in the highest degree improbable; but nevertheless Paul believed all that he had said to be certain, because all that he had said had been revealed to him from heaven. Hence his confidence. Had his fellow-voyagers believed him, they too would have become confident; but they did not. Hence their hearts were a prey to black despair. 4. *Cheerfulness.* While on every countenance sat gloom, on his shone the lustre of joy. Though exhorted to partake of food, they could not. But he, standing in their midst, took bread and, having given thanks, brake it and began to eat. What a picture of Christian gladness! (Eccles. ix. 7).

II. **The secret of his lofty behaviour.**—The assurance which he had of three things. 1. *Of his soul's salvation.* Paul knew that, though the ship went to the bottom, it would make no difference to his eternal destiny, it would only hasten him to his Master's presence. He understood and remembered the relation in which he stood to God, and God stood to him. He belonged to God—"whose I am" (compare Isa. xliii. 1)—and lived for God—"Whom I serve." And God, he could have reverently added, belonged to him (Psalm xvi. 5), and watched over him. Whatever happened he could have sung—

"When peace like a river attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea-billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to know,
It is well, it is well with my soul!"

God and he, Christ and he, could not be parted (Rom. viii. 35-39). 2. *Of his body's preservation.* The angel had told him—what once before his Lord had revealed to him (xxiii. 11)—that he must stand before Cæsar; and that implied that he could not drown. The knowledge of that kept him calm, courageous, confident, and cheerful, so far as his own fate was concerned. Whoever might be lost, he could not be! Yet more! 3. *Of the safety of his fellow-voyagers.* It is hardly likely that Paul would have been either calm or cheerful if he had known that, while he himself should be saved, all the rest of the ship's company should be lost. But he was spared this trial. The angel's communication was that all should be rescued. And so the mystery of his singular behaviour was solved.

Lesson.—They who would show Paul's calmness, courage, confidence, and cheerfulness, amid the storms and tempests of life, must be acquainted with Paul's God, possess Paul's religion, and exercise Paul's faith.

Note.—With regard to the objection urged against the historical credibility of these verses (see "Critical Remarks"), the following observations may be pondered:—"We may at once grant that the narrative would go on without any obvious awkwardness, if verses 21-26 were omitted, which is of course true of many a paragraph describing some special incident in a historical work." . . . "But it is half-hearted and useless to cut out verses 21-26 as an interpolation without cutting out verses 33-38; there, too, Paul is represented as the prophet and the consoler on a higher plane, though he is also the mere passenger suffering from hunger, and alive to the fact that the safety of all depends on their taking food and being fit for active exertion in the morning. Some critics go so far as to cut out verses 33-35. But it is not possible to cut these out alone; there is an obvious want of sequence between verse 32 and verse 36, and Holtzmann therefore seems to accept verses 33-35. But if they are accepted, I fail to see any reason for rejecting verses 21-26; these two passages are so closely akin in purport and bearing on the context, that they must go together; and all the mischief attributed to verses 21-26 as placing Paul on a higher plane is done in

verses 33-35." . . . "Further, the excision of verses 21-26 would cut away a vital part of the narrative. (1) These verses contain the additional fact, natural in itself and assumed in verse 34 as already known, that the crew and passengers were starving and weak. (2) They fit well into the context, for they follow naturally after the spiritlessness described in verse 20." . . . "But let us cut out every verse that puts Paul on a higher plane, and observe the narrative that would result: Paul twice comes forward with advice that is cautiously prudent, and shows keen regard to the chance of safety. . . . The Paul who remains on the interpolation theory could never have written the Epistles." . . . "Finally, the reason why the historian dwells at such length on the voyage lies mainly in verses 21-26 and 33-38. . . . But the interpolation theory would cut out the centre of the picture." . . . "There remains no reason to reject verses 21-26 which I can discover, except that it introduces the superhuman element. . . . But the superhuman element is inextricably involved in this book: you cannot cut it out by any critical process that will bear scrutiny. You must accept all or leave all."—Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller, etc.*, pp. 337-339.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 27—37.

Nearing the Breakers; or, *a Night of Anxiety.*

I. The situation on the fourteenth night.—(*I.e.*, from the bursting of the storm, which occurred soon after leaving Fair Havens, perhaps on the same day, at nightfall.) 1. *Drifting in the Adria.* Though usually applied to the Gulf of Venice, or the sea between Italy and Greece, the term "Adria" comprehended, in a wider sense, the ocean around Sicily, near which was Melita. The later Greek and Roman writers even called by this name the entire sheet of water as far as Africa. In what direction they drifted can be inferred from the statement that they were wrecked on Melita, or Malta, near Sicily, not the island of the same name on the Dalmatian coast. It was on this Ocean of Adria that Josephus was wrecked (*Life*, 3). 2. *Nearing land.* The time was now midnight. Whatever that may be to poets and landsmen, to tempest-tossed sailors in a sinking ship, with no moon or stars in the firmament overhead, or even with these, it must ever be a season of deep horror and great danger. With the sound, too, of breakers ahead announcing the proximity of unknown land, the acuteness of distress felt by crew and passengers in such a plight must be simply appalling.

"And fast through the midnight dark and drear,
Through the whistling sleet and snow,
Like a sheeted ghost the vessel swept
Towards the reef of Norman's woe.

"And ever the fitful gusts between
A sound came from the land;
It was the sound of the trampling surf
On the rocks and the hard sea-sand."

Longfellow.

Such was the position of Paul's ship on that terrible fourteenth night. The sailors on the look-out surmised, from the sound of foam-crested billows dashing against rocks or breaking on the beach, that they were "drawing near to some country," and this surmise the soundings forthwith taken confirmed—first twenty fathoms, and again, after a little space, fifteen fathoms. 3. *Letting go anchors.* So imminent was the peril, and so great the fear of being hurled amid rocks, that the mariners dropped into the sea from the stern four anchors, in the hope of retarding the fate which now appeared inevitable. Ancient vessels, not carrying so large anchors as modern ships, had often more of them. Lucian

(*Nav.*, v.), in describing the Alexandrian corn-ship, speaks of her as having anchors (in the plural). "Athenæus mentions a ship which had eight" (Hackett); and that Paul's possessed more than four is expressly stated (ver. 30). The reason for dropping the anchors from the stern, instead of from the prow, as was customary (*Anchora de prorâ jacitur*, Virgil, *Æn.* vi. 902), is evident. Had the ship been anchored from the bows it might have swung round and struck upon the rocks, whereas, anchored from the stern, it was ready to be run ashore at any moment. The anchorage in St. Paul's bay, the traditionary locality of the shipwreck, is reported good. "While the cables hold there is no danger, as the anchors will never start" (*Sailing Directions*). 4. *Longing for the day.* Whether or not the crew and passengers cried "every man unto his god," as the mariners on Jonah's ship did (Jon. i. 5), and as it may well be believed Paul did (see ver. 24), all on board fervently wished the night gone, since, for aught they knew, any moment the ship might founder, or the cables might snap. "The tension of hope and fear, the suspense which made men almost cry—

'And if our fate be death, give light and let us die'—

is vividly brought brought before us by Luke's words" (Plumptre). 5. *Attempting to escape.* Under pretence of paying out anchors from the foreship a number, perhaps all, of the sailors lowered the boat into the sea, and, mean-spirited and selfish, would themselves have been overboard had not Paul, with his eagle eye, perceived and frustrated their design by informing the centurion and the soldiers, adding, with a peremptory tone of authority, that unless the sailors remained on board, the rest of the ship's company could not be saved. Either Paul had received a Divine intimation to that effect, or he reasoned that, should the sailors abandon the vessel, no possibility could remain of successfully working it in any favourable emergency that might arise. 6. *Defeating the* (would be) *deserters.* "Nothing can show more forcibly," says Lewin, "the absolute ascendency which Paul had gained over his comrades than the implicit faith with which they now executed his commands." "With military promptitude the soldiers held no discussion on the subject, but decided the question by immediate action. With that short sword with which the Roman legions cleft their way through every obstacle to universal victory, they 'cut the ropes,' and the boat fell off, and, if not instantly swamped, drifted off to leeward into the darkness, and was dashed to pieces on the rocks" (Conybeare and Howson). Beautifully writes Besser: "It was a strong faith which did that. The last bridge between the lost ship, for which there was no deliverance, and the near land was, with this act, broken. At the same moment that the centurion ordered the boat's ropes to be cut and the boat to be dropped into the sea, he stepped with his soldiers into the salvation boat of Paul's word, which was hung with fast cords to the faithfulness of Almighty God. Do thou also hew the cords from every boat upon which thou hast placed thy confidence alongside of God, and then will to thee a morning light dawn in thy night, when thou shalt see the glorious help of God."

II. **The situation on the fifteenth dawn.**—At length the grey light of coming dawn began to relieve the intolerable gloom which had prevailed during night. The rain fell in torrents (xxviii. 2). The crew and passengers shivered through cold, wet, hunger, and fear. A second time, therefore, Paul addressed himself to the company. 1. *He repeated his assurance* of safety for all on board. Not a hair of their heads should perish—not even of the sailors who had so meanly attempted to leave them. Thus did he requite their evil with good, and heap coals of fire upon their heads (Rom. ix. 20). How they were to get ashore lay, as yet, beyond his knowledge. Only the fact that all should reach the beach alive had been revealed to him, and he believed that that would come to pass which God had said. When God speaks, faith immediately proceeds to hush her doubts,

knowing that nothing can be too hard for omnipotence (Jer. xxxii. 17). 2. *He besought them to take food.* For fourteen days and nights they had eaten nothing—at least, nothing adequate to their necessities, having been able to obtain no regular meals, and having had no heart to eat what they could obtain, fear and despair having quenched their appetites. The idea that they had been keeping a religious fast is not for a moment to be entertained. "Appian," says Doddridge, "speaks of an army which for twenty days together had neither food nor sleep: by which he must mean that they neither made full meals nor slept whole nights together. The same interpretation must be given to this phrase" (quoted by Hackett). "It was physically impossible that the two hundred and seventy-six who were on board could have gone on for fourteen days without any food at all. Scanty rations had, we must believe, been doled out to those who came for them; but the tension of suspense was so great that they had not sat down to any regular meal" (Plumptre). As an inducement to their compliance with his entreaty Paul explained that this was absolutely necessary for their safety; meaning that, though they might not perish through drowning, unless they took support they might die of weakness induced by starvation. 3. *He himself set them an example.* Having taken bread, he gave thanks to God in presence of them all, and began to eat. There is no ground for assuming either that Paul intended his action to be commemorative of the Lord's Supper or that the Christians present (who must have been few) understood it in this light. Just as little did he purpose to represent himself as the father or head of the family, since he did not distribute among the company the bread which he took. Simply he designed, one may suppose, to exemplify his own precept; and in so doing he properly acted as a pious Jew or a devout Christian, giving thanks to God in presence of them all for the lives He had hitherto preserved amid the dangers of the deep as well as for the prospect of safety that lay before them; for the food which, in His providence, they still possessed, and for the comparative calmness of mind in which at last they were allowed to partake of it—after which, having broken it, he began to eat. It must have been a sublime as well as strange spectacle to that shipload of heathen soldiers and prisoners, sailors and passengers, all shivering and shrunken, poor, emaciated creatures, starving and cold—to look upon the face and hear the voice of the one unperturbed spirit among them—a physically weak but spiritually strong Jew; a shackled prisoner, standing on the deck in the grey light of dawn, amid the rain and storm, the howling of the winds and dashing of the waves, perhaps the shrieking of the passengers, the cursing of the soldiers, and the shoutings of the prisoners, lifting up his soul to God in prayer, and then quietly partaking of food. "Were I a painter," writes Besser, "I would paint that scene!" And one feels disposed to say, Amen! One would like to have heard Paul's "grace," and to have seen the faces of them who listened to it! How it impressed them may never be known; how it affected them is told. "Then were they all of good cheer, and themselves also took food."

Learn—1. Man's helplessness, apart from God, amid the storms of life. 2. The unspeakable baseness of the natural heart, as shown in the mean attempt of the sailors. 3. The value of a good man in times of difficulty and danger. 4. The sublimity of true religion, as seen in Paul.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 27. *Midnight on the Sea.*

I. **A gloomy picture.**—1. A stormy ocean. 2. A drifting wreck. 3. A starless sky. 4. A rocky coast. 5. A despairing crew.

II. **A suggestive symbol.**—Of the

Christless soul. 1. Tossed about upon the sea of life. 2. Drifting he knows not whither. 3. Without a star of hope in the interior firmament of his soul. 4. Nearing an unknown country, the future world. 5. Filled with alarm for his safety.

III. **An instructive contrast.**—The voyage of the Christian soul different in these respects. 1. Tossed about by life's tribulations, he is not afraid. 2. Driven to and fro, he always knows whither he is bound. 3. Though stars shine not without, they do within. 4. The country he nears is not unknown. 5. A stranger to despair, he is conscious of a settled peace and holy joy.

Ver. 29. *Anchored from the Stern.*—Many whose faces are, or seem to be, turned towards the shore of the better country are held back, being anchored from the stern—

I. By their **secret lusts.**
II. By their **earthly affections.**
III. By their **worldly occupations.**
IV. By their **darling enjoyments.**

Ver. 31, along with ver. 22. *Theological Doctrines and Theological Mistakes.*

I. **Theological doctrines.** — 1. *The doctrine of Divine Fore-ordination.* That God fore-knows and fore-ordains (or, *vice versâ*, fore-ordains and fore-knows) everything that comes to pass illustrated by the promise that no life should be lost. 2. *The doctrine of human freedom.* That man is responsible for working out his own destiny exemplified by the statement that, except the sailors remained in the ship, neither they nor the rest could be saved.

II. **Theological mistakes.**—1. *That Divine fore-ordination precludes human freedom.* This is an error, since the same wisdom that ordains the end ordains also the means—viz., human freedom. 2. *That human freedom precludes Divine fore-ordination.* This the twofold mystery of God's relation to His intelligent creatures, that He can create free beings without Himself ceasing to be free, and that He can fix His own plan without fixing (in the sense of coercing) man's.

Ver. 34. *A Daring Prophecy.* "There shall not a hair perish from the head of any of you!"

I. **Most unlikely in the view of reason.**—Beyond all reasonable ground of hope or expectation it must have seemed to crew and captain, centurion and owner, soldiers and prisoners, that, with a sinking ship on a wind-driven ocean, and an unknown coast to the leeward, with multitudes on board who could not swim, none of them should be lost! Had any one asserted it but Paul, it would instantly have been scorned as unworthy of credence. As it was, it is not evident that much trust was reposed in the prediction. So most of God's predictions (not, however, the world's, which always seem reasonable!) are spurned by the unbelieving world as contrary to common-sense, if not impossible.

II. **Absolutely certain in the eye of faith.**—To Paul it looked neither impossible nor incredible that what he had affirmed should come true. Paul believed—1. *That God had the power to perform this unlikely thing*; since all things were possible with God, and nothing could be hard for Him who held the water (Isa. xl. 12) and the lives of men (Dan. v. 23) in the hollow of His hand. 2. *That God was faithful, and would perform that which He had promised* (ver. 25). Such faith characteristic of God's people (Rom. iv. 21). On these grounds the Church rests her confidence to-day in the predictions of Scripture.

III. **Exactly fulfilled in the course of experience.**—Precisely as Paul had said it came to pass. At one time failure threatened (vers. 30, 31), but in the end all escaped safe to land (ver. 44). So in the long run will every word that God has uttered be fulfilled (Matt. v. 18, xxiv. 35).

Ver. 35. *Paul's Prayer upon The Ship's Deck; or, Grace before Meals.*

I. **A time-honoured practice.**—Rendered venerable and sacred by the

example of Samuel (1 Sam. ix. 13) and of Jesus (Matt. xiv. 19; Mark viii. 6, 7; Luke ix. 16).

II. **A highly becoming practice.**—Considering whence the meals come (James i. 17) and the undeservingness of the recipient (Gen. xxxii. 10).

III. **A truly religious practice.**—Practically enjoined upon Christians, not alone by Christ's example and Paul's (1 Cor. x. 30), but by direct Scripture precept (1 Thess. v. 17; 1 Tim. iv. 4).

IV. **An eminently useful practice.**—Being calculated, when not done with ostentation or timidity, or in secrecy, but humbly yet courageously, so as to let its true character be seen—being calculated to seriously impress beholders.

V. **A greatly neglected practice.**—Much reason to fear that, even in pious households and with individual Christians, this hallowed custom has much fallen into disrepute—greatly to the injury of religion.

Vers. 10-35. *Paul in the Storm.*—A noble picture—

I. **Of manly courage.**—1. His prudent counsel (ver. 10). 2. His presence of mind (ver. 31).

II. **Of Christian peace of mind.**—1. His friendly address (ver. 21). 2. His confident trust in God (ver. 25).

III. **Of apostolic unction.**—1. His prophetic exhortation (ver. 24). 2. His priestly love-feast (ver. 35).

Paul in The Storm.—Christ's glory reflected in the apostle.

I. **Christ's prophetical office.**—In Paul's warning (ver. 10) and promise (ver. 25).

II. **Christ's priestly office.**—In Paul's pastoral care (ver. 21) and love-feast (vers. 34, 35).

III. **Christ's kingly office.**—In Paul's greatness of mind (ver. 35) and the souls given to him and rescued for his sake (vers. 24, 31).—*Gerok in Lange.*

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 37—44.

Running Ashore; or, *Escaping Safe to Land.*

I. **Preparing the ship.**—After all on board, following Paul's example, and doubtless comforted by Paul's assurance of safety, had partaken of food, they commenced to make ready for the work which lay before them of beaching their vessel. In order either to keep it afloat or to enable it to run as far in towards the shore as possible, they, for the third time, lightened it, by casting overboard the wheat, by which must be understood either the ship's provisions, which would be no more needed, or the ship's cargo (or what remained of it) which, in any case, would be damaged and rendered practically worthless, if it was not totally lost. (See "Critical Remarks.")

II. **Selecting a place.**—This was found in a certain bay which the morning light revealed, but which they did not recognise, on account of its not being the usual spot for landing at Melita. It had a beach of sand, which made it look a promising locality in which to land their disabled craft. Selecting a spot where two opposite currents appeared to meet, they resolved at that point to make the attempt, in which, however, they were not certain of succeeding. Hence the clause "if it were possible" (A.V.), or as it is in the R.V., "they took counsel whether." The bay is believed to have been St. Paul's bay, on the northern extremity of Malta, in front of which lay the small island of Salmonetta (see "Critical Remarks").

III. **Running ashore.**—First, the four anchors having been cast off, because, in all probability, the sailors could not afford the time necessary to take them up, were left in the sea. Next, the rudder bands were loosed—*i.e.*, the lashings with which they had been secured were untied. Then, hoisting up the foresail, the seamen made for the beach. Passing the island of Salmonetta, and observing the water behind they ran the ship in that direction. In a sandbank, most

likely caused by the meeting of counter currents, the forepart of the vessel stuck in the ground, while the stern continued to be lashed by the waves.

"She struck where the white and fleecy waves
Looked soft as the carded wool;
But the cruel rocks, they gored her side
Like the horns of an angry bull."

Longfellow.

IV. **Escaping to land.**—1. *The counsel of the soldiers was inhuman*, that the prisoners should be killed, in case they should escape. Even if explainable by the terrible responsibility which attached to soldiers entrusted with the safe keeping of prisoners (compare xii. 19, xvi. 27), it was a gruesome proposal, which might have been carried out had not Julius interposed. 2. *The suggestion of the centurion was generous.* Dictated, if not by humanity, by a desire to protect Paul, it served to show the influence Paul's personality had begun to exercise upon his mind. One cannot help recalling here that it was a Roman centurion who recognised the superhuman majesty of Paul's Master (Matt. xxvii. 54). The course recommended by Julius was that those among the soldiers who could swim should cast themselves overboard and get first to land—in which case they could both look after the prisoners as they arrived upon the beach, and extend a helping hand to any of the passengers that might need their aid. 3. *The escape of the others was accomplished with difficulty.* The ship, unable to resist the storm, fell to pieces. Those on board were driven to save themselves as best they could. Happily, by means of planks of wood and broken pieces of the ship, this was effected. Not with comfort or with ease, but with complete bodily safety, all contrived to reach the land.

Learn—1. That God helps those who help themselves. Though Paul had assured his fellow-voyagers that their lives would be spared, it was needful that they should take every precaution against their lives' loss. 2. That—

"Man's inhumanity to man
Makes countless thousands mourn."

The barbarous proposal of the soldiers to kill the prisoners was even worse than the attempt of the sailors to desert the ship. 3. That the silent influence for good of a good man is often all the greater that it is unconsciously exercised. Paul's presence on board that ship saved the prisoners from a bloody death. 4. That God can always find means to fulfil His promises. He had promised that not a life on board that ship should be lost, and so it came to pass that they all escaped safe to land.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 37. *A Great Ship's Company.*—Two hundred threescore and sixteen souls—

I. Exposed to a **common peril.**—That of foundering in mid ocean.

II. Inspired by a **common hope** (ver. 34).—That of ultimate safety.

III. Engaged in a **common work** (ver. 38).—That of self-preservation.

IV. Partakers of a **common mercy** (ver. 44).—That of final deliverance.

Ver. 42. *The Soldiers' Counsel.*

I. A proposal of **truculent barbarity.**

II. An example of **base ingratitude.**

III. An instance of **heartless selfishness.**

Ver. 44. *The Voyage of the Church of Jesus Christ.* Like that of Paul's ship in respect of five things.

I. The **stormy sea** over which it sails.

II. The **fierce** and sudden **hurricanes** it encounters.

III. The **unknown country** which it nears.

IV. The **mixed company** which it bears along.

V. The **ultimate safety** to which it reaches.

Or, thus:—

The Barque of the Church Compared to Paul's Ship.

I. **Its dangers.**—1. Contrary winds (vers. 4, 14). 2. Foolish guides (vers. 11, 12). 3. Superfluous possessions (vers. 18, 19). 4. Disunited associates (vers. 30, 42). 5. Concealed rocks (vers. 39, 41).

II. **Its means of help.**—1. The testimony of pious teachers (vers. 9, 21). 2. The prophecies of the Divine word (vers. 23, 24). 3. The comforts of the holy sacraments (ver. 35). 4. The blessing of believing prayer (ver. 35). 5. The rescuing hand of the Almighty (vers. 24, 34, 44).—*Gerok in Lange.*

Or, thus:—

I. **The conflict of the ship with the elements.**—Winds and waves (vers. 14, 15).

II. **The exertions of the sailors.**—They undergird the ship and cast the furniture into the sea (vers. 16-19).

III. **The apparent hopelessness of safety.**—Through the leaking of the ship (ver. 20).

IV. **The wonderful rescue.**—Paul's exhortation and God's aid (vers. 33-43).—*Lisco.*

The Voyage of Life.

I. **The setting out.**—1. The various changes of surrounding objects (vers. 1, 2, 4-8). 2. The friendships (ver. 3). 3. The first clouds in the heavens (vers. 9-15).

II. **Fear and hope.**—1. The fear of unbelief (vers. 16-20). 2. The confidence of faith (vers. 21-26).

III. **The contest with adversities.**—1. Trouble discloses hearts (vers. 27-32). 2. Trouble leads to God (vers. 33-38).

IV. **The haven of rest.**—1. The shipwreck and the billows of death (vers. 39-43). 2. The rescue and the landing on the unknown land of rest (ver. 44)—*Lisco.*

Ver. 44. "*And so it came to pass*"; *or, thoughts concerning providence and grace.*—Human life often likened to a voyage: "Ask what is human life," etc. (Cowper's *Hope*, 1-6). Paul's ship an emblem of the Church, whose members are sure of everlasting safety. The safety of Paul's ship's company came to pass.

I. **In accordance with the Divine purpose and plan.**—Twice over was this announced to Paul by God and by Paul to his fellow-voyagers (vers. 22, 34). Not a life would be lost, not a hair of their head would perish. So —1. *In providence,* everything comes to pass in accordance with the same Divine plan and purpose. "He doeth according to His will," etc., said Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. iv. 35). "He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will," says Paul (Eph. i. 11). "My counsel shall stand, and I shall do all My pleasure," adds Jehovah (Isa. xlvi. 10). It is not conceivable that any event should occur outside and beyond God's fore-knowledge and fore-ordination (see on ii. 23). And— 2. *In grace.* The salvation of believers occurs in accordance with the same Divine purpose and plan. They are chosen, called, sanctified, and saved, by sovereign grace (xiii. 48, xxii. 14; Rom viii. 28-30; Eph. i. 4-11, iii. 11; 2 Thess. ii. 13; 1 Peter i. 2). It is not supposable that God does not know beforehand what the issues will be of His own scheme of redeeming grace.

II. **In spite of every obstacle or hindrance.** At least four things threatened to defeat the Divine purpose to save Paul and his fellow-voyagers: 1. The severity of the storm. 2. The attempted desertion of the sailors. 3. The inhuman proposal of the

soldiers. 4. The breaking up of the vessel. Nevertheless it came to pass that all escaped safe to land. So again—1. *In providence*, the Divine purpose may seem to be, and may actually be, opposed by similar forces. Take, for instance, the determination to settle Abraham's descendants in Canaan. Notwithstanding their descent into Egypt and enslavement there, the turning away from them of the royal favour, the inhuman edict that their children should be cast into the Nile, the failure of Moses's first attempt at their liberation, the general breaking down of their national spirit, their occupation of Egypt became, in God's time, an accomplished fact. 2. *In grace*, nothing can prevent the ultimate salvation of Christ's people—neither the ills or calamities of time nor the falling away of professed disciples, nor the remains of indwelling corruption in the hearts of sincere disciples, nor the breaking up of ecclesiastical institutions; in short, nothing and no one will be able to separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus their Lord (Rom. viii. 38, 39).

III. **Through the use of means.**—Paul and his fellow-voyagers had to use means in order to effect their preservation. Even after they had been assured that not a life would be lost they had, in a manner, to work out their own deliverance, by lightening the ship, running her ashore, and either swimming to land or getting ashore on planks or broken pieces of the ship. So—1. *In providence*, the Divine plans and purposes are carried out through the employment of ordinary means wielded by man's intelligence. And equally—2. *In grace*, the salvation of believers is effected, not without, but with and by means of, their own co-operation, their ultimate attainment to eternal life and glory being accomplished through their abiding in Christ, following holiness, and generally working out their own salvation with fear and trembling.

Vers. 1-44. (On the whole chapter.) *Paul and His Fellow Voyagers—a Comparison and a Contrast.*

I. **The comparison.**—1. Partakers of a *common humanity*. 2. Bound for a *common port*. 3. Exposed to a *common peril*. 4. Subjects of a *common deliverance*.

II. **The contrast.**—1. *Grace and nature*. With the exception of Luke and Aristarchus, Paul was probably the only Christian among them. 2. *Sagacity and dulness*. Paul's forecast of the storm, and the want of insight on the part of the centurion, the owner, the pilot and crew (vers. 9-12). 3. *Faith and unbelief*. Paul's confidence that no lives would be lost: their doubt of the correctness of this assertion (vers. 22-26). 3. *Courage and despair*. Paul's intrepidity throughout: their universal faintheartedness (vers. 31-33). 4. *Piety and wickedness*. Paul's prayers for (ver. 24), and exhortations to (vers. 25, 33, 34) them; the baseness of the sailors (ver. 30), and the inhumanity of the soldiers (ver. 42).

III. **The conclusion.** 1. That all are not alike because they happen to sail in the same boat. 2. That common experiences do not always produce on different men the same effects. 3. That circumstances which call forth the nobility of the good frequently serve to evoke the meanness of the base. 4. That goodness makes the best leaders of men.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

PAUL'S VOYAGE TO ROME—DEPARTURE FROM MALTA.

§ 1. Three Months in Malta; or, Two Remarkable Incidents (vers. 1-10).
1. The Preservation of Paul (vers. 1-6).
2. The Healing of Publius's father (vers. 7-10).

§ 2. The Castor and Pollux; or, Paul's Arrival in Rome (vers. 11-16).

§ 3. An Interview with the Jewish Leaders; or, an Explanation of his Imprisonment (vers. 17-22).

§ 4. A whole Day's Preaching in his Private Lodging; or, a Last Appeal to his Countrymen (vers. 23-31).

CRITICAL REMARKS.

Ver. 1. The best authorities read, "And when *we* were escaped, then *we* knew"—lit., *And having been saved, then we knew*, or learned (by intercourse with the inhabitants) **Melita.**—Not Meleda, an island off the Illyrian coast in the Gulf of Venice, but the modern Malta.

Ver. 2. **The barbarous people,** *οἱ βάρβαροι*, were not savages, but natives who spoke neither the Greek nor the Roman tongue (compare Rom. i. 14; 1 Cor. xiv. 11; Col. iii. 11), but most likely the Punic—*i.e.*, Phœnician as used by the Carthaginians. **No little kindness.**—Meant kindness not to be met with every day, *uncommon* (compare xix. 11). **They received us.**—Not to their fire (Meyer), but to their regards, as in Rom. xiv. 1. **The present rain.**—Not the rain which came on suddenly (Meyer), but the rain then falling.

Ver. 3. **But when Paul had gathered**—lit., *twisted together*—**a bundle**, large quantity, or heap, **of sticks.**—It does not militate against the truthfulness of this part of the narrative, that Malta now shows a great absence of wood; since the growth of population in the island may have led to the destruction of the forests, while, as an additional consideration, the sticks collected by Paul may have been driftwood from the wreck. **A viper.**—*ἔχιδνα*, the female adder, the male being *ἔχις*. The reptile here referred to, the *Vipera aspis*, was common in the Mediterranean isles (Tristram). **Out of.**—*ἐκ* pointing to the local source. The best MSS. read *ἀπό*, which might signify *by reason of* (compare xx. 9; Luke xix. 3). **The heat.**—According to Agassiz vipers become torpid when the warmth of the air sinks below the mean temperature of the place they inhabit. The fact that poisonous serpents are not now found in Malta was formerly adduced (Coleridge) as a difficulty connected with the present narrative; but the disappearance of noxious reptiles from Malta may be satisfactorily accounted for by the increase of population and the cutting down of the timber in the island. In this way vipers have almost entirely disappeared from the island of Arran in Scotland (The Landsboroughs: *Arran, its Topography*, etc., p. 242).

Ver. 4. **The** venomous **beast.**—Aristotle (*Eth. Nic.*, vii. 1) uses the word *θηρίον* to denote any animal below the nature of man; Dioscorides Physicus (A.D. 60) to designate a reptile. *θηριακὰ* (from which comes our word "treacle") *φάρμακα* mean antidotes against the bites of poisonous animals. **Hang**—lit., *hanging*—**on his hand.**—"The newer critics (Ewald, Lekebush, Hausrath, and others) suppose either that the viper curled itself round and hung from the Apostle's hand without biting, or that though it fastened itself by biting, it was not poisonous; but this opinion neither the natives nor the writer entertained" (Holtzmann). **A murderer.**—This the natives probably supposed Paul to be, not because the viper had fastened on his hand (Kuinoel), or because a serpent's bite was the Maltese punishment for murder (Heinsius), but because they observed his chains (vincula videbant), and concluded him to be a notorious criminal (Bengel). **Vengeance.**—Better, *Justice*, or Nemesis, *ἡ δίκη*. The goddess Dike who avenged crimes was no mere poetical personification, but a divinity honoured with a special sanctuary in the harbour town of Megaris. Her mother was Themis, the ruling world power; her sisters were Irene (Peace) and Eunomia (Good order)" (Holtzmann).

Ver. 5. **Felt** or *took* **no harm.**—A fulfilment of Mark xvi. 12 (compare Luke x. 19).

Ver. 6. **Swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly.**—"Sudden collapse and death often ensue from the bite of serpents" (Hackett). "Both these, the inflammation of the body and the falling down dead suddenly, are recorded as results of the bite of the African serpents"

(Alford). Lucan, ix. 790, describes the bite of an African serpent, Prester, named from the verb πίμπρασθαι—

> "Nasidium Marsi cultorem torridus agri
> Percussit Prestes. Illi ruber igneus ora
> Succendit, tenditque cutem, pereunte figurâ."

which may thus be rendered—

> "Nasidius toiling in the Marsian fields
> The burning Prestes bit—a fiery flush
> Lit up his face and set the skin astretch,
> And all its comely grace had passed away."

And said that he was a god.—Compare xiv. 13-15. "Aut latro, inquiunt, aut deus: sic modo tauri, modo lapides. Datur tertium; homo deo" (Bengel). What god the Maltese imagined Paul to be, whether Hercules (Grotius) or Æsculapius (Wetstein), cannot be determined.

Ver. 7. **In the same quarters.**—Better, *in the parts about*, or in the neighbourhood of (R.V.) *that place.* **Possessions.**—*Estates* or *lands*, χωρία, as in iv. 34. **The chief** (or *first* πρῶτος, as in ver. 17, xiii. 50; xxv. 2) **man of the island** was the Roman governor, the legate or deputy of the prætor of Sicily, to which, as in the time of Cicero (4 *Ver.*, c. 11) the smaller island was most propably annexed. The use of this official designation, πρῶτος, has justly been regarded as a striking proof of Luke's historical accuracy (Baumgarten, Tholuck, Ebrard, Lardner, Paley, Howson), two inscriptions, one in Greek and another in Latin, having been discovered in Malta at Citta Vecchia, in which this title is similarly employed. Moreover, as the person named on the inscription is called Prudens, a Roman knight, it has been inferred that Publius may have belonged to this class. Publius could hardly have been called the first of the Melitæans, πρῶτος Μελιταίων, from his social rank or wealth, so long as his father lived. The **us** whom he received were probably, besides Paul and his companions, Luke and Aristarchus, Julius the centurion. The notion can scarcely be entertained that Publius provided for the whole ship's company of two hundred and seventy-six persons.

Ver. 8. The specification of the disease under which Publius's father suffered as **a fever** and **bloody flux** or dysentery, besides according with Luke's professional character as a physician, was another testimony to his accuracy as a narrator of facts. Whereas formerly the dry climate of Malta was supposed to be unfavourable to dysentery and inflammation of the lower bowels, physicians resident in the island now report these diseases as by no means uncommon among the inhabitants. **Laid his hands on him**—as in James v. 14, 15—**and healed him.**—Whether through the co-operation of Luke the physician is not stated—though the probability is not. Yet the healings in ver. 9 may have been affected partly through Luke's aid.

Ver. 10. **They laded *us* with such things as were necessary.**—Better, *they put on board such things as we needed* for our journey.

Ver. 11. **After three months.**—The departure from Malta took place in the following spring, probably towards the end of January—and once more in an Alexandrian ship (compare xxvii. 6). **Which had wintered in the isle.**—At Valetta, the principal harbour of Malta. **Whose sign was Castor and Pollux.**—Lit., *marked* or *badged with the Dioscuroi—i.e.*, the Twin Brothers, Castor and Pollux, whom heathen mythology regarded as the sons of Jupiter by Leda, and as the patrons of sailors (see Hor., *Odes*, I. 3, 2; 12, 27-32).

Ver, 12. **Syracuse.**—The capital of Sicily, on the south-east coast of the island, and about eighty miles north of Malta. The modern Saragossa occupies only a portion of the ancient city—viz., Ortygia.

Ver. 13. **And from thence we fetched a compass,** or, *made a circuit* (R.V.)—Lit., *having gone round about*, περιελθόντες—*i.e.*, either tacking because of the unfavourable wind (Smith), or standing out to sea (Lewin). Some ancient authorities read, περιελόντες, taking up the anchors, as in xxvii. 40. **Rhegium.**—The present-day *Reggio*, an Italian seaport opposite to the north-east point of Sicily, at which ships from Alexandria were accustomed to touch on their way to Rome, and where Caligula began the construction of a harbour for their accommodation (Jos., *Ant.*, XIX. ii. 5). Titus, taking the same road as Paul from Judæa to Rome, called in at Rhegium (Suet., *Tit.*, *c.* 5). Rhegium was "a city whose patron divinities were, by a curious coincidence, the same hero-protectors of sea-faring men, 'the Great Twin Brethren,' to whom the ship itself was dedicated" (Conybeare and Howson, ii. 369). **Puteoli.**—Now *Pozzuoli*, eight miles south-west of Neapolis, the modern Naples. The city earlier called Δικαιάρχεια, derived its later name from the springs (*putei*) which abound there, or from the odour of its waters (*a putendo*). From Rhegium to Puteoli was a distance of about one hundred and eighty-two miles, a sail of two days with a fair wind.

Ver. 14. **Where we found brethren.**—The city, which was a principal station for Alexandrine ships (Suet., *Aug.*, 981) was at that time the seat of a Christian Church, which had probably

been founded from Rome. **Seven days.**—Compare xx. 6, xxi. 4. Another indication that the early Christians had special Sabbath-day gatherings. Ramsay considers this statement about varying seven days "irreconcilable with Paul's situation as a prisoner"; but Julius may have had sufficient reasons for granting Paul permission to comply with the request of the brethren (compare ver. 12). **We went toward Rome.**—Better that, *we came to Rome* (R.V.). The road traversed by Julius and his prisoners would proceed first to Capua, distant twelve miles, where it would join the Appian Way, from Rome to Brundusium, the modern Brindisi. From Capua it would go by Sinuessa, twenty-one miles further on, and Terracina, seventy Roman miles from Capua. At Terracina "they would have to choose between two modes of travel, taking the circuitous road round the Pontine Marshes, or going by the more direct line of the canal," both roads meeting at Appii Forum, eighteen miles from Terracina" (Plumptre).

Ver. 15. **Appii Forum,** or "the Market of Appius" (R.V.).—A small (perhaps an assize) town near the end of the above-named canal, forty-three miles distant from Rome, and called after the builder of the Appian Way. **The Three Taverns.**—Another town or wayside inn, ten miles nearer Rome. Cicero mentions both places in his letters to Atticus (ii. 10).

Ver. 16. **And when we came to,** or *entered into* **Rome.**—The capital of Italy and of the Roman Empire, situated on the Tiber, fifteen miles from its mouth, was the residence of many Jews (ii. 10, xviii. 2) and of numerous Christians, to whom Paul wrote an epistle (see "Hints" on ver. 17). **The centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard,** or *the commander of the camp—i.e.*, of the Prætorian camp, where the Emperor's bodyguard was stationed.—This clause, omitted in the best MSS., is regarded as spurious by many competent critics (Mill, Bengel, Griesbach, Lachmann, Tischendorf, Westcott and Hort), though by other scholars (Meyer, Alford, Hackett, Plumptre, Hausrath, Holtzmann) it is retained. Alford thinks the omission of the words may have been originally caused by the transcriber's eye passing from —αρχος to—αρχω, as in Syr. (*permisit centurio Paulo*); and that this done, the emendation of the text became necessary. Lechler, while regarding the words as spurious, considers them true in fact. Wieseler, founding on the circumstance that Luke speaks of only one Stratopedarch or prefect of the Prætorian guard, whereas there were commonly two, infers that Paul must have come to Rome not later than the early part of A.D. 62, since Burrus Africanus, who had been appointed sole prefect by Claudius, died that year. Luke, however, was not so precise in relating Roman and civil matters that he must necessarily have written "to one of the new prefects," if there were two, while even if there were Paul would in all probability be delivered not to the two, but to one—to him, namely, whose business it was to look after prisoners sent from the provinces. Ramsay (*St. Paul*, etc., pp. 347, 348) suggests that the Stratopedarch was not the Prætorian Prefect, but another officer called *Princeps Peregrinorum*, or Chief of the Foreigners—*i.e.*, of the centurions who belonged to legions in the provinces, and who, when at Rome on military service, resided under his command in a camp on the Celian hill, called *Castra Peregrinorum.*

Ver. 17. The best authorities omit **Paul. The chief of the Jews.**—Better, *those that were the chief* (first, or principal men) *of the Jews*, or, otherwise, those that were of the Jews first. Most likely the parties summoned were the rulers of the synagogues, and such as were socially exalted.

Ver. 18. **Would have let me go,** or *desired to set me at liberty.*—Bethge and Holtzmann, who regard this address of Paul's to the Jews of Rome as a pure compilation of Luke's, pronounce the statement in this clause incorrect, and as justified neither by xxv. 9 nor by any other verse. But the apostle's intention obviously was to say that the Roman officials who examined him had found no fault in him, and would have dismissed him from the bar had it not been for the opposition of the Jews; and this is distinctly the impression one receives from reading the accounts of the different trials the apostle underwent.

Ver. 21. **We neither received letters out of Judæa concerning thee.**—Zeller, Baur, Wendt, and Holtzmann think it incredible that the Jews of Rome had no knowledge of Paul, of his missionary labours, or of his imprisonment. But the Jewish leaders do not say they were entirely ignorant of either the apostle or his doings; merely they assert they had received no official intelligence regarding him from the Palestinian Church, either by letter or by messenger (see "Homiletical Analysis").

Ver. 22. **As concerning this sect.**—The above critics also pronounce it strange that the Jewish leaders should have affected to be ignorant of the existence of a Christian Church in Rome, and detect in their statement a deliberate misrepresentation of history on the part of the author of the Acts for the purpose of sustaining his theory that Paul was an orthodox Jew, who only turned to the Gentile mission in Rome as elsewhere after the Jews had declined to accept his gospel. (See "Homiletical Analysis.")

Ver. 23. **Into his lodging.**—Probably the "hired dwelling," μισθωμα, of ver. 30, though some (Heschyius, Hackett) consider the term ξενια points to a private house—perhaps that of Aquila, or of some other Roman Christian—in which he was entertained as a guest. For **expounded and testified** read *expounding, testifying, and persuading.*

Ver. 25. The **one word** spoken by Paul did not occasion (Meyer), but accompanied (De Wette) the departure of the Jewish leaders.

Ver. 26. The Isaianic utterance, also quoted in the Gospels (Matt. xiii. 14; John xii. 40), was taken from the LXX.

Ver. 28 gives the last recorded words of Paul in Luke's narrative. Their resemblance to the words uttered at the beginning of his mission (xiii. 46) deserves notice.

Ver. 29 is omitted by the best texts, and the majority of critics regard it as spurious (Mill, Lachmann, Tischendorf, Westcott and Hort).

Ver. 30. **Two whole years in his own hired house.**—This almost implies that his former lodging was not a rented dwelling, The charge of his present house would no doubt be borne by his Christian friends at Rome, and perhaps also at Philippi (Phil. iv. 14, 18); but see on xxi. 23 ("Critical Remarks"). Whether he obtained release at the end of these two years is doubtful. "What became of him after those two years," writes Beyschlag (Riehm's *Handwörterbuch des Biblischen Altertums*, art. *Paulus*), "whether he obtained his freedom and made a journey to the far west, or whether the persecution under Nero, A.D. 64, found him still in prison, can no more be ascertained." "We must therefore abide by the view," says Weiss (*Manual of Introduction to the New Testament*, i. 373), "that Paul's deliverance from the Roman captivity can neither be proved nor denied on secure historical grounds." According to Eusebius (*H. E.*, iii. 22) Paul was released from his first, and experienced a second captivity under Nero; and this opinion has been advocated by Church historians like Mosheim, Neander, and Gieseler, as well as by introduction writers like Ewald, Bleek, Schulze, Lange, Salmon, and Dodds. That he perished in the Neronian persecution is supported by Baur, Hausrath, Holtzmann, and others, who dispute, as well as by Wieseler, Ebrard, Reuss, Schaff, and others, who uphold, the authenticity of the Pastoral Epistles. (See "Hints" on ver. 30.)

Ver. 31. **With all confidence**, or *boldness*.—Referring rather to the unrestricted freedom with which he preached than to the unwavering assurance he had that what he preached was true. **No man forbidding him** explains what was meant by his boldness.

That the writer should have closed his work in this sudden fashion, without intimating whether Paul was successful in his appeal or what became of him, has given rise to various explanations; but manifestly, either (1) the book was written and published before the trial came on—in which case its issue could not be mentioned—which is hardly likely; or (2) if after his death or liberation, whichever of these was the issue of Paul's trial, was already known to Theophilus, and did not require to be mentioned—which again is not perfectly satisfactory; or (3) Luke may have ended as he did because he entertained the idea of writing a third treatise, which once more is a plausible hypothesis, if Paul was liberated and resumed his missionary labours, but not if he was put to death in A.D. 64.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 1—10.

Three Months in Malta; or, Two Remarkable Incidents.—1. *The Preservation of Paul.*

I. **The fire upon the beach** (ver. 2).—1. *The name of the island* on which they had been cast ashore, the shipwrecked voyagers ascertained, presumably, by inquiring of the natives. Formerly believed to be the island of Meleda, in the Gulf of Venice, and near the coast of Illyricum, the scene of Paul's shipwreck is now universally considered to have been the modern Malta (according to some ancient authorities, Melitene) in the Mediterranean, about sixty miles south of Sicily. The argument on which this conclusion rests one may sum up thus: Malta lies in the track of a vessel driven by a north-east wind, such as the Euroclydon or Euraquilo was; the reputed locality of the wreck, as mentioned in the apocryphal acts of Peter and of Paul, agrees with Luke's account; the Alexandrian ship in which re-embarkment was made would naturally winter there, rather than at Meleda; the subsequent course of the voyage to Puteoli was that which a vessel would pursue in going from Malta, but not from Meleda (Hackett, Zöckler). 2. *The kindness of the natives* showed them to be barbarians in speech only, but not in heart. The tongue they used was that of neither Greece nor Rome, but most likely Punic, or a Carthaginian dialect of Phœnician. Nevertheless the service they rendered to the cold and shivering sailors and soldiers whom Providence had cast upon their coast, proved them to be less degraded than many who have borne the Christian name, but by their cruel

treatment of shipwrecked mariners and passengers have placed themselves outside the pale of humanity. Observing the hapless plight of the two hundred threescore and sixteen souls who had been rescued from the waves, and who, besides being drenched with brine, were exposed to the combined severity of a strong north-east wind and a steady rain, the natives proceeded to light a fire for their comfort. It was a small thing to do, but it was the right thing at the right time, and evinced the thoughtful consideration of those who did it. 3. *The co-operation of Paul* was almost what might have been expected from one who had previously taken part in lightening the ship (xxvii. 19). The writer represents him on this occasion as actively engaged in assisting the barbarians by gathering up and twisting together into a bundle a quantity of sticks to cast upon the flame. Some have objected to the truthfulness of the story on the ground that the Malta of to-day is distinguished by a great absence of wood, but the Malta of Paul's time must have been a barren spot indeed if it contained no brushwood; and in any case there must have been within easy reach, strewed along the beach, pieces of the wreck, which could have been made available for the purpose of keeping up the fire when once it had been lighted.

II. **The viper on Paul's hand.**—1. *The possibility of the incident.* That no such venomous reptiles are now to be found in Malta does not prove that none such existed there in Paul's day, any more than the fact that vipers are now almost extinct in Arran in the Frith of Clyde shows they were not formerly numerous in that island. That Paul should have grasped a snake in the handful of brushwood he collected is explainable by remembering that in consequence of the coldness and lateness of the season the reptile may have been in a torpid state, it being characteristic of such creatures that they sink into this condition when the warmth of the air falls below the mean temperature of the place they inhabit. That the beast was restored to activity by the heat of the fire into which it was flung goes without saying, while that it could easily have leaped high enough to fasten on Paul's hand as he stood in the vicinity of the flames is quite credible, since vipers are accustomed to lurk in rocky places, from which they dart out upon their enemies (Eccles. x. 8), rising sometimes several feet at a bound. 2. *The danger arising from the incident.* Though not expressly stated that the viper bit Paul, this was probably the case, and was evidently believed to be the case by such of the natives as were standing round and observed what had taken place. Knowing well the deadly nature of the reptile's sting, they expected every moment to behold the apostle either swelling up in his arm with strong inflammation, or dropping down suddenly to the ground, as Shakespeare (*Antony and Cleopatra*, Act v., sc. 2) says when speaking of the asp-bitten Cleopatra and her maid Charmian—

> "If they had swallowed poison, 'twould appear
> By external swelling";

and of Charmian, who, following Cleopatra's example, applied the asp to her bosom—

> "Tremblingly she stood
> And on the sudden dropped."

(See "Critical Remarks.") 3. *The termination of the incident.* Neither of the results anticipated by the spectators followed. Calmly the apostle shook the beast back into the fire, out of which it never again rose; and, though the wondering natives kept on in momentary expectation that something amiss would happen to the apostle, he suffered no evil effects whatever. Rationalist interpreters would like, if they could, to ascribe this either to the non-poisonous character of the reptile or to the fact that it did not bite the apostle, but it is certain that whether the creature bit him or not Paul would see in his preserva-

tion a result due to the providential care and special mercy of God. Nor does it seem unreasonable to suppose that Paul was enabled to behave throughout with the calmness he displayed, because he recalled the promise which his Master had given to the eleven, and of which he must have heard (Mark xvi. 18), and bethought himself of the twice-given assurance (xxiii. 11, xxvii. 24) that he would see Rome, and therefore could not perish in Malta.

III. **The thoughts of the Maltese.**—These were various and deep, but mistaken. 1. *A wrong conclusion.* When they saw the reptile springing from the flames and fastening on Paul's hand, they reasoned, probably observing his fettered wrists, that he must be some notorious criminal—a murderer, for instance—whom, though he had escaped the waves, Divine Justice, that awful minister of high Heaven's wrath that ever follows on the heels of crime, would not permit to live. This suspicion, which they whispered to each other, bore a striking testimony to the sense or apprehension of Divine justice which sleeps in every man, even the most degraded; supplied a signal instance of man's readiness to lapse into error when interpreting providential occurrences or pronouncing upon the characters of others; and gave a salutary reminder to all that even the best of men may be misjudged by their fellows. 2. *A disappointed expectation.* When the natives remembered what the bite of a viper signified they expected to witness the apostle either dropping down before them a dead man or swelling up along his arm and throughout his body with a strong inflammation; but in this also they were at fault, because of not knowing Him who had promised, "They shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing it shall in no wise hurt them." Verily there were more things in heaven and on earth than had been dreamt of in their philosophy! 3. *A superstitious exclamation.* When they found, as they kept looking on to witness the final collapse of the apostle's vitality, that nothing happened, and certainly that nothing amiss befell him, they changed their minds, and ejaculated again to themselves and to each other, "He is a God!"—whether "Æsculapius, the god of physicians, who ruled over the serpent, or Hercules, who crushed serpents in his cradle" (Stier), for both were worshipped in Malta, cannot be determined. Once more they were as sadly astray as when they had pronounced him a murderer. Thus "the multitude know no moderation; it either exalts one to heaven, or thrusts him down to hell" (Starke). If Paul understood what the natives said about him, it need hardly be doubted he would correct their misapprehension, as he did that of the men of Lycaonia (xiv. 13).

Learn.—1. That human nature at its worst estate is not wholly lost. Soft places exist even in the hardest hearts. 2. That Christ's people should always be forward in helping their fellows. Paul, though an apostle, disdained not to assist in collecting sticks for the fire. 3. That God is able to protect His people in the midst of greatest dangers. Paul, who had been rescued from the waves, was again shielded from the serpent's bite. 4. That the best of men are often mistaken for the worst. Paul was looked upon as a notorious criminal. Paul's master had been condemned as a malefactor. 5. That ignorance and superstition are exceedingly unstable in their judgments. The one moment Paul was shunned as a murderer, the next moment honoured as a God.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 2. *No common kindness.* The behaviour of the natives of Malta to Paul and his fellow-voyagers was—

I. A **testimony** to God's providential care in providing for their wants in a time of urgent necessity, in raising up for them friends in a place where, and at a time when, these could least have been expected.

II. A **proof** of the remnant of good-

ness to be found in the hearts of even the most degraded, which renders their ultimate recovery neither impossible nor hopeless.

III. A **rebuke** to many Christians whose conduct in showing kindness to their fellow-men falls far behind that of these untutored islanders. "Christian dwellers at the coast may learn a Samaritan love from these strangers" (Besser).

Two Fires upon the Beach.

I. **On the shore of the Galilean Lake** (John xxi. 9). — Prepared by Christ for His disciples. An emblem of Christ's love towards, thoughtful care of, and bounteous provision for, His people.

II. **On the shore of St. Paul's Bay in Malta** (xxviii. 2).—Prepared by the islanders for the shipwrecked voyagers. An emblem of the kindness which men, and more especially Christ's followers, should show towards one another, in sympathising with and assisting one another.

Vers. 3-6. *The Incident of the Viper; or, Faith and Superstition.*

I. **The barbarians' eyes of superstition** beheld in the incident four things: 1. *An ordinary occurrence*, the bite of a serpent, which they expected to be followed by the usual result, the death of the bitten one. 2. *A supernatural detection* of an evildoer as they supposed, whom Divine justice would not allow to live. 3. *An inexplicable phenomenon*, which led them to as erroneous a conclusion as that they abandoned. 4. *The presence of a Divine being*, in which thought they were right, though the Divine presence was not that of Paul, but of Paul's Master and Lord.

II. **Paul's eye of faith** beheld in the incident four things: 1. *A miracle of Divine power*. Either in preserving him from being bitten by the adder, or, if bitten, in protecting him against hurt. 2. *A token of Divine goodness* in thus shielding him from being injured by what might otherwise have proved his death. 3. *A proof of the Divine faithfulness.* Christ having promised to His disciples before His ascension that they should take up serpents and not be hurt (Mark xvi. 17, 18). 4. *A mark of Divine honour.* Put upon Paul in presence of the islanders, not for his sake alone, but for theirs as well, to open for him a door of usefulness among them so long as he remained in the island.

Vers. 1-7. *The Necessity of the Advent for the Barbarian World.* Exemplified by the barbarian life and religion of the inhabitants of Melita.

I. **Barbarian virtues.**—Two errors held on the subject of natural goodness: 1. That of those who *deny to fallen man any goodness* at all, and refuse to admit even kindness of feeling, contradicted by the virtues of hospitality and sympathy which were found among the islanders. 2. The opposite error of *placing too high a value on those natural virtues.* These Melitans, who "showed no little kindness" to the wrecked crew, belonged to a stock who, in the most civilised days of Carthage, offered human sacrifice, and after every successful battle with the Romans burnt the chief prisoners alive as a thank-offering to Heaven. 3. The advent of Christ brought *a new spirit into the world.* "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another." That was not the new part. The Melitans would not have disagreed with that. "As I have loved you." . . . That makes all new.

II. **Barbarian ideas of retribution.** —In some form or another the idea of retribution underlies all mythologies, and constitutes the basis of all natural religion. 1. In the barbarian conception of it, however, there was *something gross, corporeal, and dangerous*; because they misinterpreted natural laws into vengeance. If we ask where these Melitans got their idea of retribution, the reply is out of their own hearts. They felt the external connection between wrongdoing and penalty. The

penalty they would have executed on murder was death. They naturally threw this idea of theirs into the character of God, and blended together what was theirs and what is His. This is valuable as a proof of the instinctive testimony of man's heart to the realities of retribution. It is utterly worthless as a testimony to the form in which retributive justice works, because it is not borne out by the facts of life. 2. As information increased *this idea of retribution disappears.* Natural laws are understood and retribution vanishes. Assuredly there is no vengeance such as this which suffers not the murderer to live, but arms the powers of nature against him. So the idea of retribution goes for those who can see no deeper than the outward chance of penalty. 3. The advent of Christ brought *deeper and truer views.* It taught what sin is and what suffering is. It showed the innocent on the cross bearing the penalty of the world's sin, but Himself still the Son of God, with whom the Father was not angry but well pleased.

III. **Barbarian conception of Deity.**—"They changed their minds and said that he was a god." 1. This implied *a certain advance in religious notions.* There is a stage of worship prior to that of man-worship. Men have worshipped the powers of nature and even brute life. The Melitans were a stage beyond this. 2. In this worship of the human, however, it was *adoration of the marvellous*, not reverence for the good, which they displayed. It was not Paul's character to which they yielded homage, but the wonderful mystery of his miraculous escape. The mere worship of the mysterious has but a limited existence. As you teach laws you undermine that religion. 3. *The Redeemer's advent taught a deeper truth to man.* The apostle spoke almost slightingly of the marvellous (1 Cor. xiii. 1). Love is diviner than all wondrous powers. The revelation of the Son was to proclaim a Father, not a mystery.—*Robertson, of Brighton.*

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 7—10.

Three Months in Malta; or, Two Remarkable Incidents. 2. *The Healing of Publius's Father.*

I. **The subject of the healing.**—The father of Publius, the chief, or first man, of the island, whose estates lay in the vicinity of the scene of the shipwreck. That Publius was designated the "first of the Melitæans" was due neither to his wealth, which was presumably great, nor to his rank, which was obviously high, but to his office, which was that of representative, legate, or deputy of the Roman prætor of Sicily, to which the smaller island of Malta was annexed as an appanage. Two inscriptions found in Malta, at Citta Vecchia, belonging to the time of Augustus, one in Greek and the other in Latin, show that the term "first" was frequently so used—the Greek inscription running, Lucius Caius, son of Quirinus, a Roman knight, first of the Melitæans. That his father lived with him was probably a testimony to his filial affection.

II. **The motive of the healing.**—A threefold desire on the part of Paul. 1. *Philanthropical.* To relieve, if he could, the suffering of the patient, who lay sick of fever and dysentery. Paul was never unmindful of his own precept—"As therefore ye have opportunity, do good unto all men" (Gal. vi. 10; compare Heb. xiii. 16). Like his Master, who "went about continually doing good" (x. 38), he was ever on the watch for occasions to serve. Nor can one more closely resemble either Christ or Paul than by ministering to the infirm and afflicted. 2. *Evangelical.* To find an opening for the gospel, which he believed and was always anxious to preach. Paul was ever ready to enter with his message of salvation into any door that Providence might open, whether in

Ephesus or in Rome, in Cyprus or in Malta. Like Jesus Christ, who was always about His Father's business (Luke ii. 49), and whose meat and drink it was to do His Father's will (John iv. 32-34), Paul was one that never missed a chance of publishing the good news of grace and eternal life to those who would hear (Rom, i. 15). 3. *Eucharistical.* To make some return for the generous hospitality which for three days had been exhibited towards Paul and his companions, which was only common gratitude, a virtue in which the apostle never failed (2 Tim. i. 16-18). It is not absolutely certain that Publius's hospitality was extended to the whole ship's company, though possibly the meaning of the historian may be just this, that for three days Publius was engaged in showing kindness to the shipwrecked voyagers, having them up in relays to his mansion or grounds, and sumptuously feeding them. Others, however, suppose that the entertainment referred to Paul and his companions, Luke and Aristarchus, with perhaps Julius, the centurion, and the master of the ship. But in either case Paul would naturally feel that such generosity would demand some return.

III. **The nature of the healing.**—1. *Ordinary.* The cure of a fever and dysentery, and yet the only cure of its kind reported of Paul—indeed, only the third work of healing ascribed to him in the Acts, the other two having occurred at Lystra (xiv. 1-10) and at Philippi (xvi. 16-18), unless the healings and exorcisms attributed to Paul in Ephesus (xix. 11, 12) be taken into account. That the malady from which Publius's father suffered was not impossible, even in a dry climate like that of Malta, physicians resident in the island have shown. 2. *Miraculous.* It is evident that though Luke was a physician, it was not by him but by Paul that the cure was wrought. It was Paul and not Luke who entered into the sick man's chamber. Yet Paul had no power in himself to cure.

IV. **The method of the healing.**—1. *Prayer.* The apostle followed the usual practice of Peter in attempting the sick man's cure (ix. 40). It is possible that on entering the patient's chamber Paul had no idea beyond that of praying for his restoration to health (James v. 14), and that the impulse to perform a miraculous act of healing was communicated to his mind during prayer. If he contemplated a miracle from the first, then the precedence of the prayer would assist the patient to detect the source whence his cure proceeded. 2. *Imposition of hands.* In so acting Paul imitated the method of Christ (Mark vi. 5; Luke iv. 20, xiii. 13). The action would in part serve to connect the healing and the prayer as well as to aid the faith of him on whom the miracle was wrought.

V. **The effect of the healing.**—Threefold. 1. *Spread of fame.* The rest of the islanders who had diseases on them came to Paul for assistance, which, like his Master, he denied not, but freely granted, laying his hands upon them and healing them all (Luke iv. 40), but whether in every instance miraculously, or with the assistance of Luke, is not told. 2. *Increase of honour.* The patients whom he cured honoured him and his companions with many honours—not rewards for their services, which Paul would hardly have accepted (xx. 33; Phil. iv. 17), but "attentions," marks of favour, in attestation of the kindly feelings with which they were regarded. 3. *Supply of need.* When the time arrived for departure from the island the natives put on board ship everything they could think of that might be needful for the voyage of Paul and his companions, as once before the friends at Sidon had done (xxvii. 3).

Learn—1. That Christians should never allow themselves to be surpassed in courtesy by men of the world, though they sometimes are. 2. That Christ's people should be distinguished for their gratitude to those who show them kindness, which they sometimes are not. 3. That wherever Christians go they should endeavour to leave those they meet the better for their society, which they do not always do. 4. That Christians will lose nothing either in this world or in that which is to come by doing good, which they frequently forget.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 7. *The First Man in Malta: a Sermon on true Greatness.*—Exemplified in Publius.

I. **First in rank.**—The deputy of the Sicilian prætor, the representative of Imperial Rome. Exalted station a great talent, conferring great powers and creating great responsibilities.

II. **First in wealth.**—A reasonable inference from the mention of "lands." Like social dignity, riches a splendid endowment which, when rightly used, may be productive of immense good to their holder as well as to his less fortunate fellows in society around.

III. **First in goodness.**—Which after all is the only greatness. Publius, it is obvious, was distinguished by at least three virtues which are rare. 1. *Filial devotion.* The presence of his aged father in his official mansion probably spoke well for his respect for and attention to his parents (Ephes. vi. 1, 2). 2. *Humble condescension.* Though a great man, he did not shrink from condescending to men of low estate like the shipwrecked sailors and prisoners who had been cast upon his island (Rom. xii. 16). 3. *Generous hospitality.* A wealthy landowner, he freely parted with his means to supply the necessities of the poor voyagers whose whole goods had been devoured by the sea (Prov. xxi. 26; Psalm cxii. 9; 1 Tim. vi. 18).

Ver. 1-10. *The People of Malta: an Expressive Representation of the Heathen World.*

I. **In their need of redemption.**—Their dark superstition (vers. 4-6), their manifold misery (vers. 8, 9).

II. **In their capability of redemption.**—Their friendly hospitality (ver. 2); their dim knowledge of God (ver. 4); their lively susceptibilities for impressions of the Divine (ver. 6); their childlike gratitude for kindnesses received (ver. 10).

III. **In their relation to redemption.**—The gospel which Paul carried with him to the island and doubtless preached to its inhabitants having been intended for them, adapted to them, offered to them, and to some extent, it may be hoped, believed and enjoyed by them, as it is in the heathen world today.—Enlarged from *Gerok.*

Vers. 4-10. *The Mistakes of the Maltese.*

I. **They misinterpreted the providence of God** (ver. 4).

II. **They misjudged the character of Paul** (vers. 4, 6).

III. **They misunderstood their own needs** (ver. 9).

Vers. 7-10. *The Beauty and the Profit of Kindness.* Illustrated by and in Publius and Paul.

I. **The beauty of kindness.**—Shown by—1. *The courteous entertainment of Paul* and his companions by Publius. 2. The *unstinted philanthropy of Paul* in healing not only Publius' father, but all the diseased islanders who came to him.

II. **The profit of kindness.**—Experienced by—1. *Publius,* who must have felt his generosity to the apostle more than repaid by the healing of his father. 2. *Paul,* who doubtless also owned himself abundantly recompensed for his labours among the islanders by the tributes of affection he bore away with him from Malta.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—*Verses* 11—16.

Castor and Pollux; or, Paul's arrival in Rome.

I. **Departure from Malta.**—1. *The time of sailing.* After a three months' residence in Malta, where Paul and his companions had been honourably and courteously entertained by Publius the Roman governor, and by the natives of the island who had been cured of their maladies, and no doubt in some degree

had come to learn the true nobility of their benefactors' characters. That these three months were not allowed to pass without an endeavour to disseminate amongst the islanders as well as the shipwrecked voyagers a knowledge of the truth may almost be inferred from Paul's well-known zeal and enthusiasm for the gospel. This much is certain, that both he and his companions bore away with them from Valetta many marks of the affection and esteem of those whom they left behind. The precise date of embarkation, though not stated, may be roughly calculated. If they landed upon Malta about the end of October three months would bring them to the end of January, which was an early but still a possible date for sailing, and the passengers, as well as Julius, would naturally wish to embrace the first opportunity that offered for proceeding with their journey. 2. *The vessel in which the voyagers re-embarked.* Like the barque which had been wrecked, this was a ship of Alexandria; and like the former also, was probably laden with Egyptian corn for the Roman market. More fortunate than Paul's vessel, it had escaped the storm which had proved so disastrous to that; or overtaken by the same Euroclydon, it had managed to reach the harbour of Valetta in safety. There, having spent the inclement months of winter, with the opening of spring it was ready to a second time affront the dangers of the deep. It lends to the picture a liveliness which could have proceeded only from an eyewitness to be told that the figurehead upon the ship's bows was that of the Dioscuri or Twin Brethren, Castor and Pollux, whom heathen mythology regarded as the sons of Jupiter and Leda, and looked up to as the patrons of sea-faring men: "whose benign constellation," sings Horace (*Odes*, I. xii.), "as soon as it has shone forth to the sailors, the troubled surge falls down from the rocks, the winds cease, the clouds vanish, and the threatening waves subside in the sea, because it was their will."

II. **Progress of the voyage.**—1. *Three days at Syracuse.* This grand historic city, the capital of Sicily, famous for the siege which it suffered during the Peloponnesian war, lay about eighty or a hundred miles north of Malta—*i.e.*, a day's sail with a fair wind. Founded in B.C. 735 by Corinthian Dorians on the adjacent island of Ortygia, in B.C. 485 under Gelon, first its Tyrannus and afterwards its king, it became a splendid city, which extended over to the main island. In Paul's day it contained the residence of the Roman governor, who, since the close of the Second Punic War, had ruled the Romish insular province of Sicily (Riehm's *Handwörterbuch des Biblischen Altertums*, art. *Syrakus*). Having put into the harbour, the Twin Brothers lay for three days, most likely for purposes of trade, though possibly to wait for a favourable breeze. Whether the apostle and his companions were allowed to go ashore is not related; but, judging from the similar permission granted at Sidon (xxvii. 3), and remembering the important services rendered to Julius by Paul during the preceding voyage (xxvii. 10, 31), it may reasonably be concluded that they were. 2. *One day at Rhegium.* Having weighed anchor, and either tacked about or stood out to sea, because of adverse winds—certainly not having sailed round Sicily (De Wette)—"the Twin Brothers on the same day arrived at Rhegium, the modern Reggio, a seaport situated on the Italian coast, and nearly opposite to Messina." "By a curious coincidence," say Conybeare and Howson, "the same hero protectors of sea-faring men, the Great Twin Brethren," were the patron divinities of the city, on whose ancient coins also their heads were exhibited. 3. *Seven days at Puteoli.* On the following morning, the south wind having begun to blow, the gallant ship resumed her voyage, and next day landed at Puteoli, the ancient Dikæarchia, now called Pozzuoli, eight miles south-west of Neapolis, the modern Naples, and lying in a sheltered recess of the bay. A few months before Paul's arrival it had been elevated to the dignity of a *Colonia* (Tacitus, *Ann.*, xiv. 27). Its distance of one hundred and eighty-two miles from

Rhegium might easily have been traversed in twenty-six hours, supposing the ship to have made seven knots an hour. In any case it was a quick passage, and due to the favourable wind which filled the sails. "Puteoli," say Conybeare and Howson, "was the Liverpool of Italy." In its harbour the corn ships of Alexandria were accustomed to discharge their cargoes—Seneca (*Epist.*, 77) mentioning that these vessels, easily recognised from afar by their flags, were welcomed by loud hurrahs when they sailed into port, especially when they arrived in early spring. From its wharves armies embarked, while ambassadors from foreign parts landed at its quay. Travellers from Syria commenced at Puteoli their land journey towards Rome. Before proceeding onward to the capital, Luke and Aristarchus, if not also Paul, embraced the opportunity of holding fellowship with the Christians whom they found there. That disciples should have existed in Puteoli was not surprising, since already they had become numerous in Rome. And indeed a remarkable confirmation of the wide and rapid extension of Christianity among the provincial towns of Italy has been recently derived from an inscription found among the ruins of Pompeii, destroyed by the first eruption of Mount Vesuvius in A.D. 79. Painted on a city wall prior to its overthrow, the words "Igni gaude Christiane," "Rejoice in the fire, O Christian," clearly show that in Pompeii, within fifteen miles of Puteoli, a little Christian community existed (see *Modern Discoveries and the Christian Faith*, by Dr. Stokes, in *The Sunday at Home*, January 1892, p. 149). Requested to remain among the Christians in Puteoli seven days, the apostle, first having obtained Julius' permission, consented. That the centurion should have granted such permission need occasion no difficulty. He himself may have been waiting for orders, while his better acquaintance with Paul would undoubtedly dispose him to extend towards so remarkable a person as much indulgence as was consistent with his condition as a prisoner. How the seven days were spent can be easily imagined. As at Troas (xx. 6, 7) and at Tyre (xxi. 4), they would doubtless be devoted to Christian fellowship, to speaking and hearing things concerning the kingdom, and on the Lord's day to the breaking of bread and prayers. Indeed, the mention of seven days in each of these places as the space of time over which Paul's visit extended points by no means obscurely to the existence at that early date of the Christian practice of meeting for worship on the Lord's day.

III. **Entry into Rome.**—1. *Met by the brethren.* Having heard of Paul's arrival at Puteoli, probably through tidings forwarded by the Christians there, "the brethren"—*i.e.*, the Christians—of the metropolis determined to hurry out and proffer him a welcome before he could approach the town. In two separate companies they set forth, on the great military road called the Appian Way, which led from Rome to Capua, and from Capua to Brundusium (Brindisi), on the Adriatic shore. At Capua, distant twelve miles from Puteoli, and one hundred and twenty-five from Rome, Julius and his prisoners would join the road. The advanced party of Roman Christians—among whom may have been Aquila and Priscilla, and others named in the sixteenth chapter of the Romans (Spence)—encountered the apostle and his friends at Appii Forum, or "The Market of Appius," about forty miles from the capital; the second company at "The Three Taverns," ten miles nearer. The first of these towns, named from Appius Claudius Cæcus, the builder of the Appian Way, was situated on the northern border of the Pontine marshes, at the end of the canal which ran for several miles along the road, and is described by Horace (*Sat.*, I. v. 4) as having been full of low tavern-keepers and bargemen. The second, not far from the modern Cisterna, appears from Cicero's letters to Atticus (ii. 12) to have been located near the point where the road from Antium crossed the Appian Way. When at these two points in succession the apostle looked upon the Roman

Christians who, with kindly forethought, had thus expressed to him their sympathy, he "thanked God and took courage"—he felt the burden of isolation lying on his heart in large measure relieved, and gave utterance to the gratitude to God which their coming inspired within his soul. "The diminution of fatigue, the more hopeful prospect of the future, the renewed elasticity of religious trust, the sense of a brighter light on all the scenery round him—all this, and more, is involved in Luke's sentence. He thanked God and took courage" (Conybeare and Howson). 2. *Lodged by himself.* On arriving at Rome the centurion undoubtedly acted as the spurious clause in ver. 16 intimates, delivered over the prisoners with whom he had been intrusted to the Prætorian prefect, whose duty it was to receive such as were sent up from the provinces to the capital for trial (see, however, "Critical Remarks"). In the case of Paul, however, through the intercession of Julius, or perhaps in consequence of the representations of Festus and Agrippa, an exception was made. Whereas ordinarily prisoners remanded from the provinces were confined in a prison attached to the Prætorian camp north-east of the city and outside of the Porta Viminalis, it was sometimes allowed a prisoner to dwell in his own lodging under the supervision of a soldier. This favour was extended to the apostle by the prefect of the day, who may have been Burrus Africanus, whom Claudius had appointed sole prefect, and who certainly retained this office as late as A.D. 62 (see "Critical Remarks"). If this was the individual into whose care Paul was delivered, then one more coincidence occurs between Luke's narrative and the history of the times, since other calculations show that Paul must have reached Rome about—certainly not later than —that date.

Learn.—1. That ships of commerce have often been used by God to carry His messengers throughout the world. 2. That God's servants have frequently to visit places where no special blessing appears to be left behind. 3. That God's hidden ones are commonly found in unexpected places. 4. That the hearts of true Christians beat towards one another with fraternal love. 5. That Christian sympathy has a rare power to support under trial. 6. That God can raise up friends for His people in unexpected places. 7. That when a man's ways please God, even his enemies are at peace with him.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 11. *On Board the "Dioscuroi," or, "The Twin Brothers."*—"The three Christians stepped without hesitation on board a ship which carried a heathen flag. Castor and Pollux are nothing (1 Cor. viii. 4); but all the ships belong to the Lord, and no idolatrous banner can injure those who sail with thankfulness thereupon—a consolation for the followers of the apostle of the Gentiles, who go forth with the banner of the cross, and sail in ships which have the golden calf of mammon for their banner."—*Besser.*

Vers. 12, 13. *Quiet Days.*

I. **Are found in most people's history.**—No man's life is all bustle and activity. Interludes must occur when seemingly nothing important transpires or is done. Such days Paul spent at Syracuse and Rhegium.

II. **Have their uses when they do occur.**—Afford opportunities for rest, if nothing else, and also for meditation, Whether Paul met with Christians at Syracuse is not stated.

III. **Are worthy of being recorded in the story of one's life.**—Just because they are not so unimportant as they seem.

Ver. 14. *Seven Days at Puteoli.*

I. **Seven days of rest** in the onward pilgrimage of life.

II. **Seven days of communion** with the brethren of Christ.

III. **Seven days of service** in the edification of the Church.

IV. **Seven days of preparation** for entering the gates of Rome.

And so we went towards Rome.

I. **As travellers towards their destination.**—A picture of human life, and especially of Christian pilgrims nearing the city of the great king.

II. **As prisoners to be tried by their judge.**—Such were Paul and many others in the company. Once more a picture of life, both ordinary and Christian. "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Cor. v. 10).

III. **As missionaries toward their field of labour.**—Paul at least, and perhaps also his companions, should be viewed in this light, since Paul had already been assured that he should testify for Christ at Rome also (xxiii. 11).

Vers. 14, 15. *Finding Brethren.*

I. **Christ's people are to be met with in unexpected places.**—Paul found them in places where he himself had not been before, as at Puteoli and Rome.

II. **Have usually small difficulty in recognising each other.**—All being brethren in Christ, and possessed more or less of the same moral and spiritual characteristics.

III. **Commonly take** (or should take) **delight in each other's society.**—The communion of saints being an article in the creed which they profess in common.

IV. **Should always endeavour to be mutually helpful.**—Bearing each other's burden's, and so fulfilling the law of Christ.

Ver. 15. *Gratitude and Courage.*

I. **Paul thanked God.**—1. For the approaching termination of his journey. 2. For the goodness and mercy that had attended him throughout his pilgrimage. 3. For the numerous friends that God had raised up around him at every time of need. 4. For the evidence afforded by the presence of these Roman Christians of the progress of the gospel.

II. **Paul took courage.**—Believing—1. That God would guide him till his journey closed. 2. That God's mercy would not fail him in the great city he was about to enter. 3. That friends would not be wanting to him in Rome, and that least of all would his heavenly Friend desert him. 4. That he would still have an opportunity to advance his Master's cause in the metropolis of the world.

Ver. 16. *Paul Before the Gates of Rome.*

I. **As a homeless stranger, and yet welcomed by loving brethren.**

II. **As an evildoer in bonds and yet with the gracious testimony of God in his heart.**

III. **As an offering appointed unto death** (for sooner or later he was to lose his life within these walls), **and yet a victorious conqueror,** who plants the standard of the cross in the citadel of heathenism.—*Gerok.*

From Jerusalem to Rome.—This the course of the gospel in the Acts.

I. A **painful** course, full of shame and persecution.

II. A **heroic** course, full of the power of faith and the glow of love.

III. A **victorious** course, full of mighty acts and Divine wonders.

IV. A **blessed** course, full of salvation and grace for the present and the future.—*Ibid.*

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 17—22.

An Interview with the Jewish Chiefs; or, an Explanation of his Imprisonment.

I. **The assembly convened.**—1. *The place.* Either Paul's own private dwelling (ver. 30), which doubtless, through the kindness of Luke, Aristarchus, and other Christian friends, he had been enabled to hire; or a temporary lodging which had been provided for him by some of the Roman brethren. "Tradition points

to the vestibule of the Church of Santa Maria, at the junction of the Via Lata and the Corso, as the site of this dwelling; but it has been urged by Dr. Philip, at present working as a missionary in the Ghetto at Rome, in a pamphlet *On the Ghetto* (Rome, 1874), that this site, forming part of the old Flaminian way, was then occupied by arches and public buildings, and that it was far more probable Paul would fix his quarters near those of his own countrymen. He adds that a local tradition points to No. 2 in the Via Stringhari, just outside the Ghetto, as having been St. Paul's dwelling place, but does not give any documentary evidence as to its nature or the date to which it can be traced back" (Plumptre). 2. *The time.* After three days, which most likely the apostle spent in recruiting his wearied frame after the long and fatiguing journey he had undergone. It showed his zeal for the cause he represented, that he rested only three days. If any part of these days was devoted to social intercourse, it would certainly be with Luke, Aristarchus, and the friends who had so kindly met him at Appii Forum and The Three Taverns. 3. *The guests.* In other circumstances Paul would have sought out his countrymen at their synagogues. As this was impossible in the position in which he then was, he could only invite them to wait on him at his lodging. Accordingly at his request they come—the chief men or rulers of the synagogues, and others probably of high rank to whom invitations had been issued. The Jewish community in Rome inhabited the "Trastevere" or district beyond the river, a part of the city then notorious as the residence of a low rabble and a place of the meanest merchandise. The beginnings of the Jewish colony in that quarter could have been traced back to the captives brought to the capital by Pompey after his eastern campaign, many of whom had become freemen, and to whom additions were constantly made as the years went on, in consequence of the mercantile relations which subsisted between Rome and the East. Many of these colonists were wealthy, and contributed largely for sacred purposes to the mother country. (See Conybeare and Howson, ii. 388, 389; compare "Hints" on ver. 17).

II. **The explanation offered.**—1. *A protestation of his innocence.* To the leaders of the Jewish community Paul explicitly affirmed that, though a prisoner, as they beheld, he had been guilty of no offence against the people—*i.e.*, the Jewish nation or against the customs of their fathers. Paul had all along contended that Christianity formed the legitimate because divinely promised development of Judaism, and that in seeking to carry over his countrymen to an acceptance of Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah, he was not actuated by hostility to the ancestral religion. Nay, he had even shown by his unwonted zeal in attending the Jewish feasts and by his observance of a Nazarite vow (xxi. 26), that he was well disposed towards the customs of the fathers; and, though critics like Zeller (*Die Apostelgeschichte*, p. 292) cannot understand how Paul with a good conscience could have advanced the claim here put into his lips, when he knew that his whole activity aimed at nothing else than to subvert the Mosaic religion through faith in Christ, and that his whole religious consciousness had its middle point in the abrogation of the Law through the gospel, it is by no means hard to comprehend if one remembers that Paul never did insist upon a Jew renouncing Moses before he exercised faith in Christ. 2. *A vindication of his appeal.* The apostle doubtless felt that his countrymen in Rome would want to understand how he came to be a prisoner if he had not been chargeable with any offence; and in order to meet this unspoken but natural request, he proceeded to relate how the Roman officials who examined him were so convinced of his innocence that they would willingly have set him at liberty had it not been for the interference of the Jews—*i.e.*, of the Sanhedrists—and how solely, as a means of self-defence, and not at all because he intended to prefer any

accusation against the nation, he had been obliged to appeal unto Cæsar. The accuracy of this statement also has been challenged by Holtzmann (*Hand Commentar, in loco*), and that on two grounds: first, that the Roman officials expressed no such desire to liberate Paul as Luke here states; and, second, that it was not the Jews but Festus (xxv. 9-12) who constrained Paul to appeal to Cæsar. But one who reads betwen the lines at xxv. 9 can have no difficulty in perceiving that, while Festus demanded of Paul whether he would go to Jerusalem to be judged, Festus himself felt inwardly disposed to discharge the apostle, and probably would have done so but for the threatening attitude assumed by the Sanhedrists; and that his actual proposal partook of the nature of a compromise, which enabled him neither to condemn Paul nor to displease the Jews. Moreover, if this explanation be correct, it will show how Paul could speak of the Jews rather than of Festus as the parties whose action constrained his appeal. 3. *A reason stated for his invitation.* He wished himself to place his case before the bar of their unbiassed judgments, and to let them know that he was in reality a sufferer for one of the main points of the national faith, that in fact he was a prisoner for the hope of Israel. Perhaps also he cherished the expectation that in this way he would obviate any hostile interposition on their part in the course of his trial (Holtzmann).

III. **The answer returned.**—1. *A confession of ignorance.* About the details of his case. The Jewish leaders assured the apostle that they had neither received letters from Judæa concerning him, nor had any of the brethren arrived in the city to report or speak harm of him. According to some interpreters the synagogue chiefs imagined that Paul half suspected they might have heard disingenuous and depreciatory rumours concerning him from the Judæan metropolis, and were desirous of disabusing his mind of any such suspicion. Others are at a loss to understand how people, living in the centre of the world, as the Roman Jews did, could have professed to be unacquainted with the extraordinary commotion excited by Paul in every Jewish community into which he had hitherto come. It should, however, be noted that they do not assert they had never before heard of Paul—in which case they would scarcely have accepted his invitation to wait upon him in his lodging; but only that they had received no official papers from Judæa about his case, and that no personal messenger had arrived with tidings to his disadvantage. Both of which statements might easily have been true. Until Paul had appealed to Cæsar the Jerusalem Sanhedrists had no special reason for sending word about him to the Roman Christians; and even after that event, as no great interval elapsed between the appeal and the voyage to Rome, it is easy to comprehend how communications or passengers from Judæa may not have had time to reach Rome before the apostle himself arrived. 2. *An expression of desire.* To hear what Paul himself had to say about the new sect of which he was so distinguished a champion, and which, they told him, as a reason for their request, it had come to their ears, was everywhere spoken against. How they could have pretended to be so ignorant of Christianity as to represent it as a sect of which they had only incidentally heard has perplexed the critics, some of whom do not hesitate to suggest that the synagogue leaders told a lie (Schneckenburger, Tholuck), while others see in the narrative a falsification of actual history on the part of the writer, for the purpose either of vindicating Paul's character as that of an orthodox Jew (Zeller), or of showing how Paul in Rome, as elsewhere, commenced a Christian mission only after the gospel had been rejected by the Jews (Baur, Holtzmann). That a large and important Christian Church existed in Rome at this date the Epistle to the Romans written from Corinth shows, not to speak of the evidence supplied by the Neronic persecution, of which Tacitus says, "Nero subdidit reos et quæsitissimis pœnis affecit quos per flagitia invisos, vulgus Christianos appellabat" (*Annals,*

xv. 44). That the Jewish leaders were ignorant of the existence of such a Christian community is inconceivable. Nor do they deny that they were cognisant of its existence. Only they express themselves concerning it with caution, talking of it as a sect everywhere spoken against, about which they were anxious to receive further information. As to the reason of this reserve various explanations have been offered; as, for instance, that even before Claudius had banished the Jews from Rome the Christians had separated themselves from the synagogue, so that they remained practically unknown to the Jews who returned after the edict of banishment had been recalled (Olshausen); that the Jews purposely deceived Paul in order to obtain from him intelligence about the sect (Tholuck); and that the Jews seeing Paul apparently in favour with the Roman authorities, did not wish to assume an attitude of strong opposition towards the Christians, and therefore carefully concealed their private opinions (Philippi).

Learn.—1. That the love of a truly Christian heart for the salvation of others is practically unquenchable. Paul's desire for the conversion of his countrymen was a remarkable phenomenon. Had he not imbibed much of his Master's spirit, his love for his own kinsman must have long since been extinguished. 2. That a truly Christian heart is incapable of revenge. Paul had nothing to accuse his nation of, although they had unjustly hurled against him baseless charges, loaded him with undeserved chains, and even pitilessly thirsted for his blood as well as frequently attempted his life. 3. That Christ's followers are tender of the errors and superstitions of others. Paul in preaching Christ never ran down Moses or depreciated the value of his religious institutions. 4. That good men are always careful of their own good names. Paul desired to protect himself against the calumnies that he feared might have reached the ears of his countrymen in Rome. 5. That the Christian Church has in no age lacked detractors. As in the first, so in the nineteenth century, this sect is everywhere by some, though happily now nowhere by all, spoken against.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 17. *The Jews in Rome.*—"The Jewish quarter in Rome had for almost a hundred years been the unceasing object of attention, of sport, and of anger, to the metropolis. Before the first Jewish war the number of the Jews in Rome had been of less importance, but Pompey, Cassius, and Antoninus had sold numerous Jewish prisoners of war as slaves, who either soon were made free because they were of little value as slaves, or indeed were even many times bought free. These *liberti* formed the proper root of the Jewish community in Rome, on which account the Romish Jews were styled simply the Libertines." So, at least, narrates Philo the origin of the Jewish community in Rome. "Cæsar desired for himself no employment for his genius, reports the philosopher, and made no secret that he approved of the Jews when they abominated such. Otherwise had he not permitted that a large part of the town on that side of the Tiber should be occupied by those of whom the greater number were freed men—that is, persons who were set free by their masters, because they could not be constrained to forsake the customs of their fathers. He knew also that they sent to Jerusalem collections under the name of 'first-fruits,' by means of representatives who offered these on their behalf. Intentionally had they been restricted with their retail traffic to the fourteenth district across the Tiber, whither all dirty trades were banished. Their quarter lay upon the slope of the Vatican, and stretched itself over one of the flat islands in the Tiber, which were

exposed to inundations, and at which the Tiber boats coming from Ostia were accustomed to land. Here, where the ships' cargoes were discharged, was for the Jewish brokers the correct place which from year to year they in greater numbers occupied." . . . "To the grief of the Roman world the Jewish immigrants in no way restricted themselves to business in general, but with that manysidedness which was peculiar to them, no department of life was safe from their invasion. Whilst great and small, from Josephus, the favourite of Flavius, who dwelt in the palace at Septizonium, down to the female beggar who was stationed on the Capena, they loved to make gain, and by their Oriental manners, which were strange to the metropolitan, and the abomination in which the Romans held the gods and mysterious writings of the East, they largely increased their power, on the other hand we see them, through their pliantness, accommodating themselves to the manners of the metropolis, and developing an incredible allsidedness. What business had the son of Israel not practised in the capital of the world? Merchant, banker, shopkeeper, pedlar, as a rule, he was also an officer, and frequently a soldier; he was scholar, poet, critic, yea, even actor and singer. He swore by the temple of the Thunderer, and declaimed in mythological *rôles* tragic trimeters to the astonishment of the court. He practised also as a physician, and the doctor of Herod stood in such favour that one had better lock up his silver if he allowed himself to bargain with him. This emancipated Jew loved to imitate all the ways of the heathen. In spite of certain mockery from the heathen, he pressed into the public baths, and with the persistence peculiar to him blocked up the best places, doubly pleased if he succeeded in concealing his Jewish origin. The sportive youth of the metropolis he joined in all playgrounds with success; in short, no place was either so holy or profane that it could not lodge a Jewish guest. The speech of this Jewish community in Rome was the Greek, as indeed Paul had written in Greek to the Christian Church there. The inscriptions upon the Jewish churchyard in the Transtiberine quarter and upon the other superior churchyard on the Appian Way at Capena and upon the third in the Catacombs are composed in a Hebraising Greek, less often in bad Latin, never in Hebrew. Consequently even in the Metropolis the Jewish Greek jargon of Asia Minor was spoken, as Martial makes merry over the manner of speech even of the literary Jews" (Hausrath, *der Apostel Paulus*, pp. 474-478).

Ver. 20. *The Hope of Israel.*

I. **Implanted in Israel's heart by God.**

II. **Recorded in their sacred scriptures.**

III. **Fulfilled by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

IV. **Published to the Jewish people.**

V. **Rejected by the unbelieving portion of the nation.**

Paul's Chain.

I. **A disgrace to Israel.**

II. **An honour to Paul.**

III. **A comfort to Christians.**—In case they should be called upon to suffer for the truth.

Ver. 22. *Everywhere spoken Against.* That this could have been said of Christianity about the middle of the first century was a signal testimony to many things.

I. **To the truthfulness of Christ's prediction.**—That against His people men should say all manner of evil (Matt. v. 11; John xvi. 2).

II. **To the wickedness of the human heart.**—Which could speak evil of those who were really the lights of the world and the salt of the earth (Matt. v. 13, 14).

III. **To the success of Christianity.**—Which had made its presence known and felt even in the centre of the world (Rom. i. 8).

IV. **To the spiritual power of the gospel.**—Which roused against itself the opposition of the world.

Ver. 22. *Everywhere spoken against; or, Popular Objections against Christianity.*—Now, as in Paul's day, Christianity is objected to by various classes of persons, and on widely different grounds; as, *e.g.*—

I. **The supernatural character of its origin.**—This has been a difficulty with Christianity from the beginning. Christ advanced this claim on behalf of His doctrine when He first promulgated it (John vii. 16); and indeed the New Testament writers generally maintain that, like Mosaism, Christianity has its source in Divine revelation, and not merely in such Divine revelation as might be imparted to the human mind through, but in such as transcended, ordinary channels. The Pharisees and Jews generally rejected this claim on the ground that they found it impossible to accept as Divine revelation what seemed to them so unmistakably to set aside the revelation which they believed had been given to Moses (John ix. 29). Scientific men at the present day reject it as in their judgment incompatible with the Reign of Law, affirming in vindication of their action that, if there be a God, of which many of them are not sure, they have no knowledge of any action of His that transcends the bounds of natural law (2 Peter iii. 4). Philosophers reject it on the ground that a supernatural origin is not required for the production of what they find to be the essence or kernel of Christianity; after having stripped off what they regard as the legendary accretions with which it has come down through the past nineteen centuries, all that is valuable in it, they affirm may be sufficiently accounted for by the evolution of the human mind. Students of comparative religion, as they are called, reject it on the plea that other religions, such as Mohammedanism and Buddhism, claim to have originated in the same way, and yet their claims have not been accepted by the critical faculty of mankind, though as religions they contain not a few of the same doctrines as Christianity itself.

II. **The metaphysical character of its doctrines.**—Not so much the circumstance that the Christian documents record miracles, in which the scientific and philosophic worlds do not believe—though, of course, to many this does constitute a serious difficulty in accepting the religion which these documents teach; but the circumstance that as a religion Christianity claims to be based on a series of supernatural facts, which, if once admitted, not only explain and justify the miracles complained of, but render all other objections to Christianity itself unreasonable. These facts are: 1. *The incarnation of the Second Person in the Godhead* in the person of Jesus, which, if true, involves not only Christ's supreme divinity, but demands also a plurality of persons in the Godhead. 2. *The vicarious sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the cross,* which, if true, involves the antecedent doctrine of the fall of man, the total corruption of the race, and the inability of man to save himself, as well as the possibility of a free salvation. 3. *The resurrection of Christ from the dead,* which again, if true, involves the truth of the two preceding, and the certainty of both a future resurrection of the dead (xxiv. 15; 1 Cor. xv. 20) and a final judgment of the world (xvii. 31). 4. *The necessity of a free justification by Divine grace,* and an entire regeneration by the Holy Spirit, in order to salvation—which, once more, if true, lays the axe at the root of self-sufficiency and pride, and thus inevitably excites the hostility of the natural heart. It is perfectly well known that not one of these doctrines is palatable to the world, and even within the precincts of the Church itself there are those who in some surprising manner claim to be counted Christians who repudiate them all.

III. **The objectionable character of its precepts.**—Many of the objections urged against these are indeed un-

reasonable and contradictory, having only this in common, that they dislike Christianity and often lead to its rejection. 1. *According to one class of objectors, the precepts of Christianity are too humbling.* This holds good, especially of the commandments, to repent of sin and believe in Jesus Christ. Did repentance of sin mean nothing more than a formal, conventional, and external acknowledgment that one had not behaved exactly as he should have done—an acknowledgment which one might condescendingly make without unduly putting an indignity upon his self-respect; and were faith in Jesus Christ nothing beyond an equally generous recognition on man's part that Christ had lived in His day and generation a noble and self-sacrificing life, from which all subsequent ages had received an inspiration and impulse for good, then the acceptance of Christianity by men's hearts would not have been so difficult as it is But repentance being an inward and real sorrow for sin, which prostrates the soul before God in self-humiliation, and faith signifying the soul's absolute and final surrender to Jesus Christ for salvation and eternal life, the soul instinctively becomes conscious of antagonism against demands so imperious and exacting. 2. *To a second class, the precepts of Christianity are too severe*—too lofty, too spiritual, too inward, too thoroughgoing. Easily enough summed up in love to God and love to man, when it comes to be understood that what Christianity regards as a perfect discharge of these duties is not the performance of a few external, conventional, and formal courtesies to God in the shape of bodily worship, however elaborate or costly, and philanthropies to man in the shape of munificent and frequent gifts of charity; but the continual up-going of the heart towards God in adoring love and obedience, and outgoing of the heart towards man in sympathy and succour—then Christianity is felt to be too exalted, too inward, too exacting a religion for the natural man, with the almost inevitable result that it is spoken against and rejected. 3. *A third class complain that the precepts of Christianity are too impracticable.* While to many the Sermon on the Mount, with its doctrines of non-resistance of evil, renunciation of wealth, love to enemies, doing unto others as one would that others should do unto him, etc., is esteemed the very essence of Christ's religion, the class of objectors now alluded to pronounce its programme impracticable and visionary—in fact, declare its non-suitability to the exigencies of modern civilisation, shrink not from saying that its morality will not do for either commercial or political life, and that if Christianity insists on its doing, Christianity must go to the wall. Of course Christianity will not go to the wall, but the nation and the people shall go to the wall that propose to transact their business and conduct their politics on other principles than its.

IV. **The visionary character of its rewards.**—Had Christianity proposed to confer on its adherents immediate benefits of a material kind, such as increased wealth, power, pleasure, fame, such as the world thirsts for, its reputation might have stood higher to day than it does with the unbelieving world. But the chief blessings which Christianity undertakes to confer on its adherents are of a spiritual sort (see Ephes. i. 3), and to be enjoyed in their fulness in a future world. Not that Christianity has nothing to confer on its adherents here, because it has (see 1 Tim. iv. 8)—it has a sense of the pardoning mercy of God, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, a growing enlightenment in the truth of God with a growing conformity to the image of God, and over and above these it has all things needful for life and godliness (2 Peter i. 3), all those "other things" which the heavenly Father knows His children require (Matt. vi. 33). But because Christianity sets a higher value on its spiritual blessings than on its temporal gifts (John vi.), teaches men

to set their affections on things above rather than on things on the earth (Col. iii. 1, 2), and encourages them to seek for their inheritance in the future life rather than in this (1 Peter i. 3-5), men pronounce it visionary, otherworldly, illusory, and pass it by for what they imagine to be a more substantial good, but what they eventually discover to be a shadow.

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS.—Verses 23—29.

A Whole Day's Preaching; or, a Last Appeal to his Countrymen.

I. **The circumstances under which this appeal was made.**—1. *The place.* The same as that in which the previous address was delivered—viz., his lodging. (See preceding "Homily.") 2. *The time.* A day which had been appointed by the Jewish leaders themselves more than likely the Jewish Sabbath, when they found themselves free from business engagements. 3. *The auditors.* These same Jewish leaders, and others of their co-religionists whom they had persuaded to accompany them to the apostle's lodging. 4. *The speaker.* The chained prisoner of Jesus Christ, who, though himself looking forward to a trial of doubtful issue, had time and thought to bestow on the spiritual necessities of his countrymen in Rome.

II. **The character which belonged to this appeal.**—1. *The burden of it.* The kingdom of God and Jesus who had been its herald (Eph. ii. 17; Matt. iv. 17) and founder (Luke xxii. 29, 30), and was its exalted Head and Lord (Matt. xxviii. 18; John xiii. 36; Rom. xiv. 9; Eph. i. 20-22; Phil. ii. 9-11). 2. *The manner of it.* By expounding the Scriptures (compare xvii. 2), reasoning out of the law of Moses and out of the prophets (compare Luke xxiv. 27), and persuading them to recognise in Jesus their long-promised Messiah (compare xix. 8). 3. *The fervour of it.* Indicated by the fact that he continued a whole day from morning till evening (compare xx. 7).

III. **The result in which this appeal issued.**—1. *The faith of some.* To these the apostle's preaching carried conviction. Paul seldom taught without gaining converts; and wherever Christ crucified and risen as the King and Head of God's empire of salvation is proclaimed, it may reasonably be anticipated that some hearts will be won to believe. 2. *The unbelief of others.* This also usually resulted from Paul's preaching. If it awoke faith in some hearts it likewise aroused unbelief and opposition. So to-day the proclamation of the gospel excites against it the antagonism of the natural heart, which not unfrequently terminates in unbelief and rejection of the truth. 3. *The departure of all.* As the Sanhedrists in Jerusalem (xxiii. 7), so the Jewish listeners in Rome, could not agree among themselves, and, after an interchange of views it may be supposed (ver. 29), withdrew from the apostle's presence.

IV. **The announcements by which this appeal was followed.**—1. *That their rejection of the gospel had been foretold.* Quoting from Isa. vi. 9, 10 (LXX.), a passage which had also been cited by Christ in Capernaum (Matt. xiii. 14, 15) and in Jerusalem (John xii. 40), he assured them that their present obduracy had been distinctly anticipated in the Divine commission given to that Old Testament seer to whom Jehovah said, "Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not, and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed." The words practically signified that Isaiah would carry his message to a people who should refuse to hear it; and Paul's citation of the words to his countrymen in Rome imported that he recognised in them the true successors of the unbelievers to whom Isaiah preached, persons with souls so fast bound in carnal security that they could not be aroused to a concern for spiritual things

(Ephes. iv. 19), and understandings so darkened that the light of the knowledge of the glory of God could not shine into them (2 Cor. iv. 4); yea, it seemed to the apostle as if his countrymen, through love of the darkness and devotion to their own self-righteous ways, had deliberately closed their understandings and hearts against the truth in case they should repent and be saved (John. iii. 19). If both the Hebrew prophet and the Christian apostle represent the obduracy of the Jewish people as a punishment sent on them by God for their unbelief, that was only a strong way of saying that they had wilfully put away from themselves the offer of eternal life (compare xiii. 46). 2. *That the gospel should be henceforth preached to the Gentiles, who should not reject but accept it.* That this actually took place the last two verses of the narrative inform us. For two whole years the apostle waited for the hearing of his case, either because his accusers had not arrived, or their witnesses had not been collected, or it did not suit the emperor's convenience. Whether at the end of that period he was released from captivity or put to death is debated among expositors (see "Critical Remarks"). But during its continuance he lived in a hired dwelling of his own, the rent of which he was without question enabled to pay through the kindness of his numerous Christian friends (see, however, on xxi. 23). In this, though still chained to a soldier of the Prætorian guard, he enjoyed a large amount of liberty, and in particular "received all that came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, none forbidding him." Here also from time to time he welcomed friends from distant Churches, such as Tychicus, Epaphras, Epaphroditus, and Onesimus, who visited him with tidings how the brethren in those Churches fared, and carried back in the shape of oral communications, sometimes also in the form of letters (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon), wise and loving words of counsel and encouragement such as their circumstances seemed to demand. Likewise, all who sought his presence in the city to inquire into the kingdom or concerning Jesus met with a cordial reception, and went away with all their questions answered, even if not always with all their doubts removed.

Learn.—1. The supreme burden of the gospel ministry—the kingdom of God. 2. The transcendent value of the Scriptures—they testify of Jesus, the founder and sovereign of the kingdom. 3. The dividing power of the gospel,—it separates men into two hostile camps, those of believers and unbelievers. 4. The prescient knowledge of Jehovah—who foresees the treatment men will accord to His message of reconciliation. 5. The culpability of all who reject the truth—men are held responsible by God for the hardness of their hearts. 6. The mercy of God—in sending the gospel to the Gentiles. 7. The highest glory of the Gentile world—that it accepts God's message of salvation.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 16-29. *Last Words of Paul.*

I. **A last testimony to his innocence** (vers. 17-20).

II. **A last confession of Jesus Christ,** as the Messiah (ver. 23).

III. **A last effusion of love toward His people** (vers. 17, 19, 20).

IV. **A last stroke of the hammer on hardened hearts** (vers. 25-28).—*Gerok in Lange.*

Ver. 23. *An All-day Meeting.*

I. **The place.**—A private lodging. A vindication of kitchen meetings and drawing-room assemblies for the preaching of the gospel.

II. **The speaker.**—A chained prisoner. As strange a preacher probably as ever addressed his fellow-men. Certainly as sublime a spectacle as eye ever gazed upon—a man so absorbed

in the desire to honour Christ and save his fellow-men, that he forgets all about his own suffering and shame.

II. **The themes.**—The kingdom of God and Jesus Christ. The grandest topics that can engage the intellects and hearts of men. Worthier than any other themes to claim a day's conversation.

IV. **The hearers.**—The Jews of Rome. Not the Christian Jews, but the Jews who belonged to the synagogues. So that this all-day meeting was not a fellowship meeting of disciples, but a meeting for the preaching of the gospel.

V. **The results.** — Such as often happen. Some believed and some believed not.

Vers. 26, 27. *The History of Unbelief.*

I. Its **nature.**—A deliberate and wilful rejection of the truth of the gospel.

II. Its **origin.**—It results from an incapacity to understand the truth.

III. Its **effect.**—To render the heart obdurate, the understanding darker, the soul's sensibility to Divine things smaller, and the possibility of ultimate recovery feebler.

IV. Its **end.**—The soul's loss. Since without knowledge the soul cannot believe, without believing it cannot turn, without turning it cannot be healed or saved.

Ver. 28. *This Salvation.*

I. Its **author.**—God.

II. Its **mediator.**—Christ.

III. Its **preacher.**—Paul, and after him the pastors and teachers of the Christian Church, not excluding all who believe. "Let him that heareth say, Come!"

IV. Its **mission.**—To the Gentiles. Not to the exclusion of, but as well as to the Jews.

V. Its **fortune.**—If rejected by some (the Jews) heard by others (the Gentiles).

Ver. 30. *Two Whole Years in his own Hired House. What then?*

I. **That Paul was liberated after a successful trial** is supported by the following considerations: 1. *The unanimous testimony of the Primitive Church.* (1) The Epistle of Clement, Bishop of Rome —believed to have been Paul's friend and disciple (Phil. iv. 3)—wrote in A.D. 99 that Paul, after instructing the whole Roman world in righteousness, "had gone to the extremity of the west" before his martyrdom (Clem. Rom., i. 5). (2) Muratori's Canon (A.D. 170), in the account given by it of the Acts of the Apostles, says: "Luke relates to Theophilus events of which he was an eyewitness,as also in a separate place"—(Luke xxii. 31-33) it is supposed—"he evidently declares the martyrdom of Peter, but (omits) the journey of Paul from Rome to Spain." (3) Eusebius (A.D. 320) writes: "After defending himself successfully, it is currently reported that the apostle again went forth to proclaim the gospel, and afterwards came to Rome a second time, and was martyred under Nero" (*Hist. Eccl.*, ii. 22). (4) Chrysostom (A.D. 398) mentions it as an undoubted historical fact, that "St. Paul after his residence in Rome departed to Spain. (5) Jerome (A.D. 390) relates that "Paul was dismissed by Nero, that he might preach Christ's gospel in the west." 2. *The indirect witness of Scripture.* (1) The fact that Acts closes without mention of the apostle's death suggests that he was liberated at the end of the two years (xxviii. 32). (2) The apostle appears himself to have expected a favourable issue to his first trial (Phil. ii. 24). (3) If the Epistle to the Hebrews was written by Paul, as many still contend, it proves conclusively that he was liberated from his Roman imprisonment; for its writer is in Italy and at liberty (Heb. xiii. 23, 24). (4) The Pastoral Epistles, whose genuineness has often been disputed but never satisfactorily disproved, support the theory of the apostle's liberation, as the historical facts they mention cannot be placed in any portion of the apostle's life before or during his first imprisonment in Rome.

II. **That Paul was put to death by Nero,** either as the result of his trial or soon after in the persecution that arose in A.D. 64 against the Christians, though advocated by many has little to rest upon except—1. The absence of any account of the apostle's subsequent labours. "It is a fact that we have no historical trace of Pauline Church foundations in Spain, which makes the Spanish journey (above referred to) highly improbable" (Weiss, *Manual of Introduction*, i. 372). 2. The circumstance that in Acts xx. 25 Luke appears to betray complete ignorance of the apostle's return to his former mission field, which shows, it is argued, that Luke knew nothing of Paul's deliverance from the Roman captivity (*Ibid.*, i. 370). 3. The necessity of finding an argument in favour of the spuriousness of the Pastoral Epistles, since if Paul was not released from captivity the case against them is closed. 4. The improbability of a second imprisonment being repeated so soon afterwards under circumstances so nearly similar to those attending the first (Baur, *Paul, his Life and Works*, i. 246). The similarity of the circumstances, however, is not so obvious as is here suggested (see Weiss, *Manual*, i. 373).

Ver. 31. *Paul Preaching in Rome.*

I. **The sublimity of the spectacle.**—"History has few stranger contrasts than when it shows us Paul preaching Christ under the walls of Nero's palace. Thenceforward there were but two religions in the Roman world—the worship of the Emperor and the worship of the Saviour. The old superstitions had been long worn out. . . . The residuum they left was the philosophy of Epicurus and the religion of Nerolatry. But a new doctrine was already taught in the Forum and believed even on the Palatine. Over against the altars of Nero and Poppea the voice of a prisoner was daily heard, and daily woke in grovelling souls the consciousness of their Divine destiny" (Conybeare and Howson, ii. 458).

II. **The success of the work.**—Of this testimony is furnished by the Epistle to the Philippians, in which Paul told them that "his bonds became manifest in Christ throughout the whole Prætorian guard and to all the rest" (Phil. i. 13), and that even out of Cæsar's household saints had been gathered into the Church of Christ (Phil, iv. 22), while those who had been preaching before he came, or commenced preaching in the city while he taught in his own hired room, had by his example been stimulated to greater diligence (Phil. i. 14).

III. **The immortality of the preacher.**—Whether Paul was liberated or put to death at the end of two years, it is certain that his labours in the world's metropolis came to an end, and himself disappeared from the stage of human history. But the work he then began has never ceased to influence the thoughts and destinies of men both within the Church and without, not in Rome merely, but throughout the world; while of himself the words of the Hebrew prophet will evermore be true: "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Dan. xii. 3).

NOTE.

The Theology of Paul as set forth in the Acts of the Apostles.

IT is frequently asserted that so glaring a contradiction exists between Paul's theology in the Acts of the Apostles and his theology in the four larger Epistles bearing his name, that if the latter represents Paul's doctrinal system the former can only be regarded as the free composition of the author of the Acts. A careful examination of the various discourses attributed to Paul in the Acts,

however, will show that this allegation is not well founded. These discourses are: 1. That delivered in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia (xiii. 16-41). 2. The address to the Lycaonians (xiv. 15-17). 3. The exposition given to the Athenians on Mars Hill (xvii. 22-31). 4. The farewell charge to the Ephesian elders at Miletus (xx. 17-35). 5. The defence made to his countrymen from the castle stairs of Antonia in Jerusalem (xxii. 1-21). 6. The answer before Felix to the charges of Tertullus (xxiv. 10-21). 7. The oration before Agrippa (xxvi. 2-23). And the last words spoken to his countrymen in Rome (xxviii. 23-28). A study of these with the isolated utterances which have been preserved in illustration of his teaching, as, for instance, at Philippi (xvi. 31), Thessalonica (xvii. 3), and Corinth (xviii. 5), shows that the germs at least of the teaching developed in the Epistles may be detected in the Acts.

I. **The doctrine of God**—Theology proper—which appears in the Acts, represents the Supreme Being: (1) as a living, personal intelligence, unlike the dumb idols of wood and stone which were worshipped by heathen nations (xiv. 15, xvii. 29); (2) as a spiritual essence, who could neither be confined to temples made with hands (xvii. 24) nor worshipped by mere external performances (xvii. 25); (3) as the Creator of the universe (xiv. 15), and in particular as the Author of human life (xvii. 25, 28); (4) as the Lord of providence (xiv. 16, 17, xvii. 26) and of grace (xvii. 30, xxvi. 18); and (5) as the final Judge of mankind (xvii. 31).

II. **The doctrine of Christ**—Christology—is equally explicit. 1. The human nature of Jesus is repeatedly and clearly emphasised (xiii. 23, 38, xvii. 31). 2. So also is His essential Godhead—directly by calling Him God (xx. 28), and indirectly by styling Him Lord (xvi. 31). 3. His Divine Sonship, if not unambiguously stated, is at least suggested (xiii. 33). 4. His Messiahship is proclaimed in language that admits of no hesitation (xiii. 27, xvii. 3, xxvi. 23). 5. His death as an atonement for sin is assuredly implied in such statements as these, that "through this man"—who had been slain for no sin of His own and raised again from the dead—"is preached the forgiveness of sins" (xiii. 38), and that "the Church of God" (Christ) had been "purchased with His own blood" (xx. 28). 6. His resurrection from the dead is set forth in the clearest light (xiii. 30, 34, xvii. 31, xxvi. 23). 7. His future advent as the Judge of men is not forgotten (xvii. 31).

III. **The doctrine of man**—Anthropology—is also admirably outlined. 1. The heavenly origin of man's spiritual nature is impressively taught (xvii. 28, 29); as also is 2. The reality of his fallen condition, which, in order to salvation, demands the forgiveness of sins (xiii. 38). 3. The responsibility of man for his dealing with the Gospel offer (xiii. 46, xxviii. 29-28); and 4. His ultimate accountability to God (xvii. 31, xxiv. 25), are likewise plainly set forth.

IV. **The doctrine of salvation**—Soteriology—finds a place, and that in several particulars. 1. The blessings of which salvation consists are indicated as at least three in number: (1) forgiveness of sins (xiii. 38); (2) sanctification (xx. 32, xxvi. 18); and (3) an inheritance in the great hereafter (xx. 32, xxvi. 18), 2. The method by which salvation is imparted is explained to be (1) by a Divine act of justification, which acquits the sinner, and renders him righteous in the eyes of the law (xiii. 39); (2) by an equally Divine work of upbuilding through the word of God or truth of the Gospel (xx. 32); and (3) by a Divine bestowment of heavenly glory when the work of sanctification has been completed (xx. 32). 3. The ground on which salvation is bestowed on any is the atoning death of Jesus Christ (xiii. 39), and not the performance of any ceremonial or moral works whatsoever. 4. The condition of salvation is in every instance faith in Jesus Christ (xvi. 31). 5. The principal source of salvation is grace (xviii. 27, xx. 32). 6. Its world-wide intention is expressly pointed out (xiii. 46, 47, xxii. 15, 21,

xxvi. 17, 20, 23, xxviii. 28). 7. So also is its rejection by some who hear (xxviii. 27).

V. **The doctrine of the last things**—Eschatology—is not forgotten. 1. The resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust, is repeatedly insisted on (xvii. 32, xxiii. 6, xxiv. 15, xxvi. 8). 2. The judgment of the last day is lifted into view more than once (xvii. 31, xxiv. 25). 3. The blessed portion of believers is declared to be eternal life (xiii. 46), or an inheritance among the sanctified (xx. 32. xxvi. 18).

It is impossible to note these several points of doctrine extracted from the Acts without perceiving how completely they harmonise with the fuller statements contained in the Epistles.

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HOMILIES FOR SPECIAL OCCASIONS.

Church Seasons: Advent, ch. i. 11. Christmas, ch. i. 1; iii. 24; 26. St. Stephen's Day, ch. vi. 8; vii. 1-53; 54-64; 60. St. Paul's Day, ch. vii. 58; ix. 1-9; xxii. 1-5; 6-16. St. Matthias' Day, ch. i. 15-26; 23. Good Friday, ch. iii. 18; iv. 11; x. 39. Easter, ch. ii. 31; xxv. 19; xxvi. 8. Great Forty Days, ch. i. 2-5; 3. Ascension Day, ch. i. 6-11; 9; 9-11; iv. 33. Whit Sunday, ch. ii. 1-4; 1; 3; 4; 5-13; 17, 18; 38; v. 32.

Missions to Heathen: ch. xiii. 1-3; 2, 3; 4-12; xiv. 1-7; 26, 27; xv. 3; 26; xvi. 9; 13; xvii. 18; 22-34; xviii. 10; xix. 8-12; 23-41; 26; xx. 1-6; xxi. 17-20; xxii. 23. Bible Society, ch. viii. 28; 30; xi. 16; xvi. 1; xvii. 11; xviii. 11; xxvi. 27.

Evangelistic Services: ch. ii. 37; 37-40; iii. 19; iv. 12; viii. 9-13; ix. 6; xi. 14; 18; xiii. 26; 47; xiv. 3; 27; xvi. 19-34; 23-34; 30, 31; xvii. 22; 27; 30; xviii. 10; xx. 24; xxii. 10; xxiv. 24, 25; 25; xxvi. 18; 22, 23; 28; xxviii. 28.

Special: Ordination, ch. iii. 11-16; iv. 8-12; 33; v. 20; vi. 1-7; ix. 15, 16; x. 29; xiv. 21, 22; 23; xv. 3; xviii. 11; xix. 8-12; xx. 17; 24; xxii. 22; xxvi. 16-18. Workers, ch. iii. 1-7; iv. 13; vi. 1-7; xiv. 3; 23; xv. 36-40; xvii. 11; xviii. 10; xxii. 22. Baptism, ch. x. 47, 48; xvi. 15; xix. 3. Confirmation, ch. viii. 14-17; xiv. 22; xix. 2. To aged, ch. xxi. 16. To parents, ch. xxi. 5. Women, ch. xvi. 1; 14. Young men, ch. xxiii. 18; xxvii. 44. Girls' Friendly Society, ch. xii. 13; 14. Sailors, ch. xxvii. 15; 10-35; 15-20; 21-26; 22; 29. Christian socialism, ch. ii. 44, 45; iv. 32; 36, 37. Death, ch. v. 5-10 (sudden); xiii. 36. Almsgiving, ch. iv. 36, 37; xi. 29, 30.