



MAP OF ST. PAUL'S TRAVELS.

# LESSONS

ON THE

## ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

*For the Use of Sunday School Teachers and other Religious  
Instructors.*

BY EUGENE STOCK.

*Author of "Lessons on the Life of Our Lord."*

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| 57      | Riot at Ephesus (May; see Lesson 34, Note 5).  |  |   |
| 58      | St. Paul going up to Jerusalem. (Sails from Troas, April 17. See Lesson 38, Note 3.)<br>St. Paul arrested. |  |   |
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| 62      | St. Paul's arrival at Rome.  | Martyrdom of St. James the Just at Jerusalem.  | Death of Burrhus. Retirement of Seneca. Nero marries Poppæa. See Lesson 47, Note 3.       |
| 63      | St. Paul released. See Lesson 48, Note 1   |  |   |
| 64      | .....  |  | Great fire at Rome (July 19). First persecution of the Christians. See Lesson 49, Note 1. |
| 65      | .....  | The Temple completed.  |   |
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## KEY TO THE MAP OF ST PAUL'S TRAVELS.

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THIS Map is a photo-lithograph taken from the valuable map in the *Bible Atlas* by special permission of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

It contains every place mentioned in the Acts, Epistles, and Revelation; and a few other names, which do not occur in Scripture, are added for the sake of completeness. These latter are engraved in a peculiar style of letter, thus: **THRACIE**, **Byzantium**. The divisions of Asia Minor are also distinguished in a similar way: the names of Roman 'Provinces' being in capitals, as **ASIA**, **CILICIA**; and those of districts not under separate government, in small letters, as **Phrygia**, **Lycaonia**. (See Additional Note VI., page 86.)

The political divisions of Palestine changed several times during the period covered by the Acts. In this Map all the Holy Land is included in the 'Kingdom of Agrippa I.' (the Herod of Acts xii.); but in the small Map in the left hand corner, it is divided as in the time of Felix and Festus, when Iturea and Trachonitis belonged to Agrippa II. (the King Agrippa of Acts xxv.), and the rest of the country formed the Roman 'Province of Judæa.'

St. Paul's journeys are shown by lines, and the *direction* of each by arrow-heads; but some of these lines represent more than one journey, and have arrow-heads pointing both ways, the same ground having been traversed a second or third time. The following abstract will facilitate reference:—

*First Journey.*—From Antioch in Syria to Seleucia; by sea to Salamis in Cyprus; by land to Paphos; by sea to Perga; to Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe; back from Derbe to Lystra, Iconium, Antioch in Pisidia, Perga, Attalia; by sea to Seleucia and Antioch in Syria. (Acts xiii., xiv.)

*Second Journey.*—From Antioch in Syria by land to Tarsus, Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, Antioch in Pisidia; through Phrygia, Galatia, and Mysia, to Troas; by sea to Neapolis; to Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea; by sea to Athens; by land to Corinth; by sea to Ephesus; by sea to Cæsarea; by land to Jerusalem; back to Antioch in Syria. (Acts xv. 40—xviii. 22.)

*Third Journey.*—From Antioch in Syria, through Cilicia and Cappadocia to Galatia and Phrygia; through the Province of Asia to Ephesus; from Ephesus to Macedonia (probably by sea); to Corinth (probably by land); back to Macedonia (probably by land); by sea to Troas; by land to Assos; by sea along the coast of Asia to Miletus, Rhodes, Patara; by sea to Tyre; by land to Cæsarea and Jerusalem. (Acts xviii. 22—xxi. 15.)

*Fourth Journey.*—From Cæsarea by sea to Sidon and Myra (in Lycia); by sea, round the south side of Crete, across the sea of Adria to Melita; by sea to Syracuse, Rhegium, Puteoli; by land to Rome.



## NOTE

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THE references to Conybeare and Howson's *Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, in the following Lessons, are to the '*Intermediate Edition*' (Longmans, 1865). But for the convenience of those who may use other editions, the 'Library' or the 'Popular,' the *chapters* as well as the *pages* are given in all cases.

The Hymns suggested for use in connection with the Lessons are referred to by their numbers in *The Church Sunday School Hymn Book*.

# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

ON THE

## ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

### Introductory Note.

#### THE BOOK OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.



At the commencement of the present series of Lessons, it seems desirable to introduce a short account of the Book from which most of the subjects will be drawn. A few remarks are therefore subjoined respecting its Authorship. When and Where it was Written, its Chronology, Contents, and Design.

#### § 1. AUTHORSHIP.

1. That the Writer of the Third Gospel was also the Writer of the 'Acts,' appears (a) from the fact that both are addressed to the same person, Theophilus (of whom nothing further is known), and that the Acts opens with a reference to 'the former treatise' (see Luke i. 3; Acts i. 1); (b) from the similarity of style, which Alford describes as 'more laboured, more polished, more accumulated, so to speak,' than that of any other of the New Testament writers.

2. That this Writer was St. Luke, has been believed in the Church from the earliest times; and may also be deduced from the following internal evidence:—

(a) In two parts of the book, the use of the first person indicates the Writer's own presence as a companion of St. Paul. These are chap. xvi. (from ver. 10), and from chap. xx. 5 to the end of the book.

(b) In St. Paul's Epistles the names of many friends occur (in salutations and otherwise) who were with him at the time he wrote them. It is in every way probable that the name of the Writer of the 'Acts' would somewhere appear among these. But none of the Epistles were written in the *former* period during which the Writer of the 'Acts' was with St. Paul, and only four in the *latter* period, viz., Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, and (perhaps) Philippians, all which were written during the two years mentioned in Acts xxviii. 30, and in which alone, therefore, we might expect to find the Writer's name.

(c) In these four Letters ten names occur of persons who were with St. Paul when they were respectively written, viz., Aristarchus, Demas, Epaphras, Epaphroditus, Jesus Justus, Luke, Marous, Onesimus, Timothy, and Tychicus. Of these, the Writer of the 'Acts' could not be Aristarchus, Timothy, or Tychicus, because he mentions them in Acts xx. 4, 5, apart from himself. Nor Epaphras, nor Epaphroditus, nor Onesimus, because they did not go with St. Paul to Rome, but came to him there after his arrival (Col. i. 7, 8; Phil. iv. 18; Philemon, 10). Nor Marcus (i.e., Mark), because he was *not* with St. Paul on that very journey during which the Writer joined him (Acts xv. 38—40, xvi. 10). There remain Jesus Justus, Demas, and Luke. The former was 'of the circumcision,' the two latter not, as we gather from Col. iv. 11—14; and there are indications in the 'Acts' that the Writer was a proselyte, and not a native Jew. Between Demas and Luke who can hesitate to decide, in the face of 2 Tim. iv. 10, 11?

The above argument is ingeniously worked out in Birks's *Horæ Apostolicæ*, p. 351.

3. St. Luke was a physician (Col. iv. 14), and it is an interesting coincidence that we first find him in St. Paul's company immediately after the sojourn of the latter in Galatia (Acts xvi. 6, 10) on account of severe sickness (Gal. iv. 13). He is said by Eusebius to have been a native of Antioch in Syria. He is supposed to have been the 'brother' mentioned in 2 Cor. viii. 18 as sent by St. Paul with Titus to Corinth (compare the subscription to that Epistle).

## § 2. WHEN AND WHERE WRITTEN.

There is no reason to doubt that the 'Acts' was compiled during the two years of St. Paul's first imprisonment at Rome, down to which the narrative is brought (xxviii. 30). It is, however, highly probable that considerable portions were written during that other two years when the Apostle was kept 'bound' at Cæsarea (xxiv. 27); at which time St. Luke would have many opportunities of collecting in Palestine the materials for the earlier part of the book, particularly the speeches of Peter and Stephen, the account of Cornelius (who lived at Cæsarea), and official documents like the letter of Lysias (xxiii. 25—30). (It may be well to remark here that the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, which guided the writers of Scripture and preserved them from error, would not supersede the exercise of their memories or of their industry in research, any more than it interfered with their peculiarities of mental character or literary style.)

## § 3. CHRONOLOGY.

The various chronological questions which arise in studying the 'Acts' will be discussed as they come before us; and a Table of Dates will be given hereafter. But it may be well here to state generally that the book covers a period of about thirty-three years, from the Ascension in A.D. 30, to the end of the 'two years' of chap. xxviii. 30, in A.D. 63. This latter date is proved by a variety of evidence drawn from Roman history, which enables us to place the recall of Felix (xxiv. 27) in A.D. 60. The only other fixed date in the book is the death of Herod Agrippa (xii. 23), which can be shown from Josephus to have occurred in A.D. 44. All the chronology has to be deduced from these two events.

## § 4. CONTENTS.

The 'Acts' may be divided into four leading divisions: 1st, chap. i. to vii., in which is related the foundation of the Church at Jerusalem; 2nd, chap. viii. to xii., describing the first extension of the Church beyond the limits of Judæa and the Jewish nation; 3rd, chap. xiii. to xix., narrating the missionary journeys of the Apostle of the Gentiles; 4th, chap. xx. to xxviii., showing the course of events which brought him to the capital of the Empire.

In the first division, we have the Descent of the Holy Ghost and its immediate effects; the primitive life of the Infant Church, and the dangers that beset it from within and without; and the martyrdom of St. Stephen, which resulted in the dispersion of the community.

In the second division, we have the consequences of that dispersion in the scattering of the seed of Divine truth; the preparation made by God for the wider diffusion of the Gospel, and for its liberation from purely Jewish associations, by the conversion of Saul of Tarsus; the 'opening of the door of faith' to the Gentiles by the instrumentality of Peter; and the persecution under Herod Agrippa—which (as will be seen hereafter) had also its destined place in the course of events tending to the same general result.

In the third division, we have St. Paul's great work described—the twofold work already mentioned; the diffusion of the Gospel in Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Greece, forming the subject of chap. xiii., xiv., xvi., xvii., xviii., xix.; and its liberation from Judaism that of chap. xv.; the 'missionary chapters' comprising three distinct and prolonged journeys, and introducing us, at Pisidian Antioch, Lystra, Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth, and Ephesus, to every variety of character and circumstance among the subjects of the Empire.

In the fourth division, we have the Apostle quitting the scene of his prolonged labours, going on a special mission to the city of his fathers, and desiring afterwards to 'see Rome,' though expecting bonds and death at Jerusalem instead; and the means by which those bonds and that threatened death were, after wearying delays and imminent dangers, actually made instrumental in bringing him to the capital.

Here the history closes, and the questions naturally arise—What was the special object of St. Luke in recording just what is recorded, and no more? and what can we discover of the further and higher purposes which the Divine Spirit, under Whose inspiration he wrote, designed that the Book should accomplish?

### § 5. DESIGN.

The design of the book is certainly not indicated by its title. Most of the Apostles are not mentioned at all; St. Peter and St. Paul are the only two whose 'acts' are recorded in detail: and even of theirs we have obviously but a brief selection. What, then, was the principle of selection? That there was such a principle—that the book had a definite purpose—must be felt by every student who carefully observes the great detail with which some incidents are given, and the very cursory mention of others of equal intrinsic importance. *E.g.*, why should St. Paul's speech at Antioch in Pisidia be reported at full length, and so little be told us of his important eighteen months' work at Corinth? The answer to these and many like questions cannot be given here in detail. It must suffice briefly to state what the design of the historian seems actually to have been.

It was this (to use Alford's words, which have been very generally adopted):—To show '*the Fulfilment of the Promise of the Father by the Descent of the Holy Spirit, and the Results of that Outpouring in the Dispersion of the Gospel among Jews and Gentiles.*' The two last words, '*and Gentiles,*' should be doubly emphasised; for no sooner has St. Luke briefly narrated the foundation of the Church at Jerusalem, than the direction of his history turns towards the Gentile world. Events which had an influence in that direction receive special prominence, *e.g.*, the work of Stephen and Philip, the conversion of Saul, the admission of Cornelius to the Church, the Council at Jerusalem. Then the narrative hastens westward into Europe; and as it passes from city to city, whatever else is omitted, the 'turning' of St. Paul, over and over again, 'to the Gentiles,' when the Jews rejected his message, is never forgotten. But a history of the planting of the Church could not be complete until it had traced the progress of the Gospel from the centre of Judaism to the capital of the world—from Jerusalem to Rome. Accordingly, the most detailed episodes in the book are those which led the greatest of the Apostles to the Imperial city; and then the writer's task is done.

Another great leading idea in the 'Acts of the Apostles' must not be overlooked, viz., the continuous presence of the Lord Jesus Christ with His Church. The book opens with the Ascension, when as a King He sat down upon His throne; and He is constantly represented as the real Worker in the establishment of His Kingdom. The expression '*the Lord,*' which occurs nearly a hundred times in the book, means, not 'God' in a general sense, but, definitely, *the Lord Jesus*. This being borne in mind, if the student will turn to chap. i. 24, ii. 47, ix. 5, 10, xi. 21, xii. 11, xiv. 3, xvi. 10, 14, xviii. 9, xxiii. 11, and other similar passages, he cannot but be struck with the force of the concluding words of St. Mark's Gospel, 'They went forth and preached everywhere, *the Lord working with them*'; and he will appreciate the significance of the expression in the first verse of the 'Acts,' which describes St. Luke's 'former treatise' (the Gospel) as an account of 'all that Jesus began to do and teach'—implying that His earthly ministry was but initiatory and preparatory in comparison with what He 'did' afterwards by the hand of His Apostles. Especially is St. Luke careful to show that in the gradual expansion of the Church so as to include the Gentiles, and in its continuously-westward movement towards Rome, it was Christ Himself who led the way. Canon Norris (in his admirable *Key to the Acts*) remarks that, as in His sufferings (see Mark x. 32), so in His triumphs, 'Jesus went before' His Apostles, and 'as they followed they were amazed.' 'It was no impulse of his own that made Philip accost the Ethiopian stranger; it was a shock and scandal to Peter to find himself called to eat bread with a Roman soldier; it was with fear and alarm that the Apostles received Saul of Tarsus into their number; it took them all by surprise to hear that "the hand of the Lord" was gathering together a Gentile Church at Antioch; it was not St. Paul's free choice or determination, but the Spirit of Jesus, overruling his plans, that pushed him onward into Europe; it was the Lord Himself who made him stay in Corinth; and when he came to Jerusalem, expecting only bonds and death, it was the same glorified Form that again stood beside him, saying, "Thou must bear witness also at Rome."'*(Key, Introd. p. xi.)* This feature of the book is also well described in Bishop



Wordsworth's eloquent Introduction to his edition of the 'Acts,' and its general purpose in Baumgarten's *Apostolic History*, vol. i. (Clark's Foreign Theological Library).

But may we not discern an indirect, but not the less important, Divine purpose in the book beyond anything of which St. Luke was conscious? If the Epistles are the Church's principal handbook to Christian doctrine and Christian practice, is not the 'Acts' designed as her directory in all matters affecting her external relations? Thus, in the common people of Jerusalem, Saul the Pharisee, the Samaritans, the Ethiopian proselyte, the devout yet uncircumcised Cornelius, the ignorant heathen of Lycaonia, the Roman official of Philippi, the philosophers of Athens, the luxurious traders and pleasure-seekers of Corinth, the superstitious Ephesians, the three rulers before whom St. Paul stood—Felix, Festus, and Agrippa—we have (as it has been well expressed) 'different varieties of the universal disease, and different modes of applying the universal remedy.' Again, while ecclesiastical ordinances and organisation are certainly not prominent in the 'Acts,' we find there hints which of themselves reveal the fundamental *principles* governing their establishment, and which, read in conjunction with the Epistles, afford no indistinct view of primitive Church life and worship. Even in the 'Acts' alone, we obtain glimpses of apostolic teaching and usage in respect of common worship, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the Lord's Day, &c.; we see the origin of our three orders of the ministry in the institution of presbyters and deacons, coupled with the higher authority retained by the Apostles themselves; we observe a custom which, as a matter of fact, did lead to the adoption of the rite of Confirmation; we read of the earliest of those contributions for the relief of distress which are the fruit of Christianity; we hear the debates at the first Church councils, both general and local; and we are provided with every possible pattern of evangelistic and missionary operations. On this subject Blunt's *History of the Christian Church during the First Three Centuries* may be consulted with advantage (though it must be allowed that he presses some points too far). Once more, we have in the 'Acts' typical instances of almost all the trials and difficulties which can beset the Church, whether from within or from without; e.g., persecution from various quarters and in various forms, false brethren (v. 1—10), internal discontent and dissension (vi. 1), corrupt motives (viii. 18, 19), half-heartedness (xiii. 13), doctrinal errors (xv. 1), bitter personal contention (xv. 39), opposition from vested interests (xix. 23—28), suspicion and misunderstanding (xxi. 20—24), &c., &c. And in the guidance and deliverance vouchsafed to the Church in all these trials, we have another token of the presence and personal rule of her Lord.

'Of that Church-history of eighteen centuries,' says Canon Norris (Introd. p. ix.), 'could it be written truly, this record of the first thirty years would be seen to be but a specimen-page—the first of many pages, of which the last is not yet written. When the last page comes to be written then shall we understand, as clearly as the writer of this first page understood, the fulfilment of Christ's promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."'

The Writer of these Lessons has been asked to recommend some book or books for the use of teachers in studying the 'Acts.' Among popular works he has no hesitation in naming Smith's *Student's New Testament History* (Murray, price 7s. 6d.) as an admirable and trustworthy manual. The chapters on St. Paul's journeys are especially well done, and, for ordinary teachers, are more interesting than Conybeare and Howson's great work—*The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*—which, however, it need scarcely be said, stands alone in its complete treatment of the subject within its own limits. A smaller book than Smith's is Canon Norris's *Key to the Acts* (Rivington, price 2s. 6d.), which is charmingly written, and is particularly good in exhibiting the unity of purpose running through St. Luke's narratives. Dr. C. J. Vaughan's sermons, entitled *The Church of the First Days* (Macmillan), are peculiarly rich in homiletic suggestion, and are really wonderful in their combination of accurate scholarship with simplicity of manner and earnestness of application. Kitto's *Daily Bible Illustrations*, Vol. VIII., 'The Apostles and Early Church' (Hamilton), has all the characteristics which have made his books so popular. Many of the larger and more important works will be referred to in the course of these Lessons, such as Stier's *Words of the Apostles*, Baumgarten's *Apostolic History*, Blunt's

*History of the Church in the First Three Centuries*, De Pressensé's *Early Ages of Christianity*, Milman's *History of Christianity*, Stanley's *Sermons on the Apostolic Age*, Stanley Leathes's *Witness of St. Paul to Christ*, Merivale's *Conversion of the Empire*; the Commentaries on the 'Acts' of Wordsworth, Alford, Olshausen, Lange, Humphrey, Canon Cook, Ford, Thomas, and other more general Commentaries; and various books throwing light on particular portions of the history, as Goulburn's *Acts of the Deacons*, Alford's *Homilies*, Howson's *Companions of St. Paul*, *Metaphors of St. Paul*, and *Hulsean Lectures*, Paley's *Horæ Paulinæ*, and the works of Lightfoot, Ellicott, and Stanley, on particular Epistles.

## Lesson I.—The Upper Room at Jerusalem.

'Who hath despised the day of small things?'

Read—Acts i. 12—26; Learn—Zech. iv. 6, 7; Eph. ii. 20, 21. (*Hymns*, 72, 76, 108, 120—125, 180, 229, 235, 363.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

An opening Lesson like the present should be really introductory to the Course generally. The appointment, therefore, of Matthias to the apostleship vacated by Judas, although it occupies almost the entire passage before us, becomes, in such a Lesson, a secondary episode. Teachers, however, who have just gone through the preceding Course on the Life of Our Lord, and have therefore given the last two Lessons of that Course ('The Ascension' and 'The King and His Kingdom') immediately before commencing this one, will be able to omit some portions of the following Sketch, and give more time to the narrative. But in any case, whatever be the teacher's usual practice as to reading round, the passage in this instance must on no account be read at the beginning. To do so would go far to spoil the Lesson. Let an effort be made to open, either with the illustration suggested, or by questioning on the second text for repetition (Eph. ii. 20, 21); and the effectiveness of this plan will assuredly be manifested even to those who are unaccustomed to it. The illustration need not be St. Paul's Cathedral: any great building will do; but it should be one the children *have seen*, and a large church will be most appropriate.

The idea of 'building the spiritual Church' is a much more common one in the New Testament than would appear from the half-dozen texts to which an English reader can turn. The words 'edify' and 'edification' mean, in the Greek, *building up*; and wherever they occur, the figure of a building is implied. Our word *edifice* is derived from the Greek term.

The subject briefly referred to in the first section of Division I., viz., the state of the world at the era of the Advent, will be found more fully treated in the 'Life of Our Lord,' Lesson III.

It should be observed that the 'motto' above is taken from the same passage as the first text for repetition, Zech. iv.

### SKETCH OF LESSON.

Have you ever looked up at St. Paul's Cathedral, and wondered when you thought how it was built? What blocks of stone—how many!—how heavy! What armies of men! what years of labour! and the architect—what a *mind*! Fancy the great broad space 200 years ago—foundations being dug—heaps of rubbish—scaffolding getting ready—first stones laid: who could imagine the grand pile we see now?

Yes, erection of a *church* very interesting; but what do we call *the Church*? Not a building of stone and mortar, but the great company of Christian people—the 'Kingdom' of loyal subjects which Christ founded [see 'Life of Our Lord,' Lesson

CIV.]—the 'holy Church throughout all the world' (*Te Deum*)—the 'holy Catholic Church' (*Creed*). But *this Church* also called a building in Scripture; see 2nd text for rep.—who is the 'chief corner-stone'? who the 'foundation'—the first great stones laid at the bottom? who all the other 'living stones'? 1 Pet. ii. 4, 5 (comp. Matt. xvi. 18; 1 Cor. iii. 16; 1 Tim. iii. 15; Rev. iii. 12, xxi. 14.)

Is Christ's Church finished yet? Not yet. More 'stones' to be 'fitly framed together'—more souls gathered in. But it *shall* be completed (see 1st text for rep.); and even now, what a grand building to look at! How vast!—reaching over all the

earth. What innumerable 'stones'!—not only the multitudes of Christians now alive, but those already in heaven too—the whole family in heaven and earth' (Eph. iii. 15).

We are now going back to the time when the Church was founded—shall see how the first 'stones' were laid. We find the history in this Book, the 'Acts of the Apostles,'—which might be called 'the Works of the Builders' (see 1 Cor. iii. 10).

Think of the time when the Lord Jesus had just died, risen again, ascended to heaven. What all this for? why came the Son of God down here at all? And now that He had done the great work, had died to redeem men, had 'opened the gate of heaven to all believers,' must tell men of this 'great salvation,' and 'invite them to come in.' See, then, to-day—

### I. THE WORK TO BE DONE.

#### 1. *What was the condition of the world just then?*

*The Roman Empire.* Many great men, rich men, clever men; many more poor, ignorant, oppressed: but all 'without God' (Eph. ii. 12). Clever men very proud of their learning, but 'knew not God' (1 Cor. i. 21). Wickedness everywhere, and people not even ashamed of it (see Rom. i. 29—32). Plenty of sin and ignorance now, in England—you know that—but what would England be without the kind, unselfish, Christian people in it? *That* what the world was then. Truly the devil its 'prince' and 'god' (John xiv. 30; 2 Cor. iv. 4).

*The Jewish Nation.* What of God's chosen people, who did know Him, and had His revelations? Think—what had they just done?—crucified Jesus—rejected the Son of God! is not that enough to shew what they were?

True of that time, as of David's time (Ps. xiv. 2, 3), 'The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if, &c.—but 'none that doeth good, no, not one'! Comp. 1 John v. 19. Might say, as David said (Ps. cxix. 126), 'It is time for Thee, Lord, to work, for they have made void Thy law.'

#### 2. *What was to be done in that wicked world?*

See what Christ said just before He ascended, Matt. xxviii. 19, 20; Mark xvi. 15; Luke xxiv. 47. See what He afterwards sent St. Paul to do, Acts xxvi. 18—'to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.' To bring back the rebels to their rightful King, and so establish Christ's 'Kingdom' [see *Life of Our Lord, Lesson CIV.*—that is, to build the Church.

But what a tremendous task! A great task to rear, on piece of ground covered with heaps of rubbish, a grand cathedral; but what is that to this task—the gathering together a Church of holy men out of a

'world lying in wickedness'! To whom did Christ give this task?

### II. THE MEN TO DO IT.

Come to Jerusalem. A large upper room. A company of people praying. *That* is a meeting of Christ's Church! Some of these the men chosen for that great task—to be the King's ambassadors to the wicked world.

1. *Their weakness.* Who are these people? [Read ver. 13, 14.] Take the leaders among them—eleven poor men, fishermen, &c.—not wise men, not mighty, not noble—scarcely in whole world find a band of men less likely to be fit for such a task. And what had they done six weeks before? See Mark xiv. 50—'all forsook Him and fled.' Even that very room [see Note 1] must remind them of it! Had been afraid to be known as the Nazarene's followers (what did one, Peter, do?); when met together, barred doors 'for fear of Jews' (John xx. 19). How could they go forth on such a mission?

2. *Their strength.* But—changed since then—not fearful now—full of 'great joy' (Luke xxiv. 52). How is this? Think—they have seen their Master, who was crucified and buried, alive—have touched Him—have eaten with Him (Luke xxiv. 39—43; Acts x. 41)—know now that they are not deceived—He is the long-promised King and Saviour. But more than this: they have seen Him going up to heaven—can't forget that ascending Form—are sure He can see and hear them; and now they can (like Moses, Heb. xi. 27) 'endure, as seeing Him who is invisible.'

Now see how they showed this new strength. [Read ver. 15—26.] What one thing is there to sadden them? They are not all there. One gone—whither? ver. 25 [see Note 4]. What prevents their being sad? Have learned, since Jesus 'opened their understandings' (Luke xxiv. 45), to see what God said in Scripture; and what has Peter found there? ver. 16, 20—(a) where the betrayer would come from foretold, Ps. xli. 9; (b) his fate foretold, Ps. lxxix. 24, 25; and something else foretold—(c) that his office should be filled up, Ps. cix. 8;—what then does Peter propose? ver. 21, 22—let them make up again the number of 'the twelve.' How choose? Two things wanted in the new Apostle—(a) to be like Judas in having been Christ's follower from the first, so able to be a 'witness' (see John xv. 27)—(b) to be unlike Judas in being a true disciple. They know whom to choose for the first (knowledge), and quickly pick out two; but how judge for the second (character)?—were deceived before—how be sure now? See what they do, ver. 24—turn to their ascended Lord [see Note 5]—He knows all hearts, can make no mistake—and He (they are sure) will hear and answer them as He promised (Matt. xviii. 19, 20; John xv. 7). Then the lots, to tell them whom the Lord has chosen [see Note 5];

and then 'the twelve' complete, waiting the Master's orders.

3. *Their greater strength to come.* With all their new faith and joy, not fit yet. For such a work special 'power' wanted. See first text for rep.—a 'great mountain' of difficulty in the way [*comp. Life of Our Lord, Lesson LIII.*]—it shall 'become a plain,' indeed, but how? 'Not by might, nor by power' (i.e., man's power), but—? And so Jesus had told them, ver. 8—'ye shall receive power, after'—what? They could not 'build the Church,' but the Great Architect was planning all, would 'work with them' (Mark xvi. 20), would send on them the Holy Spirit, divine, almighty, omnipresent—thus enable them to work under Him.

ARE YOU TRUE MEMBERS OF CHRIST'S CHURCH? At Baptism, 'received into congregation of Christ's flock'—but how many forget that, and take their 'lot' in

the 'wicked world' we have spoken of! Now think what those 120 were—see if you are like them—ask three questions:—

1. Do you, like them, believe in a Saviour who died for you, and who now lives to save and bless you? Do you like to think of His eye ever on you?

2. Are you, like them, ready for any work He may give you? Though not apostles, even you may have a 'ministry'—may keep a companion from sin, tell a younger brother of Jesus, set a good example in all things.

3. Are you, like them, looking for 'power from on high,' for the Spirit promised to all who ask (Luke xi. 13)?

Then, when the Church complete at last, when the 'topstone brought forth with shouting' (1st text for rep.), you will be not one of the 'stones' cast away as worthless, but 'a pillar in the temple of God' (Rev. iii. 12).

#### NOTES.

1. There is little doubt that the 'upper room' was the same room in which the Last Supper was eaten, and in which the risen Saviour appeared to the disciples. The words in ver. 13 are, literally, 'they went up into the upper room where they were sojourning, namely, Peter, &c. as if it was their regular head-quarters. It is probable, from Matt. xxvi. 18, that the owner of the house was a believer. Compare *Life of Our Lord, Lesson LXXIV.*, Note 3.

2. The 'hundred and twenty' probably comprised all the disciples in and about Jerusalem. Most of the 'five hundred brethren' (1 Cor. xv. 6) were dwellers in Galilee.

It is interesting to observe that our Lord's 'brethren,' who, six months previously, did not believe in Him (John vii. 5), had now joined the little company. Whether these 'brethren' were sons of Joseph and Mary, or sons of Joseph by a former marriage, or sons of Mary's sister and Cleophas (and therefore only Christ's first cousins), is a much controverted question, which cannot be discussed here.

Our Lord's Mother appears here for the last time in Scripture. On this Bp. Wordsworth remarks (*in loco*), 'The Holy Spirit takes leave of her here, associated with the apostolic company of worshippers—one of those who continue steadfast in prayer. How unlike the spirit and language of the Holy Ghost is that will-worship, which takes her out of that holy fellowship of prayer, and makes her an object of adoration!'

The Greek word rendered 'with one accord' (*ὁμοθυμαδόν, homothumadon*) is a characteristic one in the Acts (see ii. 1, 46, iv. 24, v. 12, xv. 25), and is strikingly significant of the unity of the Primitive Church.

3. On the reference to the death of Judas in Peter's speech, the following remarks are repeated here from the *Life of Our Lord, Lesson XCIII.*, Note 6:—

'The account of the death of Judas in Acts i. differs from St. Matthew's. The two are usually reconciled by the supposition that, in the attempt to hang himself, the traitor fell over the precipitous rocks, and was mangled as described in Peter's speech. The 'potter's field' was bought by the chief priests with the returned money, but Peter, by a common figure of speech, ascribes the purchase to Judas, meaning that all he got by the 'reward of iniquity' was death on a spot for which the identical money was after-

wards given. The name given to the field, *Aceldama*, was a double memorial of the traitor's death in it and of the price of blood paid for it.

4. The Greek word rendered 'part,' in ver. 17, is the same as that rendered 'lot' in ver. 26. The meaning is that Judas obtained the lot (or portion) of this ministry. The same word is translated 'inheritance' in Col. i. 12 ('the inheritance' or lot 'of the saints in light'). Judas received an 'inheritance' among the Apostles, but he preferred an earthly 'inheritance,' and went to 'his own place.' This latter expression is variously explained, but most probably means *hell*. (In the Epistle of Clement of Rome, St. Peter is spoken of as having gone to 'his appointed place' in glory.)

The word for 'lot' is *κλῆρος (kleros; Lat. 'clerus')*, which is the origin of our 'clerical,' 'clergy,' &c. Professor Lightfoot (*Philippians*, p. 246), thus traces the consecutive meanings of the word:—(1) the lot by which the office was assigned; (2) the office thus assigned by lot; (3) the body of persons holding the office. It is curious that the words from which are derived 'bishop' and 'deacon,' are also found in this first chapter of the Acts: In ver. 20, 'bishopric' (*ἐπισκοπή*) (*episcopoe*) occurs as the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew 'office' in Ps. cix.; and in ver. 17 and 25 the word for 'ministry' is *διακονία (diakonia)*.

5. In 'giving the lots,' the names were probably written on two tablets, which were shaken in an urn, or in the lap of a robe (see Prov. xvi. 33), and he whose lot first fell out was chosen.

It should be observed that the disciples did not regard this as a selection by chance. They believed that their Lord had Himself already chosen (ver. 24) one to fill up the sacred number of twelve, and only used this means of ascertaining His will. They had a remarkable precedent for it, see Numb. xxvi. 55: God had fixed the several portions of the twelve tribes in Canaan, yet He let His will in the matter be known by lot, and not by direct revelation. There is no instance of lots being used after the descent of the Holy Ghost, who was sent to 'teach us all things.'

The prayer in ver. 24 must be understood as addressed to the Lord Jesus; see Introductory Note on the Book of the Acts, and compare Peter's words to Jesus in John xxi. 17.



## Lesson II.—The Gift of the Spirit.

*'They were all filled with the Holy Ghost.'*

Read—Acts ii. 1—21; Learn Luke xxiv. 49; Isa. xlv. 3. (*Hymns, 4—6, 105—112.*)

### TO THE TEACHER.

The Sketch assumes throughout that the scholars know *who the Holy Ghost is*. But in fact, on no subject is the religious belief of children so vague and unreal as on His Person and Work, as is evidenced by the common habit of applying to Him the neuter pronoun 'it.' If the teacher should have any reason to think this vagueness may exist in his class, he would do well to omit some parts of Division II., and to substitute some elementary teaching upon the Person and Work of the Spirit. Suggestions how to do this effectively will be found in Lesson LXXXVIII. of 'The Life of Our Lord'—on 'The Promised Comforter.' Teachers who begin the present Course immediately after finishing that one, should refer to that Lesson in the class, and question on what was then taught.

The opening sentences are intended to connect this Lesson with the preceding one.

The subject of the Gift of Tongues is treated in the Additional Note appended to this Lesson, for the information of teachers. But it will be well not to allude to the difficulties of the subject in teaching (except with some senior classes), but to speak simply and straightforwardly in the manner shown in the Sketch. It is a good rule, if controverted topics occur in a Sunday-school lesson, not to treat them controversially, but just to state the right view accurately without referring to any wrong ones. But *the teacher* must of course make up his mind beforehand as to what the right view is; and hence the necessity of many of the 'notes' accompanying these Lessons.

### SKETCH OF LESSON.

Did you ever ask God for something, and then *look out for an answer*? You prayed this morning, Lead us not into temptation—have you been watching for God's help to keep out of it? Do you ever really *expect* an answer at all? Easy enough to pray just as a habit, because it's right—and how easy to rise from our knees and forget all about it!

Those 120 disciples—why did they meet in that Upper Room? What had Christ promised them before He ascended? see chap. i. 8; Luke xxiv. 49. When should it be? i. 5—soon, but they knew not exactly when. So what did they do? i. 14—'*continued in prayer.*' Every day you might see them there, all in earnest supplication, eagerly looking and waiting for the promise to be fulfilled. If *you* ask God for one of His promised blessings, and expect an answer, you shall not be disappointed; neither were *they*.

*When was the promise fulfilled?* ver. 1.

Fifty days ago, Jerusalem crowded—people from all parts of country come up to keep the Passover. That was just when corn ripe—the very first sheaf of barley presented in Temple as sign of thankfulness to God for rain, sunshine, and all other mercies; see Lev. xxiii. 5—14. What have they been doing during these seven weeks? Scattered over the country, getting in the harvest, storing the grain, &c. Now all ready to make into bread—but again the first-fruits, two loaves of the new wheat, to be offered in Temple, see Lev. xxiii. 15—21. So again all gathered

together at Jerusalem, for feast of Pentecost. [See Note 1.]

At this Feast crowds almost as great as at Passover. Especially Jews born or settled in distant lands (like English in Canada and Australia) gathered in large numbers to city of their fathers. Many strange costumes there to be seen in streets—many strange languages heard, Asiatic, European, African—several named in ver. 9—11. Most of the visitors really of Jewish nation; but some Gentiles who had become Jews—circumcised—worshipped true God—called 'proselytes' (ver. 10).

So this the very time for the great work of proclaiming the Gospel to begin—so many could hear it, and speak of it when went to far-off homes. Now see how Christ fulfilled His Promise. [Read *passage*.]

#### I. THE OUTWARD SIGNS.

The joyful feast-day come—by-and-bye the disciples will go to Temple services—but first their own meeting in the Upper Room—must not cease praying—'Perhaps on this very day the Promised Gift will come.'

Suddenly, a wonderful sound—what like? where from? see ver. 2. All ears startled; and now all eyes too—a wonderful *sight*—a bright light overhead, then split up, and a jet of flame (yet not burning) upon each one [see Note 3]. Every face beaming with excited joy (see ver. 13); every tongue uttering songs and exclamations of praise to God, ver. 11 [see *Additional Note I.*]. But what strange

sounds!—these ‘unlearned and ignorant men’ (chap. iv. 18) uttering their joyous praises in all sorts of languages they have never learned!

But the great rushing noise heard not only in that house. People running together to find what it was—crowds now assembled—the foreign Jews stopping on their way to Temple at ‘third hour’ (see ver. 15)—all amazed at what they see and hear. One from Parthia may say, ‘I hear my language’—one from Libya may say, ‘And I hear mine.’ But the people of Jerusalem—they understand not the strange tongues—to them all unmeaning—what do they think? ver. 13.

Now what will the disciples do? bar the doors (as before, John xx. 19) ‘for fear of the Jews’? See the Apostles coming boldly forward—hear Peter with loud voice (ver. 14) addressing the astonished crowd. ‘These drunken! look at their faces lifted in joy to heaven—do these look like men so bad (see Isa. v. 11; 1 Thess. v. 7) as to be drunken at nine in the morning?’ What then is it? ver. 16—21:—In old times God put His Spirit in a few prophets and holy men—but one day would give Him to *all*, men and women, young and old, even to the slaves [see Note 5]—they shall be ‘inspired,’ speak as the Spirit put words in their mouths, ‘prophecy’ [see *Additional Note I.*]. When should this be? In the ‘last days’—before ‘the great day’—in time for all, if they take warning by these wonders, to ‘call on the Lord and be saved.’ Now it has come, the ‘last days’ have arrived [see Note 5]—these are ‘not drunk with wine, but filled with the Spirit’ (Eph. v. 18).

Next Sunday see what Peter told the people to do. To-day think a little more of the great Gift.

## II. THE INWARD GIFT.

Was *this* the Gift—to speak foreign languages? Ah, much more than that! Think of Peter seven weeks before, by the fire in the high-priest’s court-yard—and see him now; whence this great difference? What changed the cowardly denier of his Master into the fearless preacher? It was this—

*God the Holy Ghost had come down upon the Church.*

See ver. 4—‘They were all filled with the Holy Ghost’—these the important words. Did He come merely to inspire their tongues? No, above all to dwell in their hearts. But those signs shewed what kind of work He would do in them.

1. *He would be like wind.* (a) Invisible and mysterious. See John iii. 8—‘thou hearest sound, but canst not tell,’ &c. [See

‘*Life of Our Lord, Lesson XVIII.*] (b) Mighty and irresistible. What can stand before wind when blowing a hurricane? And since the Spirit is God, what cannot He do? (c) Life-giving. [Illustr.—*Draught of fresh air, how reviving!*] The Spirit come to breathe on dead souls that they might live (see Ezek. xxxvii. 9, 10).

2. *He would be like fire.* So said John the Baptist, Matt. iii. 11. What does fire do? Burns? yes, and God is called ‘a consuming fire,’ Heb. xii. 29. But what good does fire do by its burning? (a) Warms. And the Spirit warms our cold hearts. How? Rom. v. 5. So we sing,

‘Kindle a flame of sacred love,  
In these cold hearts of ours.’

(b) Purifies. [Illustr.—*Metals in fire to be purified from dross.*] So the Spirit takes away our evil thoughts and sinful ways, sanctifies us, makes us pure and holy. See Rom. viii. 9, 13; 1 Cor. vi. 11; Gal. v. 22—24; 1 Pet. i. 2.

3. *He would give new tongues indeed.* See what our tongues are naturally, Jas. iii. 5—8. See how the Spirit makes men speak, Eph. iv. 15, 25, 29, v. 4, 19; Col. iv. 6;—speak to God (Ps. v. 3, xxx. 12—*marg.*), and for God (Acts v. 20). ‘O Lord, open Thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise!’

*We, too, should thank God for the Descent of the Holy Ghost.* Last Sunday, we spoke of the wonderful spread of the Gospel since the Church first assembled in the Upper Room; but how could the Gospel have spread if the Spirit had not come down? No faith without the Spirit, 1 Cor. xii. 3; no belonging to Christ or pleasing God without Him, Rom. viii. 9; no salvation without Him, John iii. 5. And the Church does thank God for Pentecost every year on the fiftieth day from Easter—what called? See the special thanksgiving on that day (Proper Preface in Communion Service).

*But ourselves*—what is all this to us if we have not the Spirit? Every one may—how? Luke xi. 13. But has He never spoken to your hearts? never touched your consciences? Not one of you but He has come to. Scripture speaks of ‘resisting,’ ‘vexing,’ ‘grieving,’ ‘quenching,’ the Spirit (Acts vii. 51; Isa. lxiii. 10; Eph. iv. 30; 1 Thess. v. 19)—have you? Rather pray, ‘O God the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners!’ (See also First Collect in Ante-Commun. Serv., and Coll. for S. after Ascension, Whitsun Day, and 19th S. aft. Trinity.)

## NOTES.

1. On the Feast of Pentecost, see Exod. xxiii. 14—17; Lev. xxiii. 15—22; Numb. xxviii. 26—31; Deut. xvi. 9—12. It is called ‘the feast of harvest,’ because the grain harvest was then complete; and ‘the feast of weeks,’ because a week of

weeks (seven weeks) was reckoned to it from the Passover. It was more of a festive and hospitable gathering than the Passover, and has been aptly called ‘the Jewish harvest-home.’ The bread eaten and offered was to be that ordinarily used

(not unleavened). The fatherless, the widow, and the stranger were to be thought of; and it is along with the directions for this feast that we find the command to leave the gleanings of the harvest for the poor. The principal ceremony connected with it was the offering of the two wheaten loaves alluded to in the Sketch.

Pentecost was also regarded by the Jews as a commemoration of the giving of the Law on Sinai, which would appear to have been on the fiftieth day after Israel's departure from Egypt.

Accordingly the day was doubly suitable for the Descent of the Holy Ghost. The first-fruits of the great harvest of souls was then gathered in; and God's Law was thenceforward to be written, 'not on tables of stone, but on fleshy tables of the heart' (Jer. xxxi. 33; 2 Cor. iii. 3; Heb. viii. 10). This two-fold symbolism is drawn out at length in Baumgarten's *Apostolic History* (Clark's Edn.), pp. 43-48.

2. The exact reckoning to the day of Pentecost was as follows: The Paschal Lamb was killed on the evening following the 14th Nisan. The 15th Nisan was the first day of unleavened bread, and a 'feast-Sabbath.' On the next day, the 16th Nisan, the sheaf of barley was presented in the Temple. From that day seven weeks were counted, i.e., forty-nine days; and the next day, the fiftieth, was the day of Pentecost. Accordingly, if in the year of our Lord's death the 14th Nisan fell on Thursday (see on this point *Lessons on the Life of Our Lord*, Additional Note XII., page 235), the 16th would be Saturday; seven weeks from that would be also a Saturday, and Pentecost would fall on Sunday—which the Church has always believed was the case, and in commemoration of which Whit Sunday is kept. See Wordsworth, *in loco*.

3. Some have thought that the disciples were assembled in the Temple when the gift came on them; but this is on many accounts highly improbable. Canon Norris pictures them, after they received it, going forth into the streets prophesying, like the schools of the prophets in former days; but it seems more likely that the crowds were attracted to the house by the rushing sound, and that Peter addressed them from the door, or in a large court-yard. The words 'When this was noised abroad' are not a correct render-

ing: it should be 'When the sound came.' The noise was probably heard all over the city.

It is not said that there was any *wind* or *fire*: only a sound 'as of' wind, and an appearance of tongues 'like as of' fire. There was no blast or burning to be felt. 'Cloven' should rather be 'distributed': it is not meant that the tongues, or jets, of flame were cloven, but that the flame was separated into jets, one of which lighted on each. The same Greek word (*διαμερίζεσθαι*, *diameρίζomenai*) is rendered 'parted' in ver. 45 of this chapter, and in Luke xxiii. 34—in both cases signifying distribution. It is clear that *all* received the gift—not the Apostles only.

4. It is probable that among the visitors to Jerusalem, who were so prominent in the crowd, were both Jews by descent and Gentiles who had been admitted into Jewish fellowship by circumcision: as the words 'Jews and proselytes,' in ver. 10, are most likely a further description of all those who have just been named according to their countries. The Jews of 'the Dispersion' were a very numerous and widely spread body, and partook of all the variety of nationality to which, it may be, their families had been attached for generations. An English Jew is an Englishman as well as a Jew, and a Russian Jew is a Russian as well as a Jew; and so it was with Parthian, Egyptian, or Phrygian Jews.

The countries enumerated are in a certain order: first, those in the far east; then westward to Mesopotamia and India; then northward round Asia Minor; from Pamphylia across the Mediterranean to the African coasts; and then again across to Rome. Then comes the general description, 'Jews and proselytes'; and, finally, in a kind of postscript, two localities not easily included in the previous arrangement.

5. The present dispensation is often called in Scripture 'the last days,' as throughout preparatory for the 'great and notable day of the Lord.' The characteristic feature of the dispensation, as predicted by Joel, and pointed out by St. Peter, is the free outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The freeness of the outpouring is strikingly shown by the mention of 'servants and handmaidens,' which, in the original, is simply 'slaves' (*δούλοι*) expressed in the masculine and feminine forms.

## ADDITIONAL NOTE I.

### THE GIFT OF TONGUES.

A subject so important and difficult as the Gift of Tongues demands a special Note.

The common idea respecting the Pentecostal effusion is something like this: that the Apostles needed a miraculous power of understanding and speaking foreign languages in order to be able to preach the Gospel to all nations; that this power was given at Pentecost, and was afterwards used by them; and that they did in fact preach the Gospel in various dialects to the assembled people then and there. And pictures have been drawn of a group of Parthians round one Apostle, a group of Phrygians round another, and so on. All these ideas are most probably incorrect.

1. No such miraculous power was needed. It is true that if any of the Apostles went to very distant lands—if, for example, St. Bartholomew or St. Thomas went to India, as tradition affirms—then the power would

have been very useful, and *may* have been bestowed. But that it was so there is no evidence whatever in Scripture. In all the countries which we read that St. Paul and others visited, Greek was commonly understood. The conquests of Alexander, and the Greek Empires founded by his generals, had made it the universal language; and the existence of such an universal language is justly regarded as a striking instance of the Divine preparation for the spread of Christianity. Each country and nation of course possessed its own tongue or dialect as well, which would be in common use among the people themselves. Thus Aramaic, a degenerate kind of Hebrew, was current in Palestine; Latin was the language of Italy; and in Acts xiv., we read of the 'speech of Lycaonia' (which, by the way, Paul and Barnabas seem not to have understood).

2. We meet no instance of the use of a foreign language by the Apostles. In the Acts no such thing is mentioned after the day of Pentecost. All the Epistles are written in Greek, even that one to the half-barbarous Galatians—who were as likely to be ignorant of it as any.

3. It is not even said that on the Day of Pentecost itself the Apostles preached in foreign tongues to the assembled Jews. What they and the rest uttered in the various languages was 'the wonderful works of God.' So, in Acts x. 46, we find that the converted Gentiles, when the Spirit fell on them, were heard to 'speak with tongues, and magnify God.' It was not preaching, but praise. When the amazed people began, some to question, and some to mock, Peter came forward and addressed them all at once, of course in one language. (The eleven 'stood up,' to support him, but there is no mention of their speaking.) And what language did he use? From what has been said above, we should conjecture that it would be Greek; and there is indisputable proof that it was so, for his quotations from the Old Testament are almost *verbatim* from the Septuagint Greek translation—a circumstance which cannot be reasonably accounted for in any other way.

What, then was the Gift of Tongues?

We must not go to the opposite extreme, and, referring to certain difficult verses in 1 Cor. xiv., say that the tongues were 'inarticulate and incoherent utterances.' The disciples, on the Day of Pentecost, did speak intelligibly in actual dialects, for their words were understood by those who knew the dialects. But it is not implied that a permanent and available knowledge of any foreign language was given. They spoke 'as the Spirit gave them utterance.' The power very probably recurred on other occasions, but it was not one to be used at the will of the individual. It was always, as Conybeare expresses it, 'the result of a sudden impulse of supernatural inspiration.'

The gift may be compared with the prophetic impulses under the Old Testament dispensation. The very word for prophet in Hebrew (*nabi*) means a *bubbling forth* like a spring from the earth; and the primary idea of a prophet is one whose words flow forth by an uncontrollable inspiration. It was thus that 'the word of the Lord came' to even the regular prophets; but the phenomenon is more striking in the case of those who were not such—as Balaam, who, when the Divine impulse came, could only speak 'what God put in his mouth'; or Eldad and Medad, who unexpectedly 'prophesied' in the camp (Numb. xi. 26); or Saul, on two occasions (1 Sam. x. 10, xix. 20–24).

The Gift of Tongues appears to have been a similar occasional inspiration, taking

a particular form; and, regarded in this light, the facts mentioned in 1 Cor. xiv. do not present serious difficulty. Those who spoke with tongues at Corinth were not understood—obviously because there were no foreigners present (as there were at Jerusalem) to recognise their own languages. Accordingly the one so inspired spoke not to men, but to God (ver. 2)—edifying *himself* by the utterance in *any* way of his heart's feelings, but not edifying the Church (ver. 4). Hence, speaking with tongues was a lower gift than prophecy (ver. 2–4, 18, 19, 39). Both were the result of the action of the Holy Ghost, but it was more useful to speak God's words in the common language, which all could understand, than to speak them in the most wonderful variety of tongues. And, that the latter might not seem quite useless in the congregation, there was another gift bestowed upon some—the 'interpretation of tongues.' If the Gift of Tongues was the miraculous permanent knowledge of many languages, how could St. Paul possibly have expressed so strongly as he does in ver. 18, 19, his preference for the ordinary gift of teaching?

Yet the Gift of Tongues had an important place in the Divine economy. What, then, was it? *The Tongues were a sign to those who believed not* (ver. 22). They answered a purpose similar to that of miracles. They compelled attention, and made men feel that 'this was the finger of God'; and in that way effectively helped forward the progress of Christianity. The Holy Spirit might have filled the hearts of the disciples on the Day of Pentecost, and made them bold witnesses for Christ, without the accompanying signs; but the world might then have attributed the changes in the little company to a natural outburst of enthusiasm. The Spirit might have fallen on Cornelius and his friends, and brought them to the feet of Jesus, without making them speak with tongues; but in that case would St. Peter have been so easily persuaded that he must not 'forbid water' for their baptism? The 'outward and visible sign' was necessary, if the 'inward and spiritual grace' was to command recognition. 'If,' says Dr. C. J. Vaughan (*Church of the First Days*, i., p. 46), 'it was to be made plain, beyond further gainsaying, that the Holy Spirit of God had Himself descended to make His abode and His temple in the Church and in the hearts of men, there must be some sign, accompanying that advent, of which the senses could take cognisance, and from which no inference but one only could be drawn.'

It is right to say that Bishop Wordsworth, in his edition of the Acts, earnestly upholds the old view; but he appears to stand almost alone among modern commentators.



### Lesson III.—The First Sermon and its Effects.

*'When He is come, He will convince the world of sin.'*

Read—Acts ii. 22–40; Learn—Ps. lxxviii. 18; Zech. xii. 10. (Hymns, 43, 71, 101, 105–112, 137, 141–143.)

#### TO THE TEACHER.

In picturing a Bible scene, much depends upon the imaginary *stand-point* adopted. Thus, in the Lesson before us, we can stand in thought either by St. Peter's side, watching the multitude in front, or among the crowd looking up at St. Peter. In either case, if we are in the smallest degree successful in realising the scene, our language will, without any effort on our part, naturally accommodate itself to our mental point of view, and the description will vary accordingly, far more than many would think possible. In the Sketch the stand-point among the people is adopted, as being perhaps on the whole the most interesting.

The brief paraphrases of St. Peter's address, introduced in the Sketch, are, as will be seen, very cursory and incomplete. But it is not intended in these Lessons to expound in detail the sermons and speeches in the Acts. Probably future expositions will be even more meagre than this one. The design is merely to suggest to the teacher how a general notion (but accurate as far as it goes) of what was said may be conveyed to ordinary classes.

Teachers should be careful how the word 'Christ' is understood in this and succeeding Lessons (see ver. 30, 31, 36, 38). Children are apt to regard it as a proper name—as merely (so to speak) the *surname of Jesus*. 'Christ,' or 'the Christ,' was the *official title* of One for whom the Jews looked. 'Jesus' was the *personal name* of One who really was 'the Christ,' though they knew it not. Ambiguity may be avoided by using the Hebrew word 'Messiah' rather than the Greek word 'Christ.'

The application in this Lesson is very important, but not easy; and it needs to be carefully varied according to the age of the scholars. What we mean by 'conviction of sin' can be but partially understood by children, except in rare cases; and the teacher must endeavour to speak of it very simply and plainly, referring, not so much to sin in the abstract, as to particular childish sins. Children can repeat the words glibly enough 'All have sinned and come short of the glory of God'; but in what sense they themselves are sinners is not so clear to them. Even with senior classes, although the subject will be easier to speak upon, it will not be much easier to bring home to them.

#### SKETCH OF LESSON.

That crowd listening to Peter—let us try and think that we are in the midst of it. What day is it? So, streets full, great crowd soon collected. Several thousands here. See among them people of all classes and ages [*picture*], yes, and all countries too—many foreign costumes and languages, see ver. 9–11. What first brought them together? What has so amazed them since they came? how has it been explained to them? [*Refer to last Lesson.*]

Now look over the sea of heads at the man addressing them. A stranger to many—but some must know him—might say, 'Why, he's one of the foolish Galileans who belonged to that Nazarene crucified by Pilate last Passover—the man who, it is said, stole the body.' Perhaps some one there who heard that 'cursing and swearing' by the fire—how different Peter's face and voice now! Look how confident he is,—'Ye men of Judæa, be this known unto you' (ver. 14)—he has something to tell them which he knows is true. And how

earnest!—'Hearken to my words'—he entreats them to listen.

And they *do* listen. Now hear what he says:—

#### I. ABOUT THE CRUCIFIED JESUS.

1. *That God has raised Him from the dead.*

Peter says something like this:—'That Man of Nazareth, lately executed—you remember His mighty works—they were *God's* works (ver. 22)—and had God deserted Him when you nailed Him up? [*see Note 6*]?—no, it was God's will that He should die (ver. 23)—but what then? that very Jesus *God hath raised up*' (ver. 24). [*See Note 2.*] What must the people think of this? Some startled—some inclined to laugh—some thinking, How are we to know it? Well, Peter will tell them:—

(a) *It is true, for the Scriptures say so.* 'You remember David's words (ver. 25–28; Ps. xvi. 10), 'Thou wilt not . . . suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption'—who was that?

—not himself, for he was buried in the tomb we can see every day (ver. 29) [see Note 5]—who then?—why, that descendant of his who, as God promised, should be Messiah' (ver. 30, 31). [See Note 4.]

(b) *It is true, for the risen Jesus was seen.* 'We whom you see here to-day with these wondrous gifts—we all are witnesses—we saw Him' (ver. 32).

2. *That God has exalted Him to be 'Lord and Christ.'*

Not just raised up like Lazarus of Bethany—more than that—'exalted' (ver. 33)—'That very Jesus whom you saw hang on the cross seven weeks ago is Lord and Christ (ver. 36)—King and Ruler over all, and your Messiah, the Deliverer of Israel you were looking for!' For this too the same proofs:—

(a) *It is true, for the Scriptures say so.* David says (ver. 34, Ps. cx. 1, 2, comp. Matt. xxii. 41—45), 'Jehovah said to my Lord' [see Note 6]—who is this 'Lord'?—and who are the foes who are to be his 'footstool'?

(b) *It is true, for the result can be seen.* Ver. 33, 'You see it for yourselves—that great sound, those bright flames, these strange languages—all signs of that promised Spirit of whom Joel spoke [see last Lesson], and who is sent down by that same Jesus!'

There is Peter's sermon. Now see its effects, ver. 37.

*They see it all now.* (a) *What Scripture meant.* Often heard those psalms in the synagogues—never understood them before. (b) *Who Jesus was.* Used to dispute sometimes, *Can He be Messiah?* but when saw Him taken, condemned, executed, sure it was all fancy—and now! (c) *How fearfully guilty they have been!* The nation looked out for hundreds of years for coming King—He came at last—and they 'knew Him not,' nay, handed Him to the hated Gentiles to be—*crucified!* (d) *What awful danger they are in!* He is on His throne now—what must He think of them?—they have been His 'foes' instead of His loyal subjects—He will tread them under foot!

'Pricked in the heart'! Fancy the awful grief and terror. As they think of 'Him whom they pierced' (2nd text for rep.), are 'pierced' themselves, 'and mourn.' Hear those 3,000 piteous voices, calling out to the once despised followers of a despised Galilean, 'What shall we do?'

## II. ABOUT THEM—THE MURDERERS.

But *were* they the murderers? were they so guilty? When Peter spoke of God's great purpose being fulfilled (ver. 23), did he mean to excuse them? No [see Note 3]; he had spoken plainly enough—'Ye yourselves know' what He was, and yet 'ye have taken,' &c.—also ver. 36, 'Ye have crucified'—he meant them to be startled and terrified. And yet, what does he tell them now? ver. 38—40.

1. *What the exalted Jesus is ready to do*

*for them.* Condemn and destroy them? No (see John iii. 17, xii. 47), but give them—

(a) *Remission of sins—even their guilt may be put away!* How could it be? Because He who hung on the cross bore the guilt of those who crucified Him!—2 Cor. v. 21; Gal. iii. 13; 1 Pet. ii. 24. (b) *The gift of the Holy Ghost.* This more wonderful still—so gracious a Saviour might forgive, but, to pour on them the same gifts as on His faithful followers! But what says our 1st text for rep.?—'Gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also.' The promise is for all—for them, and for whom else? ver. 39 [see Note 7]. They took 'His blood' 'on them and their children' (Matt. xxvii. 25)—now, 'to them and their children' He offers these blessings!

2. *What they must do to obtain the blessing.* (a) 'Repent'—change their minds about Jesus—think of Him no more as the Nazarene carpenter, but as 'Lord and Christ'—call upon Him, as Joel said (ver. 21), that they may be saved. (b) *Not keep their changed minds secret, but come forward before all men, say what they think, declare themselves disciples of the crucified Jesus, separate themselves from their unbelieving nation. And how show this?* 'Be baptized in the name of Jesus the Messiah.' Why be baptized? See this next time.

Once more, what was the result? ver. 41—three thousand converts!

But how came they to be converted? Three thousand hearts 'pricked'—three thousand anxious inquiries what to do—three thousand confessions of sin and of belief in the Crucified One!—how came it to pass? See John xvi. 8, 9—'He shall convince (margin) the world of sin'—who? Last Sunday we saw the Holy Ghost's work on Christ's friends; now we see His work on Christ's foes. His 'arrows are sharp in the hearts of the King's enemies' (Ps. xlv. 5)—but what for? to destroy them? no—to save them.

*Have you ever been 'pricked in the heart'?* Ever had a painful feeling in the conscience of having sinned? You *ought* to have had it. Why? surely we not sinners like those Jews—ah! they rejected Jesus, not knowing who He was—have we turned away from Him, knowing all we do?—and is not that worse? There is such a thing even now as 'crucifying the Son of God afresh' (Heb. vi. 6). But suppose you are *not* like them, but do love, honour, try to please Christ—is there never anything to be ashamed of?

But do you know what a 'pricked heart' is? have you felt it? If so, *Who* 'pricked' it? How we ought to thank that blessed Spirit for it! If not, is it because you are so good? no, but because you don't know yoursin—and who is that like? Luke xviii. 11—and how much better to be like the Publican crying for mercy! If like him, then to you also are the promises that Peter spoke of, see 1 John i. 8, 9.

## NOTES.

1. The connection between the first and second parts of Peter's address (ver. 14—21 and 22—36) is this:—The outpouring of the Spirit proved that the 'last days' had come (see last Lesson), and that the great judgment predicted by Joel was at hand; but that, as Joel had also said, 'whosoever should call on the name of the Lord should be saved.' Then Peter goes on to show that this 'Lord,' upon whom they are to call, is the crucified Jesus.

2. The general outline of Peter's argument will be seen from the Sketch. He speaks of four things, the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. To the former, with which his hearers were familiar, he alludes but briefly. The two latter are both proved in two ways, (1) as fulfilments of Scripture, (2) as actual facts. He does not put forward the Divinity of Christ, or mention His rising and ascending by His own power. They are not yet prepared for these deeper truths. The object throughout is to show to Israel that Jehovah, the *God of Israel*, had ordained and done all. *God* 'approved,' i.e., accredited, Jesus of Nazareth (ver. 22); *God* did the miracles (ver. 22); by *God's* counsel Jesus was 'delivered' (ver. 23); *God* raised Him up (ver. 24, 32); *God* made Him Lord and Christ (ver. 36).

3. 'The counsel and foreknowledge of God are not the same: the former designates His Eternal plan, by which He has arranged all things (hence the *determinate* counsel); the latter, the Omniscience, by which every part of this plan is foreseen and unforgotten by Him' (Alford). Man's guilt is not lessened because, *contrary to his intention*, his wickedness is over-ruled to fulfil the Divine purposes. Malice may fail to hurt the person against whom it is directed; but it will not fail to hurt him who bears it.

4. On the Messianic psalms quoted here, Alford well says:—'Whether the Messiah was present or not to the mind of the Psalmist is of very little import: in some cases He plainly was; in others, David's words, spoken of himself and his circumstances, could only be in their highest and literal sense true of the great Son of David who was to come. David often spoke concerning himself; but the Spirit who spoke in David, concerning Christ.' . . . 'The term, seeing this before, distinctly asserts the prophetic consciousness of David; but of what sort that prophetic consciousness was may be gathered from 1 Pet. i. 10—12.'

5. We learn from 1 Kings ii. 10, Neh. iii. 10, that the sepulchre of David was within the city. Its locality, though now uncertain, must have been well known to the Jews at this time, as it is repeatedly mentioned by Josephus, who states that both Hyrcanus and Herod opened it and robbed it of some of its treasures.

6. '*By wicked hands have crucified and slain*'—rather, 'by the hands of lawless men,' meaning the Romans. The word rendered 'crucified' is not the ordinary one: it means rather '*nailed up*,' and is evidently used to express the cruelty of the Jews as strongly as possible.

'*Shed forth*,' in ver. 33, is in the Greek the same word as 'pour out' in ver. 17, 18.

It should be noticed that the word 'Lord' in ver. 34 is first printed in capitals and then in small letters. Although both are alike in the Greek, this is done to distinguish between the two different words in the original Hebrew of Ps. cx. Wherever, in our Old Testament, it is printed 'LORD,' it stands for *Jehovah*; wherever it is printed 'Lord,' it stands for *Adonai*. The former always means God; the latter generally not.

'Repent' means strictly 'change the mind'; and here this meaning comes out very clearly, for the first thing the Jews needed was a complete revolution in their feelings and opinions respecting Jesus.

'*To all that are afar off*,' i.e., the Gentiles, whom the disciples quite expected to be brought in, though they did not yet know that it would be without the condition of their also becoming Jews by circumcision.

7. '*Unto you and to your children*.' 'A providential recognition of Infant Baptism, at the very founding of the Christian Church' (Alford). Matthew Henry, in his homely way, puts it very well:—'Your children shall still have, as they have had, an interest in the covenant, and a title to the external seal of it . . . When God took Abraham into covenant, He said, I will be a God to thee and to thy seed; and accordingly every Israelite had his son circumcised at eight days old. Now it is proper for an Israelite, when he is by baptism to come into a new dispensation of this covenant, to ask, What must be done with my children? must they be thrown out, or taken in with me? Taken in, saith Peter, by all means; for the promise, that great promise of God's being to you a God, is as much to you and to your children as it ever was.'

## Lesson IV.—The Infant Church.

'All baptized into one body.'

Read—Acts ii. 41—47. Learn—Acts ii. 41, 42; John xvii. 20, 21. (Hymns, 122, 123, 126—129, 176, 277, 337, 365).

## TO THE TEACHER.

A glance at the Sketch will be sufficient to show the teacher that the brevity of the passage before us is no measure of its importance. The 42nd verse, indeed, might have a Lesson to itself without being exhausted; but as some of its topics can be more fully treated in future Lessons (for example, in Lessons VII., XIII., XXIII., XXXVI., XXXVII.), it will be well, on the present occasion, to give some of the time to explaining the meaning of the *first Christian baptisms*; and this is accordingly done in Division I. of the Sketch.

The Scriptural metaphor of the 'members of a body' may with advantage be more enlarged upon than in the Sketch; and it may be pointed out how the different members

do actually help one another—the eye directing the steps of the feet, the hand tending the hurt leg, the arm protecting the body generally, &c.

The important subject of the unity of the Church ought not to be neglected in this Lesson. The fact that the Lord *meant* the Church to be *one communion*, and that nothing else was ever thought of in the first ages, should not be ignored. At the same time it would be consistent with neither truth, justice, nor charity, to charge the *fault* of divisions and schisms upon God-fearing and Christ-loving men who have grown up from infancy under the influence of other teachings. Rather let us suggest to such of our scholars as can enter into the subject the use of such prayers as the Collects for St. Simon and St. Jude's Day and All Saints' Day, and the Prayer for All Conditions of Men. And further, let all the *applications* bear practically upon the circumstances of the children themselves. 'The best way in which they can imitate the primitive Christians is by being unselfish and affectionate among themselves.

It may in this Lesson be found most convenient to take up the points of application at the close of each division, although in the Sketch they are grouped together at the end. For suggestions how to explain the Lord's Supper to Sunday-scholars, the teacher is referred to the 'Life of Our Lord,' Lesson LXXXVI.

#### SKETCH OF LESSON.

When a church being built, and you watch the first great blocks of stone or marble rising, how white, smooth, bright they look! So with Christ's Church of 'living stones' [*refer to illust. in Lesson I.*]—see to-day how pure and beautiful the beginnings of the Church were. A little infant a pretty sight—so innocent and happy: see to-day 'the Infant Church.'

When those three thousand, in their sudden alarm and anxiety, burst out with the question, 'What shall we do?'—what did Peter tell them? ver. 38–40. Was it enough for them to go home with different thoughts about the Crucified One, believing in Him instead of despising Him, lamenting their sin against Him, worshipping Him, loving Him? If they truly 'repented' (as Peter told them), all this would follow; but was this all? Something else: Christ came to set up a 'kingdom,' a Church; they must 'come out from among' the rebels, 'be separate' (2 Cor. vi. 17), join His faithful and loyal subjects. Not enough to cut and polish the stone: it must be brought into its place in the building.

#### I. THE ENTRANCE INTO THE CHURCH.

How were they to join Christ's people? What had Christ Himself directed? Matt. xxviii. 19; Mark xvi. 16; so says Peter now—'Be baptized.' And they were baptized. What a scene! Three thousand people pressing forward, all eager to be taken in. Would not Peter remember that morning on the Lake a few weeks before (John xxi. 6), when 'they could not draw the net for the multitude of fishes'? Were not the 'fishers of men' in a like position now? All day that baptizing must have gone on.

Stand by the side of one of those new converts. A Jew, a child of Abraham, accustomed to think *he* all right—when Messiah came, *he* of course in the 'kingdom.' Perhaps had looked down upon Jesus—'Could any good thing come out of Nazareth?' (John i. 46, vii. 52). Perhaps had laughed

at Him as He hung on the cross. Now here he is, meekly and thankfully standing to have water poured on him [*see Note 1*] in the name of that Nazarene, by one of that Nazarene's disciples;—what does it mean?

1. It means, *on his side*:—(a) That he confesses his need of cleansing from sin (comp. Matt. iii. 6); (b) That he believes in the power of Jesus of Nazareth to cleanse him (comp. Acts xiii. 16); (c) That he 'steadfastly purposes to lead a new life' (see Rom. vi. 3, 4). [*Compare the three promises in our Baptismal Service, renunciation of sin, faith, and obedience; and the reference to them in the Catechism.*] And one thing more—(d) That he is willing that this change in him should be publicly known to all (see Luke xii. 8; Rom. x. 9, 10; 1 Tim. vi. 12).

2. It means, *on God's side*, the two things Peter promised:—(a) It is a token to the convert that his sin is washed away, 'remitted' (how? see 1 John i. 7; Rev. i. 5); (b) it is a token to him of the gift of the Spirit—he is baptized not only with water, but with the Holy Ghost too (chap. i. 5). Thus it is the 'outward and visible sign' of the 'inward and spiritual grace.'

How different that convert feels that night! His past life at an end—as if he were dead and buried (see Rom. vi. 4; Col. ii. 12)—going to begin life over again—'born again of water and of the Spirit,' and thus admitted into 'the kingdom of God' (John iii. 3, 5).

#### II. THE DAILY LIFE OF THE CHURCH.

[*Read ver. 42–47.*] Look at the four things in ver. 42 [*see Note 2*]:—

1. 'The Apostles' doctrine,' i.e., teaching. What did Christ tell the Apostles to do with their converts, besides baptizing them? Matt. xxviii. 20—'Teaching them to observe,' &c. How much they have to tell these three thousand! all about the life and teaching of Jesus, how to 'observe all things He had commanded,' the meaning of

the old types and prophecies, &c. And the new converts—are they willing to be taught? 'Continued steadfastly'—they are 'new-born babes,' and desire infants' food—what? 1 Pet. ii. 2—'the milk of the Word.' What the use of it? That they may 'grow thereby' (same verse).

2. '*Fellowship.*' Were they content just to get the daily instruction, and then disperse, and care nothing for one another? See ver. 44—'together' [see Note 3]—constantly meeting together—treating each other as brethren—the richer sharing their property with the poorer [see Note 4].

Now why this? Think of your body—the head the chief part, but many other members or limbs—all united together—pain in one limb felt through all the body—blood flows from heart to every part and back again—&c. (See 1 Cor. xii. 14–25). Now the Church is like a body. Who is the Head? Eph. i. 22, 23, iv. 15, 16; Col. i. 18, ii. 19. Who the members? Rom. xii. 4, 5; 1 Cor. xii. 26. So the converts at Jerusalem felt they were 'all baptized into one body' (1 Cor. xii. 13)—made '*members of Christ*' (Catechism). But if so, then felt they must be united (Eph. iv. 3–5), live in '*fellowship*' (Phil. ii. 1–4), not split up into sects and parties (1 Cor. i. 10–13), care for one another (Rom. xii. 15), love one another (1 John iv. 7–11).

3. '*Breaking of Bread.*' When they all met together, what done? Not only the Apostles' teaching. Another command of the Lord to be obeyed; see Luke xxii. 19, 20—something to be 'done in remembrance' of Him—what? Imagine that company of new converts assembled—the Apostles at one end of the room—bread broken—wine poured into a cup—passed round—all solemnly taking some. What would it remind them of? Would remember the body of Jesus nailed to the cross for them, the blood of Jesus shed for them; and how full their hearts of love and gratitude! More than that—when went out again into world (temptations around and sin within), would feel *stronger*—why?—had had food for their *souls*—not only eaten bread and drunk wine, but had '*fed on Christ in their hearts*'—so were '*strengthened and refreshed.*'

4. '*Prayers.*' Could they not pray at home? No doubt they did, but loved to join in the *common* prayers of the whole Church—to say, not only '*my Father*,' but (as we do) '*Our Father.*'

### III. THE EFFECT ON THE WORLD.

We have seen a beautiful picture: what did those think of it who saw it *then*?

1. *Those who saw it feared*, ver. 43. People began to think, Can it be true? was that Nazarene really Messiah? if so, what will become of us?

2. *Those who saw it approved*, ver. 47 ('favour with all the people'). Might it not have been the contrary? Suppose the new converts had behaved proudly or angrily to their still unbelieving friends, or had been selfish and quarrelsome among themselves, what then? By their humility, unity, generosity, love, they 'let their light shine,' and so—see Matt. v. 16.

3. *Those who saw it joined*—many did. Just what Christ had said (2nd text for rep.)—men believed because they saw how united the believers were. But was that enough to convert them? No, the same Divine power at work as before, ver. 47—'*the Lord added*' them to the Church.

*How different the Church now from the Church then!*

(a) Are there such baptisms now? True, little children cannot know and feel what those three thousand Jews did; but those who bring them might, and ought. And you, do you ever look back at your baptism, and think what a solemn thing it was?

(b) Are there such listeners to 'apostolic teaching' now? In church? in school? Which of you 'steadfastly continues' in regular attendance and unflinching attention?

(c) Do people care now for the '*breaking of bread*' as they did then? Why do such numbers turn their backs upon it? Are you looking forward to the time when you, too, will go up to the Lord's Table?

(d) Do people join in 'the prayers'—the '*Common Prayer*'—as they did then? Where are your thoughts when the General Confession is said, or the Litany?

(e) Is there the same '*fellowship*' now—the love, the unselfishness, the unity? Are we all acting as '*members of one body*'? We say, 'I believe in the Communion of Saints,' but where do we see it?

(f) Is the Lord '*adding to the Church daily*'? True, names are '*added*' to the baptismal register; but how many *hearts* are '*added*' to the '*blessed company of all faithful people*'? And is not *subtraction* going on as well as *addition*? Let us all pray, '*Make us to be numbered with Thy saints, in glory everlasting!*'

### NOTES.

1. There can be no doubt that the ideal and perfect mode of Baptism is by immersion—the going down into and under the water, and the coming forth to a new life; and this is the mode not only allowed, but enjoined, in the Rubric. Sprinkling or pouring water on the child has become general owing to our climate; and that such a modification is legitimate and Scriptural, the narrative before us proves: for where in Jerusalem was the water in which 3,000 persons could be immersed in one day? Sprinkling must

have been the form of Baptism in this first and greatest of baptismal services.

Renunciations of sin and confessions of faith, similar to those in our baptismal offices, were required of candidates in very early ages of the Church. Tertullian, Origen, Hippolytus, and Cyprian, repeatedly refer to the '*renunciations*,' using this very word. Did the Christian doubt whether he might lawfully attend a heathen spectacle? 'Think of your pledge,' was the reply, '*your renunciation.*' (Blunt, *Hist. of*

*Christian Ch.*, chaps. 2 and 6); and it is possible that St. Peter's expression (1 Pet. iii. 21), 'the answer (rather 'inquiry') of a good conscience,' may refer to questions put to the candidate even in the apostolic age.

2. The four characteristics of the primitive Church in ver. 42 are, literally, 'In the teaching of the Apostles, and in the fellowship, and in the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers.' The definite articles are very significant:—

(a) 'The teaching' seems to describe a certain course of instruction. This instruction consisted in great part of the relation of the facts of Christ's life (including His discourses), and so regular was it that its very language became to a great extent stereotyped. This 'oral Gospel' was doubtless the origin of large portions of the first three Gospels; and thus their frequent remarkable identity or similarity of expression is accounted for. In the same way, no doubt, arose the 'Apostles' Creed,' as a brief compendium of what candidates for Baptism were required to believe.

(b) 'The fellowship.' The exact meaning of the word here (*κοινωνία, koinonía*) has been much disputed; but the most probable view is that taken in the Sketch, viz., that it imports unity of spirit both as the cause and as the effect of external union. The word itself is variously rendered in our version. In Rom. xv. 26, it is 'contribution.' In Gal. vi. 6; Phil. iv. 14, 15; 1 Tim. vi. 18; Heb. xiii. 16, the corresponding verb is 'communicate,' i.e. (in these places) of our own wealth to those in need. In 1 Cor. x. 16; 2 Cor. vi. 14, xiii. 14, it is 'communion,' and from the former verse is derived our term 'Holy Communion.' The word 'common,' in ver. 44, is connected with it.

(c) 'The breaking of the bread.' This means

the Lord's Supper (comp. Mark xiv. 22; Acts xx. 7; 1 Cor. x. 18); which, from notices in the early Fathers, compared with Scripture, appears to have been at first connected, not with public worship, but with the evening meal, which it followed.

(d) 'The prayers.' This does not mean merely 'prayer,' which might be private, but common worship at a regular daily time. Some even think that a simple liturgical form is implied. It may be that it includes attendance at the Temple at the hours of prayer; as the converts did not abandon the Temple services (see ver. 46, chap. iii. 1).

3. 'Together,' ver. 44. The expression in the Greek (*ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ, eni tō autō*) is the same as that rendered in ver. 1, 'in one place,' which is more accurate. It is used by Clement of Rome and Justin Martyr of the Christian meeting-place for worship (Blunt, *Hist. Christian Ch.*, chap. 2), and probably has that meaning here. Very likely the 'upper room,' consecrated already by so many sacred associations, was used in this way. In the same place the 'breaking of bread' probably took place, as 'from house to house' is incorrect, and should be 'at home' (*κατ' οἶκον, kat' oikon*), i.e., at their head-quarters.

4. 'Had all things common.' See Lesson VII., Note 1.

5. 'Such as should be saved.' This is a serious mistranslation. The tense is neither future, as thus translated, nor past ('such as had been' or 'were saved'); but present—'such as were being saved,' i.e., were in the way, course, or process of salvation. So much has been built upon the expression that it is well to know what St. Luke does actually say.

## Lesson V.—Blessings through the Name of Jesus.

'His Name, through faith in His Name.'

Read—Acts iii.; Learn—Phil. ii. 9—11; Acts iv. 10, 12. (Hymns 35, 91, 93, 101, 102, 103, 167, 321, 322, 353.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

In accordance with the general plan of these Lessons as originally announced, no attempt is made in the following Sketch to expound St. Peter's address to the people in detail. The narrative is used as the basis of what actually works out as a subject-lesson. But the subject itself is not arbitrarily chosen. Not only is the miracle attributed by St. Peter to the power of the 'Name' of Jesus, but—as will be seen in the next Lesson—it was that hated Name which, more than anything else, excited the bitter opposition that followed.

It is scarcely possible that any teacher can consider this Lesson a difficult one; but it can be made still more simple by just leaving out Division II., and expounding Division III. more fully instead.

In opening the Lesson, let the important rule be borne in mind that such illustrations only must be used as are easily intelligible to the children. Those suggested in the Sketch may be varied according to the locality or the associations of the scholars. It is often an effective plan to throw an illustration into the form of a narrative: thus, teachers who have travelled, and had to show their passports, would have ready to hand an interesting example of the power of a name.

Children who like text-finding can be abundantly exercised in this Lesson, if the teacher will take a Concordance and note down the multitude of passages in which 'the Name of the Lord' is mentioned as an object of worship and love, a plea in prayer, a ground of security (e.g., 'The Name of the Lord is a strong tower'), a principle of action (e.g., 'Do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus') &c.

## SKETCH OF LESSON.

What a difference there is in names! In two ways:—

(a) Some names more *honoured* than others. [*Illust.*—Names cheered at public meetings. Or—Name of kind friend loved: e.g., if hear, *So and so is coming to-day, pleased; others not welcomed so much.*]

(b) Some names more *powerful* than others. [*Illust.*—Queen's name at foot of reprieve for prisoner—no other would avail. Or—cheque on banker—its value depending on the signature.]

Now what does the 1st text for rep. say? The Name of JESUS 'a name above every name.' Was it always so? When He was on earth, just the contrary—a name hated and despised—even Peter ashamed of it (Mark xiv. 67, 68)—and at last inscribed where any one would be ashamed to see his name, on a *cross* (like on the gallows with us). Yes, but, just because of that shameful death God would make the Name of Jesus great—see 1st text for rep. again, and preceding verse (Phil. ii. 8, 9)—'the death of the cross; *wherefore*, &c.

To-day see how it has come to be 'above every name,' and that in both ways (as above)—in *honour* and in *power*.

## I. WHAT THE NAME OF JESUS DID FOR THE LAME MAN.

Three o'clock—'hour of prayer' [see Note 1]—people thronging to Temple for afternoon service—in at the great 'Beautiful Gate,' with its glittering brass [see Note 2]. Who lying there? how long lame? ver. 2, iv. 22; how came he there? why there? how often there? ver. 2—so must be a well-known beggar. Here are two kind-looking men—he will beg of them: what do they say? what does he expect? ver. 3—5. Now what is the thing that man most wants? surely the use of his legs: is that what he asks for? No—a much smaller thing. But Peter will give him the greater thing—'Rise up and walk!' How would you expect him to take these words? would he not be angry at being so mocked? Ah, but he has heard that Name Peter mentioned—remembers how once that very Jesus cured lame men at that very place (Matt. xxi. 14)—believes that Name can still do wondrous things—grasps Peter's outstretched hand (ver. 7)—and in a moment can do what he has not done all the forty years of his life. See God's ancient prophecy fulfilled (Isa. xxxv. 6)—'Then shall the lame man leap as an hart.'

Now see the people running together, ver. 11—why wondering? have seen miracles as great before—yes, but 'these men, where did they get such power?' What will Peter say? will he take the credit to himself? ah no: he must surely remember how his Master, six months ago, was nearly stoned in that very Solomon's Porch (John x. 23, 31, 39)—will let the Jews know now

who it is they tried to stone, who it is they have crucified—not merely a man who could work miracles in his life-time, but the exalted Messiah now sitting on His throne, whose Name is still almighty. See Peter's words, ver. 12—16 (comp. iv. 10). Like this:—'Not our own power, but His power whom ye killed, whom God raised up: His power we have used, and we are able to use it because we believe in His Name.' [*Illust.*—If you had a friend in prison, could you go and order him to be released? No use: jailor would not listen to you. But if you had an order signed by Queen or judge, would you go? why would you go? would believe in the power of that signed name.]

Would faith in any other name have cured that cripple? Could Peter have said, 'In the name of Moses, rise up and walk'? So we see the Name of Jesus 'above every name' (a) in *power*. Yes, and (b) in *honour* too: for what must the people think now of the once despised Name? In Jerusalem now, as in Ephesus afterwards (xix. 17), 'the Name of the Lord Jesus magnified.'

## II. WHAT THE NAME OF JESUS COULD DO FOR THE JEWS.

Is Peter content with giving the honour of this miracle to his Master? No, he knows the Name of Jesus can do greater things than even this.

Think now—were not the Jewish people altogether very like that lame man? [See Note 7.] How? Crippled—unable to walk in the way of God's commandments, through their ignorance (ver. 17) and sin (ver. 19). More than this: what were the Jews always looking for?—a Deliverer, to drive out the Romans and make their nation great—looked forward to those coming times as 'times of refreshing' (would be so happy) and 'times of restitution' (when the kingdom restored, see chap. i. 6). But was this what they needed most? no—needed much more a Deliverer from sin and guilt, a restoration to God's favour, a 'refreshing' of their hearts by God's Holy Spirit. But of this they never thought. Just like the lame man—looked for the lesser blessing—thought not of the greater.

Now what does Peter offer them? He has told them of the greatest of their sins (ver. 14, 15)—now tells them that all their sins, all the things written down against them in God's book (Rev. xx. 12) may be 'blotted out' (ver. 19; comp. Isa. xlv. 22; Ps. li. 9). Only what must they do? 'Repent' (change their minds about Jesus) and 'be converted' (turn round and be His servants). And then the 'times of refreshing' and 'times of restitution' will indeed come! [See Note 6.]

But how this forgiveness and these promises for them? *Through Jesus*, ver. 18, 26. His Name means 'Saviour' (Matt. i. 21), and only through His Name can

they be saved, 2nd text for rep. Again, do we not see His Name 'above every name'? in power, for what cannot it do?—*in honour*, for who would not honour the name that saved him?

### III. WHAT THE NAME OF JESUS CAN DO FOR US.

*Everything!* Think—is there anything that God cannot do? You know Job's words (xlii. 2) were true. Then look at John xvi. 23, 24—*whatever* we ask in Jesus' Name God will give. If He does not give the very thing asked for, it is because we have ignorantly (Rom. viii. 26) asked for a bad thing; and even then He will give (as to the lame man, and as to the Jews) something far better. See some of the blessings to be had through His Name, Ps. xx. 1,

lxxii. 17; Prov. xviii. 10; 1 John ii. 12. Only try it; do as Peter told the Jews, 'repent and be converted'; whatever you ask for, 'humbly beg in the Name and mediation of Jesus Christ': then you will know indeed

'How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds.'

Shall we not honour His name?—'We worship Thy Name ever world without end';—shall we not sing of its power?—

'All hail, the power of Jesu's Name!'

But some do not like that Name—hate to see and hear it—will turn away impatiently if you mention it—will scorn a book or tract on which they see it. Any of you like that? Then remember our 2nd text for rep. (comp. John iii. 18)—no salvation in any other.

### NOTES.

1. There were three 'hours of prayer' among the Jews, viz., those of the morning and evening sacrifices (3rd hour, 9 A.M.; and 9th hour, 3 P.M.)—and the 6th hour (noon); see Ps. lv. 17; Dan. vi. 10. Peter and John had not ceased to be Jews because they believed in Christ; and, indeed, the Church of Jerusalem observed the Mosaic ordinances up to the destruction of the Temple.

2. It is not quite certain which of the Temple gates was the 'Beautiful' one, but the evidence seems strongly to point to that which led from the Court of the Gentiles to the Court of the Women, and which is described by Josephus as of Corinthian brass, and far surpassing the other nine gates in splendour, though even they were covered with gold and silver. See Josephus, *Antiq.* xv. 11, 3; *Bell. Jud.* v. 5, 3; Kitto, *Daily B. Ill.*, 'Apostles and Early Ch.', p. 19. Solomon's Porch was a lofty and splendid arcade on the east side of the Temple. See 'Life of Our Lord,' Less. LIV.

3. The faith in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, to which Peter attributed the miracle, and which he said was itself the gift of Jesus ('yea, the faith which is by Him'), was, primarily at least, his own faith and that of John. This is required by the tenor of his argument. But, although the lame man's faith is thus not directly stated, it is most probable that he had faith, as it was almost always the condition of being healed. Perhaps, as in the case of the cripple of Lystra (xiv. 9), his faith was 'perceived' by Peter; or it may have been only awakened by the sound of the Name so familiar to his ears. An interesting conjectural sketch of his antecedent state of mind occurs in Mr. Warrington's 'Lessons on St. Peter,' *Church S. S. Magazine*, 1869, p. 428. On the faith which enabled the Apostles to work miracles, see 'Life of Our Lord,' Less. LIII., and Less. LXXXV., Note 5.

4. This sermon of Peter's is in general outline similar to that in the previous chapter, but it is less stern and more hopeful in tone, and he brings forward fresh Scripture testimony, substituting Moses and the prophets for David. It is worth noting that he accuses the Jews of 'denying' Christ—the very thing he had done himself; and we can imagine how confidently he would assure them that they, whose guilt was in some degree mitigated by their ignorance, should be forgiven if they repented, when he had found pardon after sinning against light and knowledge. With ver. 17, 18, compare Gen. i. 20. There is a striking antithesis in ver. 14, 15: they 'desired a murderer,' and 'killed the

Prince (or Author) of life'; they preferred the *life-taker* to the *life-giver*.

5. The words 'His Son Jesus,' in ver. 13 and 26 (as also the expression 'holy child Jesus,' in chap. iv. 27, 30)—should be 'His servant Jesus.' When Christ is called the Son of God, the word is *vios* (*huiois*, pronounced *whyos*). Here it is *pais* (*pais*, pronounced *pice*), literally 'boy,' and usually meaning a servant. In the same passage in chap. iv., 'Thy servant David' is the same word. It is the word used in the Septuagint version of Isa. xlii. 1, xlix. 5, 6, lii. 13, liii. 11, where Messiah is called 'the Servant of the Lord.'

6. The 'times of refreshing' and of 'restitution' (ver. 19–21) must be yet future, as they are connected with the Second Coming of Christ. 'When the times of refreshing shall come' is a mistranslation. The Greek word never means 'when,' but 'in order that.' Bp. Wordsworth says, 'St. Peter's speech is addressed to the Jewish people, and is still applicable to them. In it the Holy Spirit declares a solemn truth, viz., that the Coming of the seasons of Refreshment from the presence of the Lord, and of the Second Advent of Christ and the Restitution of all things, are so ordered by Divine Wisdom as to depend on the Repentance of the Jews and their reception of the Gospel. Comp. Rom. xi. 25–27; Zech. xii. 10, and xiii., xiv.'

At the same time, in a spiritual and personal sense, every man's repentance and conversion usher in a 'time of refreshing and restitution.' The applicability of these two terms to the results of conversion is impressively pointed out in Dr. C. J. Vaughan's *Church of the First Days*, i., p. 121.

7. Alford (*Homilies*, p. 126) dwells on the analogy between the impotency of the cripple and the impotency of the Jewish nation; and Baumgarten (*Apostolic Hist.*, i., p. 82) on the likeness between them, in that both wished for a lesser blessing than that designed for them. See Sketch above, Division II. The analogy might be carried further. In both cases, the greater blessing would involve the lesser. The cripple, being able to walk, would be able to earn his own living, and thus get the 'silver and gold'; and St. Peter promises the Jews that those 'times of restitution' to which they were all looking would come to them if they accepted the prior and higher blessing of forgiveness through Christ. The principle is that expressed in the words, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you.'



## Lesson VI.—Persecution for the Name of Jesus.

*'These things will they do unto you for My Name's sake.'*

*Read*—Acts iv. 1—31; *Learn*—Matt. v. 10—12; 1 Pet. iv. 12, 13. (*Hymns* 126, 127, 167, 168, 171, 180, 202, 324, 375, 377.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

In this Lesson the application is particularly important, and care should be taken to reserve sufficient time for it. It needs, too, not a little thoughtful preparation in adapting it to the precise circumstances of the scholars—which differ so much that it is impossible by general suggestions to direct the teacher what to say. If there be reason to fear that not one in the class is of such a character as to invite 'persecution for the Name of Jesus,' let not the counsels to the persecuted be omitted on that account: the very fact that they do not apply may be skilfully turned into the most impressive application; see concluding paragraph of the Sketch. On the other hand, it is well to remember that those who are known as the 'good boys and girls' sometimes excite the ill-nature of their companions by a mere natural timidity or want of spirit, and in such children there is not infrequently a disposition to fancy themselves 'persecuted for righteousness' sake,' and even to *pride* themselves upon it.

Some care is also necessary in explaining the duty of 'obeying God rather than men.' It should be pointed out that the Apostles were acting under a direct Divine command. Of course a child would be justified in refusing to obey even a father's order to lie or to steal; but it is to be feared that some teachers go far beyond this in their counsels to their scholars, even forgetting that there is such a Commandment as the Fifth.

### SKETCH OF LESSON.

Last Sunday we saw a miracle done by the power of 'the Name of Jesus.' Jesus Himself had said it should be so, Mark xvi. 17, 18. But He also told of something else that should be done 'for His Name's sake'—what? John xv. 21 (comp. Matt. x. 22, xxiv. 9). To-day see the beginning of this hatred and persecution.

See Peter and John,—

#### I. IN PRISON. Ver. 1—4.

A strange beginning to their work! Up to this time their ministry has not been very public. Preached to thousands on Day of Pentecost, but that probably in some bye-street. Since then, only quiet teaching of 'infant Church.' But to-day where has Peter preached? iii. 11. In the Temple Courts, the people and rulers (iii. 17) have been openly told of the glory of the Crucified Nazarene, charged with the guilt of His murder, yet offered pardon in His Name. How Peter must have felt the great thing he was doing! how intensely he must have longed for success—'Oh! if I can persuade the nation, rulers and all, to repent now!' And what *was* the result? Instead of a joyful return home, followed by crowds seeking baptism—marched off to prison! *This* the return for his message of mercy! Just what Jesus said the Jews always had done, and would still do (Matt. xxi. 34—36, xxiii. 34, 37).

How would those two feel that night? Disappointed? disheartened? Very likely they did, that first time. But see what they learned to feel soon after? chap. v. 41; comp. xvi. 23—25. Now what reasons had they for comfort and joy in such a trial?

(a) It was nothing more than Christ had told them of (texts above); so why be alarmed?

(b) Without it, how could they be like Him? see Matt. x. 24, 25; John xv. 18—20; comp. 1 Pet. ii. 19—21, and 2nd text for rep.

(c) It would remind them of the *reward*; 1st text for rep.; comp. Rom. viii. 17; 2 Cor. iv. 17; 2 Tim. ii. 12.

(d) It could not hinder Christ's Kingdom extending, John xvi. 33. Did it for a single hour? What was going on that very night in the city, unknown to them? see ver. 4. Had Peter preached in vain?—he *could* not—why not? Isa. lv. 11. No; many again 'pricked in their hearts.' But would not the arrest of Peter and John frighten them? *Did it?* There were other Apostles to go to; and, that same night, hundreds of baptisms!

#### II. AT THE BAR. Ver. 5—22.

How came this sudden persecution? ver. 2 [*see Note 1*]'—'for His Name's sake.' It was *His* Name the Jewish rulers hated to hear—had they not had trouble enough with this Nazarene when he was alive?—and now, having got rid of Him, too bad to have his deluded followers making such a stir—must stop it at once.

Next day, a solemn assembly of the Great Council, ver. 5, 6 [*see Note 3*]. See them sitting in state—venerable elders, sacred priests, learned scribes—all looked up to by the people. Good men? Some, perhaps; but what wicked deed had they done two or three months before? Yes, it was before them that Jesus stood, Matt. xxvi. 57—66; and Annas and Caiaphas still presiding.

Now look at the two Apostles before them—the very two who were present when Jesus tried (John xviii. 15)—how they must think of that sad Passover night, and their Master's sufferings! And Peter would remember something about himself—? How different now! no more fear or shame—ready to confess Christ. Whence the change? ver. 8 (comp. Mark xiii. 11).

See the question put, ver. 7—'By what Name?' [see Note 4]. A very plain answer! ver. 10—'the Name of Jesus the Nazarene, whom ye crucified, whom God raised.' Is that all? Is Peter content with answering the question? No: he has proclaimed 'blessings through the Name of Jesus' to the people [*last Lesson*]<sup>1</sup>—now will faithfully proclaim the same message to the rulers, ver. 12—'We, we all, you priests and scribes as well as we fishermen, must be saved through that Name you hate—no other way—no use thinking of Abraham (Matt. iii. 9), or Moses (John v. 45), or any future Messiah (Matt. xxi. 37, '*last of all*')—salvation for you only through the despised JESUS.'

Will these hard hearts be 'pricked' too? ah, too hard (yet perhaps even this seed sprang up afterwards, see chap. vi. 7). An anxious debate: but not about the claims of Jesus—about what? ver. 15—17. Why not punish the bold Galileans? Because of the witness for the defence—who is that? see ver. 14—a silent witness, but no shaking his evidence. So the prisoners 'discharged with a caution,' ver. 18. Promising to amend? not at all, ver. 19, 20—fully intending to 'do it again'—why? because under higher orders—must 'obey God rather than men' (comp. chap. v. 29; 1 Kings xxii. 14; Dan. iii. 18, vi. 7, 10).

### III. AT HOME. Ver. 23—31.

How anxious the other Apostles and the rest all this time!—for their imprisoned brethren?—yes, and for themselves—may not their turn come next? No doubt much prayer that night (as in xii. 5). And how joyous the assembly next day! how eagerly attentive to Peter and John's report! ver. 23. And what next? ver. 24. Praying—why? 'when they heard that'—because frightened? no, they know this opposition to be expected, because predicted, ver. 24—

28 (Ps. ii. 1—3). Praying—what for? for deliverance from their persecutors? no—for two very different things—(a) for courage to go on preaching about the Lord Jesus, ver. 29; (b) for God's support to their preaching, by more miracles, ver. 30.

Jesus had given a promise about united prayer, Matt. xviii. 19, 20. But more than 'two or three' gathered here—then how confidently they may ask! And what result? ver. 31—first a sign that He is 'in the midst of them'—then one petition granted at once—how the other was granted we shall see hereafter. How true the words of Matt. xxviii. 20, and Mark xvi. 20!

### Is there any persecution for the Name of Jesus now?

Two ways of finding an answer to that:—(a) What does Scripture say? see 2 Tim. iii. 12. (b) What have we actually noticed ourselves? Could you mention the Name of Jesus in the playground, to stop bad tempers, wicked words, cruel deeds? would you not be afraid? Afraid of what? of being put in prison, like Peter and John? No danger of that—why then? Afraid of another kind of persecution—of what Jesus Himself mentioned, Matt. v. 11—'reviling,' 'saying all manner of evil falsely.' (Comp. Heb. x. 33—do boys like being made a 'gazing-stock'?) Yes, there is danger of that—certainty of it in some form—why? because that Name is disliked still—Jas. ii. 7 still true.

What should you do if persecuted? Just what the infant Church did—what David did (Ps. lxxix. 12, 13, cix. 4, cxlii. 6, cxliii. 9)—pray. Pray (a) for yourself, that you may have courage to say, as Peter did (ver. 20), 'We cannot but speak.' (b) For them, 'that it may please God to forgive your enemies, persecutors, and slanderers, and to turn their hearts' (Litany); see Matt. v. 44.

But has this advice anything to do with you? Perhaps you have never had these little persecutions? Why not? Because not a 'faithful soldier and servant'—'aahamed to confess Christ crucified'—perhaps care not for Him at all—perhaps a persecutor yourself. But which is the happier, the persecutor or the persecuted? see both texts for rep., and 1 Pet. iii. 12—14.

### NOTES.

1. During Christ's ministry, the opposition to Him chiefly came from the Pharisees. The persecution of the Apostles was chiefly due to the Sadducees, whose bitterness was evidently excited by the new evidence to the doctrine of a resurrection furnished by the alleged resurrection of Jesus (see chap. xxiii. 8). They were a small, but highly influential sect among the Jews; and among them were numbered Caiaphas himself and other leading men (chap. v. 17). See 'Life of Our Lord,' Less. LXXVII., Note 2.

The 'captain of the Temple' was probably the chief of the Jewish guards (not Roman soldiers). In Luke xxii. 52, the 'captains of the Temple' are mentioned.

2. 'The number of the men was about five

thousand.' This does not mean that five thousand new converts were now added, but that, after the addition, that was the total number.

3. The Sanhedrim (more accurately Sanhedrin) was the supreme judicial and administrative Council among the Jews. It consisted of (probably) seventy-one members, who were of three classes, viz., (1) the chief priests, i.e., the heads of the twenty-four 'courses' into which the priests were divided (1 Chron. xxiv. 10; Luke i. 5); (2) scribes, the authorised expounders of the law; (3) elders, men of age and influence. The power of the Sanhedrim was at one time very great, though it had been reduced by Herod the Great and the Roman governors. Further information will be found in Smith's *Dict. of Bible*;

the *Student's N. T. Hist.*, p. 54; J. Dixon's *Holy Land*, p. 340; Conybeare & Howson's *St. Paul*, chap. ii.

Annas was the *rightful* high-priest at this time, but Caiaphas actually held the office. The Roman governors appointed and deposed high-priests at pleasure, and four of the sons of Annas, as well as his son-in-law Caiaphas, filled the post in succession. The latter acted for nearly twenty years. Annas evidently retained much influence, as might be expected (see John xviii. 13), and in ver. 6 (comp. Luke iii. 2) he is actually called 'the high-priest,' though not so *de facto*.

4. The question put to Peter and John, appears to have been designed to bring them under the operation of the law of Deut. xiii.: were they doing 'signs' in any name other than that of Jehovah? Peter boldly acknowledges that they had worked the miracle in the Name of Jesus of Nazareth, thus seeming to plead guilty; but by calling Him 'Christ,' i.e., God's Messiah, he rebuts the charge of 'going after other gods.' But the obstacle to the acceptance of this statement was, that Jesus had been condemned to death by the highest authority in the nation—how then could He be Messiah? To obviate this difficulty, Peter refers to a familiar Psalm (cxviii.) which they all applied to Messiah, and quotes the very words Jesus had Himself quoted in the Temple (Matt. xxi. 42), shewing that the very fact of His rejection *proved* Him to be the predicted Messiah: 'the stone which the builders rejected had,' as the Psalm said, 'become the

head of the corner.' (Baumgarten, *Apost. Age*, p. 94.)

5. It is noteworthy that, in the ruler's question, the 'ye' comes (in the Greek) last in the sentence, which gives it emphasis: 'By what name have ye done this, ye low Galileans?' And in Peter's reply, the last word is '*we*,' again emphatic: 'whereby *we* must be saved, *we* all.'

6. 'And perceived,' &c., in ver. 13, should be, 'Having also previously known they were unlearned men and laymen.' 'Ignorant' in the original simply means private or unprofessional, not regular scribes. 'Took knowledge of them,' should be 'recognised them'—remembered their faces as those of two of Jesus' disciples.

7. The application, in the Church's prayer (ver. 24–30), of Psalm ii. to the enemies of Christ, is remarkable. There are (1) 'the heathen,' i.e., the Roman soldiers; (2) 'the people,' i.e., the Jews; (3) 'kings of the earth,' i.e., Herod and Pilate; (4) 'rulers,' i.e., the Sanhedrim.

The most probable opinion as to the way in which the prayer was offered, is that one of the Apostles spoke the words, and that the rest repeated them after him, 'lifting up their voice with one accord.' Liturgical worship had very likely already begun at that time, but *this* prayer was obviously extempore.

On this prayer, as a model of common prayer, see Dr. C. J. Vaughan's *Church of the First Days*, i., p. 176.

## Lesson VII.—The Enemy Sowing Tares.

*'Not all Israel which are of Israel.'*

Read—Acts iv. 32–37, v. 1–11; Learn—Ps. xv. 1, 2; Ezek. xxxiii. 31. (*Hymns*, 19, 20, 108, 143, 154, 166, 172, 179, 194, 359.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

The story of Ananias and Sapphira is so familiar to children generally, that some kind of novel treatment of the subject is almost indispensable if a lesson on it is to be made interesting. The treatment in the following Sketch is necessarily novel, because, in a Course like this, in which the leading purpose is to trace the development of Christ's Church, it is more natural to view the narrative as an episode in the Church's history than as a study of individual character. Hence the peculiar title of the Lesson, and the prominence given in the Sketch to the designs of Satan. Hence also the importance of laying stress on the many-sidedness of the sin of Ananias. Children are apt to think that he just 'told a lie'—which is the very thing that we are *not* told he did—whereas a little study of and reflection upon the whole passage brings to light the greatness of the sin and its peculiar aggravations, as shown in Divisions II. and III. of the Sketch. Teachers, therefore, should by no means make this a lesson solely on lying, as is too often done. Still, the subject of falsehood may well occupy more time than the Sketch appears to allow, provided the silent or acted lie, the deed, or word, or look, which is *intended to deceive*, be fully dwelt upon, and not the downright spoken lie only.

The '*why*' of ver. 3 is a key to an important truth. Satan's power is not to be an excuse for yielding to temptation, but a reason for watching against and resisting it; just as, in Phil. ii. 12, 13, God's power is made a reason not for spiritual sloth, but for spiritual diligence: "Work out your own salvation . . . for it is God that worketh in you."

Many other illustrations on the general subject of the Lesson would be suitable and effective: thus, a traitor in the camp; counterfeit coin; and this—Imperfections, &c., not observed in a dark room, but let in the sunshine, and how different every old piece of furniture or article of dress looks!—so, our piety and charity—how would they appear in the light of God's omniscience?

## SKETCH OF LESSON.

What a malicious thing to try and spoil another's work! [*Illust.—Rubbing out a boy's sum; trampling on his garden, &c.*] To do so is to copy the devil. When the work of creation was finished, and God said it was all 'very good' (Gen. i. 31), what did Satan do to spoil it? And so, in the first days of the Church, when the love, unity, holiness, so bright and beautiful [see *Lesson IV.*], Satan again full of envy and malice,—must try to spoil this new work of God's.

Do you remember the parables in which Christ gave a picture of the Church's history? [See '*Life of Our Lord, Lessons XL., XLI.*'] In Matt. xiii.—the 'Sower,' a picture of how the Gospel would be received by different people; the 'Mustard-Seed,' a picture of how quickly the Church would grow; &c. And the 'Tares'—what do we see in that? That the Church would not be perfect—a mingling of good and bad—might look the same, but really different. But do we see *why* it would be so? see ver. 28 (of Matt. xiii.) '*an enemy hath done this*'—who is that? ver. 39. So Christ foretold that Satan would try to spoil the Church. To-day see how he did it.

First he tried to do it by raising the persecution [*last Lesson*]. If Peter and John's courage had given way when they stood before the Council, as Peter's did when Satan tempted him before (see Luke xxii. 31), what a triumph for the Evil One! But that plot failed—now must try another; instead of attack from outside, now try what can be done inside the Church itself.

## I. THE SIN SUGGESTED. [Read iv. 32—37, v. 1, 2.]

Look back at the picture of the Infant Church we saw before, Acts ii.; see ver. 45, 46. Same thing now repeated, chap. iv. 32, 34, 35 [see *Note 1*]. Why did they 'have all things common'? [see *Lesson IV.*]—knew they all belonged to '*one Body*'—therefore had '*one heart*.' So if rich disciple saw poor one, what did he feel? Felt as if poor *himself*—was as eager to relieve him as though it were *himself*. Just what Jesus commanded (Mark xii. 31)—'*Love thy neighbour as thyself*.' Not to be *selfish*, but *sympathising*. Selfish man would say, '*I can't spare my property*': what did these disciples say? ver. 32—did not call it their own at all—why not? knew all they had was God's. [See '*Life of Our Lord, Lesson LXXXII.*']

But so many poor—no doubt most of the 5,000—and few rich. So, rich had to be *very* unselfish—what did they do? ver. 34, 35. One in particular, Barnabas, ver. 36, 37—a great apostle afterwards, and see what is said of him, xi. 24—there we see the secret of his unselfishness.

In and among this happy family Satan

'walking about'—what to do? 1 Pet. v. 8: '*seeking*,' looking into every heart to find where he can sow bad seed, so make tares grow up among the wheat, so spoil the Church. Not easy to find a place—why? ver. 33—'*great grace upon them all*.'

At last a chance. A man with property feeling he *ought* to help, but unwilling. Why unwilling? Too selfish—no trust in Christ—a half-hearted disciple.

Quickly Satan drops in the seed, chap. v. 3 [see *Note 3*]—a sudden thought!—Ananias can do his duty, get the credit of charity, and yet—*take care of himself*. How? see ver. 1, 2.

## II. THE SIN CHERISHED.

What should Ananias do now? Put away the thought—thrust it out. Can he? Yes—could not help Satan putting it in his *mind*, but can put it away now, can '*resist the devil*' (Jas. v. 7; 1 Pet. v. 8). Does he? Ah, no—he *thinks* about it, thus lets it in further, puts it in his *heart*, ver. 3 [see *Note 3*]. Then *talks* about it—with whom? see ver. 9.

Now see how they might persuade themselves to do it;—(a) They really must give some of their property—or will be thought stingy. (b) If they sell that land of theirs, and hand the money to the Apostles, how they will be praised—as much as that Levite from Cyprus (iv. 36) was! (c) But then, suppose only give part of the money, who will know?—just as much credit. (d) And then, will have some of it for themselves; if the Church *should* come to nothing after all (they have no real faith in their Lord), will have saved something from the wreck.

Thus the bad seed springs up. Satan got thin end of wedge in, and now drives it home.

## III. THE SIN COMMITTED.

Come to the Church's place of meeting—very likely that same 'large upper room' we have been in before. The Apostles seated, receiving the gifts to distribute to the poorer brethren. Here comes Ananias—it is known he has been selling land—and now he too is laying down the bag of silver before the Apostles—how good and generous!—perhaps the bystanders already loud in his praise.

Is it too late? cannot he even now shrink back from the sin—even now say openly he is only giving part? Ah, he should have resisted before—under Satan's power now—he lets the Church think him a Barnabas.

Now what was his sin? A lie? where is it? look! *not one word* of his mentioned. No, but *an acted lie*—and is that one whit less sinful? But was the sin only this? Much more:—(a) Vanity; (b) Hypocrisy; (c) Selfishness; (d) Avarice; (e) Mistrust of God; (f) Deceit.

And what made the sin specially bad?

(a) They were not obliged to sell the land

at all, or, if sold, to give away the money; ver. 4 [see Note 1]. (b) They might have given what they did, saying it was only part. So no excuse. (c) Not a sudden fall into sin—thought about, talked about, planned. (d) It was a lie to God—professing to yield all to His service, yet giving even what they did only 'that they might have glory of men' (Matt. vi. 2). How true is our 2nd text for rep. l

#### IV. THE SIN PUNISHED.

Ought not such a sin to be punished? (a) Because so great. (b) Because such a disgrace and injury to Church just at beginning. Exactly as Achan's sin (Josh. vii.) had to be so terribly punished, because done just when Israel first in Promised Land. (c) As a merciful warning to others. So with Korah (Numb. xvi.), Nadab and Abihu (Lev. x.), Uzzah (2 Sam. vi.). But then the punishment must be *speedy*, otherwise—see Eccl. viii. 11.

And how awfully speedy it was! [Read ver. 5–11; picture scene.]

Has Satan's plot succeeded? He has destroyed those who yielded to him. God has saved the Church from the poison—but how? by cutting off the diseased members. [Illustr.—*Surgeon amputating leg, or burning away flesh round a bite, to save life.*] Ah, but the Church shall not be spoiled—others shall be brought in—others 'take their crowns' (Rev. iii. 11; comp. Matt. xxi. 43).

SATAN IS STILL TRYING TO SPOIL THE CHURCH—always sowing bad seed; and so

there are Tares among the Wheat still—'not all Israel who are of Israel' (Rom. ix. 6)—not all true Christians who seem to be so—many like those our 2nd text for rep. mentions.

God does not now at once cast out the 'false brethren'—'to grow together till harvest' (Matt. xiii. 30)—and meanwhile tares may be changed into wheat. But will they be separated? when? Matt. xiii. 39–43; Luke xvii. 34, 35. Who only will dwell in the heavenly tabernacle? The 1st text for rep. gives the answer.

Examine yourselves! 2 Cor. xiii. 5. And watch vigilantly (1 Pet. v. 8) against Satan, 'lest he'—see 2 Cor. ii. 11. Perhaps he may tempt you exactly as he tempted Ananias—perhaps quite differently. Think! Do you ever pretend to be better than you are? Do you think money more valuable than God's favour? Do you 'love the praise of men more than the praise of God'? Do you care much for self, and little for others? Do you ever 'make a lie' (Rev. xxii. 15), or plan a deception? Many various sins these, yet all like that of Ananias. See what God says of that last one, *lying* (by word or act):—Ps. cxx. 2–4; Prov. vi. 16–19, xii. 19–22, xix. 5; Isa. lix. 2, 3; Eph. iv. 25; Col. iii. 9; Rev. xxi. 8, 27, xxii. 15.

Say, with David, 'I hate and abhor lying' (Ps. cxix. 163), and pray with him, 'Remove from me the way of lying' (cxix. 29); and let the prayer of your heart continually be, 'From the crafts and assaults of the devil, Good Lord, deliver us!'

#### NOTES.

1. 'They had all things common.' On this community of goods it should be observed:—(a) That it was not compulsory, but voluntary, see chap. v. 4; (b) That it was not universal; see chap. xii. 12, where St. Mark's mother is mentioned as owning a house; (c) That it is only found in the Church at Jerusalem, the rich and poor being mentioned as different classes in several of the Epistles; (d) That it did not long continue, even at Jerusalem; see Rom. xv. 26, where the words are literally 'the poor among the saints at Jerusalem.' Such a sharing of property was very natural in a comparatively small body, bound together by such ties; especially as it probably was merely a continuance of the manner of living of Jesus and the Twelve (see John xii. 6, xiii. 29). Its inconvenience in a large community soon began to appear (chap. vi. 1); and it is probable that the peculiar poverty of the Jerusalem Christians was a result of the system. While their motives should be admired and imitated, their practice should not be adopted.

2. 'Bar-nabas' means the 'son of prophecy,' or 'of exhortation,' rather than 'of consolation.' 'Nabi' is the Hebrew for 'prophet,' in the sense of one Divinely inspired. (See Additional Note I., at page 10.) The Greek word rendered 'consolation' (*παράκλησις*, *paraklesis*) is connected with that for 'Comforter' (*Paraclete*); on which see 'Life of Our Lord,' Lesson LXXXVIII. Note 1.

3. Peter's question, 'Why hath Satan, &c.,' plainly implies that Ananias could have re-

sisted the temptation. It is equivalent to 'Why hast thou allowed Satan to fill thine heart?' The first suggestion to his mind he could not help; but, instead of repelling it, he 'put it in his heart' ('put' is the literal meaning of the word 'conceived,' in ver. 4).

'To tempt the Spirit of the Lord,' i.e., 'to try an experiment upon the discernment, upon the penetration, of the Spirit of God; to see whether He could and would unveil their hypocrisy and visit their sin upon them' (Vaughan, *Ch. of First Days*, i. p. 190).

The heinousness of the sin is shown in a remarkable manner by the fact that it had in it the essential features of all the three sins to which Satan tempted Christ in the wilderness. See 'Life of Our Lord,' Lesson XIII., Note 2.

4. It is clear that St. Peter, representing Christ, and speaking in the power of the Spirit, inflicted death on Sapphira. But did he on Ananias? or was the death of Ananias a Divine judgment following on, but not conveyed by, Peter's words, and was Peter's sentence on Sapphira based upon what, unexpectedly to him, had fallen on Ananias? Scripture does not decide this question, and commentators are about equally divided respecting it. The justice and necessity of the judgment is shewn in the Sketch.

5. The passage affords one of the most direct proofs of the Deity of the Holy Spirit. Ananias had 'not lied unto men, but unto God,' and yet he had 'lied to the Holy Ghost.'

## Lesson VIII.—The Church's Foes Discomfited.

'God shall help her, and that right early.'

**Read**—Acts v. 12—42; **Learn**—Ps. lxxviii. 1—3, xcvi. 1; Rom. viii. 31. (*Hymns*, 21, 22, 113, 165, 168, 194, 286, 290, 304, 379.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

The passage before us can be taken in several various ways. The same line of thought might be followed as in Lesson VI. The example of courage and faithfulness set by the Apostles might be the leading point. Ver. 31 might be taken as a centre, and a lesson given on the exaltation of Christ in His twofold capacity, as a Prince to give repentance, and as a Saviour to bestow forgiveness. Dr. C. J. Vaughan (*Church of the First Days*) makes an impressive sermon by dwelling on the *four characters* in the chapter, viz., the persecuting Sadducees, the temporising Gamaliel, the admiring people, and the faithful Apostles, and by pointing out their antitypes among ourselves. In a course, however, on the history of the Early Church, the plan adopted in the Sketch appears the most effective.

Perhaps the more exact title of the Lesson would be 'God's Timely Interpositions'; and this phrase will be found useful in teaching, if the meaning of the words be clearly explained: *Timely*, coming at the right time; *Interposition*, the taking of a position between two contending parties, either to reconcile them, or (as in the present case) to defend one from the other. A Sunday-school lesson becomes easier to the teacher, and more interesting to the learner, when its leading idea is (so to speak) *crystallized* into a phrase like this. Only there must first be a leading idea: and it is just this in which many lessons are so deficient.

The counsel of Gamaliel, which occupies an important place in the passage itself, is but cursorily referred to in the Sketch, partly because it is a rather difficult topic for most Sunday scholars, and partly because the teacher who dwelt upon it at length would probably be drawn away from the central thought of the Lesson.

### SKETCH OF LESSON.

Pleasant for one who is weak to have a strong friend and protector. [*Illustr.*—*Little boy first going to school; looks to big brother to take care of him.*] But the strongest and most faithful protector may be of no use—may happen not to be near when wanted. [*Illustr.*—*The two brothers not always together. Or, police on their beats at night to defend us from thieves; yet not always at right spot.*]

A protector always at hand, always to be depended on—what a privilege if such an one could be found! There is such an one; see Ps. xli. 1—'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.'

See two things about God's protection:—

(a) God interposes [see *preface*, above] in many different ways. Sometimes deliverance seems impossible; then a new way, quite unexpected.

(b) God interposes just at the right moment—not too soon—not too late.

GOD'S TIMELY INTERPOSITIONS—see them to-day on behalf of the Infant Church—three of them, all very different, yet Ps. xli. 5 true of all.

### I.

*The Danger.*—Who has been plotting against the Church? [*Refer to last Lesson.*] How? Satan hoped to spoil the Church by enticing many to sin. Already we have seen how God interposed to prevent this—how? But even though Ananias and Saphira

dead, Satan might still work mischief through their sin. Might he not make the people think, 'Oh, these strict people are no better than others'? And then, if others said, 'That cannot be, for see how fearfully sin in them is punished,'—might not that very punishment be used to frighten people from joining the Church? Ah, Satan has many devices (2 Cor. ii. 11), and he always tries his utmost. See what did happen, ver. 13—except real 'believers' (ver. 14), none of 'the rest' durst join them [see *Note 2*]. The Church in danger—of what?—of loss of character and influence.

*The Deliverance.*—God interposes—how?

(a) He shews that He is on the Church's side. How this? verses 12, 15, 16—fresh miraculous power given to the Apostles.

(b) He does by them works of mercy, ver. 15, 16—thus showing that people need not be frightened from joining the Church—though two struck dead, *multitudes* healed and blessed.

See the scene. Every day, the Apostles in the great arcade of the Temple (ver. 12), boldly preaching the risen Jesus in that public place, despite the Council's orders (iv. 18, 21), silencing opposing tongues by their wondrous miracles. And daily, as they go to and fro, streets lined with—what? ver. 15. Whence all these sick folk? not all of Jerusalem, see ver. 16. Any brought in vain? any forgotten? no,

God rewards their trust in 'the Name'—  
'were healed every one'! [See Note 1.]

Thus, indeed, a *timely interposition*. Instead of loss of character, the Apostles 'magnified' (ver. 13), the Church multiplied (ver. 14), the Church's foes discomfited.

### II.

*The Danger.*—How had the priests and Sadducees liked the *first* miracle and preaching in the Temple? see iv. 1, 2—'grieved.' But *now*? see ver. 17—'filled with indignation.' Suddenly, in midst of preaching and healing, all arrested—not two only, as before—'the Apostles.' What must the people think, as the officers seize them?—'Will God let them be taken? if such miracles of healing, why not a miracle of rescue?' No—off they go to prison. Again danger of losing influence; might be said, as of Jesus (Mark xv. 31), 'They saved others; themselves they cannot save.' Danger, too, of work being stopped; they were let off before, after being arrested (iv. 21)—not likely again.

*The Deliverance.*—God interposes again. But in quite a different way. Not by special gift of power to Apostles—how? ver. 19. In dead of night—all silent and still; suddenly great thick doors flung open—a bright figure (such as they saw that day on Olivet, chap. i. 10) bidding them go out. Whither? To some hiding-place? see ver. 20. What a sight for the people when they came to the Temple in the morning!

See how the two dangers avoided: (a) Are they likely to be thought less of now? (b) Has the work stopped a single day? Again the interposition at right time, in best way; again the Church's foes utterly discomfited.

### III.

*The Danger.*—Now see the Council sitting—all these important prisoners to come before them. But—what strange report is this made by the officers? ver. 22, 23. No wonder the Council 'doubted,' ver. 24. If ver. 1—3 of Ps. ii. fulfilled before (see chap. iv. 25), surely 4th ver. fulfilled now! Can the prisoners have bribed the gaolers, and fled? No, for what is the next news? ver. 25—in the Temple! what audacity! Arrest them again—but this not so easy—not that the *Apostles* resist—but? ver. 26.

Then see Peter and John again where they stood before, this time with their ten fellow-Apostles. Again the same defence (ver. 29, see iv. 19), the same bold charge of guilt (ver. 30, see iv. 10), the same witness to the Lord's resurrection (ver. 32, see iv. 20), the same offer of mercy (ver. 31, see iv. 12).

Will the rulers be 'pricked in the heart' (see ii. 37) now? Ah, no: but what?—'cut to the heart' [see Note 5]—and what then? ver. 33. A new danger, worse than all—danger of death.

*The Deliverance.*—How does God interpose now? Another way altogether—not what we call a miracle—yet just as unexpected: God works upon the Council, makes them change their minds. How? By guiding the mind of a famous Rabbi there to advise differently, see ver. 34—39 [see Notes 6, 7, 8]. No doubt the Sadducees tried hard for a sentence of death; but the majority agreed to Gamaliel. Again a timely interposition; again the Church's foes discomfited.

But are the Apostles just let go as before? No, are 'beaten' first, ver. 40—thirty-nine lashes to each (Jewish custom, see 2 Cor. xi. 24)—how painful! Why no deliverance from this too? Christ never promised they should not suffer—quite the contrary—this very trial foretold, Matt. x. 17. He suffered, and they must be like Him. [See Lesson VI.] So in what spirit do they go home?—'rejoicing'—at being free? no—why then? ver. 41. And see their courage afterwards, ver. 42.

No startling miracles now. Must we then think that God no longer interposes to protect His Church? Why, to-day, we have seen how many ways He has of interposing: even in those days not always by miracle; so without miracles can still interpose.

#### AND SO HE DOES.

See Christ's promise to the Church before He ascended, Matt. xxviii. 20. Has that ever failed? Christians in all ages and countries, young and old, rich and poor, humble believers as well as martyrs and missionaries, would answer, 'No, never!' The Lord's 'eyes' always 'running to and fro'—what for? 2 Chron. xvi. 9. When enemies arise, the Church should pray Ps. xxxv. 1—3 (also Collects 3rd Sunday after Epiph., 3rd Sunday in Lent, 4th, 15th, 16th, 22nd, after Trin.); then can say the 1st text for rep., and very soon after, can say the 2nd too. 'Those evils which the craft and subtlety of the devil or man worketh against us' *will* 'be brought to nought.'

[*Illustr.*—Boys at play always like to be on winning side.] What a privilege to have God on our side! Then the victory sure.

But how secure God on our side? BE ON HIS SIDE (see Exod. xxxii. 26), 'under His banner'—then can say joyfully the 3rd text for rep., and Ps. cxviii. 6.

#### NOTES.

1. The period of excitement described in ver. 12—16 is without parallel even in the early days of Christ's own ministry at Capernaum; and the miracles are a striking fulfilment of His promise in John xiv. 12. On ver. 13, Alford well says:—'We need not so stumbling-block in the fact of Peter's shadow having been believed to be the medium (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.' We may be sure that Peter took care (as in chap. iii.) that the glory of these miracles was given to Christ, and not to himself.

The 'beds' were those of the well-to-do people; the 'couches' (as the Greek implies) were the mats or pallets of the poor. See 'Life of Our Lord,' Lesson XXX., Note 6.

2. The phrase 'the rest,' in ver. 13, is variously explained. Probably the meaning taken in the Sketch is the correct one. Those who would have joined the Church from any motives other than the highest, were repelled by the judgment on Ananias and Sapphira. The same Greek words occur in Eph. ii. 3; 1 Thess. iv. 13, v. 6, where they are rendered 'others,' meaning unbelievers. See Webster and Wilkinson's note, *in loco*.

3. On the high-priest, the Sadducees, the Sanhedrim, &c., see Notes to Lesson VI. 'Senate,' in ver. 21, means the elders: probably many were summoned who were not of the Sanhedrim.

4. It may be asked, Why were the Apostles released by the angel from prison, only to be again arrested and beaten next day? Doubtless it was to give a sign to both the Apostles and their persecutors. To the former, that, when the scourging came, they might know it was not through any failure of God to help them—that if He did not help them, it was His will that they should suffer. To the latter, that they might learn that they 'had no power at all, except it were given them from above' (see John xix. 11). In the same way, our Lord, before yielding Himself to His captors, struck them to the ground by the power of His word (John xviii. 4-12).

The news that the missing prisoners were preaching in the Temple must have been more astonishing to the rulers than even their disappearance from the prison. 'Common malefactors,' as Matthew Henry quaintly says, 'may have art enough to break prison; but they are uncommon ones that have courage enough to avow it when they have done.'

5. The high-priest's question in ver. 28 is very significant. 'They ought to have inquired first, How did ye escape? But, as if nothing had happened, they ask,' &c. (Chrysostom). Either from shame, or hatred, or in contempt, they will not mention the name of Jesus—'this name'—'this man's blood.' 'The high-priest

will not name Jesus: Peter names and celebrates Him' (Bengel).

Peter's reply is one of the most striking speeches in the Bible: 'a perfect model of concise and ready eloquence, and of unanswerable logical coherence; and a notable fulfilment of the promise in Matt. x. 19' (Alford). Its power is shown by its effect: 'cut to the heart' means 'sawn asunder' with rage.

6. Gamaliel appears in Josephus (*Antiq.* xx. 9. 4, 7) and the Talmud, as one of the greatest of Jewish Rabbis, and one of the seven to whom alone the special title of 'Rabban' was given. 'When he died,' was the tradition, 'the glory of the Law ceased, and purity and Pharisaism expired.' He was son of Rabban Symeon, and grandson of the famous Hillel. His great reputation is illustrated by St. Paul's allusion, in his speech to the populace (Acts xxii. 3), to his education 'at the feet of Gamaliel.' He was president of the Sanhedrim at this very time.

Probably the assertion by Peter of the resurrection of Jesus brought up Gamaliel, who, as a Pharisee, would fear lest the condemnation of the prisoners might be regarded as a triumph of the Sadducean view, viz., that there was no resurrection at all.

7. The reasoning of Gamaliel was plausible, but quite fallacious, because *success* is not a safe test of truth. It was also bad as a principle of action. As a Jew, he was bound to satisfy himself whether Jesus was or was not Messiah, and not to leave such a question open; and if 'the work was of God,' it was his duty to go heart and soul with it. Stier (*Words of the Apostles*, Clark's edn., p. 96) well says:—'Man cannot fight against God—is the language of the feeble prudence of the cold and cautious; Man must believe and obey God, aye, even before God's work is triumphant—is the expression of the true wisdom of the penitent.'

8. The insurrection of Judas of Galilee, referred to by Gamaliel, was when our Lord was ten years old. See Josephus, *Antiq.* xviii. 1. That of Theudas is said here by Gamaliel to have occurred previously, but it is not recorded elsewhere. Josephus mentions a revolt under Theudas fifteen years after the date of Gamaliel's speech; but there is no difficulty in supposing that there was more than one leader of that name, seeing that four Simons and three Judas's headed insurrections at different times.

## Lesson IX.—Vocation and Ministry

'Each man according to his several ability.'

Read—Acts vi. 1-8; Learn—1 Pet. iv. 10; Jer. i. 6, 7. (*Hymns*, 115, 121, 122, 174, 232, 237, 327, 328, 330, 363, 366.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

The opening of this Lesson, as suggested in the Sketch, need not be uninteresting—dry as it may appear—if only the teacher will make himself thoroughly master of it beforehand. Children are easily interested in discovering the hidden meanings of familiar words, provided that the manner of their informant is inviting, and his explanations clear. But, how necessary it is to be transparently clear, a single case will suffice to show. Suppose the word 'ministry' is explained as *service in the Church*. This would be strictly correct; but the children would inevitably think at once of 'Divine Service.'

Two objects have to be aimed at in the Lesson; and much care must be exercised that neither of them be obscured by the other:—

(a) To take advantage of the event recorded in the passage to introduce the subject of



a Threefold Ministry, and to show how entirely the Church of England is, in this matter, in accordance with the Primitive Church; at the same time, not doing this in a controversial manner (which is more likely to raise questions), but simply stating it as indisputable fact. The relation of the Scripture terms to those in modern use, and the whole argument for the Three Orders, will come before us hereafter, in the Lesson on 'The Youthful Bishop.'

(b) From the allusion of the Collect to the 'vocation and ministry' of 'every member' of the Church, to urge the obligation of every Christian to do something, however humble, for Christ. On this subject the following words may be repeated from the 'Life of Our Lord,' preface to Lesson LXI. :—The details of the application are necessarily left to the teacher to fill in, as they will differ much according to the sex, age, circumstances, and characters of the scholars. In dwelling on the duty of direct 'missionary work at home,' teachers should be very cautious how they speak about children being 'missionaries' to their parents, lest they foster self-will, conceit, and disregard of the Fifth Commandment. . . . Nevertheless, there is such a thing as a child's *active* work for Christ. Every gentle word of instruction, counsel, or warning, given to a younger brother or sister, or to a school companion or playmate,—every fearless refusal to join others in sin,—every childish prayer on behalf of another,—every unselfish act, kind word, forgiving look,—every trifle given (if from the child's *own* little money) to the missionary-box,—is in its degree a fulfilling of the command conveyed to us in this Lesson.

#### SKETCH OF LESSON.

Do you know where the title of this Lesson came from? See second Collect for Good Friday.—Receive our supplications and prayers . . . for all estates [*i.e.*, all classes] of men in Thy holy Church, that every member . . . in his *vocation and ministry*, may truly and godly serve Thee.' What do these two words mean?

(a) '*Vocation*.'—Child coming to school is asked what its father's occupation is—what he is and *does*. Another word for this—'*calling*'; and '*vocation*' means *calling*. (Compare *voice, vocal, vocation, vocabulary*.) Why is a man's occupation his '*calling*'? See Catechism—'That state of life unto which it shall please God to *call* me.' But this means what we do in the *world*, for our living. '*Vocation*' in the Collect means what we do in the *Church*, in 'the Lord's Vineyard,' for Him.

(b) '*Ministry*.'—What is a 'minister'? But *why* clergy called '*ministers*'? Not because *over* the Church, or *higher* than others (though in a sense they are so); but because they *serve* the Church. 'Minister' in the Bible means *servant*; see what is said of little Samuel in the Temple, 1 Sam. ii. 11; of the angels attending on Jesus in the wilderness, Mark i. 13; of Peter's mother-in-law, Mark i. 31; (comp. Exod. xxiv. 13; 1 Kings x. 5; Mark x. 43; Acts xiii. 5, xx. 34; Col. iv. 7; Philem. 13). So, in the Collect, '*ministry*' means *service—work for God in the Church*.

But why are only clergymen called '*ministers*'? Because specially ordained for special service or '*ministry*.' And this also their '*vocation*'—they are *called* to it (see Bishop's question in Ordination Service).

What ministers have we seen in the early Church so far? Only the Twelve Apostles, see Acts i. 17, 25. But others appointed as

time went on. To-day see the first, and what work they were to do.

#### I. THE NEW MINISTRY.

In last Lesson we found '*multitudes*' added to the Church (chap. v. 14), despite the sin and death of Ananias and Sapphira. Surely still more after such Divine interpositions as we saw! So it was, ver. 1. But then how much work for the Apostles!—not only preaching to the unbelieving, but baptizing and teaching the new converts, besides 'breaking of bread and prayers' [see Lesson IV.]; and what else? see iv. 34, 35. Every day 'tables' (ver. 2) to be prepared for the poor brethren—food provided for them—money distributed to them; and to see that all had fair shares.

And now a murmuring, a grumbling. By whom? 'Grecians,' foreign Jews who spoke Greek. ('Hebrews,' Jews living in Judæa, speaking own language.) [See Note 1; comp. Lesson II.] Why? Foreign Jews thought the Apostles, or the men they employed, not fair in the distribution.

What do the Apostles do? say, 'We know best, we won't be interfered with?' See ver. 2—4: 'We have not time to do this properly; if we do, must neglect greater work'—what? Prayer, and a '*ministry*,' a *service*—'of the Word,' preaching and teaching. Yet money affairs of Church, almsgiving, care of poor, very important—a '*ministry*' too—the '*serving*' of tables. So, while the Twelve take the one '*ministry*,' let seven new men take the other '*ministry*.'

#### II. THE NEW MINISTERS.

*Their Qualifications*.—Ver. 3. (a) 'Of honest report'—men well spoken of, whom all would readily trust. (b) 'Full of the Holy Ghost.' Did they need *this* to manage money and provisions? yes, see 1 Cor. x. 31; Col. iii. 17, comp. Exod. xxxi. 1—6. (c)

'Full of wisdom'—to know how to deal with every case.

*Their appointment.*—Ver. 4—6. (a) Who chose them? The Apostles might have said, 'We can choose best'—but rather be generous, and leave it to the Church. And the multitude generous too: most of them 'Hebrews' (see above), yet, to stop all murmurings, chose all the seven from among the foreign Jews [see Note 2]. (b) But when chosen, who ordained them? For this, the Apostles' authority necessary. (c) How ordained? Solemn 'laying on of hands,' token of giving authority and blessing [see Note 5]; and what else? God's authority and blessing wanted too; so, 'prayer.'

*Their work.*—(a) To 'serve tables,' provide food, &c. [See above.] (b) Not to do this merely as business; but with kindness to each, and fairness to all. (c) Nothing else? See what one of them did, ver. 8—14; and another, afterwards, viii. 5, 26, 40. The Twelve still the chief teachers; but the Seven to help as they had time and opportunity. And see the result, ver. 7—greater progress than ever.

No title given to these Seven; but afterwards there were men who had such a 'ministry' called *Deacons* [see Note 3]. See what St. Paul said of them, 1 Tim. iii. 8—13. And a third order soon instituted, to take the other 'ministry' of prayer and preaching, see chap. xi. 30, xiv. 23—'Elders' or 'Presbyters'; the Apostles still superintending all. Then, years after, the best Presbyters chosen to superintend the Church when the Apostles were dead, and called 'Bishops.'

*These Three Orders we have now*—Bishops, Presbyters (or 'Priests'), Deacons.

Our Deacons do not 'serve tables,' but help in the higher 'ministry' (just as the first Seven did), because so many souls to be cared for; and then we have churchwardens, &c., to manage money matters.

And our ministers appointed nearly in same way. Young men who love Christ 'presented,' after preparation, to the Bishop, and ordained by him, 'laying his hands upon them,' and praying that the Great Lord and Head of the Church will help them. Ought we not to pray too for such? So we do; (see Prayers in Ember Weeks). Pray too for the Ministers already at work (see Collect 3rd S. Advent)—for your own. See how St. Paul begged for his converts' prayers, Rom. xv. 30; Eph. vi. 18, 19: 1 Thess. v. 25.

But there are other 'ministries'—other ways of working for Christ. See Collect our Title comes from again: 'Vocation and Ministry'—but whose? 'Every member of the Church in his vocation and ministry.' Other ministries in the Early Church, see Rom. xii. 4—8; 1 Cor. xii. 8—10, 28—30; Eph. iv. 11, 12. Work for women too, see Rom. xvi. 1, 2, 3, 6, 12. So we have school-masters and mistresses, Sunday-school teachers, Scripture-readers, visitors of the poor, singers in church, &c., &c. All 'ministries' in the Church, all to be done faithfully, see 1st text for rep. and 1 Cor. iv. 1.

Yes, and humbler 'ministries' still. Every one has some 'gift' (1st text for rep., Matt. xxv. 15)—every Christian a 'vocation and ministry.' Even a child can do something: see 2nd text for rep., and remember what a great 'ministry' the little Jewish girl did for the Syrian warrior by a few kind and respectful words, 2 Kings v.

# NOTES.

1. 'Grecians'—'Hebrews.' There are two words in the New Testament very much alike, but with very different meanings, *Ελληνες* (*Hellenes*), and *Ελληνισται* (*Hellenistai*), which are distinguished in our version by the two renderings, *Greeks* and *Grecians*. The former means the Greek race, and is sometimes used even of the Gentiles generally. The latter means the foreign 'Jews of the Dispersion,' who, by language, habit, and association—in fact, in all except descent and religion—were Greeks rather than Jews; and who, in particular, used the Septuagint Greek Version of the Old Testament. See Lesson II., Note 4.

These 'Hellenists,' as they are now usually called, were much less bound by Pharisaic traditions, and much more open to the influence of Gentile thought, than the Jews of Palestine; and the differences of opinion and practice which consequently arose were the cause of much jealousy between the two sections. The Jews of Palestine called themselves, in a special sense, 'Hebrews.'

The terms 'Jew' and 'Gentile' denote different races. The terms 'Hellenist' and 'Hebrew' denote different habits of thought and life. The 'Hellenists,' indeed, were not all Jews: they included also the Gentile proselytes, who had come into the Jewish covenant by circumcision.

See further, Smith's *Dict. of Bible*. Art. 'Hellenist'; Conybeare and Howson, *St. Paul*, chap. i.; Smith's *N. T. Hist.*, p. 329; and an article on 'The Gospel of the Hellenists' by Mr. G. Warington, *Church S.S. Mag.*, Feb. 1871, p. 61.

2. The Seven appear to have been all Hellenists, or at least men with Hellenist connections, their names being all Greek; and one of them was a Gentile by descent, 'Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch.' Nothing further is recorded of any of them but Stephen and Philip.

3. The Seven are nowhere called 'Deacons,' which word, as the title of a distinct office, does not appear in the Acts, but only in Phil. i. 1 and 1 Tim. iii. 8—13. But that their appointment was practically the establishment of the Order of the Diaconate can scarcely be doubted. For (a) the first Christian writer who alludes to them, Irenæus, holds them to have been Deacons; (b) their functions were those afterwards performed by the Deacons; (c) their appointment is evidently recorded by St. Luke, 'not as an isolated incident, but as the initiation of a new order of things in the Church' (Prof. Lightfoot, *Philippians*, 'Essay on the Christian Ministry').

On the existence of the Order itself, before its designation by a special name, Bishop Wordsworth (*in loco*) says:—'So it was with all the

Three Orders in the Church. First, *the thing existed*; there was no display made in giving it a name—but a word is used to describe the thing, already received and practised in the Church.

4. The Greek word, however, from which 'Deacon' is derived, is a common one in the New Testament. In this very passage, 'ministration' in ver. 1, and 'ministry' in ver. 4, are both in the original *διακονία* (*diakonia*); and 'serve' in ver. 2, is the cognate verb *διακονέω* (*diakonēō*). Generally speaking, where the words 'minister,' 'ministry,' 'to minister,' occur in our Version, they are renderings of the same originals. But not uniformly so. Sometimes these Greek words are otherwise translated: thus, 'serve' in this and other passages, and 'relief' in Acts xi. 29. Sometimes, on the other hand, 'minister' stands for a different Greek word: thus, in Luke iv. 20, the word is that usually rendered 'officer'; and, in Rom. xv. 16,

a peculiar word is used by St. Paul, by which he likens himself to a Jewish priest offering sacrifices in the Temple.

5. '*Laid their hands on them.*' The imposition of hands is a natural symbol of transfer or communication, whether of guilt, as in the sacrificial ritual (Lev. i. 4, viii. 14, xvi. 21), or of blessing (Gen. xlviii. 14; Mark x. 16). By laying on the hands the sick were healed (Mark xvi. 18; Acts ix. 12, 17, xxviii. 8; comp. Matt. ix. 18, &c.); by the same rite men were 'ordained to any holy function,' both in the Old Testament (Numb. viii. 10, xxvii. 18, 23), and in the New (Acts xiii. 3; 1 Tim. iv. 14, v. 22); and the same symbol was used for the full admission of the baptized into the Church (Acts viii. 17, xix. 6; perhaps 2 Tim. i. 6)—which was the germ of our Confirmation. In Heb. vi. 2, probably the general symbolic idea is referred to, including all these embodiments of it.

## Lesson X.—The First Martyr.

*'If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him.'*

Read—Acts vi. 8—15, vii. 51—60; Learn—Rom. viii. 35—37; 1 Pet. ii. 21—23.

(Hymns, 77, 124, 127, 170, 171, 224, 225, 324, 387, 390.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

The five divisions of the Sketch may be thus explained:—the first three contain the narrative; the fourth points out one remarkable and peculiarly interesting feature of the narrative; the fifth gives the application. Teachers would not find any difficulty in spreading the two latter over the first three, i.e., in shewing Stephen's likeness to Christ, and the example his history conveys to us, as the narrative goes on. But it will probably be a more effective plan to picture out the story as vividly as possible, and then to question back upon what has been related,—so framing the questions as to draw out first the points of Division IV., and then those of Division V.

An exposition of so long a speech as Stephen's would not only be out of place in the Sketch, but would be impossible even in the Notes. It is not supposed that any teacher will attempt to read it through in class, however intelligent his scholars. A brief summary of it is given in Note 4, and fuller paraphrases will be found in Goulburn's *Acts of the Deacons*, and Vaughan's *Church of the First Days*.

The connection of Saul of Tarsus with Stephen is necessarily omitted from so full a Lesson as the present. It will appear, however, in the following one.

The Collect for St. Stephen's Day should by all means be referred to. It is addressed, like the martyr's own prayer, to Christ Himself, and contains petitions for two of the three graces mentioned in Division V. of the Sketch.

### SKETCH OF LESSON.

Every Sunday we sing of a 'noble army' (*Te Deum*)—who?—*army of martyrs.* What is a 'martyr'? Word means a 'witness' [*illustrate by law-courts*]; but we use it of a particular kind of witness—of one put to death because of his testimony. What is the strongest 'evidence' we could give that we believe in Christ?—Surely to be ready to die rather than deny Him. [See Note 12.]

To-day we read of the *first Martyr*.

#### I. STEPHEN'S WORK.

What he was appointed to do. See ver. 2, 3 [*last Lesson*]. To go about among the poor believers (what sort of poor, particularly? ver. 1)—to give them what food and money they needed (where got from? iv.

34, 35)—to help prepare the public meal provided daily for many. Not great work like the Apostles—useful, but humble.

What he did besides. Ver. 8—'great wonders and miracles.' Perhaps would find one widow ill—would heal her; another weeping over her sick child—would restore it to health. How did such things?—'full of power'—what power? So the humble deacon soon famous. And full of wisdom too, ver. 3. How this shewn? Stephen a Hellenist, or foreign Jew [*last Lesson, Note 1*—his work much among believing Hellenists (ver. 1)—constantly came across unbelieving ones [*see Note 2*]; would they like him, who had left them to join the Nazarenes, to get such influence? So,

what did they do? ver. 9. No doubt many of them clever—thought they could easily prove he was wrong—did they? ver. 10. Whence this 'wisdom and spirit'? see Luke xxi. 15—just what Jesus promised. But did he persuade them? ah, no—they are silenced, but now they plot against him.

Suddenly, Stephen arrested, ver. 12. Like the Apostles before (iv. 3, v. 18); yet a great difference—*then*, the people *against* the accusers (iv. 21, v. 26)—*now*, *with* them; how this? because Stephen's enemies have slandered him—how? ver. 11 [see Note 1].

## II. STEPHEN'S TRIAL.

*The charge.* What was it? ver. 13, 14. Was it true? Partly, *yes*: no doubt he *did* say these things; for were not *they* true? Luke xxi. 6, 24, 27; Gal. iv. 24, 25; Heb. viii. 7, 13, x. 9. Partly, *no*: for (1) they were not blasphemous, (2) they were not *all* he said. How does Stephen take the charge?—look at his face [*illust.*—*dark, guilty, despairing looks of prisoners at bar*]—see ver. 15, no fear, no anger, no perplexity—brave, bright, calm; and more than this—the face of the 'blasphemer' of Moses shining like Moses' face! (Exod. xxxiv. 29, 30.) [See Note 3.]

*The defence.* [See Notes 4, 5.] A very long one—53 verses here—and then cut short. Only now see two things it says:—

(a) 'You think so much of this holy place (see vi. 13); but God's great messages to our nation came before there was any Temple; did not even come in Jerusalem—came to Abraham and Moses in foreign lands (ver. 2, 30); and even when the Temple built, God said *that* not His dwelling-place (ver. 47—50). He destroyed it before (ver. 43), and He will again if you disobey Him.'

(b) 'You think yourselves like our fathers, whom God so favoured. You are like them—but in *this*: they always rejected God's messengers (ver. 9, 27, 25, 39), and you have betrayed and murdered Messiah (ver. 52).'

*The result.* See—there sit the Council—seventy-two great and learned men—in a half-circle—scribes with their rolls at either end—the prisoner in the midst—his accusers on his left—but no advocate standing on his right (see Ps. cix. 31) to defend him. Look again—those aged and learned men *gnashing their teeth* with rage, as they hear his stern words of rebuke. Is he frightened? Why not? he looks up, and sees his *Advocate in heaven*, ver. 55—knows that though these judges may condemn him, the great Judge will acquit him. And he tells them what he sees—but think *what* he told them—'That Son of Man who stood here before you, where I stand to-day, Him I see now standing'—where? Then a loud cry of horror—a rush—the Council broken up—and those venerable rulers

'with one accord' (ver. 59) dragging him through the streets! [See Notes 6, 7.]

## III. STEPHEN'S DEATH.

Outside the city (perhaps on Calvary!), the excited Jews and their unresisting victim. Who must cast the first stones? Deut. xvii. 7. To hurl them more easily, the long garments laid aside; who takes charge of them? [See Note 13.] Then the terrible blows—stone after stone wounding and crushing the martyr to death. See him, first standing meekly in prayer—for himself; then on his knees, praying for *them*—his voice ringing out clear above the turmoil (ver. 60); then stretched on the earth, mangled, dead. [See Notes 8, 9, 10, 11.]

But think—what was it really that was lying there? Stephen? It was his *body*, indeed, but was that the *man*? [*Illust.*—*A watch—take outer case off, and destroy it: is not the watch there still?*] He had prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit'; was not that prayer heard? Think of his entrance into Christ's presence—the first member of the Christian Church in heaven! We have called him a *victim*, but was he not rather a *victor*? The Jews thought they had defeated their enemy, but they only sent him more quickly to glory. (Even on earth, the victory not theirs—see this next Sunday.) And that mangled body—was even that destroyed for ever? How true St. Paul's words, spoken of the resurrection (1 Cor. xv. 54—57), 'God giveth us the victory!'—and his words about death for Christ's sake (1st text for rep.), 'More than conquerors.'

## IV. STEPHEN'S LIKENESS TO CHRIST.

Do you remember, in the famous hymn, 'The Son of God,' &c., who is spoken of first as 'following in His train'? 'The martyr first, whose eagle eye,' &c.—Stephen. See now in how many ways he was like Christ.

1. *He was treated like Christ.* So Jesus had said His servants should be, Matt. x. 24, 25; John xv. 20. (a) Disliked and attacked, despite his miracles, vi. 8, 9; comp. Matt. xii. 22—24, xxi. 14, 23; John xi. 47, xii. 37. (b) When open attacks failed, falsely accused of blasphemy, vi. 10—14; comp. Matt. xxii. 15, 46, xxvi. 59, 65. (c) Condemned unjustly, and treated shamefully by his judges, vii. 54, 57; comp. Matt. xxvi. 66—68.

2. *He imitated Christ.* So Jesus had said His servants must, Mark viii. 34, x. 21; John xii. 26, xiii. 15; see 2nd text for rep. (a) His farewell words were words of faithful and fearless rebuke, vii. 51—53; comp. Matt. xxiii. (b) He committed his spirit to the Lord, vii. 59; comp. Luke xxiii. 46. (c) He prayed for his murderers, vii. 60; comp. Luke xxiii. 34—

'Like Him, with pardon on his tongue,

In midst of mortal pain,

He prayed for them that did the wrong—

Who follows in his train?'

## V. STEPHEN'S BRIGHT EXAMPLE.

Have we not seen this already? If Stephen like Christ, then we ought to be like Stephen; comp. 1 Cor. xi. 1. But how can we be?—are we likely to suffer as he did? No, but as we have seen before, 2 Tim. iii. 12 is always true [see Lesson VI.]; so even we may be 'martyrs' in a sense—not dying ones, but living ones—*ready* to bear *anything*, little or much, for Christ's sake.

Now, are we at all like Stephen? Ask three questions—

*Have we his faith?* He could look up and see Jesus ready to help him. Can we?

Not with bodily eyes—how then? 1 Pet. i. 8 (see Collect, St. Stephen's Day).

*Have we his hope?* Can we look forward and know that *whenever* and *however* we die, the Lord Jesus will 'receive our spirits'?

*Have we his charity?* How do we feel to those who dislike our religion? Could we pray as he did? (see Collect, St. Stephen's Day).

The name 'Stephen' means a crown; and he received 'a crown of life,' Rev. ii. 10. Who else may receive such a crown? See 2 Tim. iv. 8.

## NOTES.

1. Ver. 7 of chap. vi. seems to mark the culminating point of the Church's popularity and outward success at Jerusalem. From this time it meets with more open and bitter persecution. The cause is obvious. Hitherto the chief opponents of the Apostles had been the Sadducees, and that very fact had led the Pharisees (under the leadership of Gamaliel) to look leniently on them. But Stephen's preaching was aimed directly at Pharisaism. Dean Goulburn (*Acts of the Deacons*, p. 31) remarks that he 'outstripped the Apostles in spiritual intelligence, in appreciation of the breadth, comprehensiveness, and spirituality of the Divine plans,' and calls him 'the morning star, who ushered in the dawn of St. Paul's ministry.' The charge against him shows that he had clearly seen and boldly proclaimed the truth that the Church was to be world-wide, and not to be confined by the Jewish nationality or trammelled by Jewish customs (comp. vii. 48); and this naturally roused the hostility of the Pharisees.

2. The different bodies of Hellenists or foreign Jews had each its own synagogue in Jerusalem, and apparently three of the congregations thus formed united to attack the eloquent young Hellenist deacon:—(a) That of the 'Libertines' or freedmen, i.e. (probably) Jews who had been carried captive to Rome by Pompey and other generals, and had there earned or been given their freedom. About eighteen years before Stephen's martyrdom, these Jewish freedmen were ordered to leave Rome, and many of them would no doubt return to Jerusalem, and there form themselves into a 'synagogue.' (This word is used, as we use 'church,' either for the place of worship or the worshippers.) (b) That of the African Jews. These were very numerous. At Cyrene, one-fourth of the population were Jews; and, at Alexandria, two districts of the city were occupied by them. We meet with Cyrenian Jews in Mark xv. 21; Acts xiii. 1. (c) That of Cilician and Asian Jews ('Asia,' in the New Testament, means a province of the Empire comprising about a third of what we call Asia Minor, at its western end).

3. Ver. 15 may mean either that Stephen's face was so calm as to seem angelic, or that it was supernaturally transfigured. Alford argues with much force the probability of the latter meaning, and quotes Chrysostom as follows: 'God seems to me to have made him beautiful to look at, perhaps to prepare the way for his speech. . . . Or perhaps the Evangelist mentions it to account for their tolerating his speech; for do you see how mildly and unapproachably the High-priest puts the question?'

4. The following brief sketch of Stephen's speech is taken from the excellent *Annotated Paragraph Bible* of the Tract Society:—  
'His object appears to have been twofold: to

prove, first, that the charge against him rested on the false notions which his accusers had of the ancient dispensation; and secondly, that the Jews, by refusing to receive the Prophet whom Moses foretold, and by persecuting his followers, were showing that very spirit of unbelief and rebellion which had led their fathers so often to resist the will of God, and to reject his greatest favours. Referring to their national history, in which they so much gloried, he shows that all God's dealings with the chosen people had been progressive, involving changes which at the time had often been misunderstood; and he traces those changes of place, country, and outward organisation, through Abraham, Joseph, Moses, to David. He shows that the Temple, for which they were so jealous, had no existence before Solomon, and that at its dedication, as well as afterwards, the people had been warned not to suppose that God's presence was confined to it. And, in connection with all this, he shows again and again, with growing warmth, that the Israelites of every age had been unfaithful to their trust, and had opposed their spiritual teachers, who had all, like himself, taught the spiritual nature of the Mosaic economy.'

5. There are some difficulties in Stephen's speech, owing to apparent discrepancies between its statements and those of Genesis. Of these the most important is in ver. 16, where there seems a confusion between Abraham and Jacob, Machpelah and Shechem. Bishop Wordsworth argues with much ingenuity the perfect reconcilableness of the two accounts, but his argument involves several improbabilities. On the other hand, that Stephen, in citing from memory, should have confused two such well known incidents (which is the usual explanation), seems almost incredible. Yet if he *did*, it should be observed that even the strictest view of inspiration is not affected; for all that such a view requires is that St. Luke's report of what Stephen said should be accurate.

It may be well to notice that, in ver. 45, 'Jesus' is not the Lord, but *Joshua* (as also in Heb. iv. 8). The two names are identical, 'Jesus' the Greek form, and 'Joshua' the Hebrew.

6. The sudden burst of indignant denunciation at ver. 51 was probably elicited by the scowling faces, grinding teeth, and outcries of interruption, of the Council. On the expression 'cut to the heart,' see Lesson VIII., Note 5. 'Ram upon him with one accord': this is the same word used so characteristically, yet so differently, of the infant Church; see Lesson I., Note 2.

7. It is remarkable that here only is Christ represented as *standing* at God's right hand. Elsewhere it is always *sitting*; see Ps. cx. 1; Heb. x. 12. Chrysostom says, 'Why standing, and not sitting? that he may shew His attitude of help to the martyr. For of the Father also it is said,

*Arise, O God!* Only here, too, is our Lord's appellation of Himself, 'the Son of Man,' used by another. (In Rev. i. the meaning is different.) Stephen, no doubt, did so to remind the Council the more vividly of the words of Jesus when arraigned at their bar.

8. Stoning was the regular Jewish mode of inflicting death; and it is particularly mentioned in connection with blasphemy, the crime with which Stephen was charged, see Lev. xxiv. 10—16. Elaborate rules to be observed in carrying out this punishment, as laid down in the Talmud, are quoted by Kitto and Goulburn from Lightfoot's *Horæ Hebraicæ*. All executions were 'without the gate'; see Numb. xv. 35, 36; Kings xxi. 13; Heb. xiii. 12. The eastern gate of Jerusalem is traditionally the one through which the Council led their victim on this occasion, and is still called St. Stephen's Gate; but there are some reasons for thinking it was really the northern gate.

9. The Sanhedrim, as most writers think, had not the power of life and death at this time, as they themselves acknowledged to Pilate (John xviii. 31). See 'Life of Our Lord,' Lesson XCIV., Note 5. But the stoning of Stephen was not a legal execution, but a murder, resulting from a tumultuous outbreak of fanaticism. It is probable that it took place (about May A.D. 37) when the Roman governor was absent from Judæa. See Conybeare and Howson, chap. ii.; Goulburn, p. 66; Kitto, *Daily B. Ill.*, p. 67. Canon Norris thinks the Sanhedrim could order executions at this time; and his reasons are certainly weighty. Dean Milman says their power 'at this period of political change and confusion was wholly undefined.'

10. In ver. 59, the word 'God' is not in the original. It is, literally, 'calling upon, and saying, Lord Jesus,' &c., and is a direct prayer to Christ.

11. 'Fell asleep': implying, as has been well said, 'a welcome rest,' and 'an anticipated rising.' Comp. John xi. 11; 1 Cor. xv. 18, 51; 1 Thess. iv. 13, 14. From this expression the early Christians took their name for their burial-places—'dormitories' (κοιμητήρια, *coimeteria*); and hence our word 'cemetery.'

12. The present meaning of the word 'martyr' became attached to it at a very early period, and is apparently of apostolic authority, e.g., Rev. xvii. 6, and Clement of Rome, in his Ep. to the Corinthians. The transition from the first to the secondary sense may be easily accounted for. Many who had only seen with the eye of faith, suffered persecution and death as a proof of their sincerity. For such constancy the Greek had no adequate term. It was necessary for the Christians to provide one. None was more appropriate than '*witness*' (*martyr*), seeing what had been the fate of those whom Christ had appointed to be his witnesses (chap. i. 8). They almost all suffered: hence *to witness* became a synonym for *to suffer*; while the suffering was in itself a kind of testimony. (W. G. Humphry, *in loco*.)

13. We have, in this passage, the first mention of Saul of Tarsus. He was doubtless a member of the Cilician synagogue (vi. 9), and as such a prominent antagonist of Stephen. All commentators have remarked on the probable effect upon his mind of Stephen's great speech. Mr. Humphrey (*Commentary on Acts*) suggests that from him St. Luke obtained the report of it; and some remarkable verbal coincidences with it can be traced in his Epistles, besides the general similarity of view alluded to above (Note 1); see Conybeare and Howson, chap. ii.; Goulburn, p. 100; Norris, p. 29. St. Augustine says that '*the Church owes Paul to the prayers of Stephen.*'

## Lesson XI.—The Scattered Disciples Scattering the Seed.

*'The things which happened have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel.'*

*Read*—Acts viii. 1—8; *Learn*—Isa. lv. 8—11; Ps. cxxvi. 6. (*Hymns*, 18, 120, 124, 168, 263, 264, 377, 382, 399.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

This short passage is taken in a separate lesson for two reasons:—(1) It marks an epoch of great importance in the history (see Note 7, and Introductory Note on 'The Book of the Acts'); (2) It brings Saul of Tarsus before us as he appeared to the persecuted Church, and thus prepares the way for Lesson XIV., on his early life. He is viewed in this Lesson entirely as an enemy, without a hint of his subsequent great change, except what is furnished by the necessary references to his speeches.

The great principle that 'the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church' can be illustrated from Church history, especially from the records of the early persecutions and of the Reformation; also from many missionary narratives, such as those of Western Africa, China, and Madagascar. More homely illustrations are frequent in our popular literature (both fact and fiction): readers of *Tom Brown's School Days* will remember the result of 'Arthur's' fearlessly kneeling at his prayers in the dormitory; and many of the best story-books for boys are written with the express purpose of exemplifying the principle.

It will be observed that the figure of 'seed' is used in two different ways in the Sketch: first, the blood of the martyrs is likened to seed, and then the 'word' preached by the fugitive disciples. If the teacher should foresee a difficulty in keeping the two ideas distinct in the minds of his scholars, he had better omit the former.

## SKETCH OF LESSON.

Old saying, 'The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.' What meant? 'Seed'—what we sow to get harvest. 'Martyrs'—what are they? [*last Lesson*]. What the result, or harvest, of martyrs' blood? 'The Church'—i.e., when martyrs killed, the Church grows, more people join it. Would you not expect the contrary? But it is so, always. Christ said it even of Himself, John xii. 24, 32. [*See 'Life of Our Lord,' Lesson LXXXIX.*] Even in little things the same: if a child, persecuted for religion, keeps steadfast, some good to others sure to come of it. [*Illustrate: see Preface above.*]

Last Sunday we read of the first Martyrdom. Now see the 'harvest' that followed.

## I. THE SCATTERED DISCIPLES. Ver. 1—3.

(1) What must the Church have thought of Stephen's death?

Imagine the grief—'Such a man as that to be taken from us!' But this just what God sometimes does—takes away the best and greatest—why, think you? is it not to teach us to say Ps. lxxii. 5? Never forget, *He knows best*; and see Rom. viii. 28, xi. 33.

Imagine the dismay—'What next? shall we be stoned too?' It appears as if they were too frightened to bury the poor mangled body—leave it to others—to good men who respected Stephen, though not believers [*see Note 1*].

(2) And their turn does come: ver 1—'a great persecution.' Before, when Sadducees against them, Pharisees protected them, and people on their side, chap. v. 26, 33—39 [*Lesson VIII.*]; now all against them, vi. 12 [*last Lesson, Note 1*]. And even if others would let them alone, one will not—'a young man whose name was Saul.' Very likely one of those Cilicians who 'disputed with Stephen' (vi. 9, comp. xxi. 39). Can you not fancy him?—in the Council, watching Stephen as he spoke, with bitter hatred, 'gnashing on him with his teeth' (vii. 54), rushing on him with fingers in ears (vii. 57), urging on those who dragged him through the streets, cruelly exulting in the murder (viii. 1) [*see Note 3*]. And is he content with that? No—will clear the city of these Nazarenes.

(3) Think of some humble house in quiet street—happy family—have learned to believe in the risen Jesus, been baptized into the Church. Now in terror—'That man will search us out.' Perhaps in dead of night, house broken into, Saul and his men seize them—no mercy—mother and daughters rudely bound, as well as father and sons (this three times mentioned, ver. 3, ix. 2, xxii. 4)—dragged to synagogue—there ordered to curse their dear Lord's name (xxvi. 11) [*see Note 4*—if firm, beaten

(xxii. 19), cast into prison (ver. 3), slain (xxii. 4, xxvi. 10)—[*picture this, step by step*]. Christ's prediction indeed fulfilled (Matt. x. 17, xxiv. 9).

(4) Now come to another house at night. Hasty preparations for journey—sad partings—hurried flight—all for fear of the cruel young Pharisee. So many fled, that at last—who left behind? ver. 1. What a change! The other day so much work (constant baptizing, teaching, 'breaking bread,' distributing alms) that a new ministry started to help the Apostles [*Lesson IX.*]; now, the Twelve left almost alone—the Church broken up—the disciples 'scattered' in all directions—like sheep before the wolf (John x. 12) [*see Note 3*]. Even the fugitives not safe, see ix. 13, xxvi. 11.

Is this the result of the martyr's blood?—looks like the Church's destruction, not its increase! But what does the 1st text for rep. say? 'My thoughts, not your thoughts,' &c.—

'God moves in a mysterious way,  
His wonders to perform.'

## II. THE SCATTERED SEED. Ver. 4—8.

(1) [*Illust.*—If want to put out fire in grate, what do?—throw the burning coals about the room? That might put out the one fire, but—danger of lighting several, of burning house down.] This just what Saul had done. Had dispersed the one Church at Jerusalem; but now, all over the country, small companies of disciples, each a Church. Had scattered the disciples—yes; but in so doing had scattered something else too. [*Illust.*—A party of sowers on a spring morning—what must they do if seed to be sown? stop in farmhouse? no, must be scattered over fields—then scatter the seed.] And these fugitive believers all had 'seed' with them when scattered—what? ver. 4—'the word' (see Mark iv. 14; Luke viii. 11). What was that? God's message—the 'glad tidings' of salvation through the crucified and risen Jesus—the 'Gospel'; Acts x. 36—'the word which God sent,'—and see following verses. [*See Note 6.*]

(2) But would not the fugitives be afraid to speak of Jesus, or of letting out what they were? They might well have been; but they were not—why? God was answering the Church's prayer in iv. 29; and the thought of their brethren in prison made them more earnest, comp. Phil. i. 12—14. Like the sower, in second text for rep., went forth 'weeping, bearing precious seed'; but the seed not lost—'sheaves' by-and-by—in next chapter (ix. 31) we find 'the churches,' 'multiplied' all over the country. Compare 1st text for rep.—'My word . . . shall not return unto Me void,' &c.

(3) See what one fugitive did, ver. 5. One of the Seven (vi. 5)—no work for him to do now in Jerusalem (and perhaps, as

Stephen's comrade, in special danger)—where to? Was not Samaria a strange place to go to? see John iv. 9; Luke ix. 52, 53. But what had Jesus said? i. 8—Gospel to be preached in Jerusalem first (comp. Luke xxiv. 47), but the next step Samaria. Think now—perhaps Philip at Sychar [see Note 7]—would say to people, 'That weary Jew whom you believed to be Messiah (John iv. 39–42) is now at God's right hand, Lord of all!'—and how much more to tell!—about His death and resurrection, pardon through Him, the gift of the Spirit sent by Him, &c. What signs given that the message true? ver. 7. And how the news received? ver. 8—'great joy'—to them it is indeed 'good tidings of great joy' (Luke ii. 10). What 'blessed people' (Ps. lxxxix. 15) to 'know the joyful sound'!

Thus, here, reaping as well as sowing—harvest springs up at once—and in the very place where Jesus told the Apostles about sowing and reaping, John iv. 35–38. [See 'Life of Our Lord,' Less. XX.] See what comes of the disciples being scattered: not only seed scattered too, but harvest quickly gathered in!

How thankful we should be that we do not

live in such troublous times! How earnestly pray that 'the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by Thy governance, that Thy Church may joyfully serve Thee in all godly quietness.' (Collect, 5th St. Trin.)

And yet there is persecution of *some* kind for all Christ's people [see Lesson VI.]—words, deeds, looks, hard to bear, for every one of *you*, who is His 'faithful soldier and servant.' Now to-day we see one of the things Christ expects of His persecuted servants—what? That, whatever happens, wherever they may be, they are *not to cease 'preaching the Word.'*

What were those dispersed fugitives? great preachers? clever teachers? No, plain, poor, people. Not fit to be God's ordained ministers, like Peter or Stephen. But they had one thing—'the Word'—and that they could spread—could tell the story of Jesus' life, death, resurrection, ascension—Who He was, and what he had done for them. And *whom* could they tell? not great congregations, but the people they met and talked with—their own equals. How came the great Apostle Peter to know Jesus? It was just a poor fisherman telling his brother (John i. 41)—that was all. *This is what Christ expects you to do.*

#### NOTES.

1. Most good commentators (among them Howson, Alford, Baumgarten) think that the expression 'devout men,' in ver. 2, indicates that Stephen was buried by Jews (probably Hellenists like himself) who, though not believers, had a high personal regard for him, and were shocked at his murder. If so, it adds one more to the remarkable parallel circumstances of Stephen and his Master (see last Lesson). See the use of the word 'devout' in chap. ii. 5, x. 2, 7, xiii. 50, xvii. 4, 17. Had the men been believers, they would probably have been called 'brethren,' or 'disciples.'

2. The connection of Saul and Stephen is very interesting. He would seem to have been a member of the Sanhedrim, and therefore one of Stephen's judges, for (1) he would scarcely otherwise have been invested with such large powers (ix. 2, xxii. 5, xxvi. 10); and (2) when he says (xxvi. 10), 'When they were put to death, I gave my voice against them,' the word 'voice' strictly means '*vote*.' Dean Goulburn (*Acts of the Deacons*, p. 97) draws a graphic picture of Saul at Stephen's trial:—'Who is that young man in a corner of the room, small and undignified in person, and disfigured by a slight twist of the body, but with keen grey eyes glancing restlessly to and fro under somewhat contracted and overhanging eyebrows? His complexion is transparent, and the colour comes into his cheek, and his brow becomes stern and rigid, as Stephen proceeds with his argument,' &c.

3. The words 'Was consenting unto his death' are, more exactly, 'took pleasure in his murder.' Both words are stronger in the Greek than in our Version. The former is the one used in Rom. i. 32 of the wicked, who not only 'commit such things as are worthy of death,' but 'have pleasure in them that do them.'

The phrase 'made havoc' means ravaging like a beast of prey. 'Haling' is an old English form of *hauling*, i.e., dragging.

4. A vivid idea can be formed of the persecu-

tion, by comparing with St. Luke's narrative St. Paul's own accounts in his speeches (chap. xxi., xxvi.), where many additional particulars are found. Among the things mentioned in his speech before Agrippa is his 'compelling the disciples to blaspheme' (i.e., trying to compel them—the word does not imply that they yielded). What this was we can probably gather from the famous letter written, forty years later, by Pliny, when governor of Bithynia, to the Emperor Trajan, concerning the Christians accused before him. He ordered them to *curse Christ* in his presence, and those who declined were punished by imprisonment or death. He adds, that none yielded who appeared to be sincere in their faith.

5. The well-known saying, 'The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church,' is derived originally from an expression of Tertullian's, a Christian writer of the 2nd century.

6. 'The Word' does not mean the Scriptures here (nor in many other passages of the N.T.); the Scriptures then were the books of the Old Testament, whereas what the disciples preached was the life, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Christ. See the passage in Acts x. quoted in the Sketch.

7. Philip's journey was the first great step in the extension of the Christian Church. Baumgarten says Samaria was 'the bridge between Jerusalem and the world.' The chief city of Samaria at that time was Sebaste, a city built on the site of Ahab's capital; but it is not likely that it was there Philip went, as the words are not '*the city Samaria*,' but '*a city of Samaria*.' The Greek is exactly the same as in John iv. 5, and it seems highly probable that Sychar, the inhabitants of which so readily received Christ Himself, should be the first city to be visited by a missionary of the Gospel. On Sychar, and the Samaritans generally, see 'Life of Our Lord,' Lesson XIX. and accompanying 'Additional Notes.'



## Lesson XII.—Apostolic Blessings Given and Withheld.

*'Is thy heart right?'*

*Read*—Acts viii. 9—25; *Learn*—Ps. lxxviii. 36, 37; Jas. iv. 3; 2 Tim. i. 6.  
(*Hymns*, 19, 20, 108—112, 126—129, [140], 158, 175, 323—331.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

In so treating this passage as to lead up to the subject of Confirmation, it is not intended to convey the idea that this ordinance of our Church was established by our Lord Himself, or that it is in all respects the same thing as the 'laying on of hands' by the two Apostles in Samaria. Nevertheless, there does not seem any good reason for thinking that the 'laying on of hands' was a mere temporary usage, or that its only object was to impart miraculous gifts (see Note 5, below); and if we find a thing done by the Apostles (even though there be but a single instance, which is not certain—see same Note), and a very similar thing done by the early Bishops, the inference is a natural and reasonable one that the latter originated with the former. The argument is similar to those for Infant Baptism and Episcopacy.

There will not be any need for varying the treatment of the subject with scholars too young for Confirmation. They see or hear of their elder brothers, sisters, or school-fellows being taken to the Bishop, and it is well for them to understand what is going on; while the general solemn teaching of the Lesson—suggested by the words, 'Is thy heart right?'—is applicable to all.

In places where the children are likely to meet with fortune-telling or similar delusions, occasion should be taken from this Lesson to speak of the folly of those who are deluded and the sin of those who delude them.

### SKETCH OF LESSON.

Let us see to-day a little more about those Samaritans to whom Philip preached.

What had happened among them before Philip came? Ver. 9—11. A sorcerer there (a wizard, magician, fortune-teller)—did strange and wonderful things, like conjurors' tricks. Perhaps only tricks—perhaps miracles done by Satan's power (see Note 1)—not certain which. Who believed in him? only ignorant people? see ver. 10. The Samaritans were looking out for Messiah (John iv. 25)—now thought, Perhaps this is He. Simon the greatest man in the place—all looked up to him. [See Note 2.]

What happened when Philip came? Did they all stick to the sorcerer, and have nothing to do with Philip? see ver. 6. Can you think why they preferred Philip to Simon? Observe three great differences [see Note 3]:—

(a) Did Simon's magic do any good to anybody? what good do conjuring tricks usually do?—just make us wonder, stare, perhaps laugh—nothing else; ignorant folk may think them done by some great power—we know better. But what was the good of Philip's miracles? ver. 7—not one of them done to show off—all like Christ's, 'doing good' (see x. 38).

(b) What did Simon do his wonders for? out of love? no, to get paid, as all magicians used to do (comp. ver. 18). Did Philip go there to get money? Why then? His power not his own, but his Master's—used it as He had done, for good of His creatures.

(c) For whose honour did Simon do his

wonders? see ver. 9—for his own. And Philip? ver. 5—he 'preached not himself, but Christ Jesus' (2 Cor. iv. 5; comp. Acts iii. 12, 16).

Any other result of Philip's work? only this?—that people cared more for one kind of wonders than another? No: Philip's message, like Peter's (ii., iii.), was, 'The crucified Jesus is Lord of all—believe in Him—give up your sins—come out, be baptized, join the Church.' Did they? ver. 12—Divine power not only to heal sick bodies, but to convert sinful souls.

And see who, of all men, is coming to baptism, ver. 13—the sorcerer himself! Will Philip baptize him? Yes, certainly—seems as sincere as the rest. Ah, but look at 1 Sam. xvi. 7—God sees what men do not; and we shall find what a great gift was in store for the others, which Simon could not have.

### I. APOSTOLIC BLESSINGS GIVEN.

1. *The Gift.* What had Peter promised to the Jews who had repented and were baptized? see ii. 38. *Only* to the Jews? ii. 39. Now had these Samaritan converts 'received the Holy Ghost'? Certainly He had been working in their hearts, otherwise how could they have turned from sin (John xvi. 8) and believed in Christ (1 Cor. xii. 3)? But so He had in the Jews' hearts on the day of Pentecost—yet Peter said, 'Ye shall receive.' So He had in Peter's own heart long before that Pentecost, yet how different Peter was from that day! Yes: this coming down of the Spirit a much greater thing, to teach them all

things, to strengthen them, to fill them with joy—and, as a sign of all this, that others might know it, the gift of tongues. [See Lesson 11.]

This the Samaritans had not received yet, ver. 16. Why not? Because the Lord Jesus sent this gift through His chosen Apostles, and Philip not an Apostle. [See Note 5.] So when the news reached Jerusalem, who went down to Samaria? ver. 14.

2. *How the gift was bestowed.* Could Peter and John give the Holy Ghost as they pleased? no, the power not in them (comp. iii. 12): how then procured? ver. 15—‘prayed’—only the Lord could do that. But then, *how* did the Lord give the Spirit? Through the Apostles. [Illustr.—*Water in our houses comes not from pipes, but from springs; yet it comes through the pipes.*] See what they did, ver. 17—‘laid their hands on them.’ What a solemn scene! First, the prayer; then the laying on of hands; then the converts filled with the Holy Ghost—so much so that it could be seen (ver. 18)—perhaps the wonderful tongues as before (comp. x. 46)—certainly joy beaming from their faces.

## II. APOSTOLIC BLESSINGS WITHHELD.

What about Simon? Has he received the Holy Ghost? See what Peter said to him, ver. 21—‘Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter’—why not? because his heart ‘not right in the sight of God.’ Why then had he come to baptism? Not as a sign of giving up sin, for see ver. 23—‘in the bond of iniquity’ (‘tied and bound with the chain of his sins’). No, it was this: he saw Philip’s mighty works greater than his own—thought he would join him—get power to do the like—so be the more thought of, make more money. And now he sees a still greater wonder—the gifts bestowed by laying on of hands—could he not do that too?—a power worth buying—will try and get it. See what he does get, ver. 18—23: not an apostolic blessing, but an apostolic curse! [See Note 4.]

How exactly Simon like the Israelites in the 1st. text for rep. 1—his ‘heart not right’—made a covenant with God in bap-

tism, but ‘not stedfast’ in it—professed to believe in Jesus, but ‘lied unto Him with his tongue.’ And so the 2nd text for rep. also true of him—he ‘asked and received not’—why?—‘asked amiss, to consume it on his lusts.’

## CAN WE GET THE SAME BLESSINGS NOW?

Gifts of tongues, or works of healing—no. The Gift, the Holy Ghost—yes. How? see Luke xi. 13—‘He giveth the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.’

*But is there the laying on of hands now?*

Yes, when the Bishop comes to ‘confirm’ those who have been baptized. Any power in him to give the Spirit?—no—no more than in Peter and John. But there is in God. And when the Bishop prays, and lays his hands on the candidates, ‘after the example of the holy Apostles’ (Collect, Confirmation Service), we believe God is specially willing to give the Spirit. What does the Bishop pray? (see same Collect)—‘*Let Thy fatherly hand (not the Bishop’s only) ever be over them, let Thy Holy Spirit ever be with them.*’

What does Confirmation mean? Like Baptism [see Lesson IV.], it means two things:—(a) It means, on our side, that we ‘confirm’ the promises made for us at our Baptism [refer to them]. (b) It means, on God’s side, that He ‘confirms’ the promises He made to us at our Baptism. And, by giving us the Holy Spirit, God fulfils His own promises, and enables us to fulfil ours.

But do all who are confirmed ‘receive the Holy Ghost’? Did all the Samaritans?—one did not—why?—wanted the gift for a wrong purpose. So do some who go to the Bishop now—profess to be ‘religious’ in order to get on in life. But what was the secret of Simon’s false profession?—his ‘heart not right in the sight of God.’ ‘*Is thy heart right?*’—that is the question.

Are you too young yet for Confirmation? Then look forward to it; but don’t wait for it—ask for the Holy Spirit now. Pray the Collect for Christmas Day, that being God’s ‘children by adoption and grace,’ you may ‘daily be renewed by His Holy Spirit’ (comp. Tit. iii. 5).

## NOTES.

1. Sorcerers and magicians have been common among almost all nations in every age; but they were remarkably numerous about the time of the Advent. As Alford says, ‘It was the time of the break-up of various religions: almost all educated men were persuaded in their own minds that there was no truth in any of them; they regarded them all with equal contempt; but there is a religious element in the mind of man which cannot be thus satisfied;’ and unbelief and superstition are generally found together. Most great men at that day had sorcerers with them: thus the emperor Tiberius always kept one, and we find Elymas attached to the person of the governor of Cyprus (Acts xiii. 6, 7).

There are scarcely any magical deeds done by these men which cannot be paralleled by the tricks of great conjurers now, or by the Indian jugglers—who perform feats utterly inexplicable

to those not in the secret, and which yet are acknowledged to be mere tricks. At the same time, though we cannot certainly refer any marvels of the kind to Satanic power, yet it is impossible to deny that Satanic power may have been at work at different times; see Matt. xxiv. 24; 2 Thess. ii. 9. See further, Smith’s *Dict. Bible*, ‘Magic’; Conybeare and Howson, chap. 5.

2. There are many traditions respecting Simon Magus, and it is hard to distinguish what is probably true in them from what is no doubt false. We have accounts of his education at Alexandria; of his being worshipped as a god in Samaria; of his having numerous subsequent encounters with St. Peter, and being defeated by the latter’s superior miraculous power; of his being employed by the governor Felix to tempt Drusilla to leave her husband and live with him

(this, at least, is believed to be authentic); of his gaining such influence afterwards at Rome as to be worshipped and to have a statue erected in his honour; and of his being the founder of the great Gnostic heresy. See Smith's *Dict. Bible*, Art. 'Simon Magus'; Smith's *N. T. Hist.*, p. 339; Kitto, *Daily B. Ill.*, viii, p. 79; Goulburn, *Acts of the Deacons*, p. 240; Alford *in loco*.

Simon is usually called 'Magus,' from the Greek word in ver. 9, rendered 'used sorcery'—itself derived from the 'Magi' of the East.

'Bewitched' here means startled or amazed. The very same word is used in ver. 13 of Simon's own feelings at Philip's miracles, and there translated 'wondered.'

The Samaritans called the angels 'powers of God,' from which some think that they regarded Simon as an angel. Others imagine that he claimed to be, and was accepted as, an incarnation of Deity.

3. Dean Goulburn (*Acts of the Deacons*, p. 234) takes occasion, from the difference between Simon's magic and Philip's works of mercy, to point out the distinction between genuine and spurious miracles, the test being whether they bear 'the twofold seal of God's glory and love to men.'

It is worth noting that, of the three words used in the N. T. to designate Divine miracles, viz., *répas* (*teras*), a 'marvel'—*δύναμις* (*dynamis*) a 'mighty work,'—and *σημεῖον* (*semeion*) a 'sign,'—the first is never used by itself; i.e. Divine miracles are never regarded as mere wonders, but rather as the mighty works of God or as signs of His purposes of mercy. We find 'mighty works' (i.e., the Greek equivalent of the term) alone; we find 'signs' alone; we find 'signs and marvels,' and 'signs and mighty works'; we find three times (Acts ii. 22; 2 Cor. xii. 12; Heb. ii. 4) all three terms together; but never 'marvels' alone. Whereas pretended miracles, or Satanic works, are mere marvels, and nothing else. See G. Warrington's *Can we Believe in Miracles?* (S. P. C. K. Christian Evidence series) chap. i.

4. Ver. 20—24. 'Thy money perish with thee' is explained by Alford as meaning, 'Thy gold and thou are equally on the way to corruption'; by Vaughan, 'Thy money be with thee unto destruction.' 'Thy heart is not right,' i.e., not straight, but crooked. The 'gall' probably alludes to the old belief that the gall was the place where the poison of serpents was hidden, and the phrase means 'Thou art bitter at thy very root.' Observe that Simon's prayer is like Pharaoh's (Exod. ix. 27—35), prompted by the fear of consequences, not by true repentance.

Peter's exposure and denunciation of Simon's sin may be taken as an instance of the use of the

authority committed by Christ to him in John xx. 23. Yet he neither gives nor refuses 'absolution.' He does precisely what the Absolution in our Daily Service does: he declares in effect that God 'pardoneth and absolveth them that truly repent.'

From the sin of Simon Magus is derived the word 'simony,' designating the crime of making spiritual functions matters of buying, selling, and bargaining.

5. The journey of Peter and John into Samaria, and the effect of their laying their hands on Philip's converts, have been the subject of much controversy. It has been said that they went to ascertain the spiritual condition of the Samaritans; or to assure them that, though not Jews, they were recognised by the Church; or to satisfy the prejudices of the Jewish believers;—anything to avoid what seems the plain meaning of the passage, viz., that they went to impart gifts to the converts which Philip was unable to give. The main question is not, Why did Peter and John go down? but, Why was not the Holy Ghost given till they did go? Then it is said that the gifts they bestowed were Pentecostal ones, i.e., outward gifts like the tongues, and that the spiritual influences of the Holy Ghost had been already bestowed. Of course they had; but so they had before Pentecost, and yet the result of Pentecost was an immense increase of spiritual life and power even in the Apostles themselves.

Observe, that the power to give the Holy Ghost was not inherent in Peter and John: they only obtained it by prayer. Nevertheless, they were Christ's ordained instruments of blessing and channels of grace. It is true that God is not tied even to His own ordinances, and, in the case of Cornelius and his friends, the fullest measure of the Spirit (including the gift of tongues) was bestowed before either baptism or the laying on of hands (Acts x. 44—48); but this was manifestly an altogether exceptional case.

On the symbolism of the 'laying on of hands,' see Lesson IX., Note 5.

It is said, there is no other instance, except the peculiar one of Acts xix. 1—6, of this apostolic 'laying on of hands.' On the other hand, there is not the slightest evidence that it was not a regular practice. St. Peter may have 'confirmed' the believers in Judaea when he 'passed through all quarters' (Acts xi. 32); two significant passages in St. Paul's epistles (Rom. i. 11; 2 Tim. i. 6) are not easily explained in any other way; and, as a simple matter of historical fact, the rite of Confirmation can be traced to very early times, and it is hard to say how else it could have originated. See Wordsworth, Goulburn, and Vaughan, *in loco*.

## Lesson XIII.—The Written Word and the Living Teacher.

'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.'

Read—Acts viii. 26—40; Learn—John v. 39; Ps. xix. 7, 8. (Hymns, 116—119, 122, 127, 232, 258, 259, 263.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

This passage throws light on an important question, the mutual relations and respective provinces of the Bible and the Church—or, as expressed in the title of the Lesson, of 'the Written Word and the Living Teacher.' On the one hand, it corrects those who forbid or discourage the private reading of Holy Scripture, on the ground that, without the Church's interpretation, the reader will go wrong; for the eunuch is neither rebuked for his study of the prophets, nor desired to desist. On the other hand, it corrects those who lay so extreme a stress on the 'right of private judgment' as to depreciate the Church's autho-

rised statements of truth, and even to question the lawfulness of an ordained ministry,—though it may be observed that these latter are often the most abject followers of particular teachers.

In practical teaching, while it is difficult to exalt Scripture too highly, the voice of 'authority' will often be found peculiarly effective. In this way :—a sharp boy will bring forward some shallow objection to a passage or a doctrine, or (if gone out into life) may really be suffering mentally from the infidel doubts which he has heard uttered at his workshop : in such a case, when a further appeal to Scripture may fail to satisfy, the simple historical fact that the vast majority of the best and wisest of men have lived and died in the faith, will sometimes produce a deep and abiding impression : yet what is this but an appeal to the assent of the universal Church ? The Bible is the supreme, the sole rule of faith ; but when Bible statements themselves are in dispute, ought not the teaching of the Church from the first to have some weight ? This subject is fairly and moderately treated by Dean Goulburn in *The Acts of the Deacons*.

The application of the subject to the children will be sufficiently clear from the concluding paragraphs of the Sketch

#### SKETCH OF LESSON.

When Englishmen go to distant lands, and talk there about England, how much the people must long to come and see all the wonderful things ! Sometimes they do : you may see Chinese, Persians, &c., in streets of London or Liverpool.

Not so much of this in ancient times—travelling not so easy. Yet Jewish merchants scattered everywhere [see *Lesson II*, Note 4]. People in distant lands would see they did not worship idols like everybody else, but had old sacred books which told them about the great God—would inquire further—hear about Jerusalem, the Temple, the prophets of old, the expected great King, &c. Then sometimes would take long journey to Jerusalem to see Temple, &c. (as Queen of Sheba did even in days of Solomon).

From all nations God's redeemed ones to come (Rev. vii. 9) ; see one country specially mentioned, Ps. lxxviii. 31 ; Zeph. iii. 10—Ethiopia, far away, in Africa, beyond Egypt, now Abyssinia—people black. At the time we are reading about, a strong nation [see *Note 1*].—Queen Candace had brave soldiers and clever counsellors. One of her officers, a great man, treasurer ('chancellor of exchequer'), we meet in this Book of the Acts. What of him ? ver. 27—went to Jerusalem—so he one of those who wanted to see the wonders there.

Ah, but what brought him to Jerusalem ? Not mere curiosity. 'To worship.' Not only had heard of the true God, but believed in Him. Though so great a man at home, not ashamed to learn from those strange Jews. Though so busy with the royal money, managed to take that long journey.

How was he pleased with his visit ? Not told us ; but it seems as if he did not go away happy (contrast ver. 31 with ver. 39). And were the selfish priests and proud Pharisees likely to make his heart glad ? Perhaps as disappointed as converted heathen who now come to England and find so much vice and crime instead of everybody loving Christ.

But God did not leave him like that :

provided two ways of instructing his mind and gladdening his heart :—

#### I. THE WRITTEN WORD.

See the Ethiopian on his way home. Sitting in chariot—slave driving—others leading camels—some running before to 'make ready the way'—armed men behind for protection—a long line of travellers along the winding and rocky paths of Judæa [picture out]. What is the great man doing ?—might be thinking over all his adventures, or about business affairs at home—no—what ? ver. 28.

These wonderful old books of the Jews—he wants to know more of them, more of the great God who gave them, more (especially) of that coming King he has heard of. See where he is reading, ver. 32, 53. It is Isa. liii. : see ver. 6—'All we like sheep,' &c.—no doubt he feels how true that is, how he has often 'turned to his own way' instead of God's. And then what follows ?—'The Lord hath laid on Him,' &c.—on whom ?—he knows not—feels it is some wonderful message from God, but can't make it out. Then ver. 47—that unknown One 'led to the slaughter,' yet meek as a lamb—who can it be ?

To the Ethiopian all dark. Why then did he go on reading ? Felt there was something in it. And there was light in the strange Greek characters on the roll before him. What could those sacred words do ?—see second text for rep.—'convert the soul,' 'make wise the simple,' 'enlighten the eyes,' 'rejoice the heart' (comp. Jas. i. 21 ; 2 Tim. iii. 15—17). So they did presently—see how.

#### II. THE LIVING TEACHER.

A voice calling—the Ethiopian startled—what an abrupt, rude question ! ver. 30. What right had this stranger to speak so to such a great man ? see ver. 26, 29—God's messenger—taken away from that joyful work in Samaria [*last Lesson*], sent ever so far, on a wild, lonely road (ver. 26), on purpose to meet this African traveller ! How much God will do to save a soul !

Can Philip tell him who that holy Sufferer in the book is? ver. 35—"preached unto him *Jesus*." He the unknown One in the prophecy—He the 'Man of sorrows,' 'despised and rejected,' Isa. liii. 3 (Mark xiv. 34, xv. 12—20)—He the bearer of 'the iniquity of us all,' ver. 6 (1 Pet. ii. 24, 25)—He the patient Sufferer 'unto death,' ver. 7—9 (Phil. ii. 6—9; Heb. xii. 2, 8; 1 Pet. ii. 23)—yes, and He too—the Conqueror and Mediator, ver. 12 (Heb. ii. 9, 10, 14, vii. 25).

And what must the eunuch do?—first, 'believe'—then show that he believes—how? by openly declaring himself Christ's disciple, giving himself once for all to Christ in Baptism; then, '*saved*,' see Mark xvi. 16; Rom. x. 10. Can this man 'of great authority,' this treasurer of a kingdom, do that? See, he needs no pressing, ver. 36 (comp. Ps. cxix. 60)—eager for the great act that is to cut him off from all his past life, and make him feel as one 'born again' (John iii. 3; Rom. vi. 4). Imagine the silent wonder of that black crowd of attendants, as they see their master going down into the pool with the stranger!

Look again, a few miles further—the long cavalcade again upon its way. Look at the Ethiopian—is he puzzled, dissatisfied, gloomy now? ver. 39. No Philip with him—but what *has* he got? Just what he had before—the sacred roll—yes, but a key to it now—God's messenger has shewn him how to read it—now he can

'see a Saviour's love  
Shining in every page.'

And what became of him? We know not: but, years after, his nation a Christian one—did not he first 'preach to them *Jesus*'?

You think, How good God was to that Ethiopian! But—

GOD HAS GIVEN US GREATER PRIVILEGES.

1. *The Written Word*. The Ethiopian had 'Isaiah the prophet'—perhaps all the

Old Testament—what have we? Do we care about it? See how he did:—

(a) *He read because he liked to read*—not as a duty to be shirked or hurried over if possible. Are we like him in this? See what others thought of God's word, Ps. xix. 10, cxix. 72, 103, 127; and some boys and girls have been like that—but what kind of boys and girls?—those who loved God, and were eager to learn the way to heaven. [*Illustration*—*Child reading a beloved father's letter; or emigrant studying map of country he is going to.*]

(b) *He read, although he did not understand it all*. Perhaps he read and read, thought and thought, *tried* to understand; perhaps he asked God to teach him. So may you. You can '*search the Scriptures*' (first text for rep.)—you can pray Ps. cxix. 18. Even a child *may* understand much—Timothy did, 2 Tim. iii. 15.

2. *The Living Teacher*.

Here again we have more than the Ethiopian had. He had Philip for a little while—think of our parents and teachers, 'pastors and masters.' Do we value them? See how he did:—

(a) *He listened eagerly*—did not say, 'Oh, I can make it out for myself; or, God can teach me without my asking this man.' So God could, but it is not God's usual way. His way is to send living men to preach and teach. Who taught Timothy? 2 Tim. i. 5, 13. Who teaches you? How do you listen? You *should* be like the Thessalonians, 1 Thess. ii. 13.

(b) *He believed and obeyed humbly*. No setting up his own ideas, 'I won't believe this,' or, 'I don't see why I should do that.' He saw Philip *knew best*. Imitate him: obey the Apostle's command in Heb. xiii. 17—then you too will 'go on your way rejoicing.' Those who 'hate instruction,' and 'obey not the voice of their teachers'—see what is said of them, Prov. v. 11—13.

## NOTES.

1. 'Ethiopia' in Scripture is a general name for the countries south of Egypt, including the modern Nubia, Sennaar, and Northern Abyssinia. These countries were, in New Testament times, comprised in a powerful kingdom ruled by a native dynasty of females holding the official title of Candace (which, like Pharaoh, is not a personal name), and having its capital at Meroë. One of these queens successfully resisted a Roman invasion.

2. The word 'desert' applies, not to Gaza, which was a fortified town at the time, but to the 'way' thither. There were three roads, and the word 'desert' indicated which Philip was to take. Probably it was the one which went by way of Hebron over the bare hills of Southern Judah, on the large stones of which (laid by the Romans) may still be seen the ruts of chariot-wheels. There is a spring some distance north of Hebron, which, in Jerome's time, was universally believed to be the scene of the eunuch's baptism,—a tradition believed by Ritter and other good authorities to be correct. See Mr. Bardsley's 'Tour in Palestine,' *Church S. S. Mag.*, Jan., 1871.

3. We are told that Philip *heard* the eunuch reading. Orientals habitually read aloud when travelling, even if alone. See Kitto, *Daily B. Ill.*, viii., p. 86.

The form of Philip's question in the Greek implies a negative answer: 'Well, but now, after all, you don't understand, do you?'

4. The passage in Isaiah is quoted from the Septuagint Version, which differs a little from the Hebrew: hence the variations which will be observed on comparing the prophecy with its citation here. The words here, too, are variously explained. According to the best Hebrew scholars, the two first clauses of Isa. liii. 8 really mean, 'Without prison and without judgment was He taken away' (i.e., His death was hasty and illegal), and 'Who of His generation considered?' (i.e., they were indifferent).

5. The books of the Old Testament were divided by the Jews into sections, and the section of Isaiah which begins at chap. liii. contains also chap. lvi., ver. 3—7 of which would have a special interest for the Ethiopian just after his long journey to the 'house of prayer for all people.' Some think that, this section being the Jewish

'lesson' appointed for the Feast of Tabernacles, it is possible that the eunuch had been up to that feast.

6. Ver. 37 is considered by most good authorities to be an interpolation, as it does not appear in the earliest MSS. Such a question and answer were customary at baptisms in the Church in later days, and might easily be put in a marginal note, and then be inadvertently inserted afterwards into the text. There is of course no occasion to allude to such matters in teaching, but it would not be right or safe to base any special lesson on the statement that Philip

and the eunuch spoke those particular words. Still, the words themselves express important truths, and may be indirectly used as in the Sketch.

7. The conversion of the eunuch *may* have been an important historical fact in respect of its consequences, if it led to the foundation of the Abyssinian Church. But it seems to have been recorded chiefly as a sign and pledge of God's gracious designs towards the far-off heathen—those even beyond the bounds of the Roman Empire. See Baumgarten, *Apost. Hist.* (Clark's edition), i. 201.

## Lesson XIV.—Saul of Tarsus.

*'He is a chosen vessel unto Me.'*

*Read*—Passages referred to below; *Learn*—Phil. iii. 5, 6; Acts ix. 13, 15.  
(*Hymns*, 22, 132, 135, 137, 139, 156, 170, 174, 197, 326—331.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

This is one of the cases in which the appointment of a passage for reading is simply impossible. But those who (unwisely, as the writer thinks) prefer always to open with a 'reading,' can easily pick out the more important references in the Sketch, and let them be turned up successively at the beginning. For those scholars who usually look over the chapter beforehand, the teacher might write out these references. Or a set of questions might be given out, the answers to be found in the Bible during the previous week: such as, 'Where was St. Paul born?' 'Of what tribe was he?' 'To what sect did his father belong?' 'What relatives of his are named?' 'What trade did he learn?' 'Who was his teacher as a young man?' 'What do we know of his character?' &c. Such preparatory study adds not a little to the interest of the Lesson.

Teachers of non-reading classes ought to have no difficulty in telling the story of the little boy born in a foreign city, of his reading in the Old Testament, of his learning to make goats'-hair cloth, of his going to Jerusalem and education there, of his growing up to hate Christ's people, and yet of his being marked out by God all the while for a great work. The two rather long words, 'Circumstances' and 'Character,' need not be named in junior classes, and yet the division they indicate can be followed; but the difference between them and the importance of both will generally prove interesting, if illustrated as in the Sketch.

Many other cases of God's choice of instruments for His purposes, and early training of them, can be adduced, according to the teacher's knowledge and the scholars' capacities. Thus, Augustine, King Alfred, Luther, Wesley, and many missionaries. The word *vessel* ('chosen vessel') should be explained as that which is used to convey anything; and 2 Cor. iv. 7 may be compared.

Every teacher should, if possible, obtain access to Conybeare and Howson's *St. Paul* for this and following Lessons. Kitto's *Daily Bible Illustrations* will also afford much information, and on some points it surpasses even Dean Howson's brilliant chapters.

### SKETCH OF LESSON.

Interesting to notice how God chooses men for particular works. When would deliver Israel from Egypt, chose little foundling brought up in Pharaoh's court; when would make Ebrew kingdom strong, chose shepherd boy, youngest of family. Also, Abraham, Joseph, Joshua, Samuel, Elisha, Jeremiah, &c. [*Can be illustrated also from history; see Preface.*]

A great work to be done in the days of the Apostles. Proclaiming salvation by the risen Jesus—yes, but were not the Twelve doing this? Only to the Jews. Galilean fishermen could scarcely understand the ways and thoughts of the great

Gentile nations, Greeks, Romans, &c.—some man better prepared from childhood wanted.

In choosing a man for any office, two things to think of:—he must be suitable in *Circumstances*, and suitable in *Character*. [*Illustrate—choosing boy to do something for Sunday-school on week-nights, as library, &c.—must choose (a) one who does not work late, who lives near enough, &c.—these his 'circumstances'; (b) one who is diligent and trustworthy—this his 'character.'*] 'Circumstances' are things about you (literally, 'standing round'); 'Character' is what you are yourself.

Now see whom God chose for this great work—what his circumstances—what his character.

### I. HIS CIRCUMSTANCES.

We can find out what St. Paul was as a child, as a youth, as a man, before he became an Apostle. St. Luke tells us very little: first mentions him in vii. 58; but find it in St. Paul's speeches and letters.

1. *As a child.* Where born? Acts xxi. 39. Tarsus 'no mean city,' capital of province [*illustr.*—*county town*, or *other chief place in neighbourhood*]; Roman governor there (like Pilate), and many very clever and learned men. [See Note 1.] Gentile city, but Jews settled there, as in so many foreign parts [Lesson II.].—St. Paul's father [see Notes 2, 3] one—of what tribe? Phil. iii. 5—same tribe as Saul the King (1 Sam. ix. 15—17)—perhaps this why boy named Saul. [See Note 4.] Don't know whether he had brothers; but he had a sister (Acts xxiii. 16), and other relatives are named (Rom. xvi. 7, 11, 21). How would little Saul be brought up? Strictly, no doubt, for father a Pharisee (Acts xxiii. 6). Would 'from a child know the Holy Scriptures,' like Timothy (2 Tim. iii. 15), for see the command, Deut. vi. 7, xi. 19 (comp. Ps. lxxviii. 4—8); would hear those very same stories we have heard, of Joseph, Samuel, &c.: would go to synagogue school for Jewish boys. Learned a trade too—what? Acts xviii. 3 [see Note 3].

2. *As a youth.* Pharisee father would not let boy grow up among Gentiles if could help it—sent Saul to Holy City—for more education (like going to college). Very likely when aged thirteen [see Note 6]. There, in Temple with doctors of law, sitting at their feet, 'hearing and asking questions,' just like Jesus (Luke ii. 46)—with one great Rabbi especially, see Acts xxii. 3. A clever youth—got on more quickly than others, Gal. i. 14 (comp. Acts xxvi. 24).

3. *As a man.* We are not told where he was for some years—probably at Tarsus—but by-and-bye at Jerusalem again. One so active and clever soon a great man, one of the Council, trusted by the chief priests, given authority to seize people (xxii. 5, xxvi. 10)—*what people?* This the very man we read of three lessons ago, the cruel persecutor of the Church! [Recapitulate; see Lesson XI.]

Now, was this man suitable to be God's 'chosen vessel'? God sure to choose right; but can we here see how?

(a) Look at his education, learning, knowledge of both Jews and Gentiles—so unlike the poor fishermen of Bethsaida. No doubt God can make *any* instrument fit for His work; yet education a good thing—can do much for God with it if you will.

(b) But one thing made him particularly suitable. Can you think what? His persecution of the Church! How so? Because in all after ages, men would feel, 'If

that man was converted, it *must* be the finger of God! Christianity *must* be true!—Jesus *must* be the Lord Almighty!'

### II. HIS CHARACTER.

(1) Now, would you call this young Pharisee a good or a bad man? Enemy of the Church—enemy of Christ—can't call him good; yet not an open sinner. See what he says of himself at that time, Phil. iii. 6—'blameless.' And think what that meant: not merely that he was no thief or murderer, rioter or drunkard—not merely that he was respectable, upright, amiable—more than this—'strict' in religion (Acts xxvi. 5)—no doubt could say what the Pharisee in the Temple said, 'Not as other men,' &c. (Luke xviii. 11, 12), and what the young ruler said, 'All these have I kept,' &c. (Luke xviii. 21).

(2) But was it not wrong to persecute the Church? ah yes!—and see how he looked back on it in after years, 1 Cor. xv. 9; yet even *that* not done as some boys persecute pious boys now, hating religion altogether—but done 'ignorantly' (1 Tim. i. 13)—why? see Acts xxvi. 9, 'I verily thought with myself that I *ought*,' &c.! Just what Jesus had told the Apostles, John xvi. 2. Think of him in Jerusalem—regular at the Temple—strict in prayer, fasting, alms—avoiding bad company—really trying hard to please God; and searching out, seizing, imprisoning those hated followers of the crucified Jesus—thinking *that* the best of all his good deeds!

(3) Was he happy, do you think? He really tried to please God—did he think he succeeded? No: he had been bright and cheerful at one time, but that had gone (Rom. vii. 9), because he found he *could* not keep the law perfectly—perhaps, after all, had uneasy feelings about Stephen's blood (see Acts xxii. 20)—there were 'prickings' of some kind in his conscience which he could not stop (Acts ix. 5). [See Note 8.]

But how did all this fit him to be God's 'chosen vessel'?

(a) God could make use of his good qualities as well as of his education, &c.:—e.g., of his zeal (see 2 Cor. xi. 23—28); of his anxiety to do right (see 1 Cor. viii. 13, x. 33).

(b) Having found out in himself that he never could by good deeds win heaven, how eagerly would he cling to Christ's merits when once he knew of them (Phil. iii. 7—9), and how earnestly tell others the truth he had learned himself! see Rom. iii. 20—28.

*All through those thirty years God watching young Saul—making 'all things work together' to prepare him for the great work!*

IS GOD SO WATCHING AND PREPARING ANY OF YOU?

*He may be.* Not, perhaps, for a great work—may be a very small one—see in Jonah iv. two very humble things that God 'prepared' to do something for Him:

ver. 6, 'prepared a gourd'—ver. 7, 'prepared a worm.'

Think about your *Circumstances*—your *Character*: ask God to make them helps in your serving Him. But are *Circumstances* and *Character* everything? Were they enough in Saul's case? Why, they were taking him the *wrong way* until God interposed. How this?

## NOTES.

1. Tarsus, the birth-place of St. Paul, was the capital of Cilicia, a maritime province in the S.E. of Asia Minor, between the mountains of Taurus and the Mediterranean Sea.

History gives abundant proof that it was indeed 'no mean city,' either politically or commercially, while in respect of learning and culture, the geographer Strabo speaks of it as having a higher reputation than even Athens or Alexandria. Kitto has an excellent account of ancient and modern Tarsus, *Daily B. Ill.*, viii., p. 94. See also C. & H., vol. i., chap. i., pp. 24—28; and an article by Professor S. Leathes, in the *Church S. S. Mag.* for Feb., 1872.

2. The slight allusions to St. Paul's family are noticed in the Sketch. That they were pure Jews, without any admixture of Gentile blood, is indicated by his calling himself 'an Hebrew of the Hebrews' (Phil. iii. 5); just as a Bedouin will proudly boast of being 'an Arab of the Arabs.' From his claim on two occasions to be treated as a 'Roman' (Acts xvi. 37, 38; xxii. 25—28), and his statement that he was 'free born' (xxii. 28), it appears that his father enjoyed the privilege of Roman 'citizenship,'—which, belonging naturally only to Romans by descent, could be purchased by others (as by the chief captain in xxii. 28, who had obtained it 'with a great sum'), and was sometimes given to slaves and other foreigners for services rendered. St. Paul's father might have acquired it in either way. The privileges of citizenship are described in Smith's *Dict. Greek & Rom. Antig.*, Art. 'Civitas.'

3. We have no means of knowing the social position of the family, but young Saul's liberal education shows that they could not have been very poor. His learning a manual trade was simply in accordance with an universal Jewish custom. The Talmud defines a father's duties to his son thus:—'To circumcise him, to teach him the Law, to teach him a trade.' Rabbi Judah says, 'He that teacheth not his son a trade, doth the same as if he taught him to be a thief'; and Rabban Gamaliel (St. Paul's great teacher), 'He that hath a trade in his hand is like a vineyard that is fenced.'

The particular trade young Saul learned was one largely carried on at Tarsus. The goat's hair of the district was unusually long and much esteemed; the cloth made from it (called from the locality *cilicium*) being particularly useful for tents, sacks, and rough coats for sailors. See further, C. & H., i., chap. ii. pp. 58, 59; Kitto, p. 92.

4. It is probable that Saul was a popular name in the tribe of Benjamin, in memory of the first king of Israel. Dr. Howson thinks that the Apostle also bore the name of Paul from his infancy, and suggests that his family may have had some connection (perhaps formerly as slaves) with the famous Roman family of the *Æmilian Pauli*. (C. & H., i., chap. v., p. 183.)

5. Interesting accounts of the associations of St. Paul's childhood occur in C. & H. and Kitto. The latter (p. 101) has a curious engraving and description of an Oriental school, to

illustrate his early education. In Gal. iii. 24, 'The Law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ,' the word rendered 'schoolmaster' is *pedagogue* (*παιδαγωγός*), which means, not the teacher, but the slave who took the child to school; and the allusion may have been suggested by the Apostle's own experience.

Although the school would probably be a Jewish one, yet it is clear that, either in his boyhood or afterwards, Saul acquired some knowledge of Greek literature. Three times we find him quoting from Greek poets: in Acts xvii. 28, from Aratus (also a native of Cilicia); in 1 Cor. xv. 33, from Menander; in Tit. i. 12, from Epimenides.

6. Saul probably went to Jerusalem at the age of thirteen, when Jewish boys could become 'sons of the law,' and be admitted into full national privileges. See 'Life of Our Lord,' Lesson X.

On Gamaliel, the Rabbi to whom Saul looked up as his chief instructor, see Lesson VIII., Note 6. 'Sitting at the feet' of the teacher (Acts xxii. 3) was the regular posture of the learner; comp. Luke ii. 46. On Saul's student-life at Jerusalem, and the Rabbinical methods of instruction, see C. & H., i., chap. ii., pp. 71—77.

7. Saul was probably two or three years younger than our Lord, and his residence at Jerusalem would be while Jesus was growing up at Nazareth. It is the general opinion that he never saw his Master's face until that memorable day near Damascus. Probably he returned to Tarsus, and only came into contact with Christianity when, once more at Jerusalem, he 'disputed with Stephen.'

If, at this later period, he was a member of the Sanhedrim (on which see Lesson XI., Note 2), he must have been married and a father, which was one of the conditions of admission to that body. In that case, his wife at all events did not long survive, as there are plain intimations in the Epistles that he was wifeless when they were written.

8. The inference in the Sketch respecting the mental condition of Saul the persecutor, drawn from Rom. vii., is not an undisputed one among writers on that difficult chapter. The subject could not be discussed here: but it seems most probable (a) that, in the 9th verse, St. Paul alludes to himself personally, (b) that he does not there describe an effect of his conversion, but (c) that he refers to some previous time, when he realised something of the breadth of the Divine law, and felt the 'bondage' (viii. 15) he was in, and when his heart in consequence sank within him. 'I was once alive [peaceful and self-satisfied], without [any idea of the high spiritual obligations of] the Law; but when the commandment came [home to my conscience in its significance and power], the sin [in my heart] sprang up into life; and I died [losing all joy and strength].' (*Annotated Paragraph Bible*.) If he could say 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?' after he knew the Deliverer, how much more could he say it before!



## Lesson XV.—The Persecutor Converted.

*'Is anything too hard for the Lord?'*

*Read*—Acts ix. 1—19; *Learn*—Acts xxii. 14—16; 1 Tim. i. 15, 16. (*Hymns* 5, 60, 62, 127, 143, 145—148, 180—185, 325—329, 343, 352.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

It would seem scarcely possible that this Lesson could prove otherwise than interesting, were it not for the too emphatic testimony of experience that, in the hands of some teachers, it is all but impossible that *any* Lesson should be interesting. Now the subject before us eminently requires two things: 1st, *thoughtful* preparation (not mere reading)—which is precisely what many will be tempted to omit, just because so exciting a narrative will appear easy to teach; 2nd, that the teacher should know by experience *something*, at least, of the self-abasement and feeling of utter unworthiness and helplessness which Saul undoubtedly went through in those three days. Unless both mind and heart are thus *in tune* (so to speak) with the subject, how is the teacher to convey the slightest idea of the meaning of the two great evidences of true conversion in Saul—the surrender of his will (ver. 6), and the reality of his prayers (ver. 11)?

That wonderful eleventh verse might be more dwelt upon by the teacher than the plan of the Lesson allowed it to be in the Sketch. Something in this way:—'Christ knew the name of the street, the name of the owner of a particular house, the name of the *lodger* in that house, and what he was doing: so now, He knows High-street from Queen-street, George-street from William-street, all about the inmates,' &c.—(naming familiar localities and persons). On this subject there is a powerful 'St. Paul's Special Sermon' by the Rev. J. Moorhouse.

On the general subject, Stier (*Words of the Apostles*, on the speeches in Acts xxii. and xxvi.) and Baumgarten (*Apostolic History*) are excellent. Matthew Henry's notes are among the most singularly happy and suggestive even in his ever-suggestive Commentary.

### SKETCH OF LESSON.

[*Begin by referring to Lesson XI.*] What became of the 'scattered disciples' who were driven from Jerusalem by the persecution after Stephen's death? viii. 4. Were they safe in the different cities they fled to? xxvi. 11. Who was their relentless pursuer? Why did he so persecute them?—xxvi. 9 [*see last Lesson*].—his mind full of it—'breathing threatenings and slaughter,' and yet all the while thinking he was 'doing God service' (John xvi. 2).

Now he is on a longer journey—whither? [*see Note 2*].—with what purpose? whence his authority? see ver. 2, xxii. 5, xxvi. 12. [*See Note 1.*] Imagine him pressing forward, thinking how he will by-and-bye return same way, followed by train of captives. *Will he?* He will come back a captive himself,—or rather, he is a captive *now*, and will come back free (see John viii. 34, 36; Gal. iv. 3—7; Rom. vii. 24, viii. 2, 15, 21).

For who is this persecutor? What does God mean him to be? [*last Lesson*].—'a chosen vessel,' ix. 15. To-day see how the great change came about.

#### I. THE PERSECUTOR MEETING CHRIST.

Has Saul ever heard of Jesus? No doubt has heard all about 'that troublesome Galilean who used to revile the priests and scribes, and stir up the people against them—who was so justly condemned by the Council and executed by Pilate.' Why, it is *His* followers whom Saul is seeking out—

'deluded people who actually think that Nazarene was Messiah, and say he came out of his grave!'

Suddenly, as he journeys on, whom does Saul meet? *That very Jesus of Nazareth!* See how, ver. 3—5, xxii. 6—9, xxvi. 13—15 [*picture scene*].

(a) *What Saul saw.* A light brighter than the noonday sun! xxvi. 13; comp. Rev. i. 16; 1 Tim. vi. 16. But was that all he saw? ver. 17; 1 Cor. ix. 1, xv. 8—he saw Jesus Himself—the crucified One, in Divine glory! [*See Note 8.*] He saw that very sight the description of which from Stephen's lips had seemed to him so blasphemous (vii. 55—58).

(b) *What Saul heard*, ver. 4. Think what those words meant—'Why persecutest thou Me, thy Lord, thy Saviour, thy Friend?' How could he be persecuting Christ, who was in heaven? see Isa. lxiii. 9; Zech. ii. 8; Matt. xxv. 40. But Saul understood not (perhaps thought it was one of those he had killed): now hear the startling reply, '*I am Jesus of Nazareth*' (xxii. 8)—'I, here in glorious majesty, am that Nazarene, who was condemned and executed!'

#### II. THE PERSECUTOR SURRENDERING TO CHRIST.

Can we imagine the tremendous shock in Saul's mind? See him on the ground, blinded and motionless—but his thoughts—what of them? [*Illustr.—Soldier in Ameri-*

*can Civil War, struggling with foe in battle, overcame him, shot him, then, horror-struck, found it was his own brother!]* In one instant, the dreadful certainty, all his life wrong—Messiah has come, and he is fighting against Him!

Any resistance now? Has been long 'kicking' against Christ, ver. 5 [see Note 7], but now—instant 'surrender at discretion' [*illust.—like soldier suddenly surrounded by overpowering force*—hear the trembling words, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?'] What words from his lips—the self-righteous Pharisee, the persecutor of Christ's people! For, what do they mean?

(a) That Saul acknowledges that Jesus the Nazarene has the right to direct him. What he wrote years afterwards (Phil. ii. 10, 11) true of himself then.

(b) That Saul is ready to submit to whatever directions Jesus of Nazareth may give him. Does not want his 'own way' (Isa. liii. 6) now. Another thing he wrote years afterwards (2 Cor. x. 5) now beginning to be true of himself.

### III. THE PERSECUTOR PRAYING TO CHRIST.

See Saul entering the gate of Damascus [see Note 2] no longer proud and bitter, no longer 'breathing slaughter'—a blind, broken-down man, led by the hand to his lodging. And then those three days, ver. 9—sitting in black darkness, refusing all food—with Jesus' face in his memory, Jesus' voice in his ears. How can we imagine him? perhaps Job xlii. 5, 6 will help us; comp. Ps. xxxii. 3—5, xxxviii. 3, 4, xl. 12, li. 1—4; Ezra ix. 6; 'abhorring himself'—his 'sin ever before' him—'not able to look up'—his 'heart failing' him—his 'iniquities too heavy' for him—'the remembrance of them grievous, the burden intolerable' (*Confession in Commun. Service*)—

'Lord, at Thy feet ashamed I lie;  
Upward I dare not look'—

even in his old age called himself 'chief of sinners' (1 Tim. i. 15)—what must he have felt those three terrible days and nights!

But what is he doing? see ver. 11—'behold, he prayeth.' Why 'behold'?—had he not often prayed before? yes, but *how*? see Matt. vi. 5; Luke xviii. 11, xx. 47. Now, 'asking, seeking, knocking' (see Luke xi. 5—10, xviii. 1—7), 'crying mightily to God,' like the Ninevites (Jon. iii.); 'crying unto the Lord all night' like Samuel (1 Sam. xv. 11). The persecuting Pharisee praying to Jesus the Nazarene!

Can the Nazarene, the malefactor that was dead and buried, hear those cries of bitter penitence? ah yes, exalted now—what to be?—what to give? see Acts v. 31; comp. Rom. viii. 34; Heb. vii. 25; 1 John ii. 1, 2. Yes, He can; but does He? see Gal. i. 11, 12, 15, 16—the 'Gospel' (glad tidings of pardon through Jesus) 'revealed' (unveiled, shown clearly) by the Lord Himself to His 'chosen vessel.'

But though God's wondrous love thus shown to him, no answer yet to his question 'what to do' (ver. 6)—that to come another way. See how:—

### IV. THE PERSECUTOR BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST.

A visitor to Judas' house, in 'the street called Straight' [see Note 2], seeks the blind Pharisee—calls him 'Brother Saul.' Who sent this visitor? ver. 10—12. Did he like going? ver. 13, 14. Why, it is one of the very men whom Saul went to seize—now sent to the dreaded persecutor—what to do? ver. 17, 18. The eyes of Saul's mind already opened—his soul 'turned from darkness to light' (xxvi. 18; 2 Cor. iv. 6; Eph. i. 18)—now his bodily eyes opened too.

And then the 'blameless' Pharisee must do exactly what all the other converts had done (ii. 38, 41, viii. 12, 38)—be baptized in the name of Jesus. A great step indeed—What did it mean? see xxii. 16: it meant (a) God saying to Saul, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee'; (b) Saul saying to God, 'I renounce them all' (Bapt. Service). See what Saul thought of it in after years. Rom. vi. 2—4; reckoned it as the death of his old sinful life, as the beginning of a new life—see 11th ver., 'dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.' Comp. Gal. ii. 20, iii. 26; Col. ii. 12, iii. 9, 10.

This the first thing the Lord will 'have him to do.' But, having yielded *himself* to Christ, must become an ambassador to others. See this next time.

We have read and heard of many wonders done by the Lord Jesus; but do we know one like this? Must we not exclaim, 'Is anything too hard for the Lord?'

No work so hard as to change a heart: see Jer. xiii. 23. And such a heart as Saul's! so proud as a Pharisee, so bitter as a persecutor. True, not what called 'a bad man' [see last Lesson]; but the change *harder* if anything for that, Matt. xxi. 31.

*Is Christ's power less now?* Then he can change the hardest heart in *this class*. The most *unlikely* to be a true servant of Jesus *may become one*. Think of this—for yourselves—for others.

*He can—but is He willing?* See 2nd text for rep.—Saul's case 'a pattern'—to him the Lord shewed 'all long-suffering' on purpose that the worst of us might not doubt His love. He says (Isa. i. 18), 'Though your sins be as scarlet,' &c.: well may we say to Him (Mic. vii. 18), 'Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity?'

*But do you need to be converted like Saul?* Yes, indeed—unless Christ's already. Take two tests:—(a) Is your *will* surrendered to Him? do you, as a habit, look up and say, 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?'  
(b) Can He look down and say of you, 'Behold, he prayeth'?

## NOTES.

1. At first sight it seems strange that the chief priests should be able to give Saul any power to make arrests in a distant city like Damascus. But the Sanhedrim claimed to exercise a certain religious authority over Jews everywhere, not unlike that of the Papacy in mediæval times; and, as long as they kept within certain limits, they were not interfered with by the Roman rulers. Professor Porter, in his Notes to the revised edition of Kitto's *Daily Bible Illustrations*, says, 'The political state of the Jews at present in Damascus appears to be similar to what it was in the time of Paul. Though the Jews are subjects of the Sultan, the community has its own laws, and has the power of judging and punishing its own members within certain limits. In all that concerns their religion, the Government does not interfere. I have known Jews to be imprisoned and beaten because they listened to Christian missionaries.'

But, at the time of St. Paul's conversion, the city of Damascus was not under the Roman dominion, but belonged to Aretas, the king of Arabia, and father-in-law of Herod Antipas; and the 'governor' under him 'kept the city with a garrison' (2 Cor. xi. 32). It is uncertain whether it fell into his hands in the course of the war between him and Herod (see 'Life of Our Lord,' Lesson XLIV., Note 2)—the latter being aided by the Roman governor of Syria; or, whether it was granted to him by the Emperor Caligula. See C. and H. i., chap. iii., p. 99; Kitto, p. 150.

As, however, the Jews had sympathised with Aretas in the war (regarding Herod's total defeat as a judgment on him for the murder of John the Baptist), the Sanhedrim would be likely to have more rather than less power than usual over the Jewish residents at Damascus at this time.

2. Damascus is probably the oldest city in the world. It existed in the time of Abraham (Gen. xiv. 15), and is still a place of importance at the present day. An interesting sketch of its history, by Professor Stanley Leathes, appeared in the *Church S. S. Mag.* for January, 1872.

Damascus is famed for the beauty of its situation. It stands in a plain of extraordinary fertility, between the mountain range of Anti-Libanus and the great desert. All travellers speak with rapture of the first view of it from a gentle eminence seven miles off (the traditional scene of Saul's conversion). Porter says, 'At my feet lay Damascus, embowered in its ever-green forests, as the poet describes it, "*A diamond set round with emeralds*." The morning sun lighted up its white walls, and glanced from its polished domes and the gilded crescents of its hundred minarets. Gardens and orchards, teeming with fruit-trees of almost every species, surround the city, and spread far away over the plain.' This and other descriptions will be found in Kitto, pp. 116, 127.

The 'street called Straight' (*Via Recta*) 'ran through the city from east to west, and was about a mile long. At each end was a triple Roman gateway, still in a great measure entire. The street was divided into three grand avenues by Corinthian colonnades, and its total breadth was about 100 feet.'—(Porter.) The line of the street is now traversed by a narrow lane, an engraving of which forms the frontispiece to W. B. Mackenzie's *Saul of Tarsus*.

3. The distance from Jerusalem to Damascus is 140 miles, and would occupy Saul five or six days. There is little doubt that he rode on horseback, as usually represented. The question

of his route is discussed in C. & H., i., chap. iii., p. 102.

4. 'This way' (ver. 2)—i.e., manner of religion. An expression evidently common in the early Church, see Acts xviii. 25; xix. 9, 23; xxii. 4; xxiv. 14; comp. Ps. lxxvii. 2—'that Thy way may be known upon earth.' The Christian faith was also known as 'the truth' (2 John i. 1) and 'the life' (Acts v. 20; 1 John i. 2).

5. In the three accounts of Saul's conversion (in ix., xxii., xxvi.), some differences will be noticed. But they are easily reconciled. Chap. ix. says that Saul's companions 'stood speechless'; chap. xxvi., that they, with him, fell to the earth. Probably they fell, but immediately rose again. Chap. ix. says they heard Christ's voice, but 'saw no man'; chap. xxii., that they 'saw the light,' but 'heard not the voice.' No doubt they saw the light without seeing the Lord Himself, and heard the sound of His voice without knowing that it was a voice or distinguishing the words (comp. John xii. 28, 29). In chap. xxvi., Christ's apostolic commission to Saul is related as if it were given while he lay on the ground; but probably St. Paul, in the condensed brevity of his speech, anticipated what occurred afterwards in the Temple at Jerusalem (xxii. 17—21).

6. It is interesting to observe St. Paul's express statement (xxvi. 14) that Christ spoke to him in Hebrew. This is indeed implied in chap. ix., where the Lord's words 'Saul, Saul,' are in the Hebrew form, not in the Greek (*Saoul*, not *Saule*). It is worth noticing how our Lord was wont to repeat the names of those He was addressing, when He would engage their particular attention: 'Simon, Simon,' 'Martha, Martha,' 'Jerusalem, Jerusalem.' So in the Old Test.: 'Abraham, Abraham'; 'Samuel, Samuel.'

7. 'It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks,' i.e., the sharp-pointed goads used in driving oxen. This was a common Greek proverb, expressive of the impotent rage which hurts itself instead of its object, and is found in Æschylus, Euripides, and Pindar. Its use by our Lord is a remarkable instance of that gracious readiness to employ the simplest and most familiar metaphors which we find so often manifested in His earthly ministry. The words clearly imply that Saul's conscience had not been at ease; see last Lesson, Note 8.

8. St. Paul calls Christ's appearance to him a 'vision' (xxvi. 19), but the Greek word there is not the ordinary one, but one used elsewhere of real appearances. Of the 'vision' in which the Lord spoke to Ananias, and of the 'vision' which Saul saw of Ananias coming to him (ix. 10, 12), the ordinary word is used. Saul did actually with his bodily eyes see Christ in His human nature; and his so seeing Him is adduced in his 1st Epistle to the Corinthians as an evidence of his own apostleship (ix. 1), and as a proof of Christ's resurrection (xv. 8).

9. The conversion of Saul is justly regarded as one of the most powerful of the evidences of Christianity. In the last century, a remarkable essay, entitled *Observations on the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul*, was written on the subject by Lord George Lyttelton, who had been a sceptic, but became a Christian after deliberate examination of the Evidences. This interesting work has been recently republished by the Religious Tract Society, with an able Introductory Essay by Henry Rogers.

## Lesson XVI.—The Apostle Prepared for his Work.

*'Old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.'*

Read—Acts ix. 20—30 (refer to Gal. i.); Learn—2 Cor. v. 17, 18; Eph. iii. 7, 8. (Hymns, 121, 168, 170, 202, 224, 324, 331, 377.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

This is at first sight not an attractive subject, the passage for reading merely narrating two or three apparently slight incidents which do not present a definite topic for teaching purposes; while the parallel passage in Galatians seems only to add one or two incidents without supplying the *cementing thought* needed to combine them together. It is hoped that this *cementing thought* will be found in the Sketch, where it is drawn from the description of the Christian's new life in the 1st text for repetition; and that after reading the Sketch over, teachers who have been most impressed with the unpromising aspect of the subject will see that the Lesson is almost a necessary sequel to the preceding one, shewing the *issue* of Saul's conversion in his actual life, and to some extent bridging over the chasm which, to many readers of the Acts, seems to exist between that conversion and the beginning of his missionary travels four chapters further on.

We have an example in this Lesson of the way in which the Epistles of St. Paul illustrate his history as given in the Acts, and of the light they throw upon his character and his inner life. But they will be much more extensively used hereafter. Lessons XXVII., XXXV., XXXVI., XLVII., XLVIII., and XLIX., are entirely based upon passages in various Epistles, and Lesson XXVI. partially so; while Lessons XXX., XXXII., and XXXIII. will derive much of their interest from similar sources.

The Epistles are commonly regarded as, on account of their difficulty, wholly unavailable for teaching purposes; and undoubtedly they could not be successfully expounded in detail even to the most intelligent of Sunday-scholars. But for reference they are invaluable; and if, when they are turned to in order to illustrate and fill out St. Luke's narrative, they are spoken of familiarly as '*letters*' written by St. Paul, such references will often really succeed in interesting the scholars. Children are apt to think of the Bible as one book, instead of a collection of writings of the most various kinds. Thus, in section 1 of Division I., if, as is there suggested, Rom. vi. be turned to, children will see that ver. 3, 4, have something to do with baptism, but they will not of themselves realise that the words were actually written by that very man of whose baptism at Damascus they learned the previous Sunday. Let them be made to understand *that*, and the passage will look quite differently to them.

### SKETCH OF LESSON.

What is a '*creature*'? Why do we call a dog, or a child, a '*creature*'? Find a word like it in Gen. i. 1. A '*creature*' is a *thing created* (see 1 Tim. iv. 4). What kind of '*creature*' mentioned in 1st text for rep.? If a man becomes a '*new creature*,' what a change it must be!—like being created over again. When Jesus turned water into wine, *there* was a '*new creature*'—and how changed!—no mistake about it—looked, smelt, tasted, quite differently.

Who is a '*new creature*'? (1st text for rep.)—one who is in '*Christ*,' i.e. a '*member of His body*' (Rom. xii. 5) [see Lesson IV.], a true Christian (see Rom. xvi. 7). We see many '*religious people*' who don't seem so different from other people—not much like '*new creatures*.' But when St. Paul wrote these words, he wrote what he felt and knew. With him it was true that '*old things had passed away—all become new*.' When and where was he made a '*new creature*'? [*last Lesson: recapitulate*].

To-day see something of his new life.

FIRST—See how '*all things were become new*' to Saul.

1. At Damascus, ver. 19—21. Saul had been baptized: what did he think of that solemn act? [*last Lesson*!—see Rom. vi. 3, 4, 11—13. Considered himself cut off from all the past, as one dead and alive again—now to walk '*in newness of life*.' What the first thing he does? ver. 19—'*with the disciples*'—not with the synagogue-rulers to whom he had letters of introduction (ver. 2), but with those he had hoped to '*bring bound to Jerusalem*!' Was not Isa. xi. 6 fulfilled, '*the wolf dwelling with the lamb*'?—but why? because the '*wolf*' changed into a '*lamb*'—a '*new creature*.' What the next thing he does? ver. 20—in the very synagogues where he meant to *beat* the followers of Jesus (xxii. 19), himself preaching that the hated Jesus is the Son of God! [See Note 1.] No wonder all '*amazed*' (ver. 21). Might have said, as was said of his royal namesake (1 Sam. x. 11, 12), '*Is Saul also among the prophets?*'

But why was it? Because 'old things passed away—all new'!

2. *In Arabia*, Gal. i. 15—17. [See Notes 2, 3, 4.] We are not told why he went there; anyhow, far away from friends—very different life—no more sitting in the great Council, no more hot disputation with Christ's servants, no more eager pursuit of Nazarene fugitives—probably quiet searching of Scriptures and thinking about the wondrous love of the Son of God in coming down to such a life and such a death—see his words in after years, 2 Cor. v. 14, viii. 9; Gal. ii. 20; Eph. iii. 17—19. How true our text again, 'old things passed away—all new'!

3. *At Damascus again*, ver. 22—25; 2 Cor. xi. 32, 33. Saul full of energy before—now more so than ever (ver. 22)—only how differently used! Stephen's old enemy doing just what Stephen did (vi. 10)—and the effect the same too, a conspiracy against his life, ver. 23 (comp. vi. 11—13). And not only the Jews against him—who else? 2 Cor. xi. 32—no doubt they (as years after, xxiv. 1, 5) 'informed the governor against him' as a 'pestilent fellow.' How escape? No getting out of gates, ver. 24—how then? ver. 25 (2 Cor. xi. 33)—like the spies from Rahab's house, Josh. ii. 15. [See Note 5.] The pursuer become a fugitive!—old things indeed passed away—all new!

4. *At Jerusalem*, ver. 26—30; Gal. i. 18—24. [See Notes 6, 8.] Here the same 'new things' repeated—with disciples of Jesus (ver. 28)—preaching in name of Jesus (ver. 29)—a fugitive for Jesus' sake (ver. 29, 30). But our text more true here than anywhere. Just think of Saul re-entering those gates of Jerusalem whence he rode forth 'breathing slaughter'—think of him passing the spot where he stood to see Stephen murdered—think of him arguing with his own old particular set, ver. 29 [see Note 7]—think of him living with Peter! with that same unlearned Galilean fisherman who had so boldly defied the Council in the presence of Saul's great teacher, perhaps of Saul himself (iv. 8—13, 18—20, v. 20—34).

5. *In his mind and heart*. Not only his circumstances new, but his character also [see Lesson XIV.]—his thoughts and feelings about himself, and about God. Look at 2nd text for rep.—calls himself 'less than the least' even of the once despised Nazarenes! Look at another passage in his Epistles, Phil. iii. 4—9:—is that like a Pharisee?—much more like the penitent Publican! He might (see Gal. vi. 14, 15) have sung our hymn,

'Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast  
Save in the cross of Christ my God;  
All the vain things that charm me most,  
I sacrifice them to His blood!'

SECONDLY—See how all these things prepared Saul for his work.

What was his work? See 1st text for rep. and next two verses—'the ministry of reconciliation'—to be 'an ambassador for

Christ,' beseeching men to 'be reconciled to God.' To whom would Saul long to go with this message first? (see Rom. ix. 1—3, x. 1);—his 'heart's desire' that 'Israel should be saved'; and when the Lord Jesus appeared to him in the Temple [see Note 8], and warned him to escape from Jerusalem, what did he reply? xxii. 17—20,—felt sure the Jews could not resist his testimony. But the Lord had chosen him for other work; see next verse—he must go to the Gentiles far away—was to win the name for all future ages of 'the great Apostle of the Gentiles.' See how Christ described the work, Acts xxvi. 17, 18. See what Saul himself thought of this great mission, 2nd text for rep.

How long, think you, was Saul being prepared for his work? God might prepare any of us for any work in a moment—but He does not. There are *ten years* from Acts ix. 15 to xiii. 2! Not that Saul idle all the time—have seen him to-day preaching; but still not the work until then. But think how God was preparing him by the 'new things' we have seen [question back]:—

(a) Strengthened by intercourse with the brethren. He felt this when an old man (xxviii. 15; 1 Cor. xvi. 18; 2 Cor. vii. 6)—how much more as a young convert!

(b) Prepared by study and meditation in solitude. No doubt God with him in Arabia, as with Moses, Elijah, the Baptist, in the wilderness (Exod. iii. 4; 1 Kings xix. 8—13; Luke i. 80, iii. 2).

(c) Practised in preaching. He who began in the Damascus synagogue, by-and-bye to preach to learned philosophers (xvii.), excited crowds (xxii.), rulers and kings (xxiv., xxv., xxvi.).

(d) Trained to suffer, 'to endure hardness' (2 Tim. ii. 3), to 'glory in tribulation' (Rom. v. 3). When, twenty years after, he wrote the long catalogue of his sufferings, what did he end with?—with the first one of all—that very escape in a basket from Damascus, see 2 Cor. xi. 23—33.

Thus the 'chosen vessel' became 'sanctified, and meet for the Master's use,' 2 Tim. iii. 21.

You see it is no light thing to be a servant of Christ and to work for Him.

But did St. Paul ever regret it? See his dying words, 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8—is that like regret? Let us 'be followers of him' (Phil. iii. 17), and we shall find the truth of 2 Cor. iv. 16—18.

But to follow St. Paul, we must begin where he began, by being 'new creatures.' Pray then, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me' (Ps. li. 10).

What signs of a new heart have we seen to-day? Think—(a) Choosing Christ's servants as companions; (b) Telling others about Christ; (c) Seeking in solitude to know more of Christ; (d) Suffering for Christ's sake. Can these signs be seen in us?

## NOTES.

1. The word 'Christ,' in ver. 20, should be 'Jesus,' according to the oldest MSS. It was needless to preach to the Jews that 'Christ,' i.e. the expected Messiah, was the Son of God. What Saul declared was that Jesus of Nazareth was both the Son of God and (see ver. 22) Messiah.

2. Saul's visit to Arabia, only recorded in Gal. i., should probably be inserted between ver. 21 and ver. 22 of Acts ix., the 'increased strength' being the result of his sojourn there. The 'many days' of ver. 23 correspond to the 'three years' of Gal. i. 18, and cover the whole period from his conversion to his visit to Jerusalem. Paley, in the *Horæ Paulinæ*, points out the curious fact that the same exact expressions, 'many days' and 'three years,' correspond to one another also in 1 Kings ii. 38, 39. It is uncertain what was the exact period, as 'three years' might mean, in Jewish parlance, one whole year and parts of two others; just as the 'three days' during which our Lord's body lay in the grave were actually only one day and parts of two other days. The question of the absolute chronology, i.e., of the years A.D. when these incidents happened, will be treated separately hereafter.

3. It is hard to say what locality is meant by the term 'Arabia.' It might be either (a) the great desert stretching from Palestine eastward to the Euphrates, part of which is very near Damascus; or (b) the kingdom of Arabia Petraea, then ruled over by Aretas, whose governor 'kept the city of Damascus' (see last Lesson, Note 1), the most important part of which corresponded with the ancient Edom; or (c) the Peninsula of Sinai. If the latter, it is possible that Saul, like Moses and Elijah, received strength for his great work at the 'mount of God'; and it does not seem to have been noticed by any writer on the subject that in this very Epistle to the Galatians, in which alone the visit is mentioned, St. Paul speaks (iv. 25) of 'Mount Sinai in Arabia,' a phrase nowhere else found in Scripture. Most expositors, however, think (a) is intended.

4. The purpose of the sojourn in Arabia is also a matter of conjecture. Some think that Saul began his ministry to the Gentiles by preaching to the Arabians; but, besides the fact that his great commission was not yet given, why, in Acts ix. 27, does Barnabas exclusively specify Damascus as the place where Saul had preached? Others, with apparently much greater probability, think that, as with Moses, and the Baptist (compare also Elijah's case), God ordained that Saul should have a time of retirement for prayer and meditation before entering on the work of his life: that he was 'driven of the Spirit into the wilderness' after his baptism, just as Jesus Himself was.

5. A woodcut of a house on the wall of Damascus, showing how Saul could have been let down in a basket from the window, will be found in the *Church Sunday School Magazine* for Jan., 1872, p. 9; also in Kitto, p. 148, and C. & H., i., chap. iii., p. 124.

Referring to last Lesson, Note 1, it may be observed that the possession of Damascus at the time by Aretas, which was in Saul's favour when he went there as a representative of the Sanhedrim, would be a source of peril to him when the Jews were opposed to him. The governor's action (2 Cor. xi. 32), therefore, is quite natural.

6. In Gal. i., St. Paul says he went to Jerusalem to see Peter.' The Greek word rendered 'see' means to visit (Prof. Lightfoot, *Galatians*, p. 83), and agrees with the further statement that he 'abode' with Peter. The reason of his stay lasting only fifteen days is seen from Acts ix. 29, 30.

The hesitation of the disciples in receiving him has been wondered at, seeing that he had been a convert now 'three years.' But, although they had of course heard of the great event at Damascus, the very fact of his having been lost sight of for so long might raise suspicions, and no doubt the Sanhedrim would do their best to contradict the report of his conversion. Barnabas, whose friendly conduct in this difficulty illustrates his character as described in xi. 24, had very likely known Saul in his younger days, as the island of Cyprus, whence Barnabas came (iv. 36), was close to Cilicia, and in continual communication with Tarsus.

'James, the Lord's brother,' whom Saul met at the same time (Gal. i. 19), was the first Bishop of Jerusalem and the writer of the Epistle. Probably he was the same as James the Less, son of Alphæus, and brother of Jude; but this is a much-disputed point.

7. The 'Grecians' mentioned in ver. 29 were the Hellenists or foreign Jews, of whom Saul himself had been one. See Lesson IX., Note 1, and Lesson X., Notes 2, 13.

8. The appearance of our Lord to Saul in the Temple, related in xxiii. 17-21, was during this visit, and was the real occasion of his definite appointment to be the Apostle of the Gentiles. Probably xxvi. 16-18 describes the same incident (see last Lesson, Note 5). Obviously Saul was anxious to stay and preach to his Jewish brethren: urging, even after Christ's distinct command, that his testimony, after his share in Stephen's murder, must prove irresistible; and hinting (as Stier acutely suggests), by his use of the word 'martyr' (i.e., a witness), that he was ready to seal his 'testimony' too with his blood; and he was only induced by the Lord's peremptory rejoinder to go 'far hence unto the Gentiles.'

9. On leaving Jerusalem, Saul went 'down' (ver. 30) from the highlands in which the holy city is situated to the maritime plain of Sharon, on the coast of which was the Roman capital of Palestine, Cæsarea. Thence he probably went to Tarsus by sea.

10. It is interesting to notice the object of the allusions in Gal. i. and 2 Cor. xi. To the Galatians, who had listened to depreciators of his authority and work, St. Paul vindicates his apostleship by shewing that the Gospel was revealed to him by the Lord Himself, that he owed nothing to man's teaching, that even after his conversion he did not go to the Apostles for instruction or authority, that when at last he visited Peter, he was with him only a fortnight, and that he saw no other Apostle but James. His commission, therefore, was independent, and derived directly from Christ. To the Corinthians he is showing the humiliation and suffering he has undergone for the Gospel's sake, and crowns the narrative by instancing a case when he actually had to escape in so undignified a way as in a basket from a window. It is noteworthy that in both passages he stops in the middle to appeal to God that he is telling the truth (2 Cor. xi. 31; Gal. i. 20).

## Lesson XVII.—Miracles of Mercy—Life and Health for Body and Soul.

*'The works that I do shall he do also.'*

*Read*—Acts ix. 31—43; *Learn*—Rom. viii. 13; 3rd John 2. (*Hymns*, 5, 11, 15, 90, 93, 108, 148, 169, 187, 193, 211.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

This is probably the easiest subject in the course. Let not the teacher be tempted in consequence to take but little pains. The narrative is, indeed, simple enough, and a general application can readily be found to wind up with; but when this has been done, what has the teacher gained? what has he *taught*? An easy subject should always, if possible, be regarded as an opportunity for devoting a large portion of the time to the unfolding of some appropriate truth or spiritual lesson. The narrative before us, with its two miracles, at once suggests the analogy drawn out in the Sketch between *bodily* and *spiritual* life and health; and the fact that instances of both soul-quickening and soul-strengthening also occur in the passage gives completeness to the comparison. The Lesson, therefore, though requiring scarcely any preparatory *reading*, demands some *thought* how best to make clear the figures of health and life, as applied to the soul. Lessons XXIX. and XXXIII. of the 'Life of Our Lord,' on 'The Widow's Son of Nain' and 'The Cripple of Bethesda,' may supply some further hints on the subject.

### SKETCH OF LESSON.

We have seen the great change Saul's conversion made in himself. But what difference did it make to the Church? Think what those who had turned to the Lord Jesus had suffered through Him [see Lesson XI.]—beaten, imprisoned, killed—those who escaped 'scattered' in all directions—even then not safe, xxvi. 11. But now the chief persecutor converted, persecution stops.

Another thing, too, in their favour. At this time Roman Emperor trying to get his own statue worshipped everywhere—Jews greatly excited—their turn now to be persecuted—so no time to think of despised Nazarenes. [See Note 1.]

What the consequence? Ver. 31—'*Then had the Churches rest.*'

When the Church scattered, who left at Jerusalem? viii. 1. How anxious the Apostles about their fugitive converts!—for their bodily safety—still more for their growth in grace. What would they do? write letters? but post not regular and quick as now. Would feel as St. Paul afterwards did, see Rom. i. 11. And they *did* visit them. Where did we see Peter and John went? [Lesson XII.]; and when the converted Saul came to Jerusalem [last Lesson], how many of the Apostles did he find there? Gal. i. 18, 19—no doubt the rest gone to visit the scattered disciples.

*To-day see Peter on one of these 'visitation tours.'*

'*Down*' (ver. 32), from the hills into the plain by the sea, from Jerusalem to the old Philistine country. [See Note 5.] From city to city, village to village, seeking out the believers everywhere. What a joy to him to find they were steadfast—yes, and not idle either: had been 'preaching the Word' and making more converts! viii. 5. [Lesson XI.] And how glad they to see him!

how joyfully gather together to hear his words of comfort and instruction! What would he be likely to say?—see from his letters in after years, 1 Pet. i. 6—9, ii. 1—3, 20—23, iii. 14—17, iv. 12—19, v. 10; 2 Pet. iii. 17, 18.

But now see what blessings God sent upon that neighbourhood by means of His Apostle.

#### I. HEALTH AND LIFE FOR THE BODY.

1. Health—what a blessing? So natural to boys and girls to be strong and well, that they don't think how good God is to make them so. But look at a poor crippled child—*then* think of it. Here is a sick man at Lydda—his name?—what is the matter with him? how long ill? ver. 33. To be in bed for a week not pleasant: fancy eight years!

To him the gift of health. Who healed him? Peter? But look at ver. 34. Jesus cured many 'sick of the palsy' while on earth, Matt. iv. 24, ix. 2—7; now cures one from heaven. How true Mark xvi. 18, 20—'They shall lay hands on the sick—the Lord working with them'!

2. Any blessing for the body greater than health? One—*Life*; see Job. ii. 4. So we thank God *first* for 'our creation,' *then* for 'preservation,' *then* for 'all blessings' (*General Thanksgiving*). Now see to whom Peter brings this greatest gift.

At Joppa, down by the sea (where King Hiram's cedar-wood for the Temple landed, 2 Chron. ii. 16; where Jonah embarked, Jon. i. 3) [see Note 5]—the Church in great sorrow. Who dead? why so lamented? ver. 36, 39—'what should they do without Dorcas?' Loved, as Job was, by the poor, the fatherless, the widow (Job xxix. 11—13). In their grief, send and beg Peter to come. What can he do? at all events can comfort them—probably they expect no

more. (Do not the bereaved now like to see their minister, though he can do no miracles?)

What does Peter find? Just such a scene as Jesus saw at Jairus's house, Matt ix. 23. What does Peter do? First, just as Jesus did—'put them all forth' (see Matt. ix. 24, 25). Then, quite differently—'kneeling down and prayed'—why did he do this, and Elijah (1 Kings xvii. 20, 21), and Elisha (2 Kings iv. 33), and *not Jesus*? see Acts iii. 12–16. And then, having prayed, and believing in Christ's promise (Mark xi. 23, 24; John xiv. 12–14), he again does just as Jesus used to do—see his words, ver. 40, and his action, ver. 41; comp. Mark v. 41.

But was it a blessing to Dorcas to be raised up? Was not death to her a greater blessing? Well, so St. Paul felt for himself, Phil. i. 21, 23; yet what did he say? next verses. Surely, for Dorcas to 'abide in the flesh' 'more needful' for the Church at Joppa! And she would rejoice to have more 'opportunity to do good to all, especially to'—whom? Gal. vi. 10.

## II. LIFE AND HEALTH FOR THE SOUL.

Were the two miracles we have seen all the wonders the Lord did by Peter at this time? There are *three verses* in our passage which speak of greater things still!—can you find them? Ver. 42—'many believed in the Lord'; ver. 35—'all . . . turned to the Lord'; ver. 31—the Churches 'edified' and 'multiplied.' Spiritual life and spiritual health.

1. *Life.* Those who 'believed in' and 'turned to' the Lord received *life*. Then were they *dead before*? See Eph. ii. 1, 5; Col. ii. 13; 1 Tim. v. 6—'dead in sins'—those who live in sin, and who have not come to Christ to have sin taken away, called *dead*. Why? Can a dead body see, hear, feel, speak, act? And a dead soul *sees* not its danger, *hears* not God's voice, *feels* not God's love, *speaks* not in true prayer and praise, *does* not God's will. [*The teacher will of course take these points separately.*] So when the people of Lydda and Joppa believed in Jesus, it was like a number of resurrections! A wondrous sight to

see the dead Dorcas rising from her bed—but *really more* wondrous to see all those souls 'quickened' (made alive). Who raised Dorcas?—not Peter, but—? And it was Christ who raised those souls, sending the Holy Ghost, the 'Giver of Life' (*Nicene Creed*), to 'breathe into them the breath of life.'

2. *Health.* Living persons see, hear, feel, speak, act—but can they always do so well? Not in sickness [*illustrate*]. Then, if we don't hear God's voice readily, *speak* in prayer and praise readily, do God's will readily, what is the reason? Because the soul *not in health*. God wants his servants to be *strong* (Eph. vi. 10; 2 Tim. ii. 1; 1 John ii. 14)—but how weak many are!—paralysed, like Æneas! Now how did those in Judæa get strong? how 'edified'? ver 31—(a) walked 'in the fear of the Lord'—remembering how God hated sin, they feared to sin (see Heb. xii. 28, 29); (b) 'and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost'—were 'strengthened with might by the Spirit' (Eph. iii. 16).

*Now think—What is the best wish that can be wished for you?*

See what St. John in his old age wished for his friend Gaius (2nd text for rep.)—not that his soul should be raised from the death of sin—not that his weak soul should become strong—this not necessary, *for his soul prospered*; but that his *body* might 'prosper and be in health.'

Is that the best wish for you? It is a very good one; and sometimes God grants it even when we scarcely dare to hope it [*illustrate—the Prince of Wales*]. But you are 'in health,' well and strong—*bodily*. What are you *spiritually*? The best wish for you is that your *soul* may 'prosper and be in health,' even as your *body* 'prospereth.' Is God willing to grant that? Ezek. xviii. 31, 32.

How long will *bodily* life and health last? Not always. Æneas and Dorcas died after a while. So must we. And spiritual life and health—? See Rom. vi. 23—'the gift of God is *eternal* life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

## NOTES.

1. The statement in ver. 31, that 'then had the Churches rest,' is remarkably illustrated by the historical events of the time. The Roman Emperor Caligula, actuated by a wilful vanity which bordered on madness, attempted to enforce the worship of himself throughout the Empire, and caused temples to be built and statues set up everywhere in his honour. In Alexandria, the Jews were scourged, tortured, and crucified, for refusing to obey his mandate. Petronius, the prefect of Syria, was sent into Palestine with an army, to place a statue of the emperor in the Temple at Jerusalem. At Ptolemais (Acre), thousands of Jews met him, and implored him to desist. At Tiberias still greater crowds beset him, offering to die if only by so doing they might prevent the desecration. (This incident is introduced, and very powerfully depicted, in Mrs. Charles's *Victory of the Vanquished*.)

Ultimately the prefect gave way so far as to write to Rome for fresh instructions, and before an angry reply, which was sent, reached him, Caligula was dead.

There seems little doubt that the intense excitement thus caused drew the attention of the Sanhedrim away from the new sect; and this, combined with the conversion of Saul, and with the fact that Caiaphas had been recently deposed, fully accounts for the 'rest' enjoyed by the Church. 'Thus it was,' says Canon Norris, 'that the four years of Caligula's reign, miserable as they were to the rest of the world, brought peace to the Christians.'

The circumstances referred to are narrated more fully in Kitto, p. 181, and Smith's *Student's New Testament History*, p. 86. The best account will be found in Milman's *History of the Jews*.



2. The word 'quarters,' in ver. 32, is not expressed in the Greek. The 'all' probably refers to the 'Churches' or little communities of believers. This tour is interesting as the first example of what we should call an Episcopal Visitation.

3. It is a disputed point whether *Æneas* was a believer or not. Peter's words, '*Jesus the Messiah*' (not 'the Lord') 'maketh thee whole,' seem to suggest that he was not yet converted. If so, like the paralytic at Capernaum, he received temporal and spiritual healing at the same time. Peter probably told him 'to make his bed' (i.e., roll up and put away his *mat* or *pallet*, which it is in the Greek), as a sign of his restored strength; just as Christ directed the cripples at Capernaum and Jerusalem to take their beds (*mats* again in the Greek) home (Mark ii. 10, 11; John v. 8-12).

4. 'Tabitha,' in Aramaic (the degenerate Hebrew dialect of that day), and 'Dorcas' in Greek, both mean a *gazelle*.

5. 'Saron' was not a town, but a district—the great Plain of Sharon extending along the coast between the mountains of Judæa and

Ephraim and the Mediterranean Sea. It is mentioned in 1 Chron. xxvii. 29; Cant. ii. 1; Isa. xxxiii. 9, xxxv. 2, lxxv. 10. Its fertility is unbounded.

Lydda was a town on the road from Jerusalem to Joppa. It is called *Dod* in the Old Testament, and still bears the name of *Lud*.

Joppa (now Jaffa), the seaport of Jerusalem, has many interesting associations, being connected with the tribe of Dan (Josh. xix. 46), with Solomon (2 Chron. ii. 16), with *Ezra* (Ezra iii. 7), with *Jonah*, and with St. Peter and Dorcas. Its name often appears also in the histories of the Maccabean wars, of the final war between Rome and the Jews, of the Crusades, and of Napoleon. The house of Simon the Tanner is shown at the present day, but the identification is more than doubtful. Joppa is noted for its gardens, which extend for a considerable distance from the town, and are extremely beautiful. An interesting account of the methods of cultivation employed will be found in *The Land and the Book*, p. 516. But the best easily accessible description of Jaffa and its neighbourhood occurs in the Rev. J. W. Bardsley's 'Tour in Palestine,' *Church S. S. Mag.*, Sept., 1869, p. 400.

## Lesson XVIII.—The Devout Roman.

*'The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him.'*

Read—Acts x. 1-8, 24-48; Learn—Rom. x. 12, 13; Gal. iii. 26-29. (Hymns, 22, 76, 94, 103, 105, 180-185, 189, 301, 308.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

The conversion of Cornelius is so important an event in the history of the early Church (see next Lesson, Note 1), that it seemed necessary, in drawing up the scheme, to give two Lessons to it. The subject is thus divided:—In this Lesson we take the *stand-point* (see preface to Lesson III.) of the Gentile soldier, and see how the Gospel message would present itself to him; in the next Lesson we take the stand-point of the Church, i.e., of believing Jews, both Peter and the brethren at Jerusalem. For this reason Peter's vision at Joppa, though it is narrated early in chap. x., is introduced only in the second Lesson. The applications will also be different, though really drawn from the same considerations: first we set forth what God *is* to all—whosoever they be—that 'call upon Him'; then we set forth what Christians *ought to be* to all—whosoever they be—that join the great brotherhood, the family of God.

As in all these Sketches, there are in this one several passages which can be omitted without interfering with the general outline of the Lesson: as, e.g., the double reference to *Malachi* in the first section of Division II., and the allusion to the two-fold work of enlightenment in the third section. But such passages are often interesting to intelligent classes, throwing, as it were, a new side-light on a familiar narrative.

### SKETCH OF LESSON.

You know what 'head-quarters' are—? Where general of an army is [or, *illustrated by volunteer corps*]. Head-quarters of Roman conquerors of Judæa not at Jerusalem—only a 'chief-captain' there, not the 'governor'—but at *Cæsarea*—fine city built by Herod the Great on sea-coast: see xxi. 31, xxiii. 22-24; [see Note 1]. Here most of the Roman troops. To-day read of an officer, a 'centurion' [see Note 2]. In his history see how true Heb. xi. 6 is—God is 'a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.'

I. THE DILIGENT SEEKER AFTER GOD.  
Ver. 1-8, 24-27.

No doubt Cornelius like other Roman

officers—brave, ready to march anywhere at any risk—strict in obeying orders, and in having his own orders obeyed (comp. Luke vii. 8)—proud of being one of an army that had beaten every foe—feeling very much as a British veteran with his medals does.

But Cornelius very unlike most other Romans in one thing—in his religion, ver. 2. Had, no doubt, been brought up like the rest, to believe in the heathen gods, Jupiter, Neptune, Mars, &c.—had seen temples to them in Rome, people worshipping, priests offering sacrifice—and like many others, had come to think this all nonsense. But then others went no further—gave up

old religion without getting new one,—thought, like Pilate (John xviii. 38), that no one could find out 'what is truth.' Cornelius not so—what God had he learned to worship?

Strange thing for a Roman officer! Sent to Judæa to garrison conquered country—his duty to watch those troublesome Jews and keep them down—might well dislike people who, though conquered, looked on him and his soldiers as 'Gentile dogs.' And yet he has taken their God for his God!

Now see four things about him:—

(a) *He did God's will as far as he knew it.* What could he know about it? Only what Jews told him. And what did the strict Jews think the way to please God? see Luke xviii. 11, 12; Matt. vi. 2, 5, 16—three things, alms, prayers, fasting. Which of these did he do? ver. 2, 30.

(b) *He earnestly desired to know more.* 'Prayed to God always'—not merely 'said prayers' at fixed times, but always beseeching God [see Note 3]—*what for?* see ver. 31 [Note 3], evidently that God would teach him more—like Elihu (Job xxxiv. 32), and David (Ps. xxv. 4, 5). Perhaps felt how sinful he was—how unworthy all his alms and fastings—'would God ever be satisfied?' Or, puzzled by what Jews told him, that they only God's people—'Must I really be circumcised, and actually become as a Jew (of all people!), in order to be saved?'

(c) *He obeyed God's directions how to learn more.* Who brought him those directions? ver. 3. What were they? ver. 5, 6. How strange! Not to be taught by the angel—not to send to the great Rabbis at Jerusalem—but to 'one Simon,' lodging with another 'Simon,' a tanner at Joppa! Yet does he hesitate? ver. 7, 8. And how does he treat this humble Jew when he comes? ver. 25 [see Note 6]—it is God's ambassador—that's enough for him.

(d) *He called his friends together to hear what Simon would say,* ver. 24, 27. Not ashamed of seeking the God of the Jews. Anxious that other Romans should hear about Him too.

## II. HOW GOD REWARDED THE DILIGENT SEEKER.

1. *God heard his prayers.* Anything to be surprised at in that? Suppose you could have asked the high-priest at Jerusalem whether he thought God would hear the centurion's prayer? 'What! God listen to an ignorant Gentile dog! one of the accursed Romans, too, who oppress His chosen people!' But what says our 1st text for rep.? 'No difference . . . same Lord rich unto all that call upon Him'; comp. Rom. iii. 29.

An angel sent down—but to whom? not to priests and scribes—though they said prayers often enough, but how? (texts above)—not to Temple at Jerusalem, but to Gentile soldier's house at Caesarea!

And what did the angel say about his

prayers? ver. 4—'a memorial before God'; they were ignorant prayers—Cornelius like one who has lost way in dark, wants light—but God in His love and pity watching that praying Roman—every prayer as it went up put down in God's 'book of remembrance,' Mal. iii. 16; and look four verses down (Mal. iv. 2)—that promise fulfilled at last—Cornelius not always to grope in darkness—'the Sun of righteousness' to arise on him, for he 'feared God's name.'

2. *God sent him the good news of salvation.* Imagine him waiting, with his friends around him, eager to see the man to whom an angel had directed him!—and to hear his message. What is it? Is it 'Be circumcised—then God will save you'? No, Peter says God cares for all, ver. 34, 35 [see Note 4]. What then? Why, about that Galilean of whom (ver. 37) he has heard—(perhaps from the centurion at Capernaum, Luke vii. 1–10)—who was said to be good and kind, but who was executed by Pilate (their own chief) for sedition. And what of Him? see ver. 40–43: familiar words to us (just like the Creed), but to them how strange!—the dead Nazarene risen again, appointed Judge, Saviour of sinners, and (ver. 36) Lord of all!

Can Cornelius believe that?—he, a Roman officer, to have his sins forgiven for the sake of a crucified Jew! Must it not seem to him and his friends, as afterwards to other Gentiles (1 Cor. i. 23), 'foolishness'? It well might. But what was wanted to make them believe? 1 Cor. xii. 3—'No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, except by'—?

Now see what followed: ver. 44.

3. *God gave him the Gift of the Spirit.* Long before that, the Holy Ghost working on centurion's heart—how else those earnest prayers, that godly life? And while Peter speaking, what was the Spirit doing? [Illustr.—Two things wanted to let daylight into dark room: (a) sun must shine, (b) shutters must be opened; neither enough by itself—why?] Peter brought light of Sun of righteousness—told about Jesus; but this not enough—the Spirit must open the heart to see it. Then, suddenly, a wondrous sight—all those Gentile soldiers just like the disciples on Day of Pentecost [see Lesson II.], filled with joy, and praising God in strange languages for the good news of a crucified and risen Saviour!

Would they be willing now to be circumcised, and become Jews? No doubt ready for anything. But need they? No—see this next Sunday. But though they need not join Jewish nation, must join Christ's Church. How do they do that? ver. 47, 48. (See 2nd text for rep.)

What is God called in our first text for repetition?

'The same Lord over all.' 'The same Lord' in all places—in the Temple at Jerusalem—on the wild road to Gaza (viii. 26)—in the Gentile's house at Caesarea. 'The

same Lord' to all men—the fishermen of Bethsaida—the learned Pharisee (ix. 11)—the black Ethiopian—the Roman soldier. Is He 'the same Lord' at all times?—*now* as *then*? see Mal. iii. 6; Jas. i. 17; Heb. xiii. 8. Yes, and in all places still—even in our school, in your homes; and to all persons still—God 'no respecter' (ver. 34)—cares not for rich more than poor, for clever more than ignorant, for old more than young.

But *what* of this 'Lord of all' (ver. 36) and 'Lord over all'? 'Rich'; see Eph. ii. 4, 7, iii. 16; Phil. iv. 19. 'Rich' to whom? To those that 'call upon Him'—just as we have seen to-day. Would you not think a friend must be *rich* who said to you, 'Ask, and it shall be given you'? That is what God says to each one of us. Are any of your prayers going up as 'a memorial before God'?

## NOTES.

1. The *Cæsarea* of the Acts, the Roman capital of Palestine, must be distinguished from *Cæsarea Philippi* (Matt. xvi. 13) at the foot of Mount Hermon. The former is sometimes called *Cæsarea Palestine*, or *Maritima* (answering to our *super mare*), or *Stratonis* (from the 'tower of Strato'). It was built by Herod the Great, and named in honour of Augustus Cæsar. A huge mole or breakwater was constructed, which ran out into the sea, and formed a harbour. The ruins of this mole, and also of theatres, temples, &c., remain, but the site is utterly desolate. See Mr. Bardsley's 'Notes of a Tour in Palestine,' *Church S. S. Mag.*, 1869, p. 347; Thomson's *Land and the Book*, p. 494; Porter's *Giant Cities*, &c., p. 233; C. & H., ii., chap. xxii., p. 344.

It is remarkable that, in the city which saw the 'middle wall of partition' between Jews and Gentiles broken down, occurred the disturbances and struggles between the two populations which brought on the final war and the destruction of Jerusalem.

2. A 'centurion,' in the Roman army, was commander of a *centuria* or company of infantry, the number varying with the size of the 'legion' (of which the *centuria* was the sixtieth part), but being generally a hundred.

The 'Italian band,' or cohort, is supposed to have been a volunteer body, composed entirely of men born in Italy. There is an inscription extant alluding to such a band. See C. & H., i., chap. iv., p. 143.

The name *Cornelius* indicates relationship to the great *Cornelian* family, one of the most noble and distinguished in Roman history. It was borne by the Scipios, Sylla, and 'the mother of the Gracchi,' and may be compared to that of Stanley or Percy or Cavendish with us.

3. The Greek word rendered 'prayed' in ver. 2, is not the usual one. It means rather 'beseeched,' and, together with the word 'always,' implies that *Cornelius* did not merely pray (however sincerely) because it was right to do so, and at the 'hours of prayer,' but that he was continually lifting up his heart to God in supplication for something he earnestly desired. What was that something? The angel's words (as given by *Cornelius*, ver. 31) 'Thy prayer is heard,' imply that the coming revelation by Peter's mouth (comp. xi. 14) was the answer to his prayer. His desire, therefore, was evidently for more light, for further teaching. He could not rest satisfied as he was—he felt the need of something, he knew not what. And that need could only be met by 'the one thing needful.'

4. In what sense was *Cornelius* 'accepted'? In what sense are we to understand Peter's words in ver. 35? Not in this sense—that his prayers and good deeds were in themselves meritorious before God; not that (as our Eighteenth Article expresses it) 'every man shall be saved by the law or sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his

life according to that law and the light of nature'; not that we are to accept Pope's line, 'He can't be wrong whose life is in the right.' If this were so—and the passage has often been cited in support of the view—why was *Cornelius* to send for Peter at all? The meaning simply is, that God is willing to receive, without any external condition, such as circumcision, all of any nation who sincerely seek Him.

5. 'Evidently,' in ver. 3, should be connected with 'saw,' not with 'about the ninth hour.' It means that he saw plainly and distinctly. Compare next Lesson, Note 4.

6. The homage offered to Peter by *Cornelius* was not a mere expression of respect, as it would have been had an Oriental offered it. The Romans prostrated themselves only before their gods; and *Cornelius* treated Peter as superhuman, as is manifest from the latter's reply. The Roman emperors had recently claimed and received divine honours, and *Cornelius* accorded the same to Peter as the representative of the King of kings. Peter's answer implies that no man should be so treated. *Alford* observes that 'those who claim to have succeeded Peter have not imitated this part of his conduct.'

7. The construction of ver. 36–38 is somewhat involved. The best critics thus explain the passage:—'Ye know,' governs all the rest. Three things Peter says they 'knew': (a) 'the word' (ver. 36), i.e., the communication or message; (b) 'that word' (ver. 37), i.e., the fact or matter, the thing that took place ('word' in the Greek is not the same here); (c) 'Jesus of Nazareth—how God anointed Him,' &c. (so it should read). Or thus, 'Ye know God's communication to Israel—that is, the thing that came to pass in Judæa—that is, *Jesus*. 'He is the word, He is the fact, which constitutes the Gospel' (Vaughan). Their knowledge of the public events connected with the life of *Jesus* is here implied; and this may partly account for the desire of *Cornelius* for Divine instruction and guidance (Note 3).

The rest of Peter's address may be compared with his sermons and speeches at Jerusalem (ii., iii., v.). It was the same testimony everywhere: the 'Gospel' consisted of just the facts about Christ. Compare also the Apostles' Creed, which is in part almost a verbal reproduction of this speech.

8. 'Water,' in ver. 47, is in the Greek 'the water.' Peter says in effect, 'They have had the inward and spiritual grace of Baptism—the Spirit; can any forbid them the outward and visible sign—the water!' The passage clearly shows that the Holy Ghost is not tied even to the most sacred Divine ordinances; but it shows also the importance even of the external part of Baptism, since men who had received the fullest outpouring of the Spirit were not exempted from it. It is presumption to say, 'Because the form is not everything, the form is nothing.'

## Lesson XIX.—The Gospel for the Gentiles.

'This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.'

Read—Parts of Acts x., xi.; Learn—Rom. iii. 29, 30; Eph. ii. 14, 17, 18. (Hymns, 40, 103, 122, 123, 144, 176, 229, 231, 308, 367.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

Children are accustomed to the division of mankind into Jews and Gentiles, without at all understanding how the division arose, or what was the object of it. In Division I. of the Sketch, therefore, with a view to making the narrative really intelligible, the subject is taken up from its very beginning. But, with scholars already well instructed in the matter, a great part of this Division can be omitted, and a few questions put instead; while with those too young or too ignorant to know anything about it, the teacher will have little difficulty in just *telling* enough to prepare the way for the narrative. Stress should in all cases be laid upon (d), on account of its connection with St. Peter's vision.

The illustration with which the Sketch opens, and which recurs in it at intervals, can be put in a more accurate and elaborate form if preferred. Thus, suppose a tract of waste land: a man about to reclaim it begins by *enclosing* a small piece (to protect it) and cultivating that first; then, when his operations are to be extended, the fence or wall is needed no longer, and therefore is removed. In this form the illustration *fits* better; but, as given in the Sketch, it is more simple.

The point of the application depends entirely on local circumstances, and cannot be shewn in the Sketch. It is this: the way in which the children (corresponding to the Church at Jerusalem) should treat those whom they have been accustomed to look down upon, but who, as this Lesson teaches, are their equals in God's sight. Now there are probably no Sunday-scholars who do not look down upon *some others*—but the question *upon whom* would be answered quite differently in different places. National-school boys look down on Ragged-school boys; girls at a 'business' on girls in domestic service; elder children on younger; the clever on the ignorant; the strong and active on the feeble and timid. In many places there are special classes of people who may correspond to the Gentiles in the Lesson: as the negroes in America, the gipsies in some rural districts, the poor Irish in certain great towns, the Jews themselves (what a retribution!) almost everywhere. The teacher is, therefore, necessarily left to fill up the application for himself.

### SKETCH OF LESSON.

Why is a wall (or railing) built round a garden? If you wished to allow every one to come inside, would you put a wall round? And suppose the wall is there, but you wish people to come in and see your garden—what do? Not pull wall down, but open gate. But suppose you did not want to keep it as a garden at all—wished to give up the ground to be like a common, free to all—what do then? Then pull wall down.

Our 2nd text for rep. (Eph. ii. 14) speaks of breaking down a wall—'middle wall of partition between us,' i.e., in the middle between two parties, to part or separate them (like 'partition-walls' of houses). Between *whom*? The two kinds of people named just before (ver. 11, 12), 'Gentiles' and 'Israel.' To-day see what the 'wall' between them was—who built it—why built—when, why, and how broken down.

#### I. THE 'WALL OF PARTITION.'

A wall to separate people of Israel from all other nations. Who built it? i.e., who separated them? see Lev. xx. 24.

1. Why did God separate Israel from other nations? The world had gone astray from God; Gen. vi. 5, 11, 12, as true after

the Deluge as before (comp. Ps. xiv. 2, 3; Rom. iii. 10—18). Then God chose Israel to be His (Deut. vii. 6—8), that He might train them to know and love Him, make them holy (Lev. xx. 26), give them His word (Rom. iii. 2)—until time for His Son to come down on earth. But why separate them from others? Lest others should draw them away from Him. The only way to keep them safe.

#### 2. How did God separate them?

(a) Sent their great ancestor to live in a 'strange country,' Heb. xi. 9; let them be oppressed in Egypt, that they might cling more together; gave them a land all to themselves.

(b) Appointed a sign or token of the separation, that they might not forget it—circumcision; Gen. xvii. 10, 11; Acts vii. 8; Exod. xii. 43—45, 48.

(c) Forbad them to make marriages with foreigners, Deut. vii. 1—6.

(d) Made strict rules about food, what they might and might not eat, Lev. xi.; Deut. xiv. This on purpose to make them different from others, Lev. xx. 25 ('therefore,' see ver. 24).

These things were the wall or fence round the garden.

3. *How did they like to be so separated?*

In Old Testament times many did not—tried to break wall down—disobeyed God, 'mingling with heathen and learning their works' (Ps. cvi. 35). But in New Testament times just the contrary—very proud of it (Rom. ii. 17–20)—looked down on all other people: see Acts xiii. 45, xxi. 28, xxii. 21, 22 [see Note 5].

And this feeling in the early Church too. Though believers in Christ, still thought and felt like Jews. Glad to let Gentiles join Church, only first they must be circumcised, become Jews, otherwise not fit; see xv. 1, 5. Willing to open gate and let them into garden—not to break down wall [see *illustr.* above].

But one day, news in Jerusalem—Peter has gone to uncircumcised Gentiles, dwelt with them, eaten with them, baptized them, let them come into the Church just as they are! No wonder all horrified and angry; no wonder, when Peter came back from his long 'visitation tour' (ix. 32), they—? xi. 1–3.

It was true; the 'wall' was broken down. Now see how and why.

## II. THE BREAKING DOWN OF THE WALL.

Had Peter broken it down? Not he; just as astonished as the rest. His reply to the charge something like this: 'I could not help myself; it was not my doing: it was the Lord's doing, and as marvellous (Ps. cxviii. 23) in my eyes as in yours; what (xi. 17) was I, that I could withstand God?'

*How did God show Peter that the wall was broken down?* Look at Peter's account, xi. 4–17; comp. x. 9–29, 44–48.

(a) See Peter on roof of tanner's house [see Note 3]—beautiful view, gardens round Joppa stretching away on one side, blue sea on the other—but Peter not admiring view—what doing? Very likely praying for spread of Gospel—little thought *how*. God will show him *how*—sends vision. Peter very hungry—waiting for food. God offers him some in vision [see Note 4]. What kinds? Why does he refuse? Can't break God's law (see *texts* above). But what does God say now? x. 15, xi. 9—'cleansed'—they were unclean before, but *not now*. What did this mean? Think—why were the strict laws about eating made? (above)—they were *part of the 'wall'*. Then if God now does away with these laws, lets His people eat as they please (see 1 Tim. iv. 4, 5), is not the 'wall' broken down, the separation at an end?

(b) Does Peter see this? not yet, x. 17; and though the offer of food comes three times, he can't take it. But while he is puzzling over the vision, another message from God, ver. 19, 20. Does he obey *this* command? ver. 21–23. Imagine him on the journey—thirty miles along the coast—thinking of that strange vision and *this* strange errand. And he understands them at last; for see what he says the moment he comes into Cornelius's house, ver. 28—'God hath showed me that I should not call any *man* common or unclean'; just as the unclean animals cleansed, all clean now, none forbidden; so the outcast Gentiles to be received, no difference now. Is he right? Yes; and God shews it now in another way, xi. 15, x. 44–46: upon those uncircumcised Gentiles the same great Gift bestowed as on Peter and his Jewish brethren. How can they be avoided, despised, refused baptism, *now*? God has 'cleansed' them—how call them 'common'?

But all this only shewed the wall was broken down. *When had it been done? and who did it?*

See 2nd text for rep.—'H'—who? see 13th ver. (of Eph. ii.)—Christ broke down the wall. When and how? see 16th ver. (and Col. i. 20–22)—by His death on the cross. How was that? Thus: *all*, Jews and Gentiles, alike guilty—so Christ died for all alike (Rom. iii. 9, 19, 22, 23)—after that, neither circumcision nor anything else could make any difference—those who believed in Jesus 'all one' (Rom. iii. 29, 30; Gal. iii. 26–29, v. 6, vi. 12–15; Col. iii. 11). No wonder St. Paul said what he did of God's wisdom and Christ's love!—Rom. xi. 32, 33; 2 Cor. v. 14.

*How then should those who are 'all one in Christ Jesus' treat one another?*

Look at those very Epistles from which we learn all this—how they all end. See Rom. xii. 9–16; Gal. v. 22, vi. 2; Eph. iv. 25–32, v. 1, 2; especially Col. iii. 11–14, 'Neither Greek nor Jew . . . Christ all in all; put on *therefore* . . . kindness, &c.

[*Illustr.*—Shipwreck—crew and passengers saved, but on desert island—would not all work together and help each other? all in same danger, all saved alike—would one set himself up above another then?] All of us like that—same danger, same salvation—then no more pride, envy, quarrelling, selfishness—

'Heirs of the same immortal bliss,  
Our hopes and fears the same,  
The cords of love our hearts should bind,  
The law of love inflame.'

## NOTES.

1. The great importance attached by St. Luke (and, we may add, by his Divine Inspirer) to the admission of Cornelius and his friends into the Church is shown by the circumstantial character of the narrative. The vision of Cornelius is related three times, and that of St. Peter twice, and every detail is carefully given.

The event itself was one of what has been termed, in Lesson VIII., God's 'timely inter-

positions.' Everything was ripe for the admission of the Gentiles. Stephen's wider views were doubtless shared by many of the Hellenist converts. The fugitives from Jerusalem were already acting upon them at Antioch (xi. 19–21). God's chosen ambassador to the Gentiles had received his commission. But the Twelve, and the mother Church at Jerusalem, were as yet unprepared for what was coming; and an irretrievable schism

might have ensued. And then, as Neander well observes, 'when the Apostles needed this wider development of their Christian knowledge for the exercise of their vocation, and when the lack of it would have been exceedingly detrimental,—at that very moment, by a remarkable coincidence of inward revelation with a chain of outward circumstances, the illumination hitherto wanting was imparted to them.'

2. The calling of the Gentiles is a prominent subject in Old Testament prophecy: see e.g., Gen. xii. 3, xxii. 18; Ps. ii. 8, lxxvii. lxxviii. 31, lxxii. 8—11, xcvi. 3, 10; Isa. ii. 2, 3, xi. 10, xlix. 6, 7, lx. 1—3; Mal. i. 11. Pious Jews expected it, Luke ii. 32; the Apostles themselves spoke of it, Acts ii. 39. Christ had plainly told them of it, Matt. viii. 11, xxiv. 14, xxviii. 19; Mark xvi. 15; Luke xxiv. 47; Acts i. 8. But they never dreamed of the Gentiles being received *as they were*; they thought circumcision would still be the condition of a share in the covenant; they looked (to adopt the language of the illustration in the Sketch) for the gate being thrown wide open, but not for the wall being broken down. *This was what God now revealed to them.*

3. On Joppa, see Lesson XVII., Note 5. The 'house-top' was the flat roof universal in the East, which has been used from time immemorial for numerous purposes, some of which may be

seen by referring to Josh. ii. 6; Judg. xvi. 27; 1 Sam. ix. 25; 2 Sam. xi. 2; 2 Kings-xxiii. 12; Neh. viii. 16; Isa. xv. 3; Jer. xix. 13, xlviii. 38; Zeph. i. 5; Matt. x. 27. See also *Land and Book*, p. 39; *Domestic Life in Palestine*, pp. 47, 169; *Ragged Life in Egypt*, p. 29.

4. The vision of St. Peter was of a different nature from that of Cornelius. The latter actually *saw* an angel who was really standing before him. Peter was 'in a trance' (literally 'ecstasy was on him'), and God presented the appearance of the great vessel in a kind of day-dream; no such vessel actually descended from heaven.

It may be asked, As both clean and unclean animals appeared in the vessel ('all kinds') why was not Peter willing to take the former? Lev. xi. 24, 32—34, supplies the answer: the clean were defiled by contact with the unclean: so *all* were unclean.

5. Ver. 28—'an unlawful thing,' &c. There was no Divine prohibition so stringent as this. But under Rabbinical teaching such exclusion became general, and was much insisted on by the Pharisees. Juvenal, in his Satires, says the Jews 'would not shew the way except to their fellow-religionists, nor guide any but a circumcised person to a fountain of which he was in search.' And Tacitus the historian says 'they cherished against all mankind the hatred of enemies.'

## Lesson XX.—Angelic Deliverance and Angelic Judgment.

*'The Lord preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.'*

Read—Acts xii.; Learn—1 Sam. ii. 9; Ps. xxxiv. 7; Eph. iii. 20. (*Hymns*, 22, 113—115, 124, 171, 180—188, 193, 194, 219, 386.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

The passage before us, like some others we have had, is one that can be taken in several different ways. It would make an excellent basis for a lesson on prayer; see section (b), and section 2 of Division I. It might be taken as an illustration of the great and never-ceasing struggle between the kingdoms of light and darkness, of God and Satan; see sections (a) and (b). Or, the narrative might be simply gone through, and a general application be made on God's watchful care of His servants. But as the ministry of angels is prominent in the Acts, it is well, in one Lesson of the course, to dwell upon that subject; and the present is the best opportunity, because we have here *both* kinds of angelic interference. Stier's *Words of the Angels* may be consulted with advantage.

Kitto is particularly excellent on this chapter, and the teacher who possesses his work (Vol. VIII. of *Daily Bible Illustrations*) scarcely needs any other help. In fact, the volume on the Acts is one of the best of that series.

### SKETCH OF LESSON.

A new ruler in Palestine. Instead of sending a governor like Pilate, the Roman Emperor (Claudius Cæsar, xi. 28) has made Herod (grandson of him who slew the children, nephew of him who killed John Baptist) king of the whole country. [See Note 1.]

The Church's time of rest (ix. 31) [see Lesson XVII., Note 1] at an end now—a new persecution, ver. 1—why? ver. 3. Very wicked of Herod, think you, to please the Jews with cruel murders? Did you never take part against an unpopular school-fellow to please others?

Another martyrdom—whose? see ver. 2. What had Jesus said of those two brothers? see Mark x. 39—they should 'drink His

cup'—what was that? Mark xiv. 36, suffering and death. [See *'Life of Our Lord,' Lesson LXXVII.*] John had the *fullest* cup (lived longest); but James drank his first—the first Apostle martyred. [See Note 2.]

Great joy in Jerusalem—one of the chief Nazarenes executed—soon crush the sect now—Herod just the ruler wanted! Now Herod *liked* praise (see ver. 21, 22)—what could he do to get more?—seize a still greater leader, Peter. So he does—What an excitement for the Passover crowds! (see ver. 3).

Now here are two contending parties—the king and the Church. The king—proud, powerful, popular; the Church—humble

and despised. One side trying to keep Peter for execution—the other side trying to save him. Which looks victorious?

(a) What is the king relying on? Ver. 4 (see ver. 6, 10). Strong prison walls, heavy doors, iron gates [*illustr.*—*Newgate or any local prison*]; and sixteen soldiers in charge of one man! [*See Note 4.*] A few short hours more—next morning Peter to be shewn publicly (ver. 4) and then executed. What a certain victory for the Church's foes! So one would think—'but'—yes, there is a 'but' in ver. 5—how much hangs on that little word! For,—

(b) What is the Church's weapon in the contest? The weapon 'All-Prayer,' Eph. vi. 18 [*see Christian's fight with Apollyon in 'Pilgrim's Progress'*]. 'Without ceasing'—fancy how earnestly—'what should they do without Peter?' And confidently, do you think?—might remember the former deliverance (ch. x. 19), but then James's death would show that God did not mean *always* to interpose. Still, what had Christ told them? Matt. xviii. 19; John xiv. 13, 14.

And *this* time God does mean to interpose. But He has many ways of interposing [*see Lesson VIII.*].—in what way will He now? the 2nd text for rep. gives the answer—'The angel of the Lord encampeth,' &c.

ANGELS—*what are they?* See five things about them:—1. Spirits (Ps. civ. 4; Heb. i. 14)—therefore invisible unless they like (see Numb. xxii. 24—31), and can go where our bodies can't (*e.g.*, into houses although door shut); 2. God's ministers (same texts), *i.e.*, servants [*see Lesson IX.*]; 3. Attentive and obedient (Ps. ciii. 20, 21; comp. Lord's Prayer, 'As it is in heaven'); 4. Very strong (Ps. ciii. 20)—stronger than men, stronger than Satan (see Rev. xx. 1, 2); 5. Very numerous (Ps. lxxviii. 17).

Angels employed on earth for two things:—

(a) *Deliverance and help*: see 1 Kings xix. 5; 2 Kings vi. 17 (comp. Ps. lxxviii. 17); Dan. vi. 22; Matt. ii. 13, xxiv. 31; Luke xvi. 22; Acts xxvii. 23.

(b) *Judgment*: Gen. xix. 15, 24; Exod. xii. 1; 2 Sam. xxiv. 16; 2 Kings xix. 35; Rev. xv. 6.

In this chapter we shall see an angel on both errands:—

### I. ANGELIC DELIVERANCE.

See what happened on that Passover night:—

1. *At the Prison.* Look into the cell—who there? ver. 6—three men: two soldiers, with prisoner chained to them [*see Note 4.*].

Prisoner to be executed next day—does he look nervous and frightened?—*asleep!*—how can he sleep? see Ps. iii. 5, 6, iv. 8 [*illustr.*—*Picture in International Exhibition, martyr sleeping in front of lion's cage.*] Suddenly a bright light—some one striking Peter and calling him. How can he move, with those chains? see ver. 7. And his dress—is that, too, miraculously put on him? no, what he can do he *is* to do; yet

so bewildered, that the angel has to *tell* him everything. What are the soldiers doing? They see nothing—angel invisible [*see above*]; hear nothing—not even clank of falling chains; why? But Peter not out yet: two sentinels to pass, doors and gates to open, ver. 10 [*see Note 4.*]; yet are these any obstacle? see Ps. cvii. 13—16. What is Peter thinking? Fancies he is dreaming, ver. 9; but presently here he is standing alone in the street in middle of night—no doubt about it now—what does he say? ver. 11.

2. *At Mary's house.* [*See Note 5.*] Any sleeping here? They are too anxious to sleep—yet too helpless to do anything—except one thing. All those long night hours, crying to God. Suddenly a knocking outside—fearful sound in dead of night—'Has Herod found us out too?' But what is it? anything to be astonished at? Only what they have been praying for—yet, now that God has heard them (see Isa. lxxv. 24), can't believe it! What an example of our 3rd text for rep.!

### II. ANGELIC JUDGMENT.

Is the Church safe now? Will not Herod be more hostile than ever? Ah, but God does not do things by halves—the deliverance to be a complete one.

Look at another scene now—very different from prison cell or praying company. Grand festival in theatre at Cæsarea [*see Note 8.*].—great throng of people—king Herod on throne—his silvery robes glistening in sun [*explain, ancient theatres open to sky*]. Herod making a speech to deputation come from Phœnicia to appease his anger against their people [*see Note 7.*]. Great cheering at end of it—and what said? ver. 22. In that very city Herod's prisoner Peter was treated as a god, and what did he say to it? x. 26. But Herod not like that—more like Uzziah and Nebuchadnezzar (2 Chron. xxvi. 16; Dan. v. 20)—proud of his greatness—forgetting *Who* gave it him; and what the result? As he sits there on his throne, 'immediately' comes God's angel, as quick to punish as before to deliver. Five days of torment, and the proud persecutor dead [*see Note 8.*]. How true our motto (above) and 1st text for rep.!

#### *Are the angels less active now?*

True, we can't see them; but could Herod and the people in the theatre? If the Acts never written, we should know when and how Herod died [*see Note 8.*].—but we should not know that an angel did it. How many things that we see and hear of may really be angels' work!

Now what have the angels to do with us? Have they rejoiced over our repentance? see Luke xv. 10. Are we some of those happy people whom they invisibly help and serve (Heb. i. 14), and whom they keep safe in danger (Ps. xci. 11)? But if angelic deliverance is not for us, angelic judgment will be, see Matt. xiii. 41. A<sup>2</sup>.

## NOTES.

1. Herod Agrippa I., the 'Herod the King' of this chapter, was grandson of Herod the Great (the Herod of Matt. ii.), son of Aristobulus, nephew of Herod Antipas (the murderer of the Baptist), brother of Herodias, and father of Herod Agrippa II. (the Agrippa of Acts xxv.), and of Bernice and Drusilla. See further, 'Life of Our Lord,' Lesson XLIV., Note 1. A complete genealogical table of the Herodian family is given in Smith's *Student's N. T. Hist.*, p. 56.

Agrippa (as the Herod of this chapter is called by Josephus) was an intimate friend of the Emperor Caligula. Before the latter's accession, indeed, Agrippa had been accused of intriguing in his favour by the suspicious Tiberius, and thrown into prison. Caligula, on coming to the throne, released his friend, and gave him the provinces of Trachonitis and Abilene (Luke iii. 1), with the title of king, and subsequently also Galilee and Perea. The next emperor, Claudius, added to his kingdom Judæa and Samaria (which had been governed by Roman procurators ever since the death of Archelaus); and thus the entire dominions of Herod the Great were reunited under his grandson (A.D. 41). They did not long remain, however, under one ruler; for on Agrippa's death (Acts xii. 23) three years later, his son was only allowed to retain some of the northern provinces, and a new procurator was appointed to Judæa. In those three years, however, Herod Agrippa, who is represented by Josephus as very ambitious of popularity (comp. ver. 3), and very lavish in expenditure, built an extra wall round Jerusalem, and otherwise improved the city. See Josephus, *Antiq.*, xix. 7; Smith's *N. T. Hist.*, p. 91; Kitto, p. 233. In the latter will be found an authentic likeness of this Herod, on a coin.

2. James, the son of Zebedee, is the only Apostle whose death is recorded in Scripture. A beautiful incident connected with his martyrdom is related by Clement of Alexandria, and preserved in Eusebius's *Ecclesiast. Hist.*—the Apostle's accuser, it is said, was so impressed by his good confession before the judges, that he then and there declared himself a believer, and was condemned to die with him. On the way to execution, he begged forgiveness of St. James, who replied, 'Peace be unto thee!' and kissed him; and they were beheaded together.

The James named in ver. 17 is 'James the Lord's brother,' the first Bishop of Jerusalem.

3. 'After Easter,' in ver. 4, should be, 'after the Passover.' The word (*πάσχα, pascha*) is always elsewhere rendered 'Passover.' 'Easter' is a Saxon word. The Passover that year (A.D. 44) fell on April 1st.

4. The words 'prison' in ver. 4, 5, 6, 'keep' in ver. 4, 'keepers' in ver. 6, and 'ward' in ver. 10, are all connected words in the Greek. The only way of expressing the connection in English would be by saying that Peter was 'kept' by 'keepers' in 'the keep.' 'Prison' in ver. 7 is a different word, and means 'chamber.'

'Four quaternions,' i.e., four parties of four soldiers each. Each party took one of the four watches of the night (see Mark xiii. 35). The four soldiers in each watch were thus distributed:—two in the cell with Peter, to each of whom one of his arms was chained; one outside the cell-door, and the fourth outside the prison door (those were the 'first and second ward,' or sentinel, of ver. 10). The 'iron gate' of ver. 10 would be the outer gate of the whole premises. It is worth noting that Herod Agrippa himself had been chained to a soldier when in prison at Rome (see Note 1), as St. Paul was afterwards.

5. Mary, the mother of Mark, was probably a person of some property, like her nephew Barnabas—(not brother; the word in Col. iv. 10 means cousin, not 'sister's son'); and the fact that she possessed a house shews incidentally that the 'community of goods' at Jerusalem was not obligatory (see Lesson VII., Note 1).

Rhoda is the same name as our Rose.

A curious account of Eastern customs respecting knocking at the door is given by Professor Porter in his notes to Kitto, p. 250. He says the door is never opened without the question 'Who?' being first put and answered; and if the person inside goes to report the answer, the visitor continues knocking. More than once, when he himself returned home after a journey, his own servant 'opened not the gate for gladness,' but left him standing outside to run in and tell the news of his arrival.

6. 'It is his angel.' These words may be only understood as expressing the current Jewish belief in guardian angels; but this belief is, in the opinion of the best writers, confirmed by our Lord's statement in Matt. xviii. 10. See 'Life of Our Lord,' Lesson LVIII., Note 8. The word 'angel' never means ghost or spirit in Scripture.

7. The quarrel between Herod Agrippa and the people of Tyre and Sidon (ver. 20) was probably either caused by, or followed by, some commercial regulations on his part injurious to them. The Phœnicians were a mercantile, not an agricultural people, and they depended for their wheat, oil, &c., on supplies from Galilee; in St. Luke's words, 'their country was nourished by the king's country.' Comp. 1 Kings v. 9, 11; Ezra iii. 7; Ezek. xxvii. 2, 17.

8. The account in Josephus (*Antiq.*, xix. 8) of Herod Agrippa's death remarkably confirms and supplements the narrative of the Acts. A grand festival was being held at Cæsarea in honour of Claudius Cæsar (some think, to celebrate his return to Rome from Britain). On the second day (Aug. 1st, 44), Herod appeared at the public spectacles in a robe of wrought silver, which reflected so brilliantly the rays of the morning sun, that the audience were dazzled and awestruck, and hailed him as a god, crying, 'Be gracious unto us; if we have hitherto feared thee as a man, henceforth we confess thee more than mortal.' 'The king,' says Josephus, 'did not rebuke them, nor even reject this impious flattery.' Almost immediately afterwards he was seized with violent intestine pains, of which he died five days after (Aug. 6th).

It is remarkable that some other famous persecutors have died a similar death; among them Antiochus Epiphanes (2 Macc. ix. 5), and Herod the Great (Jos., *Antiq.*, xvii. 8).

9. It is uncertain where the 'another place' was to which Peter went (ver. 17); but he probably left the city. It is the general opinion that this persecution drove the Twelve from Jerusalem, as that under Saul had driven so many of their flock; and that it thus conduced to the accomplishment of the Divine purposes in the wider diffusion of the Gospel and the deliverance of the Church from the narrow bonds of Judaism. (See Introductory Note on 'The Book of the Acts,' sect. 4, page 2.) This view seems confirmed by the fact that the contributions of the Church at Antioch for the poor at Jerusalem (xi. 27–30), which were probably conveyed by Paul and Barnabas after the persecution of chap. xii. (see next Lesson, Note 8), were sent 'to the elders,'—which looks as if the Apostles were absent. See Norris, *Key to the Acts*, pp. 56, 59.



## Lesson XXI.—The Church at Antioch.

*'Called Christians first at Antioch.'*

**Read**—Acts xi. 19–30, xiii. 1, 2; **Learn**—Phil. ii. 15; 1 Pet. iv. 14–16.  
(*Hymns*, 40, 111, 126, 127, 167, 175, 324–331.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

This portion of chap. xi. is taken after chap. xii., because the latter belongs to the history of the Church of Jerusalem, with which the Course has hitherto been mainly concerned, while the former introduces the great Gentile mother-church of Antioch, under the auspices of which those mission journeys of St. Paul were taken, which are in future to occupy our attention.

An attempt has been made in the Sketch to give some faint idea of the circumstances of a Christian community in a great heathen city. Space, however, has only allowed of this being very meagrely done; and teachers who can get access to Blunt's *History of the Church in the First Three Centuries* are strongly recommended to read the 6th and 8th chapters of that work, in which a vivid picture is drawn of the habits and the difficulties of the primitive Christians, from materials chiefly gathered from the writings of Tertullian. The supposed cases in Division II., section 1, of the Sketch, are actually cited from Tertullian by Professor Blunt. There are several passages in 1st Corinthians which would illustrate the subject, but these have not been referred to because they would need considerable explanation. Teachers who may hesitate, even with the hints given, to enter into this topic at all, will find sufficient other matter in the Sketch for a Lesson of no little interest,—particularly about the name of 'Christian.'

The very interesting point of the contributions sent to Jerusalem is but briefly touched upon, as a similar subject will have Lesson XXXV. to itself.

### SKETCH OF LESSON.

Always interesting to visit new places. You have heard of—[*name some famous city or spot where the scholars have not been*]  
—would you not like to go there? In these Lessons we shall visit (in our minds) many great cities; will try and see what each is like, as we come to it. Where have we been already? Jerusalem, Samaria, Damascus, Lydda, Joppa, Cæsarea. Now a new place—Antioch. [*See Addit. Note at end.*]

Antioch very great city. And very beautiful—handsome buildings—fine streets—shady groves of trees—gardens—statues—fountains—river running through—high mountains behind. People from all parts there—Roman soldiers, Phœnician sailors, Greek artists and philosophers, Jewish merchants, African slaves, Arab shepherds and herdmen, Syrian vine-dressers, wood-cutters from Lebanon, fortune-tellers from the far East. Gay city—every one after pleasure. Wicked city—people cared only for themselves—indulged in all sorts of sin—a feeling of '*don't care*' among them. Plenty of temples, idols, priests—all kinds of gods worshipped—but would that make them better?

Yet great numbers of those very people now in heaven! To-day see how.

### I. THE CHURCH FOUNDED AT ANTIOCH.

(1) Every day, travellers arriving at Antioch. Here (ver. 19) are some from Jerusalem, looking sad and anxious—why?—been obliged to leave homes and friends to escape prison and death (see viii. 1–4).

Why so persecuted? Because believe in Jesus of Nazareth as King and Saviour, and belong to His Church. Then will they not now take care to conceal what they are? see ver. 19, viii. 4—can't stop 'preaching the Word.' Why only to their own countrymen? [*Lesson XIX.*]  
—as yet know not that '*the wall*' is broken down.

(2) But now other believers come to Antioch—not so afraid of Gentiles—what do they do? ver. 20 [*see Note 2*]. How can they help it?—must feel as St. Paul did afterwards in heathen city, xvii. 16. They know how God pities sinners, how Jesus died for them, how the Spirit can make them holy—must tell the glad news (see iv. 20; 2 Cor. v. 14). But are they likely to make converts? will those gay pleasure-seekers listen to a story about a crucified Jew? Well, perhaps they would listen; but when they are told to give up their sinful pleasures for His sake (see Rom. vi. 12, viii. 13; Eph. iv. 17, 22, v. 4, 11; Col. iii. 5–8)—what then? Ah, but look at Luke xviii. 26, 27, and then see ver. 21.

(3) Three or four years after [*see Note 1*]  
—another traveller from Jerusalem, sent by the Church there, ver. 22—what for? To see these Gentile converts, examine them, instruct them, confirm them (as Peter and John did in Samaria, viii. 14–17) [*see Note 3*]. What does he find? are they false brethren, like Ananias and Sapphira? have they joined the Church to get gain, like Simon Magus? see ver. 23—no mistake about it, they are true converts, '*the grace of God*' manifest.

(4) A thought strikes Barnabas—This the very place for Saul; he was to preach to Gentiles—here is an opening for him! See ver. 26, 26—how strange!—the Church at Antioch founded by fugitives from Saul's fierce zeal, and then built up by Saul himself!

## II. THE NEW NAME GIVEN TO THE CONVERTS AT ANTIOCH.

### 1. *How came they to be called Christians?*

Did they call themselves so? No—never find this name used in Scripture by believers [see Note 5]. Given then by people of Antioch. Why? because so good? (If you say now of a man, 'He is a Christian,' you mean he is very good). No; *it was a nickname!* Why given? Because the converts seemed such strange people to the heathen—got disliked, laughed at, called names; and being heard so often speaking of some one named 'Christ,' came to be pointed at as '*Christ-ians*.' Men would whisper, 'Oh, he's a *Christian!*' boys would shout, 'There goes a *Christian!*' [See Note 5].

But why would they be thought so strange? why laughed at? Think—here are two friends—used to be much together—dressed extravagantly—idled away time at theatres and public gardens—would drink and gamble together; but now one of them has listened to Barnabas—been convinced of his sin—turned from it (see texts above)—no pleasure in all those things now—'ashamed' of them (Rom. vi. 21);—what will his old companion think and say of him? Or, here are two sisters—used to go together to idol-temple—make garlands to adorn oxen for sacrifice (see xiv. 13); but now one of them goes instead to prayer-meeting or sacred feast of bread and wine (what was that?)—makes 'coats and garments' for poor (see ix. 39);—what will her sister think and say of her? [See Preface, above.] Ah, there was much reproach and ridicule; but what does St. Peter say to those who suffer so '*as Christians*'? see 2nd text for rep.

### 2. *What kind of Christians were they?*

What does our 1st text for rep. say Christians ought to be?

(a) 'Blameless, harmless, without rebuke'—need not mind being laughed at, but must be very careful not to *deserve blame*—need not mind 'suffering as a Christian,' but take care not to 'suffer as a

thief or evil-doer' (2nd text for rep., comp. 1 Pet. ii. 12, iii. 14—17); and we know the early Christians were blameless [Note 6].

(b) 'Shining as lights in the world'; how and why? see Matt. v. 14—16. Now see what kind of light shone from these Christians of Antioch:—

*How did they treat God?* Neglect Him, like the gay idlers around them? see xiii. 2—'ministered to the Lord'—met regularly for services of prayer, praise, hearing God's word, celebrating the Lord's Supper.

*How did they treat themselves?* Indulge themselves as they used to do? see xiii. 2 again—'fasted'—at times went without food rather than cut short their prayers.

*How did they treat other men?* The people of Antioch a selfish set—cared only for selves; were the Christians like that? see xi. 27—30: *the first charity collection in the history of the world* was made by these Gentile believers! [See Notes 7, 8.] And who contributed to it? a few who were well off? ver. 29—'*every man* according to his ability.'

What an example! Worship, fasting, almsgiving (comp. Matt. vi. 1—18)—love to God, denial of self, kindness to men.

## THINK WHAT THE NAME OF 'CHRISTIAN' IS NOW.

First given to a small company in a far-off city—now spread all over the world. First given in scorn—now, what name so honourable?

All of us 'called Christians.' More than that: all of us have '*Christian names*'—when given? (This why Baptism called '*christening*.' Every time your Christian name mentioned, should remind you that you are not a Pagan or a Mahometan, but—?)

But then, what kind of Christian? How do you treat God—yourselves—others? (see above). This is what many boys and girls do:—*As to God*—never think of Him at all—never really pray—never really try to please Him. *As to themselves*—indulge themselves—do as they like—try and get their own way—their money, time, &c., all given to selves. *As to others*—care nothing for them. Is this like the Christians of Antioch? What are the differences?

Pray that 'all who profess and call themselves Christians may'—[see *Prayer for all Conditions of Men*].

## NOTES.

1. This passage, so brief, and apparently so consecutive, really covers a space of at least seven years. The 'persecution that arose about Stephen' began in A.D. 36 or 37, and the conversion of Saul occurred in the latter year; while the famine which was the occasion of the journey of Saul and Barnabas to Jerusalem was in A.D. 44. Of this period only a year is occupied by the joint work of these two at Antioch (ver. 26); consequently the Church there must have been growing for three or four years before the first visit of Barnabas—even allowing some time to

have elapsed before the arrival of the 'men of Cyprus and Cyrene.'

2. These Cypriotes and Cyrenians were Hellenists, or foreign Jews (see Lesson II., Note 4, and Lesson IX., Note 1), and more liberal than the Jews of Palestine: hence their readiness to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. 'Grecians,' in ver. 20, should be 'Greeks.' It is not the Hellenist Jews who are meant, as in vi. 1 (see Lesson IX., Note 1), but uncircumcised Gentiles.

3. The expression in ver. 23—'*When* he came

and had seen . . . was glad'—shows that one object of the mission of Barnabas was to ascertain the character of the unexpected influx of Gentiles to the Church. It was one thing for an Apostle like Peter to baptize a few under direct Divine guidance, but quite another thing for private believers without authority to admit them wholesale: for this the Church at Jerusalem was hardly prepared. But the selection of Barnabas for the mission was both wise and kind. As a Levite (iv. 36), he might be trusted not to be too lax; as a native of Cyprus he would have wider sympathies, and less aversion to Gentiles, than the Twelve; while his personal character (comp. iv. 36, ix. 27) would inspire confidence. And the result justified the choice.

It should be noted that in xiv. 14 Barnabas is called an 'Apostle'; and as we find afterwards that one, at all events, of the special 'gifts' of the Spirit, prophecy, was in exercise in the Church of Antioch (xiii. 1), the inference is natural that Barnabas communicated this and other gifts by the apostolic 'laying on of hands.' See Lesson XII., Note 5.

4. The Antioch of this passage was Antioch in Syria, and must be carefully distinguished from Antioch in Pisidia (xiii. 14). See further the Additional Note below.

5. The word 'Christian' only occurs three times in the Bible: viz., here, in Acts xxvi. 28 ('Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian'), and in 1 Pet. iv. 16 ('If any man suffer as a Christian'). In each of these places the word is evidently one used by unbelievers. 'Disciples,' 'saints,' 'believers,' 'brethren,' were the designations used in the Church itself. But who invented the name? Not the Jews: they would not have applied the name to those whom they regarded as believing in a fictitious Christ (i.e., Messiah); their phrase was 'the sect of the Nazarenes' (xxiv. 5). But the people of Antioch were notorious for their scurrilous wit in inventing nicknames (see instances in C. and H., i. chap. iv., p. 149); and to this peculiarity the name of 'Christian' doubtless owes its origin. (Compare Lollard, Puritan, Quaker, Methodist, &c.) It is noteworthy that Tacitus mentions it specifically as one in use among the common people ('Quos vulgus Christianos appellabat,' *Annal.* xv. 41).

In course of time the Church adopted its nickname, and learned to glory in it. 'I am a Christian,' was the bold answer of those accused before the Roman tribunals: and in the Clementine Liturgy occur these remarkable words, 'We give thanks to Thee that the name of Thy Christ is named upon us.' 'The restless, keen-witted crowds of various races which thronged the long colonnades by the Orontes, or ranged through the gardens of Epiphane, little thought that, in exercising their faculty and their license of giving characteristic names on the little band of believers of all nations, they were rendering a service to the world; and that when the gardens had vanished . . . that one carelessly-flung

*sobriquet* should make the name of Antioch familiar in countless homes throughout the world' (*Victory of the Vanquished*, p. 394).

6. The picture of the primitive Christian character drawn by Blunt (*Hist. Christian Church*, chap. vi.) from materials scattered about the writings of the early Fathers, shows how 'holily and justly and unblameably' the converts generally lived. It might be said of them, as of Daniel, that 'no occasion' could be found against them 'except concerning the law of their God.' Pliny, when governor of Bithynia, was reluctant to take severe measures against those whose main offence was (as described in his letter to the Emperor Trajan) 'to assemble betimes in the morning, chant hymns to Christ as their God, and bind themselves by a solemn engagement to be honest and chaste, to keep their word, and redeem their pledge.'

7. The expression 'throughout all the world,' in ver. 28, is no doubt hyperbolic; comp. Luke ii. 1. But no less than four famines are recorded in the reign of Claudius Cæsar. The one here referred to is probably that mentioned by Josephus as afflicting Judea when Cuspius Fadus was procurator,—who was sent to the province on the death of Herod (xii. 23). In this famine the price of food became enormous, and great numbers perished. Some relief was given to the Jews by Helena, Queen of Adiabene, a proselyte, who had come to Jerusalem to worship, and who imported corn from Egypt and Cyprus (Jos. *Antiq.* xx. 2, 6; 5, 2). See Smith's *N. T. Hist.*, p. 368; C. and H., i., chap. iv., p. 156; Kitto, p. 229.

8. The visit of Saul to Jerusalem with the alms of the Church at Antioch was his *second* visit to the capital since his conversion. It is supposed that the vision described in 2 Cor. xii. 1—4, took place then, in the Temple (like the former one, Acts xxii. 17); as that Epistle was written about 'fourteen years' after this visit. Probably he and Barnabas did not arrive at Jerusalem till after Herod's death; see date of the famine, above. It is interesting to notice that, on their return, they took with them the son of that Mary to whose house Peter went on the night of his rescue from prison (xii. 12, 25). Possibly they stayed there during their sojourn.

'Relief,' in ver. 29, is the word usually translated 'ministry,' and is so rendered in xii. 25. See Lesson IX., Note 4.

9. The contributions from Antioch were given 'to the elders'; see last Lesson, Note 9. The Greek word for elders is that from which is derived our word 'presbyters.' These Elders or Presbyters, and the Apostles and Deacons, were the original *three orders* of the Church's ministry; see Lesson IX.

10. The word in xiii. 2, rendered 'ministered,' is a significant one. It is the original of our word 'liturgy.' It refers to public worship, and is used elsewhere of the Temple services.

## ADDITIONAL NOTE II. ANTIOCH.

The city of Antioch occupies so important a place in the Acts of the Apostles, that it seems well to devote to it a special Note.

Antioch was built 300 B.C. by Seleucus Nicator, the first of the Greek kings of Syria. He was a great founder of cities, and is said to have built sixteen Antiochs and nine Seleucias, named respectively

after his father Antiochus and himself. One other of the Antiochs is mentioned in the Acts (xiii. 14), and one Seleucia (xiii. 4). This one, Antioch in Syria, was much the greatest, and in the time of St. Paul was the third city in the Roman Empire, yielding precedence only to Rome and Alexandria.

Antioch was situated on the Orontes,

near the spot where that river breaks through the chain of mountains (Amanus) which runs parallel to the sea, and which is a prolongation of the Lebanon range northwards. This situation was highly favourable to the prosperity of Antioch. By means of its port, the Seleucia of Acts xiii. 4, at the mouth of the river sixteen miles off, it possessed ready communication with the Mediterranean. It was also easily approached from the Euphrates; and so became the meeting-place of East and West.

Successive kings enlarged and beautified Antioch, until it became one of the finest cities in the world. Built partly (like Paris) on an island in the midst of the river, partly on the bank opposite, and partly on the craggy sides of Mount Silpius, which rose precipitously on the south side, it must have been most picturesquely placed. Its chief feature was a splendid street four miles long, with colonnades under which the citizens could walk (again reminding us of Paris, with its Rue de Rivoli).

Two or three miles from the city was Daphne, a celebrated sanctuary of Apollo, —'with its fountains, and groves of bay-trees, its bright buildings, its crowds of licentious votaries, its statue of Apollo; where, under the climate of Syria and the wealthy patronage of Rome, all that was beautiful in nature and in art had created a sanctuary for a perpetual festival of vice' (C. & H., i., chap. iv., p. 154).

The frivolity of the Antiochenes was notorious. They had 'a passion for races,'

were the easy dupes of Chaldaean astrologers, and were generally considered the most abandoned people in the Empire. When the satirist Juvenal describes the superstitions prevalent in Rome, he says that 'the Orontes had flowed into the Tiber.'

Nevertheless, Antioch is connected with some great names. Germanicus, the high-minded son of Tiberius, died there. Ignatius the martyr was Bishop of its Church. It was the birthplace of Chrysostom, and the scene of his earlier labours.

The modern Antakiyah is comparatively insignificant.

The Orontes, on which Antioch stands, is the largest river in Syria. In St. Paul's time it was navigable, and in modern times it has been proposed to make it so again in connection with the Euphrates Valley route to India. It is a beautiful river, winding between high cliffs and verdant banks, and has been compared to the Wye. At its mouth, on a rocky height, was Seleucia, the port of Antioch, a place of great strength, and of great importance in ancient history. It had a harbour, and two piers projecting into the sea, the remains of which can still be seen—the piers to this day bearing the names of Paul and Barnabas.

See further, an interesting article by Professor Stanley Leathes in the *Church Sunday School Magazine*, March, 1872; C. & H., i., chap. iv., pp. 149–154, 165–169; Kitto, p. 221; Smith's *Dict. Bible*; and some striking passages in *The Victory of the Vanquished*, pp. 200, 338, 360.

## Lesson XXII.—The First Mission Journey.—A Contest for a Soul.

*'Satan hath desired to have you—but—'*

*Read*—Acts xiii. 1–12; *Learn*—2 Cor. x. 4; 1 Pet. v. 8. (*Hymns*, 102, 103, 120, 127, 166, 168, 229, 231, 233, 238.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

This subject presents two leading points of application, viz., the missionary duty of the Church, and the critical position of one who is being drawn opposite ways by good and evil influences. With the view of combining the two, the narrative is regarded in the Sketch as illustrating two aspects of the great warfare between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of Satan. First, the mission of Barnabas and Saul is described as an attack upon the territory of the Evil One; secondly, the conversion of Sergius Paulus is described as the defeat of the Evil One in the 'contest for his soul.' The latter division leads naturally up to an application which will be novel to most children. They hear often enough—they have heard already in this course—of the warfare in which they are themselves called actively to engage; but here they are reminded that their own souls are the prize in the warfare between the Powers of light and darkness. No consideration can be more impressive, if skilfully and earnestly put before them.

The introductory paragraphs merely repeat in a condensed form some leading points of Lesson I., and of the last Lesson in the 'Life of Our Lord,'—both which should be referred to.

With senior classes, the Ordination Service should be compared with ver. 3; and in many parishes, where special services or meetings have been held to bid farewell to

departing missionaries, there will be an illustration ready to hand of the 'dismissal' at Antioch.

We are now entering upon those journeys of St. Paul which have been so abundantly illustrated by the geographical and historical portions of Conybeare and Howson's great work. No one who has not read Dean Howson's picturesque narrative can form the slightest idea of the light thrown by it upon the Acts. Every possible use will be made of the information it contains to add to the interest of succeeding Lessons; but after all, space will only allow of this being done very meagrely, and teachers should get access to the book if possible. Not that minute descriptions of cities and graphic pictures of scenery should ever be allowed to interfere with the far higher work of the teacher; but they may be legitimately used within proper limits, to give interest to the narrative, and thus make its spiritual teachings more acceptable, and more easily remembered. Indeed, it is no small result of a Lesson if it has only shown how truly interesting Scripture history is, and how entirely its truth is confirmed by the researches of travellers and students.

#### SKETCH OF LESSON.

Suppose the people of some county or city of England would not obey the Queen, but set up another ruler, what would they be called? This is just what multitudes are towards God—*rebels*. How came they so? Satan, a rebel himself, first started rebellion on earth—when? Usurped God's dominion (John xiv. 30; 2 Cor. iv. 4)—tempted men to obey *his* will instead of God's.

What did Christ do, when He would reconquer the world? called together a little band of loyal soldiers—sent them to fight in the great warfare between Him and Satan, and win back the rebels to their rightful King.

What did Satan do then? Wait to be attacked? No—set to work either to crush Christ's soldiers (by persecution), or to draw them into rebellion too (by tempting them to sin). [See Lesson VII.]

So far as we have gone, although many rebels won back, yet the Church very much 'on the defensive' against these attacks; and the great world, wide countries and populous cities, all in rebellion—Satan's reign undisturbed. To-day see the first great effort to carry the war far into the enemy's country.

#### I. THE FIRST MISSIONARY EXPEDITION.

Look at ver. 1 and 2. 'In the Church at Antioch'—what do we know of that Church? [Question on last Lesson, and see Note 1.] And now what is God's call to this Church? They had sent relief to starving bodies (xi. 28–30); now to send relief to starving souls. Their money had been 'separated' (devoted, put aside) for God; now their men to be 'separated' too.

Who chose the men? ver. 2—the very names revealed [see Note 2]. No such miraculous messages now; yet who should choose all God's ministers, teachers, missionaries? see Heb. v. 4 (comp. Ordination Service).

Did they shrink from God's call? Some have done so; see Exod. iii. 11, 13, iv. 1, 10, 13; Jonah i. 1–3. Not so Barnabas and Saul: ready, like brave and loyal

soldiers, to go wherever sent, even to death (comp. xx. 22–24, xxi. 13). So must Christ's soldiers be now: missionaries especially [illust.—*death of Bp. Patteson*];—but not they only—every one 'under Christ's banner' to 'fight manfully';—

'Go forward, Christian soldier,  
Beneath His banner true.'

How did the Church send them forth? Ver. 3. (a) Fasting and prayer; like Jesus Himself when He ordained the Twelve, Luke vi. 12, 13. (b) Solemn laying on of hands—token of authority and blessing [See Lesson IX., Note 5].

Now see these three, Barnabas, Saul, Mark (ver. 5; see xii. 25), setting out on their journey. If it had been a great Roman army starting from Antioch, what crowds in streets, what excitement! But who cares about or even notices three humble Jews, quietly going down the beautiful river [see Note 4] to the sea-coast? Yet these are the 'vanguard' of Christ's army, going forth to the great war, to deliver men from Satan's dominion.

How are they equipped? See 1st text for rep.—their weapons 'not carnal'—you could not grasp them with your hand, or buckle them to your side—and yet 'mighty' to win great victories, to 'pull down strongholds.' What are they? (a) The 'Word,' the message, they have to preach [see Lesson XI., Note 6]. Why this so 'mighty'? Because it is a proclamation of free pardon—is not that likely to win back rebels? (b) Prayer (Eph. vi. 18). Why this so 'mighty'? Because it 'moves the Hand that moves the world.'

Now see the first battle.

#### II. A CONTEST FOR A SOUL.

The missionaries standing on the seashore at Seleucia—ships sailing in all directions—which way shall they go? In the far distance can dimly see high mountains [see Addit. Note II., page 62]—Barnabas's own country—thither they will go. If one place in world then where Satan supreme it was *there*—wickedness of Cyprus famous [see Note 5].

Who was the Roman governor there? ver. 7 [see Note 6]. We find good and bad governors mentioned—this a good one. Something like Cornelius [see *Lesson XVIII.*]—not indeed ‘devout’—does not know the true God—yet anxious to find out what is truth. Has no doubt heard that those strange people, the Jews, say they know the true God and possess His messages to men; so what does he do? There is a Jew in the island (ver. 6), a great wizard, who can do wonderful tricks, like Simon Magus [see *Lesson XII.*]; will send for him. But who is this Jew? one of God’s prophets? No, a ‘false prophet’—on Satan’s side—cares not for the governor’s soul, but for his money [see Note 7].

But now Sergius Paulus hears of two other Jews in the neighbourhood, with some new and wonderful message from God—must hear what they say too. How does Elymas like that? Not at all; if the governor listens to them, all his power at an end.

See the conflict. Sometimes in warfare, the struggle particularly desperate for possession of one fortress [*illustr.—Metz or Strasburg, in Franco-German War*]. So now. See the combatants—on one side Elymas, on the other Barnabas and Saul—the sorcerer fighting Satan’s battle, the Apostles fighting Christ’s battle. So Moses and the magicians before Pharaoh; Elijah and the Baal-worshippers on Carmel. But fighting for what? For the soul of Sergius Paulus. And how fighting? Barnabas and Saul telling the glad tidings of salvation—Elymas contradicting and slandering them.

See the victory. Look at Saul gazing sternly on the sorcerer (ver. 9); hear his burning words. What does he call him? Not his own name, Bar-jesus (son of Jesus), but what he really is, ‘son of the devil’ (see Matt. xiii. 38; John viii. 44). What does he do to him? See the blinded magi-

cian with hands stretched out for some one to lead him!—his boasted magic can’t open his eyes. [See Note 8.]

Now what do you think of this act of Saul’s? Was it passionate and cruel? Not passionate, for—see ver. 9, ‘filled with the Holy Ghost.’ Nor cruel, for—(a) the punishment ‘only for a season’; (b) it won the victory, and saved a soul, ver. 12; (c) Elymas might be led to repent, and then another soul saved.

#### THAT GREAT WARFARE IS STILL GOING ON.

Satan not yet deposed—Christ’s Kingdom not everywhere yet. So we pray, ‘Thy Kingdom come!’ And it shall; see Ps. ii. 8, xxii. 27, 28, lxxii. 8; Rev. xi. 15, xii. 10.

And there are contests for souls now. Satan always ‘seeking whom he may devour’—like what? 2nd text for rep. How do you think he gets at us? Often by setting others to tempt us, just as he set Elymas to tempt Sergius Paulus. Here is a boy, being pulled two ways; companions drawing him one way, his own conscience, his teacher, &c., drawing him the other way. Many of you like that. Did you ever think, those companions are Satan’s agents? They may not mean to be (perhaps Elymas did not), but they are. When you yield to them, Satan gets a victory—do you wish that? But your teachers, all who draw you from sin towards what is right—they are Christ’s agents. When you yield to them He gains the victory—do you wish that?

May our motto (above) be true of us, as it was of Peter (Luke xxii. 32), and of Sergius Paulus—‘Satan hath desired to have you—but—!’ Ask Christ to pray for you, as He did for Peter; and then, do as He told Peter to do—‘strengthen thy brethren’—be ‘a good soldier of Jesus Christ’ (2 Tim. ii. 3).

#### NOTES.

1. Little is known of the three ‘prophets and teachers’ named with Barnabas and Saul in ver. 1. Symeon’s surname, *Niger* (‘black’), suggests that he may have been an African. Lucius was also from Africa, but probably one of the large Jewish colony at Cyrene (see Lesson X., Note 2), and one of those who brought the Gospel to Antioch (xi. 20). He is supposed to be the Lucius of Rom. xvi. 21, who is called by St. Paul his ‘kinsman.’ The name is quite different from Luke (Lucas or Lucanus). Manaen had been ‘brought up with Herod the tetrarch’ (Herod Antipas), i.e., was his foster-brother. Though he is not mentioned elsewhere, Professor Plumptre has most ingeniously constructed the probable history of his life (*Sunday Magazine*, April, 1867; also in his *Biblical Studies*).

2. The call of the Holy Ghost probably came through one of the prophets, being a revelation to the Church, and not (as in viii. 29) to the mind of one individual. (Norris, *Key to the Acts*, p. 62). Comp. chap. xx. 23 with xxi. 10, 11. The ‘prophets’ of the New Testament were an order of teachers who spoke by direct inspiration. Sometimes they predicted future

events (xi. 28, xxi. 10, 11). The gift of prophecy is ranked by St. Paul above that of tongues (1 Cor. xii. 28, xiv. 1–5); see Addit. Note I., page 10.

3. John Mark, who accompanied Barnabas and Saul, is called their ‘minister,’ or *assistant*. Probably he, among other things, baptized the converts, see x. 48; 1 Cor. i. 14–17.

4. ‘Departed,’ in ver. 4, is literally ‘went down.’ Perhaps they sailed down the river. See Additional Note II., page 62.

5. The island of Cyprus, like the city of Antioch, was a meeting-place of East and West. Its worship was half Oriental and half Greek, and combined the evils of both. Paphos, the seat of government, in particular, was noted for its sanctuary of Venus, and for the infamous rites connected with the worship of that goddess—a worship which Athanasius called ‘the deification of lust.’ At Salamis, at the eastern end of Cyprus, there were large numbers of Jews, attracted thither by the lucrative trade to be done in the products of the island, which was extremely fertile, and also possessed important

copper mines. Observe the plural 'synagogues' in ver. 5. There were 'synagogues' at Damascus (ix. 20), but only a 'synagogue' at Thessalonica and at Corinth (xvii. 1, xviii. 4).

6. The title 'deputy,' applied to Sergius Paulus, affords a singular example of the minute accuracy of St. Luke. The provinces of the Roman Empire were of two kinds:—Some were under the direct authority of the Emperor; some under that of the Senate. (The origin of this curious division will be found in C. & H.) The former were under military rule, and were governed by 'proprætors,' 'legates,' or 'procurators'; the latter were under civil rule, and were governed by 'proconsuls.' Now the New Testament does not distinguish between the varieties of imperial officials, but calls them all 'governors' (*ἡγεμῶν, hegemōan*). But the *proconsuls* are always specified, and the word (*ἀρχόντος, anthupatos*) appears in our version as 'deputy.' We find 'deputies' at Corinth and Ephesus (Acts xviii. 12, xix. 38), the capitals of provinces which we know from contemporary history to have been under the Senate; while this term is never applied to the governors of the imperial province of Syria or of its dependency Judæa.

But the designation of Sergius Paulus as a 'deputy' or proconsul was for a long time considered a difficulty, Cyprus not being one of the provinces under the Senate's authority. But further research has shown that, for a time, the island was governed by a 'proconsul'; and coins have been found confirming this, one of which, of the date of Claudius Cæsar (in whose reign St. Paul came to Cyprus), is represented in C. & H. i., chap. v., p. 176, and Kitto, p. 265.

7. On the sorcerers of those times, see Lesson XII., Note 1. It may here be added that many of these, both male and female, were Jews. The satirist Juvenal draws a picture of a Roman lady beguiled by a fortune-telling Jewess, and adds that the Jews 'would, for the smallest coin, tell you what fortunes you desired.' The grossest superstitions were rife among all classes. Even the first Emperor, Augustus (as the historian Suetonius tells us) kept magical remedies against thunderstorms, and was afraid to be left alone at night. See Kitto, pp. 357—362.

'Sorcerer' is in the original the same as 'Magus' (see Lesson XII., Note 2). 'Elymas' means the same thing in Arabic, viz., 'wise.' The 'wise men' of Matt. ii. 1 are called in the original 'Magi.'

Readers of missionary narratives are familiar with the unvarying hostility to the Gospel manifested by the sorcerers, soothsayers, and 'medicine-men,' of heathen countries.

8. Two miracles of judgment occur in the

Acts—the death of Ananias and Sapphira, and the blindness of Elymas: the one at the foundation of the Church among the Jews, the other just as the Gospel is going to the Gentiles. See Lesson VII., Division IV.

The words 'mist' and 'darkness' indicate that first the eyes became dim, and then total blindness followed. Raphael's famous cartoon (familiar to all, through engravings) strikingly portrays the blinded man feeling about for a guiding hand. 'Some to lend him by the hand' is one word in the Greek, and the same word occurs in connection with St. Paul's own blindness in ix. 8. That blindness, too, was 'for a season'; but whether its blessed result was paralleled in the case of Elymas, we know not.

9. It is at this point in the history that the name of Saul is dropped and that of Paul taken up. Some have thought that the latter name was adopted by the Apostle in honour of Sergius Paulus; but this is in every way improbable, and the best writers think that he had both names, the one Jewish, the other Roman, from childhood (Lesson XIV., Note 4). But if so, why does 'Paul' supersede 'Saul' just at this juncture? The best explanation seems to be that the Gentile name was assumed because the Apostle's missionary work among the Gentiles was beginning.

It was, says Dr. Alexander, 'the time fixed by Divine authority for Paul's manifestation as Apostle of the Gentiles; and this manifestation was made more conspicuous by its coincidence with his triumph over a representative of unbelieving and apostate Judaism, and the conversion of an official representative of Rome whose name was identical with his own Apostolical title. The critical juncture was still further marked by Paul's first miracle, or sign of his Apostleship (see 2 Cor. xii. 12), preceded by a few words conceived and uttered in the highest tone of Apostolical authority' (quoted in the *Annotated Paragraph Bible*).

And Howson well says, 'As Abram was changed into Abraham, when God promised that he should be the father of many nations; as Simon was changed into Peter, when it was said, On this rock I will build My Church—so Saul is changed into Paul at the moment of his first great victory among the heathen' (C. & H., i., chap. v., p. 182).

This view is confirmed by the fact that from this time St. Paul takes the lead. Hitherto it has been 'Barnabas and Saul'; henceforth it is 'Paul and his company' (ver. 13) or 'Paul and Barnabas' (vers. 43, 46, 50, xv. 2, 22, 35). The three exceptions to this (xiv. 14, xv. 12, 25) can each be specially accounted for, and, indeed, rather prove the rule.

## ADDITIONAL NOTE III.

### ST. PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY.

It may help the teacher, in getting up Lessons XXII., XXIII., and XXIV., if a special Note is devoted to a brief description of the route of St. Paul's first missionary tour, which is the subject of those Lessons. A reference to the map at the beginning of the volume will explain the geographical allusions.

From the Syrian Antioch, Paul and Barnabas 'went down' (Acts xiii. 4, *Greek*) the Orontes to Seleucia (see Addit. Note II., p. 62). From the coast there the high mountains of the island of Cyprus can be

distinctly seen, on a clear day, rising above the south-western horizon; and, with a fair wind, the voyage to Salamis would not occupy more than a few hours. Thence they went, no doubt on foot, and probably by a Roman road, to Paphos, the capital, about a hundred miles off at the further end of the island. Their next destination would naturally be some part of the great peninsula which we now call Asia Minor; and as St. Paul had already spent some time in Cilicia (ix. 30, xi. 25), they set their faces towards the next province, Pam-

phylia. There would be no difficulty in finding some small vessel about to sail thither, and, after sailing across a part of the Mediterranean famous in ancient history for two great naval battles (between the Greeks and Persians, and between the Romans and Antiochus of Syria), they were safely landed at Perga, on the river Cestrus.

Howson supposes that they started from Seleucia about March, that being the time when ancient navigation 'opened' for the season (comp. xxvii. 12, xxviii. 11); and that they arrived at Perga about May. If so, they would 'find the inhabitants deserting its hot and silent streets'; as it has always been the custom for almost the whole population of these sultry coasts to move up into the mountains for the summer. A picturesque account of 'an almost uninterrupted train of cattle and people,' which passed up on May 10th, is quoted from Sir C. Fellows' *Travels in C. & H.*, i., chap. vi., p. 200. This would account for Paul and Barnabas not stopping at Perga on this occasion.

The climate rapidly changes as the traveller ascends the great chain of Taurus. One day he sees the corn whitening for harvest; the next day he has risen to where it is not an inch above the ground. 'The upper part of this district is a wild region of cliffs, often isolated and bare, and separated from each other by valleys of sand.' Down the deep ravines rush foaming torrents, not perennially, but when the rains or the melting snows fill the water-courses; and the 'perils of waters' from the sudden flow are among the most serious encountered by the traveller. The region was also peculiarly one of 'perils of robbers'; for the marauding habits of the lawless mountain tribes are mentioned by several ancient writers.

Having crossed the Taurus, Paul and Barnabas would soon arrive at Pisidian Antioch (see Lesson XXIII., Note 3).

When driven thence, they completely changed the direction of their journey, and turned back towards the south-east, following (no doubt) the course of the great road which stretches right across Asia Minor from Ephesus to Cilicia and Syria, and which would carry them over broad bare upland plains to Iconium. On these plains myriads of flocks have grazed in all ages, and supplied wool for the markets of Greece and Rome, as they still do for those of Great Britain. In this respect, and in the scarcity of water (see Lesson XXIV., Note 8), these Lycaonian plains resemble those of Australia.

Another peculiarity of the country is that the mountains rise abruptly in small but lofty masses, like so many rocky islands rising out of the sea. At the foot of the most remarkable of these islet peaks, called Kara-Dagh (Black Mountain), is supposed to have stood the town of Lystra; and Derbe was probably a little to the east, where there is now a village called *Diule*.

At this point Paul and Barnabas had come very near to the 'Cilician Gates,' the famous defile, eighty miles long, through the Taurus chain, a little to the north of Tarsus (see description in *C. & H.*, i., chap. viii., p. 302). It would, therefore, have been easy for them to have returned home by that short cut; and this fact, combined with the perils they had incurred on the journey, strikingly witnesses to the self-denying devotion which led them to retrace their steps, visit successively the very cities whence persecution had driven them (xiv. 21), and return by the same dangerous route to Perga. Howson suggests that they came down into the Pamphylian plain at the close of autumn, and, finding Perga now full for the winter season, 'preached the Word' there (xiv. 25).

They did not embark, as they had disembarked, in the river at Perga; but went on to Attaleia, on the sea-coast, and 'thence sailed to Antioch' in Syria (xiv. 26).

## Lesson XXIII.—Two Sabbaths in a Synagogue.

*'Take heed how ye hear.'*

*Read*—Acts xiii. 13—52; *Learn*—Ps. xcv. 8—11; Mark vi. 11; Luke x. 16. (*Hymns*, 40. 62, 144, 145, 202, 232, 258, 261, 263, 264, 377.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

It will be assumed, in this and subsequent Lessons, that the relations between the Jews and the Gentiles, and the feelings of the former towards the latter, in St. Paul's time, are understood by teachers and scholars, having been fully treated in Lesson XIX. If further explanations should be needed, that Lesson must be referred to.

The length of this Lesson will depend on the time given to St. Paul's sermon. This can be omitted entirely if necessary, or merely described in a few words as conveying the announcement of a crucified and risen Saviour. On the other hand, if it be taken more fully than in the Sketch, the episode of Mark's desertion must be left out; and the application might be altered into the simple pressing home of the message of 'forgiveness of sins through this Man.' But the application in the Sketch is one which should be taken



somewhere in teaching on the Acts, being based on circumstances repeatedly met with in that book; and the present appears the best opportunity.

The teacher will not fail to notice that the first text for repetition is from the *Venite*, and hence the words are very familiar. An opportunity therefore occurs of referring to what the scholars hear in church; and such opportunities should not be lost.

Care must be taken in this Lesson not to confuse the two *Antiochs*.

#### SKETCH OF LESSON.

We have seen Barnabas and Saul starting on their first missionary journey. Where did they go first? Where was their first victory over Satan's power?—[*recapitulate*]. Which of the two Apostles won this victory? ver. 9; and now he, the younger and hitherto the inferior, takes the lead as the 'Apostle of the Gentiles'—and at same time drops his Jewish name and takes his Roman one, ver. 13. [*Last Lesson, Note 9.*]

Will they stay at Paphos after the great victory? Everything looking well, now the governor with them; but their work not to stay in one place—must do among the Gentiles what Jesus Himself did among the Jews, Luke iv. 43. [*Illustr.—When sower casts seed in one place, does he stand still and watch till it comes up? No, goes on sowing elsewhere.*]

On board ship again, across the sea—whither? ver. 13. Then difficult journey before them—over great snow-capped mountains by dangerous road, to get to great city 100 miles off [see *Addit. Note III., p. 66*]. Do they shrink? One does—one of the three who started together—ver. 5, 13 (see xv. 38). [See *Note 1.*] What is that like? Those three came out to fight Christ's battles [see *last Lesson*].—what is Mark now?—and what does the Captain say of deserters? Luke ix. 62; Heb. x. 38. If he was afraid, what should he have done? see Ps. lvi. 3—

'Shrink not, Christians: will ye yield?  
Will ye quit the painful field?  
Will ye flee in danger's hour?  
Know ye not your Captain's power?'

Will the other two shrink likewise? Always harder to go on when comrades have drawn back; but they do 'know their Captain's power,' and in next verse we find them at the end of their journey.

In this city two interesting scenes, on two successive Sabbaths. Look at them to-day.

#### THE FIRST SABBATH.

This Antioch like the other, a Gentile city; yet many Jews settled here, so one place where true God worshipped—their synagogue. Here, far from Jerusalem, the Scriptures read, and 'the Lord's song,' sung 'in a strange land' (see Ps. cxxxvii. 4). And some Gentiles, too, have learned about Jehovah, and attend the services (ver. 16, 43).

Look into the synagogue on this Sabbath. [*Picture scene; see Note 4.*] Two strangers sitting at lower end—perhaps the 'ruler' has heard they are Rabbis from Palestine—if so, how glad the congregation to hear some one who can speak

to them of the holy city and Jehovah's Temple!—so what are they asked to do? ver. 15.

How glad Paul of the opportunity! True, his mission to Gentiles; but he loves his own nation, and what does he long for? Rom. x. 1. In Judæa they have rejected Jesus and His Apostles; but here, in this far-off city, may they not be less proud and bitter? may they not receive the Gospel gladly? Now see some of the things he says [see *Notes 5, 6*]:—

(a) He reminds them of God's mercies to their nation, down to King David's time, ver. 16—22.

(b) What were all Jews looking out for? For a successor to King David—one as great as he—to deliver them from the Romans and make them a great nation again. Well, says St. Paul, this expected King has come, ver. 23—26.

(c) Would they say, O no! it could not be Jesus the Nazarene, for our rulers put Him to death? This, says Paul, the very reason for believing in Him, for His rejection was predicted, ver. 27—29 (see Isa. liii. 3).

(d) But how could He reign if He were dead? Ah, that's no difficulty, for He rose again, ver. 30, 31; and this *proves* He is indeed Messiah, for of this also God spoke by the prophets, ver. 32—37.

(e) Now come the 'glad tidings.' No doubt they had often asked Job's question (ix. 2), 'How should man be just with God?' They only knew one way, by keeping Moses' law; but then they could not keep it (why? 1 John iii. 4), so felt how true those words (which we hear so often in church), 'In thy sight shall no man living be justified' (Ps. cxliii. 2; comp. Rom. iii. 20; Gal. ii. 16, iii. 10, 11). Might pray, 'God be merciful to me a sinner'; but knew not *how* God could be merciful. Now Paul tells them, ver. 38, 39—'through this Man'—how? see Rom. iii. 24, 25, iv. 25; Gal. iii. 13; 1 Pet. ii. 24, iii. 18.

Do the congregation like the sermon? Paul sees *some* do not, for how does he end? ver. 40, 41; just like our 1st text for rep., 'To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.' But others?—see ver. 42, 43.

#### THE SECOND SABBATH.

What happened then? ver. 44. How came this? Think—all that week Paul's message talked about in the city—'Free forgiveness, God acquitting (which 'justifying' means) sinners for His Son's sake, though Moses' law condemns them—good

news indeed !' But *for whom* this good news? Did not he say 'all that believe'? Can that mean Jews only? The heathen will go and see if they too may share the blessing [see Note 7]; so the synagogue thronged, and crowds unable to get in. What do the Jews think of that? ver. 45—'Fancy Gentiles expecting God's favour!' See Paul's answer, ver. 46, 47. Like this: 'You, the old chosen race, have the first offer; but if you refuse, is God's good purpose to come to nought? If the invited guests stay away, must bring in others,' see Matt. xxii. 1—9.

See the result,—twofold:—(a) Gentiles believing; (b) Jews stirring up persecution. [*Illustr.—Same fire which softens wax, hardens clay.*] What do Paul and Barnabas do? Note what Christ had directed, see Matt. x. 23 and 2nd text for rep. [see Note 8]. But how can the new converts get on without them? Must they not be crushed down with grief and fear? Nothing of the kind, ver. 52—'filled with joy'!—how is this? see Rom. v. 1, 2—'being justified by faith,' they can rejoice; see Ps. cxviii. 6—'the Lord on their side' now—'what can man do to them?'

*Which of these Hearers are we like?*

The same Gospel comes to us—how do we receive it? The people of Antioch heard it on two Sabbaths—on how many have you heard it?

Are you like the Jews, rejecting, contradicting, even blaspheming? Some do that. What does Christ say of them? 2nd text for rep.—what became of Sodom and Gomorrah?—even that fate 'more tolerable'!

Are you like the Gentiles? Does it make you glad to hear about Christ? Do you, when one Sunday over, long for the next, and think of God's love meanwhile? Pray for grace 'to hear meekly His Word, and to receive it with pure affection' (Litany).

But are you like neither? Not rejecting, yet not accepting? What is that really? [*Illustr.—I offer you money—you simply do not put out your hand to take it—is not that rejecting it?*] Ah, some are eager to hear God's Word—negroes and savages, whom you would look down upon as the Jews did upon the Gentiles—and they will be in heaven when some clever English boys and girls 'cast out' (Luke xiii. 28, 29).

#### NOTES.

1. Various reasons have been assigned for Mark's desertion of Paul and Barnabas. That it was desertion, and not merely a preference for some other field of labour under his spiritual father St. Peter (see 1 Pet. v. 13), as some have conjectured, is clear from Acts xv. 38. Others have thought that he had doubts about the free admission of the Gentiles to the Church; or that he was offended at Paul's taking the lead instead of his cousin (see last Lesson, Note 9). Matthew Henry pithily says, 'Either he did not like the work, or he wanted to go and see his mother.' Probably the chief reason was that he shrank from the hardships of a missionary's life. In after years he became 'a comfort' and 'profitable' to St. Paul (Col. iv. 10; 2 Tim. iv. 11); he is said to have presided over the Church of Alexandria (see an article by Bp. Wordsworth in the *Church S. S. Mag.* for March, 1867); and to him we owe one of the Four Gospels.

2. Perga in Pamphylia, situated seven miles from the coast on the River Cestrus, was an important city, and noted (like Ephesus) for its Temple of Diana. On the route from Perga to Antioch, see Additional Note III., page 66.

3. Antioch in Pisidia must be carefully distinguished from the much greater Antioch in Syria, whence Paul and Barnabas had first started. It was built by the same great monarch, Seleucus Nicator (see Addit. Note II., page 62), and was on the high road from Ephesus and Smyrna eastward. It was, like Philippi (Acts xvi. 12), a Roman 'colony'—a term which will be explained in Lesson XXVIII. In C. & II. (p. 205) there is an interesting account of the discovery of its site in 1833.

4. The word 'synagogue' is a Greek one, meaning *assembly*. It is almost identical with the Latin 'congregation,' and is actually so translated in ver. 43. Like our word 'church,' it originally designated the assembly of worshippers (comp. John ix. 22; Acts ix. 2), but in course of time was applied to the building in which they met.

Synagogues generally stood on the highest

ground in or near the town, and were so built that one end was towards Jerusalem (like chancels towards the east), at which end was the ark or chest containing the Books of the Law, &c., and the 'chief seats' so eagerly sought (Matt. xxiii. 6; Jas. ii. 2, 3). The pulpit, which stood in the centre of a raised platform, occupied a position similar to that in our churches. The women sat in a separate gallery, behind a lattice.

Every Jew, on entering a synagogue, put on the 'Tallith,' a veil worn over the head. No doubt Paul and Barnabas did so, and this would show them to be Jews.

The service consisted of prayers, read by the 'ruler,' the people standing (Mark xi. 25; Luke xviii. 11) and responding 'Amen'; singing of the Psalms; the reading, first of the Law, then of the Prophets (as first and second lessons); and the 'derash,' or 'word of exhortation' (ver. 15). See further, 'Life of Our Lord,' Lesson XXII., Note 2.

5. In the Greek of ver. 17, 18, there are some very uncommon words, which words are found in the Septuagint Greek version of Deut. i. and Isa. i. Now these two chapters are read as the two 'lessons' from the Law and the Prophets on the same day in the Jewish kalendar: hence it is conjectured that they had actually been read that day in the synagogue of Antioch, and that the words in question were used by St. Paul as references to the lessons. One is the word in ver. 18, wrongly rendered 'suffered their manners,' which should be (as in the margin) 'nursed them as children'; see Deut. i. 31; Isa. i. 2. If this be so, St. Paul's introductory remarks would have the effect of 'Yes, God has indeed cared for our nation, as you have heard to-day: now I will tell you of His last and greatest mercy.'

6. This sermon is strikingly similar to that of Stephen (compare the historical summary in each, and the solemn warnings with which each closes), thus illustrating the profound effect of the latter upon the mind of Saul of Tarsus, see Lesson X., Note 13. It is also remarkable as containing

(ver. 38, 39) the first brief statement of that great 'Pauline' doctrine (as it is called) of justification by faith, which is so prominent in the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians. This point is well brought out in Smith's *Student's N. T. Hist.*, p. 377. The sermon is admirably paraphrased by Vaughan (*Ch. of First Days*, p. 154, &c.), and more fully expounded by Stier and Baumgarten.

7. Ver. 42, according to the best MSS., should read 'As they [*i.e.*, the worshippers] were going out, *they* besought,' &c. The Gentiles are not meant here. It is true that among the worshippers were some proselytes (ver. 43), who would be Gentiles, and who are addressed in ver. 16 as 'ye that fear God.' But the *heathen* did not come to the synagogue till the following Sabbath.

8. 'Shook off the dust of their feet against them.' It was a Jewish custom to shake off the dust of Gentile lands as unclean on returning from a journey; and Christ directed His disciples to do so where they were rejected, as a sign of leaving the place to its sin and its punishment. See Matt. x. 14, 15; Mark vi. 11; Luke ix. 5, x. 11. A traveller in Pisidia observes, 'Literally they may have shaken off the dust of their feet, for even now (November) the roads abound with it, and in the summer months it must be a plain of dust.' (Arundell's *Asia Minor*, quoted in C. & H.)

'Coasts,' in ver. 50, as in the N. T. generally, does not mean the sea-coast, but the border or boundary of a country or district.

## Lesson XXIV.—The Perils of a Missionary.

*'Out of them all the Lord delivered me.'*

Read—Acts xiv.; Learn—2 Cor. xi. 25–27; 2 Tim. iii. 10–12. (Hymns 124, 127, 168, 197, 202, 235, 237, 377, 379, 382, 387, 390).

### TO THE TEACHER.

The chapter before us has been taken as in the Sketch, in order to bring into one view some of the principal dangers of St. Paul's missionary life,—a topic of peculiar interest, and one that will prove far from unpractical if made the occasion of an effort to inspire in the scholars' minds an enthusiasm like his. Volunteers can always be found for a perilous service; and though this Lesson may not waken in a single youthful breast the idea of being one day a missionary (though why should it not?), yet it may be instrumental in making some, who are striving to live for Christ, more patient and more fearless amid their trials and difficulties, which, however small, are as real in their way as those of the great Apostle.

The points in this chapter which are missed in the Sketch have been, or will be, taken in other Lessons: thus, the teachings to be drawn from the cure of the lame man appeared in Lesson V.; and those of St. Paul's speech to the Lystrians will appear when we come to that addressed to the Athenians.

Will any teacher think of explaining the word 'peril'? It will not be needless with some classes. But a passing hint may here be given about such explanations. Never put such questions as, 'What is a peril?' Easy as they seem, they are in reality most difficult. Nothing is harder to give than a *definition*. Rather take this line: 'St. Paul tells us of his perils—were you ever in peril? When? When you cross a wide street just as a cart is coming, what peril are you in?' In this way, children are made to catch the meaning of words which may be quite strange to them.

### SKETCH OF LESSON.

Our 1st text for rep. gives a long list of 'perils'—who went through them? Now we all have 'perils,' and we pray against them (see Collect 'for Aid against all Perils,' and Coll. 4th S. after Epiph.); but which of the perils in these verses do not come on us? How came they on St. Paul? would they if he had stayed quietly at home? It was because he was a *missionary*. Many of these perils on this first journey of which we are now reading. See some of them to-day.

#### I. ST. PAUL'S PERILS IN TRAVELING.

Where did we leave him last Sunday? How had he come from Antioch in Syria to Antioch in Pisidia?

(1) Two sea voyages, Seleucia to Sala-

mis, Paphos to Perga. Any perils in them? [*Describe danger on sea—especially then, when no compass, and small open vessel—refer to Acts xxvii.; Ps. cvii. 23–29.*] What does he say in our text?—'perils in the sea'—'thrice' shipwrecked—'a night and a day in the deep'—tossed about by the waves, perhaps only grasping a plank. None of this recorded in the Acts—so may have happened on this journey. (Voyage to Rome long after 2 Cor. was written.)

(2) Very dangerous journey from Perga to Antioch. [*See Additional Note III., p. 66.*] Over great mountains, by steep narrow paths, along edges of precipices. Rushing streams to cross—strong enough to sweep one away—no bridges. [*Illustr.—Missionary's wife in Africa—ill of fever—*

carried in litter—bearers swept down in crossing stream—sick lady fell into water.] And in these mountains many robbers—thought nothing of 'stripping, wounding, leaving half dead' (Luke x. 80) any one they could catch. Does St. Paul mention these in our text?—'perils of waters' (i.e., rivers), 'perils of robbers,' and 'weariness, painfulness, hunger, thirst, cold, nakedness' (as if robbed)—all these perils of travelling.

## II. ST. PAUL'S PERILS FROM HIS OWN COUNTRYMEN.

Who opposed him at Antioch? who stirred up the rulers against him? xiii. 45, 50 [last Lesson]. Would you not expect his own countrymen to take his part? Instead of this, heathen anxious to hear, Jews doing nothing but hinder. (So in modern times, many English have opposed missions: e.g., at first no missionaries allowed in India.) Now see what the Jews did in other cities.

Whither did Paul and Barnabas flee from Antioch? xiii. 51. What place in Iconium would they be likely to avoid? Surely the Jewish synagogues where so opposed before. Did they? ver. 1. Were they as badly received here? Not at first, ver. 1. How joyful for them!—this time both Jews and Gentiles converted in multitudes; and not only these miracles on men's souls, but what else? ver. 3 (see Mark xvi. 17, 18). Such wonders excite the whole city; but do all agree about them? ver. 4. So in Jerusalem about Jesus, John vii. 12, 43, x. 19.

Now why did not all support men who did such good things?—who caused the division? ver. 2—again his 'own countrymen'! Are they content with speaking against him? What do they aim at? ver. 5—Paul 'in peril' of being stoned. See presently how they brought this very thing on him; but this time escape again by flight—whither? ver. 6.

## III. ST. PAUL'S PERILS FROM THE HEATHEN.

Among very different people now—Lystra not great city, but little town—plain country folk, who seldom saw strangers, knew nothing of any religions but their own—Jupiter their great god—used to worship his image set up by city gate, ver. 13. No Jewish synagogue here, where might hear of true God—perhaps only one half-Jewish family (xvi. 1). [See Notes 3, 4]. So here Paul has to preach (as our missionaries do) in streets, in market-place, under trees, anywhere.

Now see two remarkable scenes at Lystra:—

(1) A great commotion in the town—loud shouts—news spreading from mouth to mouth—from street to street, 'The gods come down!' Crowds of people gathered—(if you were told, 'an angel in next street,' how excited!)—in the midst white-robed priests with knives, leading oxen gaily adorned with flowers. What all this for?

A grand 'thanksgiving service' [illustrated by Prince of Wales]—why? 'the kind gods have made a man able to walk who never walked in his life!—so these oxen to be sacrificed in their honour. Now read ver. 8—13: who was it that healed that lame man?—who was it that the Lystrians were going to worship? [See Notes 6, 7.]

Was this very wicked? But they knew no better—rather admire them—eager to please their gods, ready to give their best to them—which of us as devoted to our great God and Father? Are we not more like the Jews in Isaiah's day? see Isa. xliii. 22—24.

But look!—Paul and Barnabas rushing out—more alarmed than at all the 'perils' they have been through—this the worst peril of all, that they should have God's honour. (Comp. x. 26, xii. 22, 23; Rev. xix. 10, xxii. 9.) How is this peril escaped? ver. 15—18 [see Note 8].

(2) Perhaps next day—another great commotion—crowd pouring out of gate, dragging a bruised, bleeding, senseless body—whose? ver. 19—one of the two they called gods yesterday! He would not let them worship him: now they have stoned him! There is a peril!—one of the very perils in 1st text for rep.—'once was I stoned.' This a peril from the heathen—yes, but who set them up to it? ver. 19—Paul's 'own countrymen' willing to follow him in those toilsome journeys if only they can spoil his work.

Yet even in Lystra the work has not failed: who are sadly gathered round that mangled body?—disciples—perhaps the grateful cripple—perhaps young Timothy and his mother and grandmother [see Note 4]. If they could only revive him, how gladly nurse him through long weeks of gradual recovery! But see!—no nursing wanted—the Apostle, like the cripple, 'upright on his feet' and strong again! [See Note 9.]

Have we not seen perils enough to-day to terrify the boldest missionary? Yet see where these two go next [see Additional Note III., p. 66]—on to another heathen town, ver. 20—then back again to all those places of peril they have come from! ver. 21. What to do? ver. 22—can't leave their converts half-instructed and trembling in midst of enemies. How encourage them? Promise them no trials shall come? No—'must through much tribulation enter the Kingdom'—how well they knew that after such a journey! True, all these perils could be avoided: but how? By doing what Mark did [last Lesson]—turning back from God's work; but do you think, after all, Paul and Barnabas wished they had turned back too?

But now ~~this~~ time come to go back, ver. 24—26. What a joyful missionary meeting that in the great Syrian city! ver. 27. Looking back on all the perils, how thank-

fully say (2nd text for rep.), 'Out of them all the Lord delivered us!'

*Missionaries run much the same risks now.* Perils in travelling (see above; also Henry Martyn—Bishop Mackenzie—Livingstone). Perils from the heathen (Judson—John Williams—Volkner—Bishop Patteson). Even perils from own countrymen (Bishop Patteson's death really caused by white men's treachery)—this specially the peril of *native* missionaries (Madagascar martyrs—Negro catechist crucified by king

of Dahomey). Did you ever pray God to take care of our missionaries? Do you help them with contributions? 'Every little helps'—'Little drops of water,' &c.

You, too, may be missionaries—by your Christian words and conduct. But if so, you too will suffer—2nd text for rep. still true—'All that will live godly,' &c. Yet fear not,—

'Off in sorrow, off in woe,  
Onward, Christian! onward go.'

#### NOTES.

1. Iconium was not renowned in ancient times; but in the Middle Ages it was important as the Turkish capital for a long period. It is still a large city, and is called Koniah. See Kitto, p. 284. The division of the people of Iconium into two parties on a question of religion (ver. 4) is quite in the manner of the Asiatic Greek cities of those days. We read, for instance, of the 'Blue Faction' and 'Green Faction' at Antioch in Syria at this very period.

2. The 'Greeks,' in ver. 1, and 'Gentiles,' in ver. 2, are not the same. The former are the Gentile proselytes; the latter the heathen.

3. On Lycania, and its cities, Lystra and Derbe, see Addit. Note III., p. 66. No mention is made of any synagogue at these places. They were remote country towns, with a purely heathen population, speaking their own dialect (ver. 11), yet understanding the Greek spoken by Paul and Barnabas,—just as, in many towns of Wales, English is understood, but Welsh is the language of common intercourse.

4. There was, however, at least one partly Jewish family at Lystra. Here lived that unnamed Greek whose wife Eunice, and her mother Lois, are mentioned in 2 Tim. i. 5, and whose son Timothy became afterwards St. Paul's most constant companion; see Acts xvi. 1. Timothy was, no doubt, converted at the Apostle's first visit, as the latter calls him (1 Tim. i. 2) 'my own son in the faith,' and in xvi. 1 he is already a 'disciple.' It is in writing to him that St. Paul refers to the persecutions 'at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra' (2 Tim. iii. 11); and very likely he was one of the converts who 'stood round about' the bruised and senseless body of the Apostle outside the gate of Lystra (ver. 20).

5. The cure of the cripple at Lystra is in many respects very similar to that of the lame man by St. Peter (chap. iii.), with which it should be compared. 'Faith to be healed,' in the Greek, is 'to be saved.' It was a faith in St. Paul's message, and would therefore save his soul as well as qualify him for a miraculous bodily cure.

6. Jupiter (or Zeus) was the greatest of the classical deities, the 'father of Gods and men.' Mercury (or Hermes) was the god of eloquence, and regarded as 'the messenger of the gods.' The poet Ovid preserves a legend that Jupiter at one time assumed human form, and visited these very regions, attended by Mercury; which accounts for Paul and Barnabas being taken for them. Barnabas was probably older than Paul, and perhaps of more commanding mien (see 2 Cor. x. 10), and would therefore look more like the superior deity; while Paul, as 'the chief speaker,' would naturally be identified with the god of eloquence. Jupiter was the patron or tutelary deity of the Lystrians; his temple or statue was close by ('before their city,' ver. 13); so that the people thought their *own* god had come among them. Pictures of both deities are given in Kitto, p. 286.

7. The oxen (rather, bulls) and garlands (used to adorn altars and victims) were brought 'into the gates,' i.e. (as the Greek shows), to the doors of the house to which Paul and Barnabas had gone after the miracle,—perhaps the house of Timothy's parents. The two Apostles, not knowing what the cries meant (which is certainly implied, and which accounts for the dialect being here specially mentioned, see Note 3), were unconscious of the honours in store for them until they saw the sacrificial procession; and then, horror-struck, they rushed out to prevent the profanity. Raphael's famous cartoon gives a vivid idea of the scene.

8. There can be no doubt that the appeal of the two Apostles to the people (ver. 15—17) was actually spoken by St. Paul. Its tone is very similar to that of his speech at Athens (chap. xvii.); and its expressions recur in his Epistles, comp. ver. 15 with 1 Thess. i. 9, and ver. 17 with Rom. i. 19, 20. Being addressed to an ignorant heathen population, there is no reference to the Scriptures or to the Jewish expectations of Messiah; its argument is one which a simple people could understand, appealing to the wonders of creation and the providences of everyday life. The allusion to *rain* as a Divine gift was peculiarly appropriate, as that district was bare and dreary, and frequently suffered from a scarcity of water.

9. There is no cause for surprise in the sudden change in the disposition of the Lystrians towards Paul and Barnabas. The fickleness of an ignorant populace is proverbial; and the Jewish accusers probably suggested to them that the miracle had been done by diabolical arts—which would be the more readily believed after the refusal of Divine honours by the Apostles.

In 2 Cor. xi. 25, St. Paul says, 'Once was I stoned.' Paley, in the *Horæ Paulinæ*, remarks on the exact agreement of this with Acts xiv., where *two attempts* to stone the Apostle are mentioned, only one of which succeeded (ver. 5, 19). His recovery at Lystra was certainly miraculous; for though it does not appear that he was actually dead, yet he must have been terribly bruised and crushed, and quite unfit to travel, as he did next day.

10. There appears to have been no persecution at Derbe, and this city is not mentioned in 2 Tim. iii. 11. Here St. Paul 'taught many' (ver. 21)—literally, 'made many disciples' (as in Matt. xxviii. 19). One of these was probably Gaius of Derbe (xx. 4).

11. 'Ordained elders in every church' (ver. 23)—i.e., *presbyters*, to act as regular pastors. The Apostles were as careful in organising the newly-formed churches as they were zealous in preaching the Gospel. They 'made choice of fit persons to serve in the sacred ministry of the Church' (Prayer for Ember Weeks).

12. 'Antioch' in ver. 26 is of course Antioch in Syria, whence they had first started.

## Lesson XXV.—The First Christian Council.

*'When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth.'*

*Read*—Acts xv. 1–35; *Learn*—Gal. ii. 16, v. 1, 6. (*Hymns*, 62, 105, 111, 122, 144, 147, 176, 365).

### TO THE TEACHER.

Probably this Lesson will generally be considered the most difficult of the Course; and in some books for Sunday-school use the chapter is omitted entirely. The difficulty arises, partly from a confused idea that the 'four prohibitions' embody the decision on the main question at issue in the Council, and partly from a feeling that this main question cannot be intelligibly explained to children; besides which, there is a generally-felt doubt whether such a subject is suitable for Sunday-scholars of the nineteenth century at all. On these points it may be observed—(a) That the key to a right understanding of the whole passage is the entire distinctness of the 'four prohibitions' from the great decision (see Division II. and Note 6)—a distinctness which is clearly shown in the Sketch by the division of the subject into 'A Question about Salvation' and 'A Question about Conduct'; (b) That the main question, *i.e.*, the one 'about salvation,' is quite capable of being simply explained,—and it is hoped that the Sketch gives ample instructions for doing so; (c) That the subject is both an important and a practical one, as it is believed most teachers will agree who glance *first* at the points of the application. And even without these points there would still be the central topic of the Lesson, *viz.*, that salvation itself is absolutely the free gift of God, that human merit has no part whatever in obtaining it, *and yet* that the highest of laws, the law of love, is binding upon us *just because* we have a 'so great salvation.' It cannot surely be said that *this* is unimportant or unsuitable for Sunday-scholars.

The unusual length of the Sketch is more apparent than real. Sections 1 and 2 of Division I., which are *introductory* to the study of the passage, will be scarcely required with scholars who have gone intelligently through preceding Lessons; while in those classes where it is necessary to take these sections fully, in order to make clear what follows, it will be unnecessary to explain the speeches of St. Peter and St. James, and the teacher will pass at once from the description of the scene in the Council, at the beginning of Section 3, to its decision in Section 4. Except with elder scholars, too, the 'four prohibitions' need not be explained in detail, but merely noticed in general terms, as in the Sketch. It is essential that teachers should remember that they are not instructing divinity students: if they were, they would be bound to explain every verse; as it is, all that has to be done is to pick out what will tend to the children's spiritual profit. But, since adequate knowledge is indispensable to simplicity in teaching, teachers should spare no pains to make *themselves* masters of the passage before them.

No allusion is made in the Sketch to the subject of General or other Church Councils, the more obvious topics occupying all the available space. But competent teachers of senior classes would do well to refer to the Four acknowledged General Councils (that of Nicæa, for instance, to which we owe the Nicene Creed); to the contrast between that true 'Œcumenical Council' which is described in this chapter, and the modern attempts at its imitation; and to the duty incumbent on English Churchmen, of praying for those smaller Councils, Convocations, and Conferences of various kinds, now so frequently held in connection with our own Church, that to them also 'the same Spirit' may give 'a right judgment in all things.'

### SKETCH OF LESSON.

What do we specially pray for on Whitsun Day? see Collect—'Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things.' 'The same'—Who?—He who at Pentecost did 'teach the hearts of God's faithful people.' What promise did Christ give about that 'same Spirit'? John xiv. 26, xvi. 13—'shall teach you all things,'

'shall guide you into all truth.' Why do we need His teaching? Without it, would often not know what to believe, think, say, do—perplexed because one says one thing, another says another.

See to-day how the Holy Spirit did teach and guide the Church in a time of great difficulty.

## I. A QUESTION ABOUT SALVATION.

1. *What St. Paul told the heathen about salvation.*

When he and Barnabas preached, as we have seen [*last three Lessons*], on that long journey, what was the great thing they had to tell? One thing was this, 'You heathen are all wrong, worshipping false gods—must turn to the One Living and True God' (xiv. 15). But this not all: heathen would ask, 'What will God do to us? will He not destroy us for our wickedness?' What would Paul say then? This: 'No, He loves you—sent His Son to save you, His Spirit to make you holy—will justify (i.e., acquit) you from all things if'—*if what?* xiii. 39—'*believe*' in His Son Jesus. No wonder they were 'glad' (xiii. 48) at such news!

Thus God had let the heathen come into the Church. But by *what door* had they come in? see xiv. 27—'the door of faith.' They just *believed* the message, then showed they believed by coming to baptism; thus '*saved*,' see Mark xvi. 16; Rom. x. 9, 10.

2. *What the Christian Pharisees thought about salvation.*

Christian Pharisees! who were they? In Jerusalem, among the 'multitudes' of converts (v. 14), many Pharisees, even priests (vi. 7). But, although believed in Jesus as the risen and ascended King, still very strict, as before (see xxi. 20)—still thought God loved Jewish nation only, and hated all others.

Would they be glad to hear of the heathen being turned to God? Yes (even wicked unbelieving Pharisees tried to do that, Matt. xxiii. 15). But then, every convert to become like a Jew, be circumcised, keep all the law—not only Ten Commandments, but every rule about sacrifices, fasts, washings, &c. These Christian Pharisees thought Christ's Church to be a *Church of Jews*, Messiah to be King of Israel; and, if Gentiles joined, must become exactly like Israelites.

So, hearing of the great Church of uncircumcised Gentiles at Antioch—of Paul and Barnabas travelling far and wide and founding other like Churches everywhere—what do they do? see ver. 1, 5—down they go to Antioch—'This won't do—must not let all these in by *door of faith*—they must come in by another door—*except circumcised, and keep law, cannot be saved.*'

Much disputing at Antioch, ver. 2—Gentiles saying, 'Must we be circumcised?'—Jews saying, 'Yes, no hope otherwise'—Paul saying, 'No; God receives you just as you are, for Jesus' sake.' How to be settled? see ver. 2.

3. *How the Council discussed the question.*

Now come to the great Council at Jerusalem, called to discuss this great question. [*See Note 3.*] How interesting to have been there! Meetings now presided over by 'chairmen': probably St. James 'chair-

man' at that meeting—he, the Apostle who lived at Jerusalem, was like a Bishop there, did not go elsewhere to preach (see xii. 17, xxi. 18; Gal. i. 19) [*see Addit. Note V., p. 77*]. Then look at the other holy men, Peter, John (see Gal. ii. 9), and other Apostles; prophets like Judas and Silas (ver. 22, 32); the deputation from Antioch, Paul, Barnabas, Titus (Gal. ii. 1); all the chief men in the Church at Jerusalem; others, no doubt, from Joppa, Cæsarea, Samaria, &c.; and plenty of the Pharisee party.

Many speeches on both sides, ver. 7—then, at length, Peter. How eager the whole assembly to know what their great leader will say! how the Pharisees hope he will be with them! Is he? see ver. 7—11:—(a) He reminds them of Cornelius and his friends, how God accepted them without circumcision. (b) Did not God, seeing into the heart, know best? (c) True, they were 'unclean' [*see Lesson XIX.*], but God 'purified' them—how? by circumcision? no, *by faith* (believing in Jesus). (d) 'Besides,' he adds, 'how were *we Jews* saved? by our circumcision? by our keeping the law? why, we could not keep it, could not bear such a yoke [*see Note 4*]; should never have been saved but for Christ's grace and love: well, then, if circumcision could not save us, how save these Gentiles?' So, which side Peter on?

Then a great silence—the missionaries to speak now—first Barnabas, then Paul. Do they argue the point? No, ver. 12—just tell their story, about Elymas struck blind, Roman governor of Cyprus converted, signs and wonders at Iconium (xiv. 3), cure of cripple at Lystra, wondrous recovery of Paul after the stoning, heathen in every city throwing away idols—'If God has done all this for us, *can we have done wrong in His sight?*'

Who speaks next? ver. 13. How hopeful the Pharisee party now!—James, their own friend and leader, living among them, himself very strict in keeping all the law, revered by the whole city, even by those who reject Jesus [*see Addit. Note V., p. 77*].—fancy all the assembly hanging on his words—fancy the breathless silence as he too decides for Paul and Barnabas! 'Don't be surprised,' he says; 'all this is nothing new—God meant it from the first (ver. 18)—He told us by the prophets that the Gentiles should seek Him—now He is bringing them in His own way [*see Note 5*].—therefore (ver. 19) trouble them not.'

4. *How the Council decided the question.*

See the letter written to the Gentile churches, ver. 23—29. What in it about the Pharisee party? ver. 24—utterly condemned! What in it about Paul and Barnabas? ver. 25, called 'our beloved'! No wonder, when the letter got to Antioch, great rejoicing, ver. 30, 31.

But how came the letter to be written? 'Carried by a majority'—the minority

going home angry and discontented? Not at all, see ver. 22, 25—'whole Church,' 'with one accord'—decision unanimous!

How could this be? Ah, it was Christ's great promise fulfilled; the Spirit did teach them, did 'guide them into all truth'—He inspired Peter and James—He moved the whole Council—even the murmurers themselves carried away (it seems) for the time to agree with the rest! Well might the letter say (ver. 28), 'It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us'!

## II. A QUESTION ABOUT CONDUCT.

But there was something else settled that day. It might be asked (probably was asked), 'If we tell these Gentiles that keeping the law won't save them, will they not think they may do as they like—go on as they used to do, living wickedly, feasting and dancing at idol temples, &c.—eat things which we Jews can't eat? and if so, how can they live in harmony with Jewish members of the Church?' (see Rom. vi. 1, 15).

See what St. James proposed about this, ver. 20, and what was put in the letter about it, ver. 29. (a) The Gentiles must keep apart from idol temples and feasts, and all that went on there; (b) they must give up some kinds of food. [See Note 6.]

But *why* this? Must they do this *in order to be saved*? O no—saved *only* through believing in Jesus (1st text for rep.); but, *because saved*, ought they not to be willing to give up *anything* for His sake?—especially what might be dangerous for themselves (like the idol feasts), or offensive to their brethren (like blood for food). See 3rd text for rep.—the faith that saved them must be a 'faith which worketh by

love.' They should rejoice in being free from the burdens the Pharisees wanted to lay on them (2nd text for rep.), but their liberty must not hurt others, 1 Cor. vii. 9, Gal. v. 13. (See further, Rom. xiv. 2, 3, 14, 15, 21; 1 Cor. viii. 4—13, x. 31—33).

*What has all this to do with us?* A very great deal. Learn four things:—

1. No one tries now to make us Jews. But why not? Suppose the Pharisees had triumphed that day, the Church might always have remained a Jewish Church. So even we may thank God for that first great Council and its decision.

2. But some people still say, Except you do this or that, can't be saved; except you join my Church or my sect, will be lost; except you keep this or that rule, God will not accept you. Cling, therefore, with all your heart to the words of our 1st text for rep., and of John iii. 16; Acts xvi. 31; Rom. iii. 22—24, x. 9; Eph. ii. 8, 9; Phil. iii. 8, 9. Always feel,—

'Not the labours of my hands  
Can fulfil Thy law's demands;  
Could my zeal no respite know,  
Could my tears for ever flow,  
All for sin could not atone—  
Thou must save, and Thou alone!'

3. Show your love to God for His free salvation by giving up everything wrong or doubtful for His sake—not by constraint, but willingly—not to get salvation, but because salvation is yours already.

4. Pray, for yourselves, those around you, the whole Church, especially for all who meet together to decide hard questions, that the Holy Spirit 'may in all things direct and rule' your and their hearts.

## NOTES.

1. It has been much disputed whether the visit to Jerusalem mentioned by St. Paul in Gal. ii. is that of Acts xv.; but the majority of the best writers believe in their identity. As Howson well puts it (C. & H. i. App. 1, p. 546), the visit of Gal. ii. could not have been *before* that of Acts xv., because then the latter would have been unnecessary (see Gal. ii. 7—9); nor *after*, because Barnabas (who is with him in Gal. ii.) separated from him soon after that of Acts xv. It appears from Gal. ii. 2, that he went 'by revelation,' i.e., by Divine direction; but if this revelation, like that in xiii. 2, came through others, the account in Acts xv. 2 is at once explained.

2. Titus is nowhere mentioned in the Acts; but we know him, from the Epistles, to have been one of St. Paul's most trusted helpers. See 2 Cor. ii. 13, vii. 6, 7, 13—15, viii. 6, 16, 23; 2 Tim. iv. 10, and the Epistle to Titus.

3. The proceedings at Jerusalem seem to have been as follows:—First, a public reception of Paul and Barnabas (ver. 4), at the close of which the Judaizers made their protest (ver. 5). Then a private conference between Paul and Barnabas, and 'The Three Pillars,' James, Peter, and John (Gal. ii. 2, 9), when the former entered more fully into their views—which they had refrained from doing at the public reception, lest there should be a misunderstanding, and so their efforts in the cause of Gospel liberty come to nought (Gal. ii. 2). At this private conference,

too, the personal apostolic authority of St. Paul was once for all established; and it is this to which he especially refers in writing to the Galatians. (Professor Lightfoot's notes on Gal. ii. throw much light on all the circumstances.) Then came the Council, convened specially to consider the points in dispute: at which there were, probably, representatives from all the Churches within an accessible distance.

4. The drift of Peter's speech is sufficiently explained in the sketch; but what does he call the 'yoke,' which 'neither they nor their fathers were able to bear'? Evidently the 'law' which the Judaizers wished to make binding on the Gentiles. This would include (a) the ceremonial law of Moses; (b) the Rabbinical additions to it, on which the Pharisees laid so much stress; (c) the moral law itself, embodied in the Decalogue. The ceremonial law was burdensome, on account of the multiplicity and minuteness of its injunctions—necessary as they were in the Divine training of the Jewish nation. The 'traditions of the elders' were still more so, and had no corresponding necessity, and no Divine sanction. And even the moral law itself, though of perpetual and universal obligation as a *rule of life*, was, and is, an intolerable burden *if its perfect observance be regarded as the condition of salvation*.

5. In comparing James's citation from Amos (which is quoted from the Septuagint Greek



Version of the O. T.), with the prediction as it stands in our Bibles, it must be borne in mind that Edom, in prophecy, sometimes stands for the Gentiles generally, on account of the persistent antagonism shown by the Edomites to Israel. St. James virtually says: 'You have always thought that the predicted greatness of Israel was to be achieved by the conquest of the Gentiles; but God is now showing us that it will consist in their being made 'follow-heirs.'

6. It is a great mistake to regard the four prohibitions in the Letter of the Council as the chief result of its deliberations, or as the substance of its 'Decree.' The important points of the letter are, the strongly-expressed disapproval of the Judaizers, the commendation of Barnabas and Paul, and the exclusion of circumcision from the 'necessary things.' And even the four prohibitions themselves hardly make the decision a 'compromise' (as Milman and Professor Lightfoot call it); for there is all the difference in the world between declaring circumcision necessary to salvation, and enjoining abstinence from certain practices on local and temporary grounds.

But, were the four prohibitions made on local and temporary grounds?

(a) 'Blood' was forbidden to the Jews by the Levitical law (Lev. iii. 17, xvii. 10-14), but among the Gentiles it was, in various forms, a delicacy; therefore, in Churches composed of both Jews and Gentiles, social and brotherly intercourse would be impossible, unless the latter abstained from it also.

(b) 'Things strangled' were not used as food by the Jews, because the blood was still in them. Abstinence from them was therefore enjoined, for the same reason.

(c) By 'meats offered to idols' is meant the flesh of animals offered in sacrifice, a portion of which was eaten at sacrificial feasts, and other parts were sometimes sold in open market. Abstinence from such food was enjoined, partly because it also was abhorrent to the Jews, and partly be-

cause the partaking of it was regarded as, in a sense, *uniting* the eater and the Deity to whom it was offered (see the reference to this in connection with the Lord's Supper, 1 Cor. x. 16-21). It is true that 'an idol was nothing' (1 Cor. viii. 4), and there could be no union with a god that had no existence; true, also, that all kinds of meat were God's gift (1 Cor. x. 25, 26; 1 Tim. iv. 4), and therefore not objectionable on religious grounds; but it was necessary in this case, considering what was the popular belief, to abstain from the appearance of evil (1 Cor. viii. 9-11, x. 28; Rom. xiv. 14). The fact, however, that St. Paul's directions to the Church of Corinth are given without any reference to the Council's decree, shows that the latter was not meant to be universally or permanently binding.

(d) But why is one gross sin—fornication—put with these things indifferent? The answer is, that there is probably a special reference to the wicked customs connected with idolatrous feasts; and, therefore, the prohibition is coupled with that of 'meats offered to idols.' The connection may not be so clear to us now as it was to the Gentile converts then; but that there was a connection, and a dangerous one, is seen from Rev. ii. 14, 20. Of course the words 'local' and 'temporary' only apply to these special circumstances; and the great difference in importance between this prohibition and the others is shown by the way in which St. Paul speaks of the sin in the very same Epistle in which he treats the abstaining from meats offered to idols as merely a matter of expediency. See 1 Cor. v. 1-13, vi. 18-20.

It will be seen, therefore, that two of the prohibitions were determined upon in the interest of peace and unity between the Jewish and Gentile sections of the Church; and the other two, partly with the same object, and partly to cut off the converts more entirely from heathen associations. So far from being in the least degree arbitrary or unreasonable, they were, under the circumstances, both judicious and kind.

## ADDITIONAL NOTE IV.

### THE JUDAIZING CHRISTIANS.

It is of great importance to a right understanding of the Acts, and of St. Paul's Epistles, to appreciate the feelings and attitude of the 'Judaizing party' in the Church. We find continual allusion to a faction animated by the bitterest hatred of St. Paul, and we are apt to forget that this faction was composed of converts to the faith of Christ, and that its opposition to him was quite distinct from that of the unbelieving Jews. It was the latter who conspired against his life at Damascus, persecuted him at Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, Thessalonica, Corinth, and elsewhere, and accused him before Felix and Festus. But it was the former who preached the necessity of circumcision at Antioch in Syria (xv. 1), and argued the same point at Jerusalem (xv. 5); and who, when defeated at the Council, followed in the footsteps of St. Paul, and tried to undermine his influence and discredit his teaching in the Churches he had founded among the Gentiles.

A great part of the Epistles to the Corinthians and Galatians is occupied with the controversy with these Judaizing Christians.

We find that they threw doubts on his apostolic authority (1 Cor. iv. 1-4, ix. 1-6; 2 Cor. iii. 1, vi. 3-12, xi. 5, 22, 33, xii. 11, 12; Gal. i. 11, 12, 18-20, ii. 6-9), sneered at his bodily presence being weak, and his speech contemptible (1 Cor. ii. 1-5; 2 Cor. x. 10, xi. 6; Gal. iv. 13-17), imputed dishonourable motives to him (2 Cor. ii. 17, iv. 2, xii. 14-18), and, in Galatia, seriously marred the effect of his teaching by insisting on the necessity of circumcision, and thus virtually preaching 'another Gospel' (Gal. i. 6-9, iii. 1-3, v. 1-7, vi. 12-15). Probably those at Corinth who called themselves the party 'of Cephas' (1 Cor. i. 12) were of this faction—not that they really represented Peter's views, but that they exalted him as the leader of the Apostles to the depreciation of St. Paul.

It is not easy now to understand the position, and still less to enter into the feelings, of these Pharisaic Christians. Yet, while all our sympathies are with St. Paul in his long struggle for the freedom of the Gospel message, it is right, as far as possible, to appreciate the views of the opposite party. The more extreme of them were

indeed justly stigmatised by St. Paul as 'false brethren' (Gal. ii. 4), and 'enemies of the cross of Christ' (Phil. iii. 18), notwithstanding their being believers in the Messiahship of Jesus and members of the Church. But their feelings were to a considerable extent shared by the majority of the Jewish converts, to whom this language will not apply. It is these latter who are called (see Rom. xiv. ; 1 Cor. viii.) 'weak brethren'; it was these by whom St. Paul hoped that the 'collection for the poor saints' would be accepted as a peace-offering from the Gentile churches (Rom. xv. 26, 31); it was these whose sentiments towards him were spoken of so doubtfully by St. James and the elders at Jerusalem, and on whose account he joined in a votive offering in the Temple as a sign of his 'walking orderly' (Acts xxi. 18-26). Now it must be borne in mind that the Judaizers were fighting on behalf of ordinances which were 1500 years old, and of Divine authority; and when we reflect how we ourselves cling to religious usages to which we are accustomed—even though they be without Divine authority and unimportant in themselves,—and how ready we are to condemn others who think less of them, we need not wonder at the mistaken zeal of the Judaizers. 'They saw,' says Dean Howson (C. and H., i., chap. vii., p. 253), 'that Christianity, instead of being the purest and holiest form of Judaism, was rapidly becoming a universal and indiscriminating religion, in which the Jewish element would be absorbed and lost. This revolution could not appear to them in any other light than as a rebellion against all they had been taught to hold inviolably sacred. And since there was no doubt that the great instigator of this change of opinion was that Saul of Tarsus whom they had once known as a young Pharisee at the feet of Gamaliel, the con-

test took the form of an attack made by "certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed" upon St. Paul.'

It is true that the Church of Jerusalem had previously accepted Peter's explanation of his baptizing and 'eating with' Cornelius and his friends (Acts xi.); but that they might take to be an exceptional case. In old times men like Araunah the Jebusite and Uriah the Hittite had been tolerated, and special blessings had been bestowed on Naaman the Syrian; and it might be so still. But such a revolution as Paul was effecting was another thing altogether. Peter himself was only weaned from the same prejudices by a heavenly vision (x. 9-16); and even after his speech at the Council, and the solemn decision then arrived at, he was involved for a time in the old error (Gal. ii. 11-14).

On the other hand, that the assertion of liberty for the Gentile converts was a matter of fundamental principle is shown by the earnestness of St. Paul in the matter. No one was more ready to concede secondary points than he, as his Epistles show again and again; yet to the Judaizers, on the question of circumcision, he 'gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour' (Gal. ii. 5). Their doctrine he felt to be utterly subversive of the central truth of the Gospel—salvation only of unmerited grace through faith in Christ. 'What,' asks Dr. Vaughan (*Ch. of First Days*, ii., p. 229), 'would have become of Christianity, as a religion for the world, if it had been tied for ever to the ceremonial law, and made a mere offshoot of Judaism?'

On the whole subject, see Stanley, *Sermons and Essays on the Apostolic Age*, Essay on 'The Judaizers,' p. 193, &c.; Lightfoot, *Galatians*, Essay on 'St. Paul and the Three,' p. 285, &c.; C. and H., chaps. vii., xiii., xv., xviii., xxi.

## ADDITIONAL NOTE V.

### ST. JAMES THE JUST.

The important and peculiar position occupied in the early Church by 'James the Lord's brother' (Gal. i. 19) should be understood by every student of the Acts; and in order that the occasional allusions to him in these Lessons (especially in Lessons XXV. and XXXIX.) may be more readily intelligible, a few particulars concerning him are gathered together in this Note.

It appears from several of the early Fathers, that James, the 'brother' of the Lord, and the writer of the Epistle of St. James, was the first Bishop of the Church at Jerusalem; and all the Scripture notices of him accord with this statement. After the martyrdom of James the son of Zebedee and brother of John (Acts xii. 2), we find a leading man at Jerusalem who is called simply 'James' in every place except Gal. i. 19 (where a

special designation is added to distinguish him from the son of Zebedee, because the latter was still alive at the date of St. Paul's visit there referred to). And in every place he is mentioned just in the way in which one who presided over the Church at Jerusalem would be mentioned. When Paul goes there after his conversion, the only Apostle there, besides Peter, is James (Gal. i. 19). When Peter recounts his deliverance from prison to the disciples at Mary's house, he says, 'Go show these things unto James, and to the brethren.' When Paul goes up to the Council on the question of circumcision, he finds three Apostles at Jerusalem who 'seem to be pillars,' 'James, Cephas, and John,' James being mentioned first (Gal. ii. 9). It is James who sums up the deliberations of the Council (Acts xv. 13, 19), and who (it is believed) actually draws up

the Letter to the Gentile Churches. (The form of salutation in it, '*greeting*,' only elsewhere occurs in the Epistle of James, i. 1.) When Paul again arrives at Jerusalem with the aims of the Macedonian and Corinthian Christians, he goes in '*unto James*,' 'all the elders' being present (Acts xxi. 18).

We should naturally expect that the Bishop of the mother Church would, though not a Judaizer in the more bigoted sense (see *Addit. Note IV.*, p. 76), to some extent sympathise with their views; and three circumstances confirm this idea. (a) It is James who suggests the 'four prohibitions' in the decree of the Council. (b) When the Judaizers come again to Antioch, and resume their efforts to pervert the brethren, they are described thus, 'Certain came from James' (Gal. ii. 12); not that he had given them authority (see Acts xv. 24), but that they would try to claim the sanction of his teaching and example. (c) His Epistle is addressed 'to the twelve tribes,' and its whole tone is that rather of the Old Testament than of the New.

One other mention of him must be noticed. In 1 Cor. xv. 7 we are told that our Lord, after His resurrection, appeared once specially to James; and the date of this Epistle leaves no doubt that no other James can be

meant. It is interesting to find the relative of Jesus according to the flesh, and one who was to occupy a position so unique and so influential, thus specially privileged.

Some remarkable notices of St. James occur in the writings of the early Fathers. He is described as very austere in the character of his holiness, strictly obeying the letter of the law, and under the vow of a Nazarite; called emphatically 'the Just,' and held in the highest honour by the whole people, both believers and unbelievers. He was stoned, like Stephen, by the Sanhedrim, during the interval between the departure of one Roman governor and the arrival of another (Jos., *Antiq.*, xx. 9, 4); and many regarded the destruction of Jerusalem, which took place not long afterwards, as a judgment on the nation for the murder. See Stanley, *Sermons and Essays on the Apostolic Age*, pp. 297—341; Lightfoot, *Galatians*, p. 347; Kitto, p. 172; Smith's *Student's N. T. Hist.*, pp. 98, 565.

It has been much disputed whether this James should be identified with 'James the son of Alphæus,' one of the Twelve. The arguments, which are very voluminous, are well summarised in Smith's *Dict. Bible*, and *N. T. Hist.*, p. 236: where the decision is in favour of the identification.

## Lesson XXVI.—Apostolic Failings.

*'We also are men of like passions with you.'*

*Read*—Gal. ii. 11—16; Acts xv. 36—41; *Learn*—Ps. xix. 12—14; Gal. vi. 1. (*Hymns*—108, 136, 141, 154, 161, 174—179, 343, 355, 359, 360, 365.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

The fact of the two incidents which are the subject of this Lesson happening probably about the same time, enables us to take them together, and thus bring out an application of some importance, which might be neglected if each were taken separately. It will be observed that this general application is put at the end of the Sketch, while opportunity is given for the more direct teachings of the separate incidents to be worked out at the close of the two divisions respectively.

### SKETCH OF LESSON.

We often tell you to try and be like St. Paul, or St. Peter, or some other great man in the Bible. Do you ever feel, 'Oh, it's no use trying to copy them; impossible to be like such good and holy men'? Now, even if they were perfect, still we should imitate them [*illustr.—the best copy-books those in which the copies best written*]; and Who is our great Example? John xiii. 15; 1 Pet. ii. 21. But were the Apostles perfect? What did Paul and Barnabas say to the Lystrians? xiv. 15—'We also men of like passions with you'; see also what St. James says of Elijah, Jas. v. 20.

Many cases in Scripture of great and good men falling into sin. Do you remember Noah's sin? Abraham's? Jacob's? Moses'? David's? Elijah's? Hezekiah's? Job's? Why has God told us these things? That we may not think those men so far

above us, but say, 'If they, sinful as they were, served God so well, why cannot we?' To-day see two 'apostolic failings.'

#### I. THE SIN OF PETER AND BARNABAS—*Fear of man.*

Last Sunday we left the Christians of Antioch rejoicing—what about? Nothing now to disturb their harmony and union—Jewish converts not perplexed whether they may eat with Gentile converts—Gentiles not afraid of being looked down upon, willingly giving up some kinds of food [*see last Lesson*] not to offend their Jewish brethren—all meeting together happily [*see Note 4*]—feeling 'neither Greek, nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision,' but 'all one in Christ Jesus' (Gal. iii. 28; Col. iii. 11).

A visitor to Antioch—the great Apostle Peter, Gal. ii. 11. How pleased the Church to see him!—heard much of him, but many

never saw him before. They have had two chief men from Jerusalem confirming the letter Paul brought, xv. 22, 27, 32—now the leader himself. Will he come to their friendly meals and 'eat with the Gentiles'? see Gal. ii. 12—O yes, he did so at Casarea years ago (xi. 2, 3), of course will now.

More visitors from Jerusalem, Gal. ii. 12—men like those who came before and caused such disputing (xv. 1)—strict Pharisee Christians [see last Lesson, and Addit. Note IV., p. 76]. Will they join the rest? O no—what then would you expect Peter to do?—rebuke them? persuade them? What does he do? One day, when the Gentile converts assemble, no Peter—not one of their Jewish brethren! Not even Barnabas, after all he had done for the Gentiles! Why absent? Afraid of being seen there by the Pharisees!

Peter's old faults again!—

1. *Fear of man.* What made him fall that night in Caiaphas' court-yard? Afraid of being known as Jesus' disciple. What is he afraid of now? of being found out in something wrong? No, as before, just the other way—of being found out in what is right. Anything strange in this? Some of you would often like to please God, but fear that others should know you would!

2. *Dissimulation, i.e., pretending not to be what you are.* (Simulation is pretending to be what you are not.) What did Peter pretend on that Passover night by the fire? John xviii. 17—was that true? And now, wants these Pharisees to believe he is not friendly with the Gentile converts, and would not think of eating with them. Does he say so? no, but keeps away to deceive them. What did Peter say to Ananias and Sapphira for *simulating*? Acts v. 3, 5, 9; now he is *dissimulating*—is that any better? How true is Prov. xxix. 25!

But was no one faithful to the Gospel all this time? see how boldly Paul rebuked Peter 'before them all,' Gal. ii. 14—16. Like this:—'You, though a Jew, gave up your prejudices, and came among the Gentiles: yet now you make the Gentiles think this was wrong, and that the Jewish law must be kept after all. Yet you yourself said at the Council that we are all saved by faith (see Acts xv. 9), and you know that is true, and that by the works of the law shall no man be justified: why then lead these poor perplexed Gentiles to think their salvation depends on the law?'

## II. THE SIN OF BARNABAS AND PAUL—Contention.

It is a long time now since Paul and Barnabas came home from that missionary journey [Lesson XXIV.]; are they going to give up their great work of carrying the Gospel to the heathen? Which of them first thinks it is high time to start again? ver. 36 [see Note 5].

Who started with them before? xii. 25, xiii. 5. How long did he stay with them?

xiii. 13. Why left them? [Lesson XXIII.] And now here he is at Antioch, anxious to go with them again, no doubt promising to be more steadfast. His cousin Barnabas ready to try him once more [see Note 6, and Lesson XX., Note 5]; but what does Paul think? ver. 38; see Luke ix. 62.

A difference of opinion between two great Apostles: surely each will be eager to give way, 'in honour preferring one another' (Rom. xii. 10)—? No, neither! so, what then? first, ill-feeling; then, sharp words; then, separation.

See how God brought good out of evil (see Neh. xiii. 2; Ps. lxxvi. 10): through this quarrel, two parties start instead of one; Gospel blessings carried in two directions instead of one.

But does that make the sin less? Their separation not a friendly one to prevent strife, like that of Abraham and Lot (Gen. xiii. 5—9); 'contention so sharp that,' &c. Should they have gone away so? What should they have done? [Illustr.—John Wesley, having been slandered by a local preacher, told him he must apologise. The preacher refused. 'Then,' said Wesley, 'I will beg YOUR pardon'; and melted the offender's heart.]

But what would have been better than apologies? Not to have spoken sharply at all. If either had angry thoughts, should not have let them out; see Prov. xvii. 14—'the beginning of strife, as when one letteth out water'—no stopping it. But what better even than that? To have had no angry thoughts at all. Should have prayed our 1st text for rep.—'Let the words of my mouth'—and what else?—'be acceptable in Thy sight.'

*If these good men could fall as we have seen, who is safe?* Some boys and girls, generally good, seem to think that they would never do this or that which bad children do—feel like Hazael (2 Kings viii. 13). But see what two of those whose failings we have seen to-day said afterwards:—*St. Paul*, Rom. xi. 20; 1 Cor. x. 12; *St. Peter*, 1 Pet. v. 8. Yet both say we are to try and be perfect, Phil. iii. 12—14; 2 Pet. i. 10.

But when we do fall, what then? Try and make out it is nothing—not so bad as others—not worthy of blame? see 1 John i. 9—'If we say that we have no sin,' &c., 'but if we confess,' &c. This first. Then add petition to the confession: pray the Collect for 4th S. after Epiphany.

And if others fall, what then? When a good child detected in a fault, how apt we are to be pleased, and laugh! Look at Ps. xxxv. 21—have you never been like that? But what does our 2nd text for rep. say? see also 1 Cor. xiii. 6. Rather pray for others, as well as for ourselves, 'That it may please Thee to strengthen such as do stand . . . and to raise up them that fall' (Litany).

## NOTES.

1. There is some difference of opinion as to the time when St. Peter's visit to Antioch took place; but most good writers place it between the Council and St. Paul's second missionary journey. The reason of its being mentioned where it is, in Gal. ii., seems to be twofold:—(1) Because the fact of St. Paul's withstanding to the face' one of the Three 'Pillars' (ver. 9) illustrates the former's high apostolic position, which he is vindicating in the Epistle against the attacks of the Judaizers; (2) Because the subject of his rebuke of Peter naturally leads on to the subject of his rebuke of the Galatians. See next Lesson.

2. It is doubtful whether all the latter verses of Gal. ii., from ver. 14, are St. Paul's spoken words to St. Peter; and, if not, where these end. Probably, St. Paul begins by quoting his very words, then goes on, only giving the substance of his further rebuke, and so gradually passes off into what he has to say to the Galatians. Professor Lightfoot says, 'St. Paul's narrative loses itself in the reflections suggested by it . . . We find at the end of the chapter that his thoughts and language have drifted away from Peter at Antioch to the Judaizers in Galatia.'

3. If we might coin English words for the purpose of literally translating ver. 14, it would run thus:—'If thou, being a Jew, livest *Gentilishly*, and not *Jewishly*, why compellest thou the Gentiles to *Judaize*?' 'Compelling' is used in the sense of Peter's conduct having the effect, however little he might intend it, of governing their conduct.

4. It is probable that the *agapæ*, or 'love-feasts,' so characteristic of the early Church in the next two centuries, had already become customary; so that liberty to eat together was essential to the harmony of the Church. These *agapæ* usually took place in the evening, and were followed by the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

5. The word rendered 'visit,' used by St. Paul in proposing the new journey to Barnabas, is connected with that from which our word 'bishop' is derived. He contemplated what we should call an Episcopal Visitation; and, ultimately, he and Silas 'went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the Churches.' The Greek of ver. 36 conveys the idea of pressure on St. Paul's part, as though he were eager to resume his great mission, and had to stir up the flagging energies of Barnabas: it is as if he said, 'Come, now, let us go at once.' His feelings were very likely the same as he describes in 1 Thess. iii. 10.

6. There can be little doubt that in the quarrel there were faults on both sides. Not only was it quite natural that Barnabas should wish to have his cousin with him; but if Mark were willing to go, it would seem only charitable to give him another chance. And to act on this feeling was quite in accordance with the generous temperament of Barnabas (see ix. 27, xi. 22–24). On the other hand, St. Paul would be as naturally unwilling to risk the full efficiency of the mission a second time. Although in the end Barnabas' good opinion of Mark proved right, yet, apparently, at the time the Church at Antioch agreed with Paul, if we may judge by St. Luke's language in ver. 40. Matthew Henry says, 'If a man deceive me once, it is his fault; but, if twice, it is my own fault for trusting him.'

7. It is interesting to observe the after-allusions of the men whose differences are the subject of this Lesson to one another. St. Peter, in his 2nd Epistle (iii. 15), speaks of 'our beloved brother Paul.' St. Paul could have hardly mentioned Barnabas as he does in 1 Cor. ix. 6, if the quarrel had lasted. On the later history of St. Mark, see Lesson XXIII., Note 1. He and Silas appear to have been at one time together as companions of St. Peter (1 Pet. v. 13), Silvanus being the same name as Silas.

## Lesson XXVII.—The Fickle Galatians.

'Ye did run well: who did hinder you?'

Read—Acts xvi. 1–6; Gal. iv. 11–20; Learn—Heb. x. 38; 2 Pet. iii. 17, 18.  
(Hymns, 62, 63, 126, 155, 162, 166, 170, 202, 329, 350, 360, 374, 377.)

## TO THE TEACHER.

It is probable that, to not a few of the teachers who take this Lesson, the substance of it will be quite new. But this novelty can scarcely fail to enhance the interest of the subject—at all events where there is conscientious preparation. Of course such a Lesson must prove utterly impracticable to those who go to their classes unprepared; but those who properly get it up will find it an easy one. Sunday scholars are mostly quite ready to appreciate the treasures which lie beneath the surface of Scripture, and which are missed by the cursory reader, if exhibited by one who appreciates them himself. There cannot be a greater mistake than to suppose that an 'out-of-the-way' subject will not interest them. Here is a Lesson, in which the chief incident is based on a single expression in a single verse of an Epistle; and if nothing else be gained from it than a new idea of how much there is in the Bible to reward patient study, it will not be useless.

But more ought to be gained by it. The application is one of great importance, and should be pressed home as earnestly as possible. There are few teachers who have not felt the disappointment of seeing a favourite scholar beginning to 'go wrong,' and who will not be able to use with all their hearts the expressions the Sketch puts into their mouths. It will be observed, however, that the application in the Sketch has to do with 'drawing back' in life and conduct; whereas the 'drawing back' of the Galatians was (primarily at least) from sound to unsound doctrine. The former has been selected for

treatment, as being more common; but with elder scholars, many of whom are subject to serious danger from theological errors of various kinds, the latter can be warned against still more appropriately. The very error of the Galatians, who looked for justification to ceremonial observance rather than to the cross of Christ, is, it need scarcely be said, not uncommon in our day; though it must be added that an undue reliance on the mere fact of *not* being added to ceremonialism is at least as common. To adopt St. Paul's words, '*uncircumcision availeth nothing, any more than circumcision.*'

#### SKETCH OF LESSON.

Last Sunday we saw St. Paul starting on his second missionary journey. Who with him? xv. 40. Where did he go first? xv. 41. Then over those great mountains again [*Lesson XXXIII.*], but not the same way [*see Note 2*—and so on from city to city, once more back to where he was so persecuted, xvi. 1—5.

What sort of work is all this? xv. 41, xvi. 5. Like watering plants already springing up, or building up after foundation laid. But is this St. Paul's own particular work? No, his work *planting* or *founding* (see 1 Cor. iii. 6—10)—*i.e.*, preaching the Gospel in new places. So must not stay here among friends—must start away again.

On the *first* journey, three started together (xiii. 2, 5). Now how many? xv. 40—so a third wanted. Found at Lystra, ver. 1—3. Quite a youth, for see what Paul wrote to him twenty years after, 1 Tim. iv. 12. Yet God chose him to be a missionary, 1 Tim. i. 18 [*see Note 1*]. Was he fit? see his faith, 2 Tim. i. 5; his knowledge of Scripture, 2 Tim. iii. 15; his good reputation, ver. 2; and then special gifts of the Spirit, given him when St. Paul 'laid his hands on him,' 2 Tim. i. 6 [*see Lesson XIII.*], and when he was ordained as Paul himself had been, 1 Tim. iv. 14 (Acts xiii. 3) [*see Note 1*]. And we shall see how steadfast he was, not turning back, like Mark, but faithful to the last (see 1 Cor. iv. 17; Phil. ii. 22; 2 Tim. iv. 6).

Paul and Silas and Timothy—which way do they go? ver. 6—'Phrygia and the region of Galatia.' Not a word here of what they did there; yet that is our subject to-day, and a very interesting one—Where look? To a letter Paul wrote years after to the very converts made there—'Epistle to Galatians.'

#### I. ST. PAUL IN GALATIA.

1. *His sickness.* Look at Gal. iv. 13 [*see Note 5*—because of *sickness* he preached to them—how could that be? The three only passing through Galatia, on their way somewhere beyond—suddenly obliged to stop—Paul too ill to go on. We are not sure what the matter with him, but most likely sharp pain in eyes, almost blinding him. But whatever it was, very painful—he calls it a 'thorn in the flesh' (2 Cor. xii. 7)—like a sharp stake piercing him [*see Note 6*]. And he often suffered from it—had prayed for its cure (2 Cor. xii. 8), but what did the Lord reply? (9th ver.)—it was to be always with him, that he might be humble, and trust

only in Christ (7th and 9th ver.)—so he had given up complaining, rather rejoiced in it (5th, 9th, 10th verses).

2. *His preaching.* Could he preach while in that state? You know how hard it is to do or say anything in acute pain. But with Paul still harder to be silent—why? 2 Cor. v. 14. As he could not travel on, must tell of Christ *there*; so Galatians owed Gospel to his sickness. But *how* would he preach, do you think? Feebly? Why, he seems to have been more powerful than usual (perhaps thought he might die, and this his last chance). Look at Gal. iii. 1—'Christ evidently set forth crucified among you' *i.e.*, he described Christ's death so powerfully, that it was almost as if they saw it all [*see Note 8*].

3. *His success.* These Galatians ignorant heathen, but quick to understand, and easily moved by an earnest preacher [*see Note 3*]. Yet would they listen to a poor sick travelling Jew, speaking in pain and weakness? See Gal. iv. 14—they despised not his infirmity; more than that, so pitied and loved him, that—see ver. 15, would have given him *their own eyes* if they could! But was this all he wanted, that they should love him?—No, see 2 Cor. iv. 7—wanted them to love Christ. And they *did* believe his message, listened to him as to 'an angel of God' (ver. 14), cast away their idols, received the Holy Spirit (iii. 2), began bravely to 'run the Christian race' (v. 7; see 1 Cor. ix. 24; Phil. iii. 14; Heb. xii. 1). How happy St. Paul, when starting again, to leave a Church behind him!

#### II. WHAT HAPPENED IN GALATIA AFTER ST. PAUL LEFT.

What kind of people were the Galatians? [*above*]. But if easily moved one way, easily moved another way—like 'a reed shaken with the wind' (Matt. xi. 7), or 'a wave driven and tossed' (Jas. i. 6). They gave up their idols to trust in a crucified Saviour, and now just as quickly turn from Him to something else. [*Illustr.—Children and their playthings; or, the seed in stony ground.* Mark iv. 16, 17.]

How do we know this? Here is this letter St. Paul wrote them. See how he begins, i. 6—astonished at the change in them. See iii. 1—'O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?' See iv. 11—afraid his 'labour in vain.' See iv. 20—'in doubt' of them. See v. 7—'Ye *did* run well; who did hinder you?'—*i.e.*, who stopped you and turned you back?

Now let us see,—

1. Who 'bewitched' and 'hindered' the Galatians. (That is, as if a man running a race suddenly saw something and could not take his eyes off it; so, hindered from going on.) Who did it? See i. 7—some that 'troubled' them. How? See vi. 12—'constrained them to be circumcised.' Those Pharisee brethren again! Paul overcame them at the Council; but now they have followed him to distant lands, coming to his converts after he has left, telling them Paul had no authority to go to them, and teaching them all wrong [see *Addit. Note IV.*, p. 76]. Teaching what? Just as before at Antioch, Acts xv. 1, 5—that believing in Jesus not enough, must become like Jews, be circumcised, keep Jewish law (Gal. iv. 21, v. 4) and all Jewish fasts and feasts (iv. 10). And those changeable Galatians forgot the sick preacher they had loved (iv. 16), and—worse still—the crucified Lord they had trusted in (iii. 1).

2. How St. Paul tried to win them back. (a) Reminds them how they loved him, iv. 13–15. (b) Shews his love for them: calls them 'little children,' iv. 19 (comp. 1 Cor. iv. 14); writes to them with his own hand (vi. 11), not by dictation, as usual [see *Note 6 f*]. (c) Proves his own authority, i. 11, 12, ii. 9. (d) Tells them that if they trust in keeping the law, they will be cursed, not saved, iii. 10, 11. (e) And that the only way to be saved is by faith in Christ, iii. 13, 14, 22, 26, v. 6, vi. 14, 15; see 1st text for rep.—'the just shall live by faith, but if any man draw back'—?

## ARE YOU 'DRAWING BACK' FROM CHRIST?

It seems a dreadful thing, but it is very common. We teachers often disappointed by scholars 'drawing back.' Boy good, obedient, really trying to please God, while at school—goes out to a 'place'—how quickly changed! We sadly say (see v. 7), 'He *did* run well: who did hinder him?' Gentle and modest girl, loving her teacher, her church, her hymns, seeming to love Christ—falls into bad company—soon what a difference! We say (see iii. 1) 'O foolish girl, who has bewitched her?' And this not only with big boys and girls: how often teachers might say (iv. 19) 'My *little* children, I stand in doubt of you!' how often go home 'afraid (iv. 11) that our labour in vain'!

Do any of you think, 'We shall never draw back'? What would last Sunday's lesson say to that? It is *much easier* to draw back than to press on [*illust.—rowing or swimming against, or with, stream or tide*]. But we need not be drawn back—can have the same grace that enabled St. Paul to go on with his work amid all that pain, see 2 Cor. xii. 9. Therefore, *run the race*, looking (a) 'unto Jesus,' who has gone the same path before (Heb. xii. 1, 2), (b) at the prize (Phil. iii. 14), the 'incorruptible crown' (1 Cor. ix. 24–27).

'Awake, my soul, stretch every nerve,  
And press with vigour on;  
A heavenly race demands thy zeal,  
And an immortal crown.'

## NOTES.

1. On Timothy and his family, see Lesson XXIV., Note 4. It appears from 1 Tim. i. 18, that a Divine call to the missionary work came to him through the inspired utterances of some of the converts at Lystra who had received the gift of prophecy, just as it was in the case of Barnabas and Saul at Antioch (Acts xiii. 2); see Lesson XXII., Note 2. The 'presbytery,' mentioned in 1 Tim. iv. 14 as joining in Timothy's ordination, were the 'elders' (same word in the Greek) ordained by Paul and Barnabas (Acts xiv. 23); see Lesson XXIV., Note 11.

Why did St. Paul circumcise Timothy, and not Titus? Because the former was half a Jew (Acts xvi. 1), and the latter a pure Greek (Gal. ii. 3). Timothy, unless circumcised, would have been scouted by his countrymen as an apostate; but the circumcision of Titus would have been a surrender of Gentile liberty. St. Paul was willing to 'become all things to all men'—to concede anything indifferent—so long as the truth of the Gospel was not affected. His view was 'Neither circumcision availeth anything, *nor uncircumcision*' (Gal. v. 6, vi. 15); and he only used the strong language of Gal. v. 2 because those to whom he wrote had been persuaded that circumcision was a condition of salvation. See C. and H., i., chap. viii., p. 312; Baumgarten, *Apost. Hist.*, ii., p. 95.

2. Paul and Silas did not go to the Lycaonian cities by way of the sea and through Pamphylia, as Paul and Barnabas had done. The mention of Cilicia in xv. 2, and of Derbe before Lystra in xvi. 1, makes it clear that on this second occasion the direct north-western route over the Taurus mountains was taken. This would lead

them through a remarkable pass, or defile, called the 'Cilician Gates,' celebrated in history as the route of invading armies both ways. It is described as a rent or fissure in the mountain chain, eighty miles in length, and in some parts only ten or twelve paces wide. See C. and H., i., chap. viii., p. 301.

3. The Galatians were not Asiatics, or Greeks, but *Gauls*; i.e., they belonged to the great Celtic race, the same from which sprang the Irish and the French. 'Galli,' 'Galatæ,' and 'Celtæ,' are names used nearly synonymously by classical authors. In the 3rd century b.c. a great Gallic movement southward took place; and a portion of the emigrant stream established itself, after hard fighting, in the centre of Asia Minor: hence the name Galatia. In due time, like the surrounding nations, it fell under the Roman power.

The peculiar features of the Celtic character are well known. Cæsar described the Gauls as 'fickle in resolves, fond of change, and not to be trusted'; and these qualities, with the more favourable ones of impressibility, enthusiasm, and quickness of apprehension, are easily recognisable in their modern descendants. French travellers in the East write of Galatia with patriotic interest (C. and H., i., chap. viii., p. 285); and the Epistle to the Galatians illustrates the character of the race most strikingly, e.g., impressibility, iv. 14, iii. 1; fickleness, i. 6, iii. 3; vanity, vi. 3; enthusiasm, iv. 15. See further, Lightfoot, *Galatians*, p. 14; Kitto (Porter's Notes), p. 329.

4. The religious tendencies of the Galatians,

as they appear in the Epistle, also agree with what we know of the ancient Gauls and other Celts. Osesar speaks of their 'excessive devotion to ritual observances'; and their priests were the well-known Druids. The Phrygian worship of the goddess Cybele, which the colonists in Galatia found there, and which they adopted, consisted of elaborate ceremonies and gross superstitions. Professor Lightfoot (p. 30) calls it 'a passionate and striking ritualism, expressing itself in bodily mortifications of the most terrible kind.' And it is noteworthy that when St. Paul rebukes his converts for being seduced by Jewish ceremonialism, he calls it a 'turning again,' a 'being entangled again,' in the bondage they were in before (iv. 8, 9, v. 1). They had been in the darkness of heathenism, they were now falling into Christian Pharisaism; and St. Paul speaks of the latter as identical with the former—identical, that is, in its enslaving devotion to mere forms.

5. The best writers are agreed that the Greek words in iv. 13 can only mean 'on account of infirmity (or sickness) of the flesh'; which implies that St. Paul did not intend to stay in Galatia, but was detained against his will. Perhaps he meant to go on northward into Pontus, where there were numerous colonies of Jews.

6. It is now universally agreed that St. Paul's sickness in Galatia was caused by the 'thorn in the flesh' mentioned in 2 Cor. xii. 7. That the 'thorn' was some physical malady was the opinion of the early Church, and although mediaeval writers identified it with sensual passion, and Luther with unbelief, modern critics have gone back to the old view, and certainly no other is reconcilable with St. Paul's own expressions. Some variety of opinion exists as to the nature of the malady; but the majority of expositors agree that it was probably an acute affection of the eyes.

(a) Such a complaint might well be described as a stake (or large Eastern thorn) piercing the flesh.

(b) Acts xxiii. 1, and 5, are supposed to imply weak sight in St. Paul.

(c) It has been suggested that this weakness was the remains of his three days' blindness at Damascus.

(d) The 'weakness' of his 'bodily presence' when at Corinth (1 Cor. ii. 3; 2 Cor. x. 10) might in part refer to the same infirmity.

(e) Gal. iv. 15—'Ye would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me'—though not necessarily demanding this explanation, strongly suggests it.

(f) The words of Gal. vi. 11—'Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand'—do not accurately represent the Greek, which is 'with what large letters I have written.' He had written in great irregular characters, i.e., as we should say, in a sprawling hand. How natural this, if semi-blindness at the time of writing prevented his rightly guiding his pen! His usual habit of employing an

amanuensis (Rom. xvi. 22; 1 Cor. xvi. 21) would be explained in the same way. Probably, to shew his earnest love for the Galatians, he, contrary to his regular custom, wrote the whole Epistle himself: though it is possible that the 'large letters' only refer to ver. 11-18 added by himself at the end.

Conybeare (C. and H., ii., chap. xviii., p. 183) mentions a letter he had received from the German critic, Neander, 'written in the fair and flowing hand of an amanuensis,' but ending with 'a few irregular lines in large and rugged characters,' written by himself, and explaining that weak sight prevented his doing more.

7. The Epistle to the Galatians was probably written from Macedonia, during the journey mentioned in Acts xx. 2. (The 'subscription' at the end is clearly wrong.) It comes, therefore, (as we shall see hereafter) between the 2nd Epistle to the Corinthians and that to the Romans. The relation of the Galatian letter to these two is most interestingly drawn out by Professor Lightfoot (pp. 43-55). But, before this time, St. Paul had paid a second visit to Galatia (Acts xviii. 23), and this visit is implied in the Epistle. In iv. 13, 'at the first' means 'at the former of my visits'; and the rebukes and warnings the Apostle gave his converts at the second visit seem referred to in i. 9, iv. 16, v. 21. Probably the evil leaven had even then begun to work, but subsequent alarming news of its progress induced him to write the Epistle.

This Epistle is the severest St. Paul wrote. It alone contains no utterance of thankfulness for the faith, zeal, or knowledge of those to whom it is addressed. Instead of opening with the usual 'I thank my God for you,' it begins at once, 'I marvel that ye are so soon removed' (*lit.* 'become renegades' or 'turncoats'). The first two chapters are devoted to a vindication of the writer's authority, after which he proceeds to explain and enforce the truth of justification by faith, and to expostulate with them for their fickleness.

8. The two words in Gal. iii. 1, specially noticed in the Sketch, are remarkable. 'Bewitched' means '*fascinated*,' as by the power of an evil eye. On this Lightfoot is very interesting. 'Set forth' means '*placarded*.' It is the regular Greek word for public notices, or what we should call *posters*. Some have laid stress on this verse as implying that St. Paul exhibited a picture or crucifix to the Galatians. If the word is to be taken literally at all, a placard must be meant; but it is far more likely that it is a figure for the vividness of St. Paul's language in preaching.

Professor Lightfoot thus paraphrases the verse, connecting it with the concluding words of chap. ii. 1—'Christ's death in vain! O ye senseless Gauls, what bewitchment is this! I placarded Christ crucified before your eyes. You suffered them to wander from this gracious proclamation of your King. They rested on the withering eye of the sorcerer. They yielded to the fascination and were riveted there.'

## Lesson XXVIII.—The Cry of the Heathen.

'Come over and help us.'

Read—Acts xvi. 7-15; Learn—Matt ix. 36-38; Rom. x. 14, 15. (*Hymns*, 99, 103, 120, 229-239, 400.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

By taking these few verses by themselves, an opportunity is afforded for giving a Missionary Lesson. We have already viewed missionary work as an attack on the kingdom of Satan (Lesson XXII.), and have exemplified its perils by those of Paul and



Barnabas (Lesson XXIV.); but in this Lesson we look at the heathen themselves, and their need of the Gospel. No teacher who has taken the slightest interest in missions can have any difficulty in adding illustrative incidents from modern fields of labour. Anecdotes showing the misery of the heathen, their failure to find satisfaction in their own religious systems, and their eagerness for the Gospel, abound in missionary publications.

Teachers in *garrison towns* who may use this Lesson, will have an illustration ready to hand of a military station or 'colony' like Philippi (see Note 7). Indeed, different as our modern life is from that of the Roman Empire, a rough idea may be caught of the peculiarities of the various cities visited by St. Paul, from a comparison of them with English towns. Thus, Antioch in Syria may be likened to Liverpool with a Cheltenham or Harrogate annexed to it, or to Bristol and Clifton; Cæsarea, as the seat of a provincial government and a military station, to Dublin; Athens to Oxford, or to the 'modern Athens,' Edinburgh; Corinth to Liverpool, with a dash of Doncaster; Philippi to Dover or Portsmouth. Tarsus may be described as a combination of Bradford and Cambridge; and Ephesus, as at once a centre of traffic and famous for its temple, to York or Norwich.

#### SKETCH OF LESSON.

Four quarters of globe—Europe, Asia, Africa, America—which of these is mostly Christian? But from which did Christianity come? Palestine in Asia; Antioch too, and all the places whither we have followed St. Paul so far. Europe then all in heathen darkness. In the civilised South, men worshipped Jupiter, Mars, Neptune; in the barbarian North, they worshipped Woden, Thor, &c. In our own Britain, and in Gaul (France), the religion of the Druids.

But God saw all those myriads of heathen, and pitied them; and now He will send His Apostle there also. Look at ver. 6—Paul has left Galatia, recovered now—where are he and Silas and Timothy thinking of going? 'Asia'—not the great continent we know, but a little piece of it called so by the Romans [see *Additional Note VI.*, p. 86], where the great city of Ephesus was. But God will not allow them to go that way [see *Note 1*] to their left, so they turn to their right, towards Bithynia (ver. 7)—but no, not to go that way either; so on they move, straight across towards the sea (ver. 8)—just as if a hedge on either side, nothing to do but to go on. [*Shew map.*] Why this? Because God means them to cross over to Europe. See how He directed them.

#### I. THE CRY FOR HELP.

St. Paul now on sea-shore, looking across towards the great nations beyond—but can't go on—no direction yet from God. But that night it comes—how? ver. 9. Who sent the vision? Let us see what that cry meant—'Come over and help us.'

1. *It meant that 'help' was sadly needed.* Needed by whom? only by the people of Macedonia? Why, that one man represented all the heathen—only God made him appear a Macedonian that Paul might know where to go first. But what help did the heathen need? What kind of people cry for help? rich people? strong people? people who know what to do and how to do it? Of course not; yet the great heathen nations were rich, strong, clever,

self-satisfied. Ah, but see Rev. iii. 17—people may seem to 'have need of nothing,' and yet really be 'miserable, poor, blind,' &c. [*Illustr.—Blind man may be rich, strong, clever, yet needs help.*] Romans did not need strong arms; Greeks did not need clever brains; but what did they need? (a) Knowledge and guidance, to know which way to go, what to do in order to be holy and happy [*illustr.—as blind man needs guiding hand*]; (b) Strength of heart and will to go the way they ought to go, to do what they ought to do [*illustr.—cripple may see his way clearly enough, yet be unable to move, as in John v. 7*]. They needed what we pray for in Collect 1st S. Epiph., 'to perceive and know what things they ought to do,' and 'grace and power faithfully to perform the same.'

2. *But did they know their need, and where to get help?* If you had gone from city to city, and seen all the gay, careless people, would have said, 'They don't seem unhappy or anxious.' But is it not just the same now with us?—yet you know those who don't love and serve Christ not really happy, and they feel it too sometimes. So it was then. Especially perplexed about death—'What is it?'—'Do men's souls live after death?'—'Where are they?'—could not answer these questions. You might not have noticed that the heathen were crying for help, but God did. In His ears, sighs and groans ever rising up (see Exod. ii. 23, iii. 7, 9; Jas. v. 4). To Him all the heathen like blind men groping in darkness, like cripples helpless to move, like slaves oppressed by Satan, like hungry men without food, like thirsty men without water. And they knew not where they could get help—(some went after sorcerers, like the Samaritans and Sergius Paulus, viii. 9, 10, xiii. 6, 7; see it again next Sunday). This too God saw—therefore sent Paul that vision.

#### II. THE CRY ANSWERED.

Come down to harbour of Troas, early in the morning after that vision (see ver. 10, 'immediately'). Ships alongside—taking

in cargo—sailors, porters, merchants, &c.—all busy—fine south wind for sailing [see Note 5]. Here are four passengers asking for ship going to Macedonia—who? Paul, Silas, Timothy, and who else? look at the 'we' in ver. 10—what does that mean? [Note 2.] Soon off; and how soon across? ver. 11.

Those four humble men, sailing over the blue sea in that unknown vessel, God's helpers, carrying 'help' to the heathen! How the great men would have laughed had they known it! But see 1 Sam. xiv. 6; 2 Chron. xiv. 11; 1 Cor. i. 27, 28. What help were they taking? God's message to His creatures—a message not of wrath, but of love—John iii. 16 gives it exactly. They were taking the knowledge of Christ, and what more wanted?—

'Thou, O Christ, art all I want;  
All in all in Thee I find.'

Come to Him—then will 'know what ought to do,' and have 'grace and power to perform same' [above].

### III. FIRST-FRUIT OF THE MISSION.

The four missionaries in streets of Philippi—plenty of soldiers and Roman officials about—perhaps meet the two high officers who govern, with their guards carrying bundles of rods to use for punishments [see Note 7]. An unpromising place!—people don't look as if they wanted 'help' from Jewish travellers!

Usually Paul finds out synagogue—speaks first to own countrymen—but scarcely any of them here, so no synagogue—just a few women quietly worshipping God—where? ver. 13 [see Note 8]. See Paul on the Sabbath, with the little party around him—what a beginning to the great work in Europe!—ah, but look at Zech. iv. 10.

Who is the first convert? ver. 14 [see Note 9]. See, 1st, the cause of her conversion—what led to it: her heart 'the Lord opened'; 2nd, the consequences—what followed it? (a) attention to the 'things spoken' (how differently you would

'attend' if your hearts opened!); (b) baptism—Lydia not afraid to 'confess Christ crucified'; (c) ready to help God's servants—never thought, 'It will cost so much to entertain these four men.' Other converts too, for see ver. 40. And that little band not only the first Church in Europe, but also among the most faithful of St. Paul's friends, see Phil. i. 7, iv. 1, 15.

*Is the world very different now from what it was then?*

Think of the great Christian countries, and the many thousands who really love Christ scattered everywhere. Think of the difference in England alone! And yet still multitudes of heathen—Africa, India, China, &c.

(a) *The Cry for Help still rises up to God.* Darkness, misery, sin, everywhere. Heathen want to get peace and salvation, but know not how [illustr.—pilgrimages in India, Juggernaut, &c.]; and when our missionaries go among them, how eager to hear them! Sometimes with missionaries as with Christ (Mark vi. 31)—'many coming and going—no leisure so much as to eat.' Sometimes chiefs of remote village will walk hundreds of miles to see missionary and beg him to come to them. Ought not the cry to ring in our ears too?

'From many an ancient river  
From many a palmy plain,  
They call us to deliver  
Their land from error's chain.'

(b) *The Cry is still being answered in the same way.* Christ now, as of old, has 'compassion on the multitude, because—?' 1st text for rep. So He puts it in the heart of men to go out; for (2nd text for rep.) 'how can' the heathen 'hear,' 'believe,' 'call on Him,' 'without a preacher'? But see next words—'How preach except sent?' What are you doing to help to send them? Give, as Lydia did, what you can; and also do as Christ says (1st text for rep.)—'Pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth more labourers into His harvest.'

### NOTES.

1. We are not informed in what way the Divine directions on this journey were made known to St. Paul and his companions. It may have been by visions, like that of the 'man of Macedonia' at Troas, or through the prophetic inspiration of Silas (xv. 32), or by providential intimations of one kind or another.

2. The use in ver. 10, for the first time, of the 1st person plural ('we endeavoured') reveals the fact of St. Luke having now joined the little company. He appears to have gone no further than Philippi, as the 'we' does not occur in the following chapters until we come to xx. 5; and St. Paul's visits to Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, and Ephesus, are (notwithstanding the length and importance of the two latter especially) not described with anything like the minuteness with which St. Luke narrates the incidents at Philippi witnessed by himself. The journey to Jerusalem in chaps. xx., xxi., on the other hand, is given with the utmost detail, and reads almost like the writer's diary. The fact that we lose sight of Luke at Philippi, and next

meet again with him at the same place (xx. 6), gives some ground for supposing that he was left in charge of the Church there. According to the subscription of 2nd Corinthians, that Epistle was 'written from Philippi by Titus and Lucas.' Concerning Luke personally, see Introductory Note 'On the Book of the Acts,' sect. 1.

3. On the various provinces mentioned in the passage, see Addit. Note VI., next page.

4. Troas was a city built in memory of the Trojan war, 15 miles south of the site of old Troy. Its full name was 'Alexandria Troas,' the former appellation being added in honour of Alexander the Great, who halted here on his march to conquer the East, and indulged in dreams of rivaling the hero of the locality, Achilles. In this very city, another 'man of Macedonia' appeared in vision to St. Paul; and hence the great Apostle was (as Howson remarks) 'sent forth to subdue the powers of the West.' See further, C. and H., i., chap. viii. p. 329; Kitto, p. 333; Smith's *N. T. Hist.*, p. 393.

5. In ver. 11, the words 'came with a straight course' mean literally 'sailed before the wind' (the south wind—see map). How favourable the wind must have been, is shown by the fact of their reaching Neapolis, the port of Philippi, the next day; the voyage on another occasion over the same waters occupying five days (xx. 6). See C. and H., i., chap. viii., p. 335.

6. 'Chief city' in ver. 12, is a mistranslation. It should be 'first city.' Neapolis, where they landed, was reckoned as belonging to Thrace. The capital of Macedonia was Thessalonica, and the chief city of 'that part' Amphipolis. See C. and H., i., chap. viii. p. 341; Lightfoot, *Philippians*, p. 49.

7. Philippi is described as a 'colony,' which we know also from Roman historians, and from coins. Representations of one of these coins, bearing the abbreviated word 'COLA,' are given in C. and H., i., chap. ix., p. 342, in Kitto, p. 343, and in Professor S. Leathes' article on Philippi in the *Church S. S. Mag.* for April last.

A 'colony' was a settlement or military station of Roman citizens and soldiers in a conquered country, with the view of maintaining and extending the Roman authority there. Such cities enjoyed peculiar privileges, as being, in the words of an ancient writer, 'a miniature likeness of Rome.' They were wholly under Roman municipal law, and governed by military officers, (*prætors* or *duumviri*, the latter signifying there were two of them). Roman prætors were attended by officers called *lictors*, who carried each a bundle of rods with an axe in the middle. St. Luke uses the correct Greek words for both prætors and lictors—*στρατηγοί* (*strategoi*) and *παῖδοιχοι* (*rhaddouchoi*), rendered 'magistrates' and 'sergeants': a striking instance of

his minute accuracy. It was with the rods of the lictors that Paul and Silas were 'beaten.' See further, next Lesson, Note on this 'beating.'

In writing to the Philippians, St. Paul seems to allude to their peculiar privileges as citizens of a Roman 'colony.' In i. 27, 'let your conversation be' is literally 'perform your duties as citizens'; and in iii. 20, 'our conversation' should be 'our citizenship.' See Lightfoot's notes, *in loco*.

Among other Roman 'colonies' at that time, there were two in Britain, York and St. Albans.

8. It was natural that in a military town like Philippi there should be but few Jews, and no synagogue. The Greek of ver. 13, 16, implies that there was a *proseucha*, or 'place of prayer.' These were common where no synagogue existed. They were merely enclosures open to the sky, and were usually constructed on the bank of a river, on account of the customary ablutions.

9. Lydia is described as one who 'worshipped God,' the usual expression for a Gentile proselyte. Her native city, Thyatira, was in the province of Asia, and afterwards the seat of one of the 'Seven Churches.' Inscriptions have been found relating to a guild of *dyers* there; and the 'purple' in which Lydia traded (ver. 14) was either a purple dye, or cloth dyed that colour. This is another of the historical coincidences so numerous in the Acts.

10. Although we cannot positively say that Lydia's 'household' (ver. 15) included young children, it is most unlikely that there should have been none *either* in hers, or in the jailor's (ver. 32—34), or in that of Stephanas at Corinth (1 Cor. i. 16); and this is an indirect argument in favour of Infant Baptism.

## ADDITIONAL NOTE VI.

### THE PROVINCES OF ASIA MINOR.

The ancient divisions of Asia Minor are somewhat perplexing, and need some explanation. In St. Paul's time, the peninsula comprised seven Roman 'Provinces,' viz., Asia, Bithynia, Pontus, Cappadocia, Galatia, Pamphylia, and Cilicia. All other names belong strictly to an earlier period of the history. Some of them had become quite obsolete, as Ionia, Lydia, &c.; but others were still in popular use, as Phrygia, Pisidia, Lycaonia, and Mysia—just as we still use the old names, Normandy and Brittany, although France is now divided into departments with modern names. The boundaries of the Roman 'Provinces' are not accurately ascertained, but they certainly did not follow those of the older divisions; thus, 'Antioch in Pisidia' was probably in the Province of Galatia, although 'Pisidia' was reckoned as part of the Province of Pamphylia.

In most maps these important distinctions are wholly ignored; thus, Pisidia is made a separate province, between Pamphylia and Galatia, as though all three names belonged to one category. So with Phrygia, which was really included in the Province of Asia. In the Map given with the last number, the distinction is accurately observed, and shown by differences in the

lettering. See Key to the Map, in the same number.

In the Acts, the names are generally given as in the popular usage of the time. Thus, in xvi., we are told that St. Paul and his companions went 'through Phrygia and Galatia,'—by 'Galatia' being meant, not so much the Roman Province as the smaller district, forming part of it, colonised by the Galatian immigrants [*Lesson XXVII., Note 3*]. But the word 'Asia,' on the other hand, *always means the Roman Province so called*, which comprised about one-third of the peninsula, at its western end, occupying much the same position in relation to the larger portion of it that Portugal does to Spain; and included the old districts of Lydia, Caria, part of Phrygia, &c. The term 'Asia Minor,' by which we now designate the whole peninsula, was not known to the ancients.

The Roman divisions are also accurately named in 1 Pet. i. 1, the Epistle being addressed to the 'strangers' (i.e., the Hellenists, or Jews of the Dispersion) in five of the seven Provinces, 'Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.'

For further information, see Conybeare and Howson, i., chap. viii., p. 277, &c.

## Lesson XXIX.—The Jailor and his Prisoners.

*'What must I do to be saved?'*Read—Acts xvi. 16—40; Learn—Mark xvi. 16; Rom. v. 1. (*Hymns*, 42, 60, 62, 63, 90, 99, 102, 127, 144, 147, 345.)

## TO THE TEACHER.

We are all familiar with the common answers of school children to the question which forms the motto of this Lesson—'Be good'—'Pray'—'Believe.' For such answers there is every excuse; but there is no excuse for the way in which most teachers receive them. Suppose the first to be given—'Be good.' Many a teacher will reply, 'Yes, be good; and then where will you go when you die?' Every one can see how faulty this is. But no better result is obtained if he reply, 'No, that's not right'; and if, when the scholar, making another guess, cries, 'Believe,' he assent—'Yes, that's right: you must believe,' what definite idea does the scholar gain? The Sketch briefly indicates what is the true way of meeting the supposed answer. Let the class be drawn on to see what 'being good' means. Let them be shown how impossible it is for them to 'be good' enough to earn salvation,—and this, not by the teacher telling them so, nor even by the mere reference to Scripture texts, but by an appeal, practical and minute, to their own daily experience, so that they may not only know the guiltiness of man as a doctrine, but *feel* it as a *fact*. Then the way will be clear for setting forth the complete work of Christ in its fulness and simplicity, because the *need* of it will first have been realised. And it may be that true 'faith' will be awakened in the scholars' hearts without their having been puzzled by the words 'faith' and 'believe' at all. Stress must not be laid upon the *believing*, but upon Him on Whom we are to believe. The way to explain a fine view or picture is to dwell upon it, and not to expatiate upon the faculty of sight; and although strength or weakness of sight may affect our *enjoyment* in looking, it does not affect the reality of what we look at.

Care must be taken to prevent confusion between the real sense in which the Philippian 'prætors,' &c., were 'Romans,' and the merely legal sense in which Paul and Silas were 'Romans.' See Note 8. The way in which a foreigner residing in England can become a 'naturalised' Englishman, and thus acquire all an Englishman's privileges, will illustrate the peculiar 'citizenship' of Paul and Silas.

## SKETCH OF LESSON.

Last Sunday we talked about the ignorant heathen in St. Paul's time. When any of them troubled in mind, wanting comfort or direction, to whom did they go? Had no ministers, or Christian friends, or Bibles, to consult; therefore to magicians and fortune-tellers, like Simon and Elymas (Acts viii. 9—11, xiii. 6). [*See Lessons XII., Note 1; XXII., Note 7.*] So it was long before, see Deut. xviii. 9—14; Isa. viii. 19, xix. 3; Jer. xxvii. 9. So it is to this day: crowds of such deceivers in every heathen country.

How comes all this? Partly Satan's malice, partly avarice of men. Satan sees those in trouble longing for *some* guide, so gives them false ones. Wicked men see they are ready to *pay* for guidance, so pretend to give it, to gain money (see Numb. xxii. 7; 2 Pet. ii. 15; Jude 11).

At Philippi see *both*, ver. 16 [*see Note 1*]: (1) Satan has put an evil spirit in a poor girl, making her say strange things, that people may think her a prophetess; (2) bad men have employed her to get money for them by her fortune-telling. What does she say of Paul and his companions? ver. 17. Would not Paul be glad the people should thus be directed to them? see ver. 18—'grieved'

—why?—he is sent to fight *against* Satan—will have none of his pretended help—won't let people think them *allies* (comp. Mark i. 25, 34, iii. 11, 12). Grieved, too, for the poor girl—will deliver her from the bondage—how? ver. 18. But who are 'grieved' *now*? ver. 19—the selfish men thought not of *her*, only of their own gains!

See Paul and Silas before the magistrates [*last Lesson, Note 7*].—will they have a fair trial? ver. 20—22,—they are *Jews*, that is enough: no mercy for them [*see Note 2*].—even the rulers themselves ill-treat them—then cruel beating with the lictors' rods [*see Note 3*].—'many stripes' (ver. 23)—then handed over, to whom?

*But this jailor to be the next convert.* See all about him to-day.

## I. THE JAILOR BEFORE CONVERSION.

What sort of man a Roman jailor likely to be? No doubt stern and unfeeling, used to torturing and ill-treating the thieves and robbers given to his charge, caring nothing for their sufferings. Do we see this in his treatment of Paul and Silas? What was he told to do? ver. 23; what *did* he do? ver. 24,—does not this show how hard and merciless he was? See him

seizing them, faint and bleeding as they were with the scourging,—‘thrusting’ them down into dark, damp, foul dungeon, and, to add to their misery, their feet fastened tight, to prevent their moving [see Note 4]. Very likely he thought, ‘Such men deserve no pity—just like those troublesome Jews—always at some mischief—fancy them pretending to teach us Romans the way of salvation’ (see ver. 17)—a dungeon the best place for such vagabonds!

Midnight. Any sounds to be heard in that dark cell? if cries and groans, no wonder—but, what? ver. 25. Songs of praise at such a time!—why? see Acts v. 41; 1 Pet. iv. 13, 16; and prayers—for what? Perhaps a prayer like Ps. cxlii. 7 (see Ps. cii. 19, 20, cxlvi. 7), but more probably like Acts iv. 29. Any listeners? ver. 25—how astonished! But the jailor—does he hear? (see ver. 27)—fast asleep—nothing to him whether groans or hymns.

## II. THE JAILOR'S CONVERSION.

But there was *one* ‘Keeper’ that night not asleep, see Ps. cxxi. 4. The Lord was watching—pitying His suffering servants—and pitying the poor heathen jailor too—had He not even died for him? Yes, and He meant to make that night for ever memorable, that jailor to be read about in countries far away—yes, *in this school*—that wondrous story to save many souls!

Suddenly, the ground shaking, thick prison walls tottering, heavy gates flung open, chains snapping ver. 26. Jailor awake now—horrified—why? Disgrace and death if he lose his prisoners [see Note 5]—how avoid it? only by suicide! ver. 27. But at that instant, a voice out of the darkness—whose? what said? ver. 28. See him now rushing in, his lamp dimly showing him the way, ver. 29—then on his face before those very feet he had ‘made fast in the stocks’!

‘What must I do to be saved?’—what does he mean? (a) The earthquake has reminded him that there is a great and mighty God. (b) His sins crowd on his memory, cruelties to prisoners, &c.—feels God must be angry with him. (c) He is sure these two Jews must be God’s servants—did not that soothing girl say so?—and how calmly and kindly have they called to him not to hurt himself!—surely they can ‘show him the way of salvation.’

What is Paul’s answer? Is it, ‘Repent first of your cruelty to us’? Is it, ‘Take us out, give us food and rest, then we will tell you’? Is it, ‘No salvation at all for such as you’? No need to tell him of his sinfulness—he feels that—it is a Saviour he wants now—how glad Paul must be that he can tell him of one! What does the answer mean? It means this (and no doubt Paul so explained it):—‘God loves you, bad as you are—sent His Son to save you—Jesus, our Master, who has sent us to Philippi, died for your sins, rose again, is now above, ready to hear and help you—believe this, and you are forgiven, justified,

saved; and not you only—let all your family believe, and they saved too.’

What a message to the terrified jailor! Did he believe it? How did it make him feel? ver. 34.

## III. THE JAILOR AFTER CONVERSION.

Will he let these messengers of God go free now? That would be failing in duty, and they would not wish him to do it. But, though bound to ‘keep them safe’ (ver. 23), not bound to treat them as he did; so what does he do? ver. 35. Perhaps a fountain or well in prison-yard: there see *two washings*, ver. 33: *he washes* their wounds—they baptize him and his family. Then into his own room—there rest and food for them, ver. 34 [see Note 4].

Now what does all this show in the jailor? It shows he was *really converted*. (a) Depend upon it, he had never treated prisoners like this before! So he was a ‘new creature’ (2 Cor. v. 17), and his *faith* ‘worked by love’ (Gal. v. 6). (b) He, a Roman officer, not ashamed to be baptized as a disciple of that Nazarene whom a Roman officer crucified. Nor any objection to baptism as unnecessary; no saying, ‘You said if I *believed* I should be saved—I do believe—why then this ceremony?’ What had Jesus said? see 1st text for rep.—‘He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved’—why this? Because coming to baptism the *proof* of faith: if the jailor *really* believed in Jesus as Saviour and King, would he refuse to confess Him publicly by joining His Church? (2nd text for rep.)

What became of Paul and Silas? ver. 35—40 [see Note 8]—follow them next Sunday.

*But that great question—How should we answer it now?—What must you do to be saved?*

‘Pray’? ‘Be good’? So you must: yet neither ‘praying’ nor ‘being good’ will save you. *Could* you ‘be good’ all your life, *never sinning*?

Only one way (Acts iv. 12)—Christ takes our sin, and gives us His righteousness—then we are ‘justified,’ acquitted, reckoned and treated as if quite good; see Rom. iii. 19–26; 2 Cor. v. 21; Gal. iii. 10–13; Eph. i. 6, 7; 1 Pet. ii. 24.

But *who* can be thus saved? [Illustr.—If wonderful medicine to cure the sick, which of the sick would be cured?] You must take the salvation. How? By *believing* it—nothing else. *But how believe?* Don’t think about believing; don’t puzzle about faith: just think about Christ—all He is and all He has done; ‘look’ at Him, as the bitten Israelites looked at the brazen serpent (see Isa. xlv. 22; John iii. 14, 15); and you will get to feel it is all true—then you will hate sin, then you will love Christ, then you will be ready joyfully to serve Him—you will find yourself, like the jailor, ‘a new creature.’

## NOTES.

1. The words 'spirit of divination' are in the original 'spirit of *Python*.' *Python* was the name of the god Apollo, and the priestesses who declared the oracles at the famous shrine of Delphi were called the 'Pythoresses.' The girl at Philippi was supposed to have an inspiration similar to that attributed to the Pythoresses. St. Paul's words distinctly imply that the girl was really 'possessed with a devil'; but this does not imply that she had real powers of revealing the future. Smith's *Student's N. T. Hist.* well remarks (p. 395), 'The question, whether a soul intellectually and morally abandoned to disorder was suffered to fall under the power of a personal spirit, is quite distinct from the claims of supernatural knowledge and prophecy, of which the possessed were chosen as the agents. Indeed, the reality of the possession sets in a more striking light the vileness of the imposture which trafficked in the worst evil that could befall humanity.' See also Kitto, p. 351, &c.; and on the general subject of 'possession,' 'Life of Our Lord,' Lesson XXIV., Note 1.

2. It would appear that about this time (as in the reign of Caligula, see Lesson XVII., Note 1) the Jews were undergoing persecution from the Romans. We find from xviii. 2 that the Emperor Claudius had expelled all Jews from the capital, and the decree is alluded to by the historian Suetonius. The Roman prætors at Philippi would naturally follow suit, considering a 'colony' as sacred as Rome itself (see last Lesson, Note 7, and ver. 21); and this would explain their arbitrary and violent treatment of Paul and Silas.

3. The Greek word rendered 'beat,' in ver. 22, means specifically to beat with the rods of the lictors (see last Lesson, Note 7). The customary sentence (mentioned by Seneca) was no doubt given: '*Go, lictors, strip off their garments; let them be scourged.*' The lictors unbound their fasces (bundles of rods), and, having used the leathern thongs to bind the prisoners, beat them with the rods. St. Paul alludes to this, and two other similar Roman scourgings (besides the Jewish 'stripes'), in 2 Cor. xi. 25.

4. The Roman prison must be conceived of as something very different from an English jail. The 'inner prisons' (ver. 24) were pestilential dungeons, damp, cold, and totally dark (comp. Jer. xxxviii. 6). The word 'sprang in' (ver. 29) seems in the Greek to imply a springing down into a subterranean cell. The 'stocks' were so constructed that the legs could be drawn apart at the will of the jailor, and excruciating torture caused. Into such a dungeon, to be confined in such a manner, were Paul and Silas thrust, smarting and bleeding as they were from the severe scourging (the 'many stripes'). The jailor's house (ver. 34) was evidently in the precincts of the prison.

5. The jailor knew that if the prisoners escaped, certain death awaited him, see xii. 19; hence his attempt to destroy himself. Philippi is, as Howson expresses it, 'famous in the annals of suicide.' Brutus and Cassius both fell there by their own hand, after their final defeat at the battle of Philippi.

7. It would appear that Timothy and Luke escaped the fate of Paul and Silas. The latter may have been seized as the more prominent preachers. Luke seems to have been left behind at Philippi (last Lesson, Note 2), but Timothy probably accompanied Paul and Silas to Thessalonica (see xvii. 14).

8. On St. Paul's possession of Roman 'freedom,' or 'citizenship,' see Lesson XIV., Note 2. It is clear, from the narrative, that Silas was also a 'Roman' in the same sense. Even if they had not been thus privileged, it was illegal to scourge them without trial; but to treat a 'Roman' so was high treason, punishable with death and confiscation of property. Cicero, in one of his great orations, charges a provincial governor with doing exactly what the magistrates at Philippi did, affirming that 'to bind a Roman citizen is a misdeed, to scourge him is a crime, to put him to death is almost a parricide'; and dilates upon the magic power of the plea '*Civis Romanus sum*' ('I am a Roman citizen'). And a few years before St. Paul's visit to Philippi, the Emperor Claudius deprived the people of Rhodes of their freedom, for putting some Roman citizens to death. The magistrates, therefore, had cause for their 'fear' (ver. 38).

The silence of Paul and Silas about their citizenship when arrested, and their announcement of it next day, are very significant. They would not use their privilege merely for their own personal benefit. They doubtless knew that God required their sufferings for the fulfilment of His purposes (think what we should have lost had they not so suffered!), and they were content to be the passive, as well as the active, instruments of His will. But the preferment of their claim afterwards would have a great influence in securing safety and respect for their converts: they, therefore, fearlessly used their national rights for the good of their Master's cause. So Christ would not exert His power to turn stones into bread to appease His own hunger, though He fed thousands miraculously.

It is not clear what led the magistrates to send in the morning to 'let those men go.' Possibly the earthquake may have aroused their consciences as well as the jailor's; and, in any case, they probably felt on reflection (though as yet ignorant of the citizenship of Paul and Silas) that they had acted illegally in scourging men without trial, and thought the easiest way of getting out of the difficulty was quietly to release them.

## Lesson XXX.—Proclaiming 'the Kingdom' at Thessalonica.

'Saying that there is another King, one Jesus.'

Read—Acts xvii. 1—14 (comp. 1 and 2 Thessa.); Learn—Ps. cxlv. 11, 12; 1 Thess. ii. 13, 14. (Hymns, 81, 82, 86, 87, 101, 102, 103, 122, 232, 235, 238.)

## TO THE TEACHER.

This Lesson, like that on St. Paul's sojourn in Galatia, depends for its interest mainly upon the allusions in his Epistles; and the teacher should not only look out every reference given below to the two letters to the Thessalonians, but also, *after* doing so, read the Epistles themselves carefully through. A well-prepared teacher ought to have no

difficulty in keeping the attention of his class thoroughly awake by these continual references; and perhaps it would make the turning to them all the more interesting, if the little editions of the separate Epistles were used—which can be obtained at any Bible depot. Of course these little books contain exactly what our Bibles contain; but the novelty of their appearance would communicate an imaginary novelty to their contents. In classes where references are of little use, a large portion of Divisions I. and II. will have to be omitted: and it will be easy, in this case, to expand Division III. The particulars given in Note 3, should be told to any scholars who can understand them.

On the subject of the 'Kingdom,' see the concluding Lesson of the course on 'The Life of Our Lord.'

It will be observed that the titles of this and the two following Lessons are similar in form. This similarity is designed to shew the variety of St. Paul's teaching, and to stamp upon each narrative its peculiar features of individuality.

#### SKETCH OF LESSON.

What were the Apostles sent to preach? Mark xvi. 15—the 'Gospel'—what is that? 'Good tidings' of salvation through Jesus (Luke ii. 10, 11)—yes, but something else to be proclaimed—what is the 'Gospel' called in Matt. xxiv. 14? They had to set up Christ's 'Kingdom.' The 'Gospel' a proclamation from the King to His rebel subjects. What to tell them? (a) That He will forgive them freely, and *why* He will (because has Himself suffered their punishment); but something else too—(b) they must give up their rebellion,—'throw down their arms,' join the King's loyal subjects. Did we not see this last Sunday?—first the gracious message of salvation—*then* what did the jailor do? We have to 'obey the Gospel' as well as believe it, see 2 Thess. i. 8.

When a messenger has to post up a notice where all can read it, what kind of places does he choose? [*Or, town-crier; whereabouts does he stand and cry?*] Christ's heralds just like that—we always find Paul passing by villages, hastening on to great cities—'proclaiming the Kingdom' wherever most people.

So, after leaving Philippi, whither next? ver. 1—along great high road made by the Romans [see Note 1], past two smaller cities, to capital of Macedonia. [See Notes 2, 3.] See to-day how he 'proclaimed the Kingdom' there.

#### I. THE PROCLAMATION.

To the Jews. Plenty of them here, with large synagogue [see Note 2], so to them, as always, Paul goes first, ver. 2. We have seen him preaching in synagogue before [Lesson XXIII.]—same kind of scene here—sits in Rabbi's chair, with roll of Isaiah or the Psalms open before him, turning from prophecy to prophecy to shew—what? ver. 3—two things:—(a) That Messiah, the King they were expecting, was to die and rise again, and *then* reign (for if died not first, no pardon to proclaim!)—see Isa. liii.; Ps. xvi.; (b) That Jesus, who did die and rise again, was therefore Messiah: the King had come already, was now on His heavenly throne, and they were His heralds to proclaim His reign.

To the Gentiles. Some proselytes heard

Paul in synagogue, ver. 4; but did he not preach also to the heathen idolaters? See 1 Thess. i. 9—some of his converts had 'turned to God from idols.' And these two letters (1st and 2nd Thess.) shew how he 'proclaimed the Kingdom' to them [see Note 4].—

(a) Not enough to shew that the King had come—shewed too that He was *coming again*. Coming 'from heaven' (1 Thess. i. 10); not in humiliation, as before, but in glory (1 Thess. iv. 16); suddenly (1 Thess. v. 2); to punish rebels (2 Thess. i. 7—9, ii. 8).

(b) But though that coming dreadful to rebels, a joyful thing for loyal subjects. By dying and rising again at His *first* coming, Jesus had 'delivered them from the wrath to come' (1 Thess. i. 10); and now He could keep them safe and holy until He came again (1 Thess. ii. 13, v. 23).

(c) Therefore let them try and walk 'worthy of the Kingdom' (1 Thess. ii. 12; 2 Thess. i. 5); and though, as the King's loyal subjects, they might suffer from the rebels (1 Thess. ii. 14; 2 Thess. i. 5), yet, 'at His coming,' their steadfastness to the end would give St. Paul his greatest joy (1 Thess. ii. 19).

(d) But what about those who might die before the King came? For them the Thessalonian converts sorrowed, just like the heathen who had 'no hope' in death (1 Thess. iv. 13). Ah, says St. Paul, but Jesus also died, and He rose again (14)—so shall they too (16)—their death only a sleep (14, 15)—when He comes we shall all meet and be 'for ever with the Lord' (17). [See Note 4.]

#### II. THE HERALDS.

A man may give a public notice [*illustr.—the town-crier*], because his duty to give it, but not concerned about it himself. Was it so at Thessalonica? Can tell by these letters. Who wrote them? 1 Thess. i. 1; 2 Thess. i. 1—now see how these three men acted there:—

1. *They were bold*. What had happened to two of them at Philippi? [*last Lesson*]—would they not be afraid of running a like risk here? see 1 Thess. ii. 2—'even after that we had suffered,' &c., 'bold to speak in

spite of 'much contention.' See *how* they spoke, 1 Thess. ii. 4, 5—not to please their hearers—not that it might be said, 'What fine preachers these are!'—no 'flattering words'—but with plain strong words telling of the coming judgment (2 Thess. i. 8, 9, ii. 12).

2. *They were earnest and affectionate.* See what they were like: 1 Thess. ii. 7—'gentle' like a mother nursing her own child [*literal meaning*]; ii. 11—earnestly 'charging' them, like a father his children.

3. *They were unselfish.* Usually they stayed at houses of converts—at whose house at Philippi? Acts xvi. 40. This quite right, see Luke x. 7; 1 Cor. ix. 11, 13, 14; Gal. vi. 6. But at Thessalonica Paul would not take anything without paying. Why? Because some new converts inclined to be idle—perhaps thought that Christ's coming they heard so much of would be very soon, so no use working. Paul must give these no excuse—so will work for his own bread, see 1 Thess. ii. 9; 2 Thess. iii. 8—'*night and day*'—fancy him at night, with dim lamp (no gas then!), toiling over his rough tent-cloth [see *Lesson XIV., Note 3*];—then how well might he rebuke the idlers! see 1 Thess. iv. 11; 2 Thess. iii. 6—15.

### III. HOW THE PROCLAMATION WAS RECEIVED.

By many, received as indeed the King's message, see 1 Thess. i. 5, ii. 13. To these the two Epistles afterwards written; and see how loyal they had become! 1 Thess. i. 6—9; 2 Thess. i. 3, 4.

But now turn to Acts xvii. 5—9. The Jews envious and angry at idolaters coming into the 'Kingdom,' just as we saw them at Antioch, Iconium, Lystra (xiii. 45, 50, xiv. 2, 19)—only can't get at the rulers through their wives as before (xiii. 50)—so whom do they stir up? ver. 5—idle fellows hanging about (as we see at corners and outside public-houses)—they ready for any mischief, no matter what—mob soon gathered—great uproar. Can't find Paul and Silas, so some of the converts seized. What the accusation?

ver. 7—that they were *rebels*, because obeyed '*another King, one Jesus.*' Was it so? By becoming loyal subjects of Christ, had they rebelled against the Emperor? Not at all: the Apostles came to dethrone Satan, not Cæsar—could be loyal to both earthly king and heavenly King, see Mark xii. 17; John xviii. 36; 1 Pet. ii. 13, 17. And we can sing both 'God save the Queen' and 'Glory to the new-born King.'

Yet no wonder the rulers perplexed and alarmed; so Paul and Silas have to fly. Whither? ver. 10. More successful at Berea—why? ver. 11, 12. See what sort of people the Bible calls 'noble'! But again, obliged to fly—why? ver. 13, 14—just as at Antioch, Iconium, Lystra.

### DOES CHRIST STILL SEND HIS HERALDS TO PROCLAIM THE KINGDOM?

Yes: all ministers, missionaries, teachers, are His heralds. But why still necessary? Because all not loyal yet. *Are you?* If not, worse than a rebel—a traitor and deserter!—because you *have* been brought into Christ's Kingdom or Church—when?—when bound to serve 'under His banner'?—yet what multitudes even of the baptized *are* traitors and deserters, saying (Luke xix. 14), 'We will not have this Man to reign over us'!

So we must still go on proclaiming—what? The same two things St. Paul proclaimed at Thessalonica:—

(a) *That the King has come*—that He died for His rebel subjects, and now offers a free pardon to all who will come back to Him.

(b) *That the King is coming again.* Then to Him '*every knee shall bow*' (Phil. ii. 10). But some will bow in adoring love and joy—some in hopeless terror; how will it be with us?

A prayer for the heralds, and for those to whom they make proclamation (Collect, 3rd S. Advent):—'*O Lord Jesus Christ, who at Thy first coming didst send Thy messenger . . . grant that . . . at Thy second coming . . . we may be found an acceptable (because loyal) people in Thy sight!*'

### NOTES.

1. The great military roads of the Romans were among the most important and enduring of their works. They were to them what railways are to us. From Rome to Brundisium (the modern Brindisi) at the south-east corner of Italy, extended the most famous of these roads, the *Via Appia* (Appian Way). Thence the traveller crossed the mouth of the Adriatic to Epirus, and from this coast, 500 miles eastward, right across Macedonia into Thrace, was the *Via Egnatia*, marked from end to end with milestones. On this road St. Paul travelled *westward* from Philippi to Thessalonica. The distance was about 100 miles, divided into three stages by Amphipolis and Apollonia. A picturesque description of the scenery of this route is given in O. & H. i., chap. ix., p. 374.

2. The position of Thessalonica, on this great road, and at the head of the 'Thermaic Gulf,' made it an important commercial city; and,

under its modern name of Saloniki, it is the second city in European Turkey. As in all mercantile towns in the East, the Jews have always been numerous. Kitto says they compose nearly half the present population of 70,000. The expression in ver. 1, '*the synagogue*' (Greek), implies that it was an important one, and probably resorted to by Jews of neighbouring towns. Thessalonica was named after a sister of Alexander the Great. See further, C. & H. i., chap. ix., p. 378, and Professor Leathes' article in the *Church S. S. Mag.* for April last.

3. As in the case of Philippi, St. Luke's minute accuracy is remarkably shown in his incidental references to Thessalonica. Having taken the side of Augustus in the Civil Wars, it had been made a 'free city,' i.e., it had the privilege of being entirely self-governed, and independent, as to its local affairs, of the governor of the province. It was, therefore, the



very opposite of a 'colony' like Philippi. No Roman soldiers were stationed in a 'free city,' nor were there any outward signs of Roman domination. Now, St. Luke tells us that the mob sought to bring out the Apostles, not to a governor or 'magistrate,' but to '*the people*'—the Greek word (*demos*, whence our *democracy*) signifying a supreme popular assembly. The 'rulers of the city,' in ver. 8, are in the original '*politarchs*.' This word is not found in classical writings, but has been found in an inscription on a triumphal arch still standing in the main street, which tells us that Thessalonica was governed by *seven politarchs*, who were no doubt elected by the *demos*. The names of the seven are given, and it is remarkable that three of them are identical with the names of three Macedonian friends of St. Paul, Sopater (Acts xx. 4), Gaius (xix. 29), and Secundus (xx. 4). See C. & H., i., chap. ix., p. 392, &c. Athens, Ephesus, and Tarsus were also free cities.

4. The Epistles to the Thessalonians, as is shown in the Sketch, strikingly illustrate the accusation preferred against the Apostles, of 'saying that there was another King, one Jesus.' It may be observed that the people of a 'free city' would be particularly jealous of anything that might discredit their loyalty to the Emperor, for fear of losing their privileges; and the part taken by the Jewish inhabitants in the affair reminds us of the protestation of the chief priests to Pilate, 'We have no king but Caesar' (John xix. 15).

The Epistles further show that the Thessalonian Church was substantially Gentile, by the

fact that, unlike almost all St. Paul's other letters, they contain no references to the Old Testament. See also the way in which '*the Jews*' are mentioned in 1 Thess. ii. 14.

It is worth notice how in these Epistles St. Paul constantly refers to what his converts had seen and been taught while he was there. See the frequent repetition of '*you know*' and similar phrases: 1 Thess. i. 5, ii. 1, 2, 5, 10, 11, iii. 3, 4, iv. 1, 6, v. 2; 2 Thess. ii. 15.

The expression, 'sorrow not, even as others which have no hope' (1 Thess. iv. 13), is sadly illustrated by the inscriptions still to be seen on the ancient heathen tombs at Thessalonica, which witness to the dismal hopelessness of a Greek's idea of death.

5. An interesting incident of St. Paul's stay at Thessalonica is noticed by him in Phil. iv. 15, 16. His faithful Philippian converts twice sent supplies to him there. This would be a great help to him in carrying out his resolution not to be 'chargeable' to the Thessalonian Church.

6. Nothing is known of Jason; but if he was the Jason mentioned in Rom. xvi. 21, he was a relative of St. Paul's. The identity is rendered probable by another kinsman in the same verse having a Macedonian name, Sopater (same as Sopater), see Note 3.

The 'security,' in ver. 9, does not mean 'bail,' otherwise Paul and Silas would certainly not have fled. Probably it was an undertaking that the peace should not be again broken; and *this* would be best insured by their departure.

## Lesson XXXI.—Declaring 'the Living God' at Athens.

*'In Him we live, and move, and have our being.'*

Read—Acts xvii. 15—34; Learn—Ps. civ. 27—30; Rom. i. 21, 22. (Hymns, 9—17, 21, 22, 83, 85, 157, 190, 191, 193, 301—305.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

Teachers who know enough of Athens and its history to share, even in the smallest degree, in the enthusiasm the very name excites in classical scholars, will find so much pleasure in preparing and giving this Lesson, that they can scarcely fail to make it attractive if they take the least pains. To them the thought of the greatest of the Apostles, standing on such a spot, amid such surroundings, and addressing such an audience, is almost overpowering in its profound interest. To teachers without this knowledge the difficulty of the subject is very serious, and all that a lesson-writer can do is to reduce that difficulty to a minimum. It is hoped that the Sketch and Notes will prove sufficient for that purpose, but they must certainly be studied with unusual care. If Conybeare and Howson can be referred to, so much the better.

Perhaps the best way to give a dim conception of the greatness of Athens to children is to do as the Sketch suggests, viz., allude to the place its history and literature occupy in English education, or to the enduring influence of Greek art. But intelligent elder classes will be interested to hear the names of such warriors as Miltiades, such statesmen as Solon and Pericles, such philosophers as Socrates and Plato, such orators as Demosthenes, such writers as Xenophon and Euripides, such artists as Phidias,—even though they be to them nothing but names. Teachers who have seen the sculptures from the Parthenon in the British Museum will be able, by simply mentioning having seen them there, to give an idea of their value; and the interest attaching to the ruined temples and porticoes can be illustrated by an allusion to the sight-seers who throng to ruins in England, such as Kenilworth Castle or Tintern Abbey.

Let it not be thought that all such matters are beyond the scope of Sunday-school teaching. They *are*, indeed, if taken up for their own sake. But be it observed, that the

higher the idea conveyed of the greatness of Athens, the more impressive will be the thought that, even at its best, 'the world by wisdom knew not God.'

Either of the two points of application can be taken by itself; or a different line altogether may be adopted, viz., that though the Athenians lived in the 'times of ignorance,' *we do not*, and that the responsibility before God of a humble Sunday-scholar who has heard the Gospel is far greater than that of either the wisest or the most depraved of the Greeks.

#### SKETCH OF LESSON.

St. Paul again upon the sea. Last time we saw him there, he was going to invade Satan's territory [*Lesson XXVIII.*]—now a fugitive from that very Macedonia—Satan seeming to conquer (see 1 Thess. ii. 17, 18). Yet think of Paul's victories at Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea—how many souls rescued! Even now, only flying to carry the war elsewhere. Where? ver. 15.

Athens one of the most famous cities in the world. In our great English schools and colleges, boys learn history of Athens, and books written there, just as you learn arithmetic and dictation. Our most learned men study what clever Athenians wrote long before St. Paul's visit. When our sculptors want to carve beautiful statues, or our architects to build fine buildings, they copy what Athenians did over 2,000 years ago. So you see how clever they must have been.

#### I. WHAT ST. PAUL SAW AT ATHENS.

He had often heard of Athens and its wonders—must have been greatly interested. Walked about, seeing everything (ver. 23) and watching the people.

1. *The temples and idols.* [*See Additional Note VII. p. 96.*] Wherever he turned, beautiful white buildings and statues. Several hills in Athens, crowned with fine temples. In centre, a great rock high above all—very steep steps up—on the top the grandest sights—even the ruins at this day beautiful to look at. What did St. Paul feel? ver. 16—his 'spirit stirred'—stirred with what? pleasure and admiration? No—felt as Jesus did when disciples showed Him the grand Temple at Jerusalem (see Matt. xxiv. 1, 2), very sad—why? because all the temples built in honour of false gods—many of the statues images of false gods. He had seen such things elsewhere, but here so many of them!—Athens *full of idols* [see Note 2]—used to be said, 'Easier to find a god than a man there'! How true what he wrote in a letter a few years later, Rom. i. 23!

2. *The people.* Athens not at all like Philippi—no Roman soldiers about [see *last Lesson, Note 3*]; nor like Thessalonica—no busy traffic going on. Idle folk—seemed to have nothing to do but to talk, see ver. 21 [see *Note 3*]. Especially in the 'market' (ver. 17)—not like our markets, but fine open space with trees, statues, fountains, colonnades, always crowds of gossiping idlers there. Would they be likely to care for religion? They *did* [see *Note 6 a*!—had built all those temples to

please (as they thought) *all* the gods—and, for fear of missing any out, an altar to—see ver. 23 [see *Note 2*]. Would not this make Paul more sad? Why? see John xvii. 3; 2 Thess. i. 8—did the Athenians '*know God*'?

3. *The philosophers.* [See *Note 4.*] If the common people so foolish and ignorant, surely the learned men wiser?—They *thought* themselves so—and did not believe in the idols—yet even '*by wisdom knew not God*' (1 Cor. i. 21)—what does our 2nd text for rep. say?—'professing to be wise, became fools.' Two sets of philosophers mentioned, ver. 18. Epicureans thought there was no God; Stoics thought the world was itself God! Neither had any idea of a loving Father caring for men, or of an all-seeing Judge watching them. Epicureans were 'lovers of pleasure' (2 Tim. iii. 4), said, 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die' (1 Cor. xv. 32); Stoics were proud and strict, and despised others. Epicureans like the Sadducees; Stoics like the Pharisees. How different St. Paul! see Rom. xiv. 7, 8; 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

#### II. WHAT ST. PAUL SAID TO THE ATHENIANS.

When his 'spirit stirred,' what did he do? ver. 17—'disputed daily.' His words 'something new' to them, so all the idlers curious to hear (ver. 19–21). Where did they take him? ver. 19—out of the crowded 'market'—up on to 'Mars' Hill' (ver. 22)—more quiet there—room for all to sit and hear him. [See *Additional Note VII., p. 96.*]

His speech very wonderful—learned men study it with admiration—exactly the right things said for those people in that city. How came he to speak so well? see Matt. x. 19, 20; Luke xxi. 15; (comp. Exod. iv. 11, 12; Jer. i. 6–9; Acts iv. 8, xiii. 9). You can't understand all; but see one or two things:—

First, he speaks of themselves, ver. 22, 23. Like this: 'No doubt you are very religious; but after all, you confess there is a God you don't know, for I found an altar,' &c.; 'there is a God you don't know, and I come to tell you of Him.' [See *Note 6, a, b.*]

Then he tells about this unknown God:—

(a) *He is Maker of all things*, ver. 24, 25. This God not just one more to add to their crowd of deities. Paul would say, as we do in Nicene Creed, 'I believe in *one God*, the Father Almighty, Maker of, &c.; see 1 Cor. vii. 4–6. How then can *He*

dwell in a temple made by hands which He made Himself? (1 Kings viii. 27; Isa. lxvi. 1; Acts vii. 48—50.) And (ver. 25) if all we have is given us by Him, how can we, by sacrifices on our altars, give Him anything? (Ps. l. 9—13.)

(b) *He is Disposer of all things*, ver. 26—29. That is, He arranges everything—has not just set the world going and then left it to itself, but always present, preserving, providing, overruling. See 1st text for rep.; Neh. ix. 6; Ps. cxv. 3; Matt. x. 29; Collect 8th S. after Trin.—‘O God, whose never-failing Providence ordereth all things both in heaven and earth.’ See what Paul tells them God had done:—Ver. 26—‘You Greeks think other nations an inferior race; no, all of one blood (i.e., all from Adam), and if you are superior in some things it is God who made you so, for He settled when and where you should live.’ Ver. 27—‘Why does God do so much for us? That men, even if blind and ignorant, may try and seek Him (like blind man feeling His way); and He is not far off from any of us’ (see Ps. cxxxix. 1—12). Ver. 28, 29—‘You ought to know all this, for your own poets have called men God’s offspring; and if so, how can you, His creatures, with all your gold and silver and marble, and all your cleverness, make a likeness of your Creator?’ (see Isa. xl. 17, 18, 25).

(c) *He is Judge of all men*, ver. 30, 31. Does this Maker and Disposer of all care nothing how men live? Does He like to see gossiping idlers, idol-worshippers, pleasure-loving Epicureans, proud Stoics? Ah, says St. Paul, He has let you alone a long while; He has not punished you as He might have done’ [see Note 6 e]; but now a message to ‘all men everywhere’ (comp. Mark xvi. 15), which I Paul bring you. What was it? Why to repent? *Because a day fixed for judgment*. Who and what will be judged then? Eccl. xi. 9, xii. 14; Rom. xiv. 12; 2 Cor. v. 10; Rev. xx. 12, 13. Does he hold out to them any chance of mercy? yes—would he invite them to ‘repent’ if it were no use? And see ver. 31—just beginning to tell them of a *Man*

[see Note 6 f]—who is that? John v. 22, 23.

So Peter told Cornelius (x. 42), and what did he go on to say? (43)—‘remission of sins through His name.’ No doubt Paul was going to tell the Athenians this too—why did he not? ver. 32, 33. What a result to this great sermon! How true is 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7!

#### ARE YOU LIKE THE ATHENIANS?

(1) You would say, Not as to idolatry, at all events. Well, you do not worship idols of ‘gold and silver and stone.’ But see Ezek. xiv. 3—5,—there are such things as ‘*idols in the heart*.’ How can we tell what they are? Look at Ps. lxxiii. 25—could you say that to God? or could you say it to anything else? How often people say, ‘I would give the world’ for this or that!—then *that* is their idol. Again, look at Ps. lxxiii. 6—David ‘remembered’ God ‘on his bed,’ ‘in the night watches’—do you? or are your thoughts about yesterday’s game or to-morrow’s pleasure; about getting more money or being thought more of? Are not these things to you what God was to David? The Bible mentions some ‘*idols of the heart*’: Phil. iii. 19—*appetite*; 2 Tim. iii. 4—*pleasure*; Ps. lxxiii. 7—*money*. Or it may be a *good* thing, as knowledge, or some one you love: but if put before God, then an *idol*.

(2) Perhaps like the Athenians in another way. May feel, after all, that there is a God whom you do not serve—a God who can send blessings or troubles, but who is not *your* God; you are afraid of Him, and *hope* He will be merciful, but are not sure. Is not that an ‘Unknown God’? Now, ‘*Him* declare we unto you’—to make you know and love Him is what we most desire—why? John xvii. 3. To Him you owe everything—(not one breath can you draw without Him (1st text for rep.))—then ought you not to *know* Him, i.e., intimately, as a Friend? If you only *knew* what a kind and Gracious Father He is, you would indeed ‘turn from idols to serve the living God.’ Look at Rom. viii. 32—what can we want more?

#### NOTES.

1. On Athens and its temples, &c., see Additional Note VII., p. 96. The ‘market’ is in the Greek ‘*Agora*’—a term originally meaning a general assembly of the people, but afterwards (like the word ‘church’) applied to the place of meeting, and ultimately to the market-place or great square of a town. The Athenian *Agora* is well described by Professor Leathes as a combination of the Stock Exchange and the West-end clubs and parks. ‘*Areopagus*’ (ver. 19) and ‘*Mars’ Hill*’ (ver. 22) are precisely the same in the Greek, *Areopagus* being the Greek for *Hill of Mars*. See Marginal Readings.

2. ‘Wholly given to idolatry,’ literally ‘*full of idols*’ (as in the margin). Of no city could this be so truly said as of Athens. The traveller Pausanias says, there were more gods there than in all the rest of Greece; and the satirist Petronius, that it was easier to find a god there than

a man. Many other ancient writers, including Josephus, testify to the devotion of the Athenians to religion. But, as Dean Howson says (C. & H., i., chap. x., p. 427), ‘It was a religion which ministered to art and amusement, and was entirely destitute of moral power.’ It was ‘a mere dedication of human attributes and the powers of nature.’ To understand it aright, we ‘must go beyond the darkness of mere ignorance, into the deeper darkness of corruption and sin. The most shameless profligacy was encouraged by the public works of art, by the popular belief concerning the character of the gods, and by the ceremonies of the established worship.’ The moralist Seneca, himself a Stoic, says that ‘no other effect could possibly be produced, but that all shame on account of sin must be taken away from men, if they believe in such gods.’

The altars ‘to the Unknown God’ are men-

tioned by at least two heathen writers. They probably originated in a desire to propitiate the deity who was supposed to have sent some calamity, when they did not know to which deity to attribute it.

3. No more exact picture of Athenian life could be drawn than that in ver. 21. 'Something new' is literally 'something never,' i.e., anything later than the latest news. The great orator Demosthenes, when stirring up his countrymen against Philip of Macedon, bitterly complained of their idle craving for news when they ought to be vigorously preparing to defend their liberties. 'Aro ye content,' said he, 'to be always going about the Agora, asking what new thing is reported?'

4. Four great schools of philosophy had their head-quarters at Athens, viz., the *Peripatetics* (followers of Aristotle), who met at the 'Lyceum'; the *Academicians* (followers of Plato), who met at the 'Academy'; the *Epicureans* (followers of Epicurus), who met at the 'Garden'; and the *Stoics* (followers of Zeno), who met at the 'Porch' (*stoa* in the Greek—hence the name of the sect). Although the two former schools have exercised great influence upon Christian thought, the two latter only appear to have encountered St. Paul.

The Epicureans were Atheists and materialists, believing the world was the result of chance; the Stoics were Pantheists, holding that 'All are but parts of one stupendous whole, Whose body Nature is, and God the soul.'

Neither of them believed in a future life or the immortality of the soul, nor in a personal Moral Governor and Judge. But their ethical systems were utterly opposite. The highest aim of the Epicurean was to gratify himself; and St. Paul implies that this was a natural effect of a disbelief in a future life, when he ironically quotes their maxim in 1 Cor. xv. 32. The Stoics, on the other hand, considered the great end of man to be the attainment of a lofty superiority to both pleasure and pain, and of a stern indifference both to the cravings of self and the feelings of others. The English words 'epicure' and 'stoical,' derived from these two sects, give a fair general idea of their respective characteristic features.

The Stoic school produced some of the noblest men of antiquity; yet it was in reality as opposed to the tenderness and humility of the Christian character, as Epicureanism to the self-denial and self-sacrifice which are the essence of Christian virtue. Both *Pride* and *Pleasure* would resent the teaching of St. Paul.

5. A 'babbler,' in the original, means literally a bird that picks up seeds. The word was contemptuously applied to a retailer of borrowed scraps of information, who had nothing of his own worth saying. 'Setting forth new gods' was the precise charge on which Socrates, the greatest of the Athenians, was put to death. It was the province of the supreme 'Court of the Areopagites' to judge questions of this kind; but although St. Paul was taken to their place of assembly, the proceedings do not appear to have been (as Wordsworth and Kitto think) of a judicial character. He is courteously asked to explain his doctrines; and at the close he quietly 'departs from among them.'

6. St. Paul's speech is admirably paraphrased by Dr. Vaughan (*Church of First Days*, vol. iii., Lect. 1), and well expounded in detail by Stier (*Words of the Apostles*, p. 284). The following brief notes will suffice here:—

(a) The opening of this remarkable address shows consummate prudence and tact. Instead of at once attacking their idolatry, Paul begins

by gracefully acknowledging their well-known devoutness (see Note 2). The rendering 'too superstitious' is most unfortunate, giving an entirely wrong idea of his meaning. It should rather be 'very religious,' the precise sense being that they had an unusual reverence for supernatural powers. Such a religious instinct, however misdirected, was, as Dr. Vaughan remarks, 'better than an utter insubordination and insolence of self-trust.' It was something to which St. Paul could appeal.

(b) But, with great skill, he turns his compliment into an exposure of their ignorance: 'In your anxiety to propitiate every deity, you have, by that inscription I saw, confessed that there is a deity you know not.' Then, by his words, 'Him declare I unto you,' he excites their curiosity, and at the same time evades the accusation of setting forth strange gods. 'Devotions,' in ver. 23, should be 'objects of worship,' meaning the idols, temples, altars, &c.

(c) The speech throughout, with its clear assertion of the existence of a personal Creator, Preserver, and Ruler, was strongly opposed both to the Epicurean doctrine of chance and to the Stoic doctrine of a remorseless fate. In its affirmation of the unity of mankind (ver. 26), it rebuked the national pride of the Athenians generally (who divided men into two classes, Greeks and Barbarians), and also disputed the idea that each nation might have its own gods. The thought of a resurrection, again, would be utterly distasteful to men who regarded the body as a clog upon the pure aspirations of the soul. And as to St. Paul's reference to images of deity and temples for deity to dwell in, it must have required no small courage to utter such language, standing where he did, surrounded by the sublimest efforts of human genius, with the Acropolis just above him, crowned by the glorious Parthenon and the colossal figure of Minerva glittering in the sun. (See Additional Note, next page.)

(d) The quotation in ver. 28 is from an astronomical poem of Aratus, a Cilician poet, and therefore a countryman of St. Paul's. Almost the same words occur in a hymn to Jove by Cleanthes, a Stoic; and similar sentiments are common in Greek literature. Probably on this account, St. Paul uses the plural, '*poets*.' Translations of the passages in Aratus and Cleanthes are given in Kitto, p. 378.

(e) 'The times of this ignorance God winked at'—rather '*overlooked*.' There is no such metaphor in the Greek as our Version implies. St. Paul attributes *forbearance* to God, not *conivance*. See Ps. l. 21; Acts xiv. 16; Rom. iii. 25. Alford remarks, 'In this assurance lies treasures of mercy for those who lived in the times of ignorance.'

(f) 'Whereof He hath given assurance unto all men.' There is a tone of encouragement here. The idea is that, a *Man* being appointed Judge, the judgment would be not only righteous but merciful, being conducted by One who could sympathise with men. Dr. Vaughan thus paraphrases ver. 31:—'There is a day of judgment. It is a fixed day, though we know it not. That judgment will be a righteous judgment. All sin will quail before it. And that judgment will be conducted by a Man; even by One who is as truly Man as He is truly God. And the proof of His investment with the office of the Judge is the fact of His own resurrection already accomplished.'

7. Dionysius the Areopagite, i.e., a member of the Supreme Court of Judicature, is said to have afterwards become Bishop of the Church at Athens, and to have suffered martyrdom. The ruins of a church built in his honour may still be seen. Nothing is known of Damaris.



PLAN OF ATHENS.

- |                                     |                       |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Parthenon, or Temple of Minerva. | 5. Temple of Theseus. |
| 2. Colossal Statue of Minerva.      | 6. Temple of Jupiter. |
| 3. Temple of Mars.                  | 7. Stadium.           |
| 4. Sanctuary of the Furies.         |                       |

### ADDITIONAL NOTE VII.

#### ATHENS.

The city of Athens stood, and stands, on a plain between the mountains of Attica and the sea, watered by the rivers Cephissus and Ilissus. Behind it, on the north-east, is a lofty peak, Mount Lycabettus; and within the walls are a smaller rock rising abruptly from the plain, the Acropolis, and some other trifling eminences, including the Areopagus, the Pnyx, and the Museum. Lycabettus occupies a position relative to Athens so similar to that of Arthur's Seat in relation to Edinburgh, and the Acropolis is so like the rock of Edinburgh Castle, that the Scottish capital may be justly called 'the modern Athens' in a physical as well as in an intellectual sense.

These natural features of the situation are of course unaffected by the lapse of time. But a still more exact idea of ancient Athens can be formed from the description given by Pausanias, a traveller and antiquarian who visited the city about fifty years after St. Paul.

There can be little doubt that the ship which conveyed the Apostle cast anchor in the harbour of Piræus. This port was literally a part of Athens, although five miles off: the fortifications having been extended by Themistocles from the city to the harbour by means of a double rampart called 'the Long Walls.' These, however, were in ruins when St. Paul traversed the long street that ran between them; and at the

present day the foundations only can be traced here and there.

Entering the city proper, statues of Neptune, Minerva, Jupiter, Apollo, the Muses, &c., and the temples of Bacchus and Ceres, would at once meet the Apostle's eye, and bear witness to the 'devotion' of the Athenians (see Lesson XXXI., Note 2). A street lined with colonnades led direct to the Agora or great square of the city (see Lesson XXXI., Note 1), planted with plane-trees, adorned with statues of the great men of Athens, and surrounded by highly-decorated porticoes or cloisters. It occupied the hollow between the eminences above-mentioned. On the Pnyx, to the left, was the block of stone from which Demosthenes and a long succession of lesser orators had excited the enthusiasm of the Athenians. In front, an ascent of sixteen steps led up to the Areopagus or Hill of Mars (see Lesson XXXI., Note 1), on the brow of which was the temple of the god of war, and, in a cleft of the rock, the sanctuary of the Furies. The platform at the top was the place of meeting of the august 'Court of the Areopagites,' who sat on benches hewn out of the rock; and here St. Paul delivered his memorable speech.

But the glory of Athens was the Acropolis, with the magnificent buildings on its summit. The whole was 'one vast composition of architecture and sculpture, dedi-

cated to the national glory and to the worship of the gods.' In the centre was the Parthenon or Virgin's House—the grandest of ancient temples, built entirely of white marble, and containing the colossal statue of Minerva, the tutelary goddess of Athens (her name in Greek is *Athenē*), executed by Phidias in ivory and gold. A still more gigantic statue of the patron goddess, 75 feet high, stood on the Acropolis, representing her standing with spear and shield keeping guard over the city. It was made of the armour captured in the battle of Marathon, and the flashing of the sun upon its brazen surface rendered it a conspicuous object miles away. St. Paul would see it from the ship long before he approached the Piræus.

Two suburbs of Athens are famous as the resorts of the philosophical schools of Plato and Aristotle respectively. The former met in the groves of the Academy, outside the walls to the north-west; the latter in the groves of the Lyceum, at the foot of Mount Lycabettus. The Stoics and Epicureans assembled within the city: the former in one of the cloisters in the Agora, called the Painted Porch; the latter in a 'garden,' the site of which is now unknown. In the time of St. Paul, Athens had lost its ancient military greatness, and Corinth was the capital of the Roman province of Achaia. But it was still the head-quarters of Greek science, art, and philosophy, and was resorted to by scholars from all parts of the empire.

## Lesson XXXII.—Preaching 'Christ Crucified' at Corinth.

*'I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.'*

*Read*—Acts xviii. 1—18 (refer to 1 Cor. i. ii.; 1 Thess. iii., &c.); *Learn*—1 Cor. i. 22—24, ii. 2—4. (*Hymns*, 57, 58, 63, 90, 104, 127, 167, 312, 324.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

Here again, St. Luke's brief narrative in the Acts is by no means the centre of interest. He just gives the *facts* of St. Paul's sojourn at Corinth; but the touching circumstances attending the earlier part of that sojourn have to be gathered from scattered notices in the Epistles. This is one of the cases in which the Lesson will be much helped by the teacher giving some preparatory questions to the scholars the Sunday before—e.g., concerning the five causes of St. Paul's 'weakness,' &c., mentioned in Section 1 of Division II. Several interesting circumstances connected with the Church at Corinth will appear in Lesson XXXV.

### SKETCH OF LESSON.

What kind of city and people did we visit with St. Paul last Sunday? To-day a very different one—people not learned philosophers or gossiping idlers—Corinth a very busy city—plenty of trade and shipping—a wicked city too—Paul would not call them 'very religious,' even in an idolatrous sense. Just such another place as the great Antioch. [*Lesson XXI.*]

Was St. Paul very successful at Athens? Now see how he got on at Corinth.

I. IT WAS VERY UNLIKELY THAT THE GOSPEL SHOULD SUCCEED AT CORINTH. For two reasons:—

1. *The Weakness of the Apostle.*

We have before looked at St. Paul's letters to find out more about him: now look at a letter he afterwards wrote to Corinth, 1 Cor. ii. 3 (2nd text for rep.)—'I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.' Why this? [*See Note 3.*]

(a) Suppose he had left at Athens many faithful converts, as he had at so many places, how joyfully he might have trudged along the shore towards Corinth! But had he? A very few (xvii. 32—34); even after that wonderful speech, most men rejected him. So at Corinth he would be *downcast*.

(b) In all his journeys, had he ever been alone? Who had been with him on this journey? But now quite alone (see xvii. 15, xviii. 5; 1 Thess. iii. 1). Would a great man like Paul care about that? Ah yes, the bravest like to have companions, especially in strange countries (see xxviii. 15; 2 Cor. ii. 13, vii. 5). So at Corinth he would be *lonely*.

(c) But how came he to be alone? (see 1 Thess. iii. 1—5): fearful about the Thessalonians, whether they would stand fast when persecuted; had sent Timothy to find out. So at Corinth, waiting for news, he would be *anxious*.

(d) In 1 Cor. ii. 3, 'weakness' means *illness* [see Note 3 d]. Perhaps Paul suffering with his eyes, as in Galatia. [*Lesson XXVII.*] So at Corinth he was *ill*.

(e) See 2 Cor. xi. 9. 'When I was present with you, and wanted,' i.e., was almost destitute [see Note 3 e]; comp. 2 Cor. vi. 10. How did he manage to get a living? see ver. 3 (of Acts xviii.)—just as at Thessalonica [*Lesson XXX.*], obliged to get employed by a tent-maker [see Note 2], toiling with his own hands to earn his bread. So at Corinth he was *poor*.

*Downcast—lonely—anxious—ill—poor.*

No wonder he was 'in fear and much trembling'; no wonder some Corinthians sneered at such a preacher. 2 Cor. x. 10. How could we expect the Gospel to succeed at Corinth?

## 2. *The offence of the Cross.*

At Thessalonica St. Paul preached chiefly about *Christ the King*, who had come, and who was coming again; at Athens, about *the living God*, creating and governing;—what about at Corinth? see 1 Cor. ii. 2 (2nd text for rep.)—"nothing among you, save *Jesus Christ and Him crucified*"; see also 1 Cor. xv. 1—3, '*first of all*,' what? He told that story we know so well, of Jesus dying on the Cross, and why He died.

Did they like to hear it? Did they rejoice to find there was such a Saviour for them? See 1 Cor. i. 23 (1st text for rep.): 'unto the Jews a stumbling-block' (i.e., something you fall over)—they could not believe it, could not *get over it*; 'to the Greeks foolishness'—they laughed at it. Why? Hard enough for Jews to believe a man that was *dead* to be their conquering Messiah (though what else did Paul tell them? 1 Cor. xv. 4), hard enough for Greeks to believe in a Jewish Saviour at all. But *Christ crucified—the Cross—that was the offence—why?* What do we now think the greatest disgrace to any one? Is it not to be *hanged* as a criminal? In those days, many ways of putting to death: one, the most painful and disgraceful of all, kept for rebellious slaves, robbers, and all low and despised people—*nailed alive to a wooden cross*. If a man crucified, sure he was some bad and worthless fellow. So Corinthians would say to Paul, 'Do you mean to tell us that a *crucified criminal* is our Saviour and King?'

Again, how could we expect the Gospel to succeed at Corinth?

## II AND YET THE GOSPEL DID SUCCEED WONDERFULLY AT CORINTH.

(1) At first Paul only quietly 'reasoning' every Sabbath in synagogue, ver. 4—too depressed [see above] to do more. But by-and-bye, who arrive? ver. 5. Three of his causes of depression now removed:—(a) No longer lonely; (b) No longer destitute, see 2 Cor. xi. 9; (c) No longer anxious about the Thessalonians, see 1 Thess. iii. 6—8. What then? Encouraged and thankful, he is 'pressed in the spirit' [see Note 3 c]—more zealous and earnest—"testifies"—preaches with all his might.

(2) Success greater then? Does not seem so, for, more opposition, ver. 6. Once more, as so often elsewhere, the Jews reject the Gospel. See what St. Paul says of them just at this time, 1 Thess. ii. 15, 16 [see Note 4]. And see what he *does*, ver. 7—will not worship at synagogue any longer—a new synagogue next door—how vexed the Jews each Sabbath, to see the Corinthians crowding there! [See Note 4.]

(3) But success at last, ver. 8. Not only

among Gentiles, either—the chief man of the Jews himself a convert—what a sensation!—highest seat in synagogue empty, because Crispus has joined Paul! Generally Paul does not himself baptize, but Crispus he does baptize—and whom besides? see 1 Cor. i. 14—17 (these also great men, see Rom. xvi. 23; 1 Cor. xvi. 15, 16). And there are poor and humble converts too, 1 Cor. i. 26—28. See what some were, 1 Cor. vi. 9—11: thieves, drunkards, &c.!

(4) How was it that so many believed even in the Crucified One? see 1 Cor. ii. 4, 10, iii. 6, xii. 3. Yes, the Holy Spirit at work in Corinth. Is the opposition at an end? see 2 Thess. iii. 2—still danger for Paul. Elsewhere, we have seen him fleeing from persecution, as Jesus commanded (Matt. x. 23); but here the Lord comes to him with quite different orders, ver. 9, 10; and how long does he stay? ver. 11.

(5) But now, eighteen months later, a chance for his Jewish foes—a new Roman governor [see Note 6]—perhaps he will interfere, and get rid of this 'pestilent fellow'; ver. 12, 13. See Gallio on his judgment-seat, with his Roman officials around him. Before him three parties: (a) the *plaintiffs*, the Jews, with Sosthenes (Crispus' successor) at their head; (b) the *defendants*, Paul and his friends; (c) the *lookers-on*, Corinthian populace. What result? Charge made, but Gallio will not hear defence—no need for it—"You do not accuse this man of breaking *Roman* laws, and what have I to do with your Jewish laws?" What do the Corinthian lookers-on think of this? Have learned, bad as they are, to respect Paul during those eighteen months—are *against* his accusers—how do they treat the chief one? Thus the very deliverance and success which the Lord promised (ver. 10).

With what thankfulness must Paul have bid farewell to the great Church thus 'planted' (1 Cor. iii. 6), and sailed away to return to Antioch, after his long absence!

We have seen what unconverted Jews and Greeks thought about 'CHRIST CRUCIFIED.' Now, *what would those who believed think?*

1. It was good news to them that One had, as St. Paul said, 'died for their sins' (1 Cor. xv. 8). Why *this* such good news? Because they *felt their guilt*, knew they deserved God's anger—so a message of forgiveness just what they wanted. Do you care for the Lord Jesus for *that* reason?

2. Were they offended because the Lord died a criminal's death (see above)? Why, that 'humbling Himself' 'even to the death of *the Cross*' (Phil. ii. 8) proved how great His love, and they would love Him all the more for it, and say what St. Paul says in Gal. vi. 14. Do you ever think what that love was? Look at the Son of God hanging on the Cross: hear Him saying to you, '*I did THIS for thee—what hast thou done for Me?*'

NOTES.

1. The Roman province of Achaia comprised the whole of Greece south of Macedonia; and of this province Corinth was the capital. Situated on the narrow isthmus which connects the peninsula of the Morea (the ancient Peloponnesus) with the mainland of Greece, Corinth stood in a most commanding position. By means of its two ports, Cenchreae and Lechaum, it was the centre of communication between two seas; and small vessels proceeding to or from the Aegean and the Adriatic were dragged across the isthmus (only three miles in its narrowest part) to avoid the circumnavigation of the Morea. Hence Corinth was a great emporium of trade, full of stir and life; and between it and Athens at that time the contrast was as great as between Liverpool and Oxford.

Corinth was also famous for its order of architecture, the most ornate of classical styles; for its 'Isthmian games,' from which St. Paul draws such striking illustrations of the Christian life in writing to his Corinthian converts (1 Cor. ix. 24-27), and in several other Epistles; and for its unblushing vices, which gave rise to the appellation of a dissolute life as 'playing the Corinthian,' and concerning which St. Paul writes so indignantly (1 Cor. v., vi. 9-20).

2. We here meet for the first time with Aquila and Priscilla, who became two of St. Paul's most valued 'helpers' (Rom. xvi. 3, 4). Their business of tent-making (on which see Lesson XIV., Note 3) seems to have taken them to different parts of the empire at various times, as we read of their being at Rome twice (Acts xviii. 2; Rom. xvi. 3), and at Ephesus twice (Acts xviii. 19, 26; 1 Cor. xvi. 19; 2 Tim. iv. 19), besides this residence at Corinth. The mention of 'the church in their house,' both at Ephesus and at Rome, implies that they were well-to-do. The edict of the Emperor Claudius, which compelled them to leave Rome, is probably that mentioned by Suetonius as having been issued about this time in consequence of tumults raised by one *Chrestus*—which seems to be a mistake of the historian for disturbances which may have been caused at Rome (as elsewhere) by the jealousy of the Jews at the progress of Christianity.

It is doubtful whether Aquila and Priscilla were believers when St. Paul joined them, or whether they were converted by his instrumentality. Probably the latter; as Aquila is not called 'a disciple,' but 'a certain Jew'; and the reason given for Paul's abiding with him is only that 'he was of the same craft.'

3. Concerning the causes of St. Paul's 'weakness and fear and much trembling' when he first came to Corinth, enumerated in the Sketch, it may be further remarked:—

(a) His natural dejection at his lack of success at Athens would be enhanced by that being the first occasion of his being rejected by *Gentiles*. Hitherto, their readiness to hear the Gospel had consoled him for the enmity of the Jews.

(b, c) The movements of Silas and Timothy are not quite clear. Both were left behind at Berea (xvii. 14), and both came from Macedonia to Corinth (xviii. 5); but whether in the meanwhile they, or Timothy alone, had joined Paul at Athens, and been sent back from there, or whether 1 Thess. iii. 2 only means that Paul sent a message to Timothy at Berea to proceed to Thessalonica instead of coming to Athens, cannot be decided. But the state of Paul's feelings during their absence is clear, both from 1 Thess. iii. 6, 7, and from the expression 'pressed in the spirit' (xviii. 5) used to describe the effect upon him of their return. The word

'pressed' is the same as 'straitened' used by our Lord of Himself (Luke xii. 50).

(d) The word rendered 'weakness' in 1 Cor. ii. 3, is the same as that rendered 'infirmity' in Gal. iv. 13, and means bodily sickness. See Lesson XXVII., Notes 5, 6.

(e) The expressions 'wanted' and 'lacking,' in 2 Cor. xi. 9, mean literally that Paul was actually in want—at the last resource.

4. On ver. 6, see Josh. ii. 19; 2 Sam. i. 16; Neh. v. 13; Ezek. xxxiii. 4; Matt. xxvii. 25; Acts xx. 28; and Lesson XXIII., Note 8. Ver. 7 does not mean that St. Paul left Aquila and Priscilla to live with Justus, but that he used the latter's house as a place of worship and teaching instead of the synagogue.

5. Whether Sosthenes, who is associated with Paul in the opening salutation of the first letter to the Church of Corinth, was the Sosthenes who appears in Acts xviii. as the chief prosecutor of the Apostle, is uncertain. The conversion of two successive 'chief rulers of the synagogue' (Crispus being the other) would be very interesting; but Sosthenes was a common name.

6. Gallio is accurately termed by St. Luke the *deputy* (i.e., proconsul), Achaia being a proconsular province, see Lesson XXII., Note 6. He was the brother of the philosopher Seneca, and is mentioned by him, and by Tacitus, Pliny, and other Latin writers. He appears to have been an unusually amiable and popular man. His brother speaks of him as loved by all men, and Statius calls him 'the pleasant Gallio.' But, as Dr. Vaughan remarks, 'an amiable person is often weak in principle'; and although his refusal to yield to the clamour of the Jews against St. Paul contrasts favourably with the weakness of Pilate, yet a firmer governor would have put down with a strong hand the turbulence of the Greeks. Still, the words, 'Gallio cared for none of these things,' scarcely bear the sense generally attached to them. They do not refer to his carelessness about Christianity, but to his indifference at the attack of the populace on the Jewish opponents of the faith.

7. Much has been written on the subject of St. Paul's *vow*, mentioned in ver. 18. It seems to be usually assumed that he took the vow at Cenchrea, with a view to paying it when he arrived at Jerusalem, whither he was about to sail. But the shaving of the head marked the expiration of the vow; and, bearing this in mind, Baumgarten's view seems the right one. (*Apost. Hist.*, ii., p. 218, &c.) It is thus summarised in the S.P.C.K. Commentary:—'The two chief features of the Nazirite vow were to abstain from intoxicating drink, and to let the hair grow. The first plainly represented self-denial; the second is apparently explained by St. Paul himself in his 1st Epistle to these very Corinthians. A woman's long hair, he says, is a token of her submission, and need of protection, as a man's short hair of his liberty and independence. The Nazirite's long hair, therefore, represented his being under a yoke, in a state of humility and self-abasement. . . . It is probable that St. Paul, from a sense of his dependence upon God and his dedication to a mighty work at Corinth, adopted the outward sign which represented this. We know how out of his weakness Christ brought forth strength, and a flourishing Church was born. What more natural than to put off the outward sign of his vow publicly, as a token that his work was ended there for the time, and that God had blessed his vow?'



## Lesson XXXIII.—Ephesian Darkness and Gospel Light.

*'Ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.'*

*Read*—Acts xviii. 19–28, xix. 1–10; *Learn*—Acts xxvi. 18; Eph. v. 8, 11, (Hymns, 105, 109–112, 118, 280, 281, 283, 289, 307, 308.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

There is so much that is interesting connected with St. Paul's sojourn at Ephesus, that two Lessons are required for it. But the division is not easy. The two great conflicts of Christianity at Ephesus—viz., with sorcery and with idolatry—make a good subject for the second Lesson; but to throw everything else into this first one involves the necessity of finding some *connecting thought* (see preface to Lesson XVI.) to connect together the episode of Apollos, the early teaching of St. Paul in the synagogue, &c., the interesting reminiscences in his farewell speech to the elders in Acts xx., and such illustrations of his work and its results as may be gathered from the Epistle to the Ephesians (see Note 6)—as well as to provide an opportunity for giving some information about Ephesus itself. How it is proposed to meet this difficulty the Sketch will show; and though it has a somewhat artificial appearance, it will probably work out better than it would have done had the isolated incidents been merely taken up and commented on one after the other.

The opening illustrations are borrowed from Lesson LV. of the 'Life of Our Lord,' on the 8th chapter of St. John, in which the general subject of spiritual darkness and light will be found further elucidated.

### SKETCH OF LESSON.

Our first text for rep. is part of what the Lord said to St. Paul when He sent him as a missionary to the heathen—how does it describe his work? *'To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light.'* What is meant by the heathen being in darkness?

(a) If you go in the dark to some new place, what know about it? 'To be in the dark' means 'not to know.'

(b) What people like darkness? Those who want not to be seen—thieves—boys in mischief. 'A dark deed' means a bad deed.

(c) Light makes us glad—darkness makes us sad. In misfortune we say, 'All looks dark.'

So 'darkness' stands for three things:—ignorance, see Eph. iv. 18; sin, see second text for rep., Rom. xiii. 12; misery, see Matt. xxv. 30.

The heathen 'dark' in all three ways: much ignorance, much sin, much misery. When St. Paul went forth to preach, 'gross darkness covered the earth' (Isa. lx. 2). To-day we go with him to a city specially dark, Ephesus.

#### I. DARKNESS AT EPHESUS.

Very great city, populous and busy. Very grand city—fine buildings, immense amphitheatre, most splendid temple in world. [Describe: see Addit. Note VIII., page 102.] And yet, very dark city. Our second text for rep. is from a letter St. Paul wrote to his converts there [see Note G]—what does it say?—'Ye were sometime darkness.'

(a) Dark because ignorant. That grand temple not for worship of God, like Temple at Jerusalem. Inside it, hideous wooden

image, which they thought had come down from heaven (see Acts xix. 35)—all the grandeur and treasures of the temple in honour of that image! What do we know about all these idols? 1 Cor. viii. 4; Ps. cxv. 4–8. But they knew not: see Rom. i. 21–23, 'their foolish heart darkened'—'changed glory of God into an image,' &c.

(b) Dark because sinful. Ephesians wicked people: see what St. Paul says his converts had been, or what those around them were, Eph. ii. 2, 3, iv. 19; thieves, iv. 28; drunkards, v. 18; quarrelsome and revengeful, iv. 31; used bad words, iv. 29, v. 4; did things too bad to be named, v. 12.

(c) Dark because miserable. Would not feel so as long as they enjoyed themselves; but sin like bitter draught—looks bright and sparkling, but when taken leaves bitter taste behind. They knew no kind Father to trust in—used to carry charms about with them, thinking these would protect them [next Lesson]. And see Eph. ii. 12—they had 'no hope'—what worse than that?

#### II. DIM LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS.

(1) One place at Ephesus where not so dark, where true God worshipped, see ver. 19—Jewish synagogue. But this light only dim—Jews knew nothing of the true 'Light of the World.' Who was that? John viii. 12.

(2) One day, a ship in from Corinth—who on board? ver. 18, 19. But Paul cannot stay now—only on way to Jerusalem. However, his friends Aquila and Priscilla, who do stay, know the Gospel—probably learned it from him when he lived with them at Corinth [last Lesson]; and no doubt they try and enlighten others—

but only by quiet talking—they are not preachers.

(8) Another Jewish visitor to Ephesus, ver. 24. [See Note 8.] Four things said of him:—(a) 'was mighty in Scriptures'—knew the old prophecies thoroughly—all they said of coming Messiah; (b) 'instructed in way of Lord'—knew Messiah had come—knew Jesus of Nazareth was Messiah; (c) 'fervent in spirit'—full of zeal—longed to tell good news; (d) 'eloquent'—so, sure to be listened to. Can he light up Ephesian darkness? His, too, but a dim light: could tell Ephesians of true God, and of Saviour—but if one came to him and asked, 'How can I get strength to give up my bad ways? how can I be holy, and please God?'—Apollus could not tell of God's gift of the Holy Ghost, to strengthen, sanctify, comfort—did not know himself. But see how he learned this, ver. 26—the learned and eloquent preacher did not mind being taught by the plain tent-maker and his wife. Now he might be, still more than John Baptist was (John v. 35), a 'burning and a shining light'; but he is quickly gone (ver. 27), and Ephesus still in darkness.

### III. SUNSHINE AT EPHESUS.

But now who arrives? xix. 1. St. Paul brings 'the light of the glorious gospel' (2 Cor. iv. 4), and soon we shall see the difference.

(1) Here are twelve disciples of Apollus, ver. 1—7 [see Note 4]. Have felt their sins, been baptized as tokens of their repentance (see Mark i. 4), but still ignorant, something like the Apostles before Pentecost. But now, baptized again in the way Jesus commanded (Matt. xxviii. 19)—then the 'laying on of hands' [see Lesson XII.]—then, what? ver. 6; comp. Matt. iii. 11; Acts i. 5, ii. 38. And if they have the Holy Ghost, what then? Why, He 'teaches them all things' (John xiv. 26)—they see now many things they could not make out before; see Eph. i. 17, 18—'the eyes of their understanding enlightened.'

(2) Where does Paul spread the light next? ver. 8. But here we see that sunshine is no use to some: after three months trying, Paul obliged to leave—why? ver. 9—they shut their eyes, and will not see the light. Why this? See one reason in 2 Cor. iv. 4, and another in John iii. 19.

(3) Yet the light is not put out: who can put sunshine out? It shines next from

a Greek school-room, ver. 9; and how far does it reach? ver. 10. What result? see second text for rep.—'Ye were sometime darkness, but now'—? And see what Peter wrote, long after, to Christians in Asia (1 Pet. i. 1)—God had called them 'out of darkness into His marvellous light' (ii. 9).

(4) Yes, but how came this? It is God who converts men, but He does it by making His servants work. See how Paul worked those three years, Acts xx. 18—21, 31, 34 (these his own words afterwards to elders of Ephesus). Imagine him, toiling day after day (as at Corinth) at his tent-making (no doubt under Aquila again), to support himself and others (34); in leisure hours, 'night and day' (31), going from street to street, 'from house to house' (20), 'with tears' in his eyes (31), warning and persuading 'every one' (31), young and old, rich and poor, and 'ceasing not,' despite many dangers (19); teaching 'publicly,' too (20), in that school-room of Tyrannus—teaching what? *what should be taught in all school-rooms*, 'repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ' (21). No wonder God blessed such work as that!

WE TOO ARE IN THE SUNSHINE. St. John would say to us, as he did at Ephesus in his old age, 'The darkness is past, and the True Light now shineth' (1 John ii. 8). An English child knows more about Christ than the learned and eloquent Apollus.

But some of us, like those Jews at Ephesus, still in darkness. Not in first kind of darkness (see above), *ignorance*; but in second kind, *sin*. And if remain so, will go into third kind too, *misery*. If you thus dark, pray that the 'Sun of righteousness' (Mal. iv. 2) may shine, not only around you, but 'in your hearts' (2 Cor. iv. 6). And then,—

(a) '*Walk as children of light*' (second text for rep.)—how? Have nothing to do with 'works of darkness' (second text for rep.); 'cast them off' (Rom. xiii. 12). What are they? Whatever has to be *concealed*. Do nothing but what may be *seen*.

(b) '*Let your light shine*' (Matt. v. 16). Do not be afraid of others knowing and seeing that you are Christ's servant.

(c) *Help to send Gospel light into lands still in darkness of heathenism:*

'Can we, whose souls are lighted  
With wisdom from on high—  
Can we to man benighted  
The lamp of life deny?'

### NOTES.

1. A careful comparison of the notices of time in the Acts with what is known of the sailing season among the ancients, leads to the conclusion that the feast which St. Paul desired to attend (xviii. 21) was Pentecost.

2. With St. Paul's arrival at Antioch ends the Second Missionary Journey. The Third Journey commences at ver. 23. St. Paul seems to have begun it by going over the same ground that he traversed at the beginning of the Second Journey. When he had passed through the 'upper coasts' (xix. 1), i.e., the high table-land in the centre of

the peninsula, he was permitted to follow the road to the capital of the province of Asia, which a Divine intimation had closed to him on the former journey (xvi. 6).

3. The simple statement that Apollus was of Alexandria reveals not a little concerning his training. Alexandria was not only the second city in the Empire, but it had a very large Jewish population, occupying two wards of the city out of five. It was, in fact, the head-quarters of the Hellenist Jews (on whom see Lesson IX., Note 1). Apollus would, therefore, like St. Paul, combine

Hebrew and Greek learning; and probably his education was even more liberal and complete than the latter's. Trained in the rhetorical schools of his native city, his eloquence would be of a cultivated order, and we can understand how, after hearing him, St. Paul's detractors at Corinth might, in comparison, throw 'contempt' on the great Apostle's 'ruder' speech (2 Cor. x. 10, xi. 6).

The precise degree of knowledge concerning the Gospel to which Apollos had attained is not clear. Probably he knew as much as the Twelve did before Pentecost. He could preach, as the Baptist had preached, 'the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins'; he could tell that Messiah had come, and very likely knew also the facts of His death and resurrection. But he knew not the full meaning of the facts; the Pentecostal enlightenment had not yet been given him. The words 'diligently' in ver. 25, and 'more perfectly' in ver. 26, are alike in the Greek, and mean literally that, so far as he knew, he 'taught accurately,' but that Aquila and Priscilla explained the Gospel to him 'more accurately.' On the expression 'the way,' see Lesson XV., Note 4.

We must not blame Apollos for the party use made of his name at Corinth (1 Cor. i. 12, iii. 4-6). Evidently there was no antagonism between him and St. Paul, for when 1st Corinthians was written, he was with St. Paul at Ephesus, and the latter was 'greatly desiring' that he should go again to Corinth (1 Cor. xvi. 12). He is mentioned once again in Tit. iii. 13.

4. The twelve disciples found by St. Paul at Ephesus were probably converted by Apollos before his fuller instruction by Aquila and Priscilla. St. Paul's question and their answer are somewhat obscured by a mistranslation. Paul asks, 'Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?'—referring to the special Pentecostal gifts which usually followed baptism. They reply, 'We did not even hear whether the Holy Ghost is,' i.e., He was not mentioned at all. They knew not of the Gift of the Spirit. Of His existence they might know, even from the Old Testament; and John the Baptist spoke of Him (Matt. iii. 11; John i. 33). See also John vii. 39. Paul's next question, 'Unto what, then, were ye baptized?' implies that he regarded it as a matter of course that, being believers, they had

been baptized, and that *some* outpouring of the Spirit ought to have accompanied it. The answer explained the case: they had been baptized 'unto repentance,' like the Jews in the Baptist's time; but they had not received that baptism into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, which was ordained by Christ Himself (Matt. xxviii. 19), and to which was annexed the promise of the Spirit.

On the 'laying on of hands,' and consequent miraculous gifts, which followed their baptism, see Lesson XII., Note 5.

5. It appears from Acts xx. 31, that St. Paul stayed three years at Ephesus, two years and three months of which are specifically mentioned in xix. 8, 10. This is the longest stay in one place of which we have any record in St. Paul's life. Not only was Ephesus itself a most important sphere of Christian work (see 1 Cor. xvi. 8, 9), but from such a centre of traffic the light of the Gospel could radiate forth in all directions (see ver. 10, where *Asia* means the Roman province so called, see Addit. Note VI., page 86). Probably by St. Paul or his helpers, during this period, the 'Seven Churches of Asia,' and others in Phrygia, &c., were founded; e.g., Colosse, by Epaphras or Philemon.

6. Almost all commentators are agreed that the 'Epistle to the Ephesians' was not addressed specifically to the Church of Ephesus. The word Ephesus does not occur in ver. 1 in the oldest MSS.; and it is not likely that a letter addressed to a city where the writer had lived so long would contain no personal salutations, &c. It was probably addressed to the Churches of Asia generally. But as, of these, the Church of Ephesus was by far the most important, it seems quite legitimate to draw upon the Epistle for illustrations of the circumstances and character of that Church, as is done in the Sketch. One passage in it is certainly suggestive of Ephesus: the figure of a great temple, with its foundation, corner-stone, &c., in chap. ii. 20-22, is just what would impress those who had lived under the shadow of the Temple of Diana; in connection with which it may be observed that the figure of a pillar occurs in an Epistle to the youthful Bishop of Ephesus (1 Tim. iii. 15); and that in bidding farewell to the Ephesian elders, St. Paul commends them to God, who is 'able to build them up' (Acts xx. 32).

## ADDITIONAL NOTE VIII

### EPHESUS.

Ephesus was the capital of the Roman province of 'Asia' (on which see Additional Note VI., page 86). Its situation, just in the middle of the Asiatic coast of the Ægean Sea, and at the converging point of the great roads from the East, made it a place of great importance and extensive commerce. Antioch in Syria, Corinth, and Ephesus, were, in a mercantile sense, the three greatest of the cities visited by St. Paul. Although of Greek origin, it had a large Asiatic population, and was noted as the home of the darkest and grossest superstitions.

Ephesus stood in a small, flat, marshy, plain, surrounded by mountains, except on the west side, where the river Cayster flowed into the sea. Just behind the city rose two hills, on the slopes of one of which, Mount Orion, were the seats of one of the largest amphitheatres in the world—the 'theatre'

of Acts xix. 29—excavated out of the rock. The view from the top of Mount Orion commands several localities of interest to the Bible student. Behind rises the high table-land of Asia—the 'upper coasts' of Acts xix. 1; and the ancient pavement of the road by which St. Paul came down can still be seen. In front, across the plain, is the harbour where he landed on his arrival from Corinth—now filled up, useless, and desolate. To the left is the coast-road to Miletus, by which the Ephesian elders went to receive his farewell counsels. At the spectator's feet are the broken outlines of the great theatre. (See Tristram's *Seven Churches of Asia*, p. 26; and the views in C. and H. ii., chap. xvi., p. 83; Smith's *Dict. Bible*; *Student's N. T. Hist.*, p. 423; and the *Church S. S. Mag.* for July, 1872, page 345).

The glory of Ephesus was the far-famed

Temple of Diana, one of the seven wonders of the world. The old temple had been burnt down on the night that Alexander the Great was born; but a still grander one was built upon the site, at the expense of all the neighbouring cities; the foundations being laid with extraordinary care, and at great cost, in the marshy ground at the head of the harbour. Upon these, resting on a platform 425 feet by 220 feet, stood the temple, which was thus nearly as long as St. Paul's Cathedral and more than twice as broad. It was surrounded by 127 marble columns, 60 feet high, each of them the gift of a king; and within were other columns of jasper, some of which are now in the great mosque (formerly church) of St. Sophia at Constantinople. The most precious woods were lavished on the interior; the finest works of great painters and sculptors adorned its walls; and, as it was considered an inviolate sanctuary, treasures of every description were deposited in it for safe-keeping. It was, as Tristram says, the Bank and the Great Exhibition of the ancient world, as well as the stronghold of Paganism.

The image of Diana, enshrined in this temple, and which, it was believed, 'fell down from Jupiter' (Acts xix. 35), was not itself a beautiful work of art, but a rude wooden figure, nearly the shape of a mummy, and much more like a grotesque Hindoo idol than a Greek statue (see the woodcut in Kitto, p. 396). On the 'silver shrines,' the manufacture of which was so lucrative, see Lesson XXXIV., Notes 4, 5.

It was the pride of the Ephesians to call their city *Neokoros*, or 'temple-keeper' of the goddess—a term answering to our 'warden,' or 'sacristan,' or 'verger.' This word occurs in Acts xix. 35, where it is

wrongly rendered 'worshipper.' It appears on most of the extant coins of Ephesus.

Ephesus was a 'free city,' governed by its own magistrates and popular assembly. (See Lesson XXX., Note 3.) The chief magistrate is called in Acts xix. *γραμματεὺς* (*grammateus*), rendered in our version 'town-clerk,' but which means literally a recorder, and answers virtually to our *mayor*. The assembly of the people, which was the supreme authority at Ephesus, is also mentioned by St. Luke (ver. 39).

The interest of the Christian student in Ephesus is not confined to St. Paul's connection with the city. Over its Church Timothy afterwards presided, and thither were sent St. Paul's two Epistles to him. It was the residence of St. John in his old age, and to it was addressed one of the Epistles to the 'Seven Churches of Asia,' in which those who had formerly worshipped Diana 'the life-giver,' are promised that they shall 'eat of the tree of life' (Rev. ii. 7). Three hundred years later, the Third General Council of the Church was held at Ephesus.

Not only has the 'candlestick' of the Church of Ephesus been long 'removed out of its place,' but ruins alone mark the site of the once famous city, and its neighbour, Smyrna, has succeeded to its commercial pre-eminence. Every trace of the exact position of the Temple of Diana was lost for many centuries, and only last year (1871) has it been discovered by an English explorer, Mr. Wood. After several years' search he has at length come upon the remains of the pavement and columns 20 feet below the present surface, and some valuable fragments of the marble capitals, &c., have, within the last few months, been brought to England by H.M.S. "Caledonia" and deposited in the British Museum.

## Lesson XXXIV.—Victories of the Truth at Ephesus.

*'So mightily grew the Word of God, and prevailed.'*

*Read*—Acts xix. 11—41; *Learn*—Zech. xiii. 2; John iii. 19—21. (*Hymns* 108, 120, 126, 143, 151, 155, 166, 180, 235, 331, 340, 359.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

In the Sketch, the first division of the narrative (the 'conflict with superstition') occupies more space than the second (the 'conflict with selfishness'), because it needs more elucidation for the guidance of teachers; but in giving the Lesson, it will be well rather to miss some points in the first part (e.g., the 'special miracles' or the incident of the Jewish exorcists), than to run the risk of having to cut short a subject so sure to interest all children as the tumult raised by Demetrius. With intelligent classes, the information given in the 'Notes' concerning this episode, and in the Additional Note above, should be largely used.

But, whatever be omitted, the burning of the magical books should certainly be retained, as upon it the application is mainly based. Besides the more general lessons suggested by it, there is a point of great importance in the present day, on which this incident enables us to touch, viz., the unhealthy and even impure literature now so widely circulated, which—in its serial forms, at all events—is poisoning the minds of our young people more than most teachers have any idea of. There could scarcely be a stronger

test of the power of religion in many a Sunday-scholar's heart, than the abandonment of this kind of reading—so tempting, so exciting, so seemingly harmless, and so easily concealed.

Important applications are suggested also by the conduct of Demetrius and his workmen; but these would only be suitable in particular classes and (perhaps also) particular localities. Suffice it to say here, (a) that there are trades, in which many of our scholars are being brought up, which would positively suffer by the spread of vital religion,—‘crafts’ by which thousands ‘have their wealth,’ the profits of which are derived, in part or in whole, from the sins and follies of others; (b) that older boys and girls are often seriously tempted to disobey conscience and sacrifice true peace of mind, by entering upon occupations, with a view to ‘getting on in life,’ in which they know they must act inconsistently with their Christian profession.

#### SKETCH OF LESSON.

We saw last Sunday how diligently St. Paul preached at Ephesus. For how long? What result? [*recapitulate*]. Throughout province of Asia, with all its great cities (see Rev. i. 11), the Gospel spread; large numbers ‘turned from darkness to light’—and from what else? see xxvi. 18—‘from the power of Satan unto God.’

When Paul started on his first missionary journey, what did we say he was going to do? [*see Lesson XXII.*]—to fight in the great warfare, attack Satan in his ‘strongholds,’ pull them down (2 Cor. x. 4), deliver men from his grasp. ‘To the rescue!’ might be a Christian missionary’s motto.

Here in Ephesus, a most successful attack on the enemy’s strongholds; as we have seen, many rescued. But this can’t go on so—Satan not to be thus easily conquered—will make fierce resistance. See to-day two great conflicts at Ephesus.

#### I. A CONFLICT WITH SUPERSTITION.

We have met, two or three times, with magicians and fortune-tellers in the Acts [*Lessons XII., XXII., XXIX.*]—and seen how people resorted to them in those days. This one of Satan’s devices—knew men longed for guides and advisers—would not (and could not) give them true guides—so provided false ones. And men, knowing nothing of the Good and Holy Spirit who is our Guide (John xiv. 26, xvi. 13), went, or thought they went, to other spirits (Acts xvi. 16)—like unhappy King Saul (1 Sam. xxviii. 6, 7). At Ephesus, every kind of magic practised—people extremely superstitious—used to carry about little trinkets with strange words or the figure of Diana on them, thinking these would protect them from danger [*see Notes 3, 4*]. Now see how the Gospel triumphed over all this.

(1) See ver. 11, 12—‘special miracles,’ unusual ones—miracles like what magicians pretended to do, only more wonderful. So once at Jerusalem, Acts v. 15. Then, Peter’s shadow healed sick in street. Now, sick not even brought to Paul at all: the very aprons he wore at his tent-making, the very handkerchiefs he used to wipe his hot and tired face, enough to cure them! [*see Note 1*]. Why such unusual marvels? To show all that Paul’s God was greater than their idols and sorcerers (see Ps. cxv.

2—9); that they might say, like the magicians of Egypt, ‘This is the finger of God’ (Exod. viii. 19).

(2) Among other miracles, Paul cast out devils ‘in the name of Jesus’ (see xvi. 18). See what some wandering Jew fortune-tellers [*see Note 2*] do, ver. 13, 14—try and imitate him!—perhaps think the mere sound of Jesus’ name enough. Will the Lord have them for allies? Certainly not (comp. Mark i. 25, 34). Will the devils obey them? Ah, Satan knows the difference between a real and a pretended servant of Christ—not afraid of the latter. What result? ver. 15, 16.

(3) See the effect of all these wonders, ver. 17—20. All that great city struck with fear! What afraid of? of Paul? But no doubt he told them what Peter told the Jews (iii. 12, 16)—and so [*see Lesson V.*] not his name, but the ‘name of the Lord Jesus magnified.’

(4) And now a great bonfire in Ephesus. What burnt?—what sort of things do we throw into fire?—things worthless, of no value—how much these books worth? Why burn them? Because *bad* books—all about dark tricks of magicians, &c. Who burned them? Not Paul and his helpers—no, the magicians themselves!—why? see ver. 18—they had believed in Christ, yet at first went on with their magic; but now these wonders have startled them—they feel how great the Lord Jesus is—feel they must give up all that displeases Him. Could they not *sell* the books? ah, but would that be *giving up*, if they had the money?—and what harm the books might do elsewhere! No, rather lose all: like Paul himself (Phil. iii. 7), ‘what things *gain* to them, those they counted *loss* for Christ.’ Did they do it secretly? ‘Before all’—‘confessing and showing their deeds’ (see Prov. xxviii. 13)—‘not ashamed to confess Christ crucified.’ A victory for the truth indeed!

#### II. A CONFLICT WITH SELFISHNESS.

(1) Some of those charms the Ephesians used were little silver medals of Diana, or models of her temple—‘silver shrines,’ ver. 24 [*see Note 4*]. Such quantities of these sold, that makers and sellers of them grew rich (ver. 25). But now, after Paul

at Ephesus three years, their gains less—why? Would the converts buy 'silver shrines' to keep off dangers, when they could look up to the 'Lord of all' as their Friend?

(2) But how will the workmen like this? They hold a meeting about it: see what the chairman says, ver. 24—27 [see Notes 5, 6]. Do you think it *was* rather hard on them? But so it was on the magicians; and *they* cheerfully gave up their profits for Christ's sake. Not so these silversmiths—nothing to them if people remain in darkness—in darkness themselves—only care for gain. How many like that now! Yet how much can men keep when they die? Ps. xlix. 17; see Matt. vi. 19, 20; 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10, 17—19.

(3) What to be done? They must stir up the people—how? ver. 28—make out they are defending religion. Was it Diana they really cared for? No more than Judas cared for the poor (John xii. 4—6). But the cry succeeds—great tumult—rush of mob to find Paul—seize two of his friends—then to vast open theatre [see Note 7]—shouting in honour of their goddess—won't hear any defence (ver. 33, 34) [see Note 9]—'all these Jews alike!'

(4) Here is a serious danger. If Paul caught, very likely murdered—then perhaps great persecution of all who have come 'out of darkness into light'—progress of Gospel stopped—victory for Satan. But once before we saw God had many ways of *interposing at right time* [see Lesson VIII.]: among them *then* we saw (a) special miracles, and (b) guiding mind of some chief ruler.

We have seen the one to-day also: now see the other—see how the chief man at Ephesus, fearful of Roman governor punishing the city for the tumult, pacifies the crowd ver. 35—41 [see Note 10].

Another signal victory for the truth!

*Are there no struggles like these now—in your hearts?*

How many boys and girls have something they must give up, if they serve Christ faithfully; but yet they cling to it! How many, like those Ephesians, do 'believe,' do know Christ's service is the only happy one, but try and keep something displeasing to Him! Some bad habit—it may be one done only in the dark, in secret, like Ephesian magic—is *this* keeping you from Christ? What does our 2nd text for rep. say? Or bad books—not like those at Ephesus, but bad other ways—do they fill your thoughts and prevent your praying? Or bad companions—are they drawing you away? Or money—are you caring only for that? Remember two things:—

(a) You are not strong enough yourself to break these chains; but Christ is. Satan strong, but Christ stronger (Luke xi. 21, 22). And Christ willing to help you; so if not rescued, your own fault. If you feel yourselves 'tied and bound with the chain of your sins,' pray, 'Let the pitifulness of Thy great mercy loose us!'

(b) Every year, month, day, makes rescue harder; and suppose, while you wait and wait, Death should come! Go *at once* to Christ, and say, 'O God, make speed to save us! O Lord, make haste to help us!'

## NOTES.

1. The 'special' (literally, 'not common') miracles, to perform which special power was given to St. Paul, are a signal example of the way in which God adapts the *means* to the *end*. Such marvels were precisely what would arrest a superstitious people like the Ephesians. There seems to be much force in Baumgarten's argument (*Apost. Hist.*, ii., p. 281), that the fact of a man with such supernatural resources 'scorning to accept from the Church the least reward for his unparalleled love, anxiety, and toil,' and, in working garments, 'pouring out his sweat in hard toil for the maintenance without charge of himself and his fellow-labourers' (see Acts xx. 34), would deeply impress the people, who would thus come to regard as sacred 'the cloths moistened with sweat from his body' (the literal meaning of 'handkerchiefs') and the workman's aprons he wore in Aquila's workshop. For it is clear that the application of these garments to the sick was the people's thought, and not Paul's; and though such a faith was not of the highest kind, God accepted and rewarded it as He had the faith of those who sought to be cured by Peter's shadow at Jerusalem (see Lesson VIII., Note 1).

2. 'Vagabond Jews, exorcists,' rather 'wandering Jewish exorcists'—men who went from place to place pretending to cure demoniacs. Many expositors think that Matt. xii. 27 implies that these 'exorcists' did, in some way, actually cast out devils. See 'Life of Our Lord,' Lesson XXXIX., Note 4.

This narrative affords clear proof of the

reality of demoniacal possession. The man and the evil spirit are carefully distinguished. On the general subject, see Alford on Matt. viii.; Trench, *Miracles*, p. 151; Dr. Barry's article in Smith's *Dict. Bible*; and 'Life of Our Lord,' Lesson XXIV., Note 1.

The reply of the evil spirit in ver. 15 is literally, 'Jesus I acknowledge, and Paul I know; but you, who are ye?'

3. Among the chief forms of superstition for which Ephesus was notorious, were the 'Ephesian letters.' These were mysterious words and symbols engraved upon the image of Diana (on which see Additional Note VIII., p. 102), and inscribed on amulets worn about the person, or uttered as incantations. One of these inscriptions is given by Kitto, p. 403. Curious stories are told of their supposed power; see C. & H., ii., chap. xiv., p. 16. The study of these, and of the various forms of magic prevalent at Ephesus, was an elaborate science; and the books burnt, as mentioned in ver. 19, were those of its professors. All books in those days were costly, and works on such a subject would no doubt be especially so: still, the number destroyed must have been large for the value to be (as is reckoned) £1,875.

4. The 'silver shrines' were little models and medallions of the temple and image of Diana, which were extensively used, like the 'Ephesian letters,' as charms, and were carried in processions and set up as 'household gods' in private dwellings. The manufacture of them was there-

fore a large and profitable business, as every one who came to Ephesus would purchase them, if only as keepsakes. It is painful to think of the modern counterpart of this in certain articles of Italian commerce. The parallel has been drawn by a Roman Catholic commentator, Cornelius à Lapide (quoted by Bp. Wordsworth *in loco*), who says, 'They carried these images as our travellers carry images of Our Lady of Loretto.'

5. St. Paul's mention, in 1 Cor. xvi. 8, of his intention to 'tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost,' combined with the notice in Acts xx. 1, that he left immediately after the tumult raised by Demetrius, throws some light on the narrative. The month of May was especially sacred to 'Diana of the Ephesians'; there was then a great 'religious' gathering. 'From the towns on the coast and in the interior,' says Howson, 'the Ionians came with their wives and children to witness the gymnastic and musical contests, and to enjoy the various amusements which made the days and nights of May one long scene of revelry.' At this time, therefore, the silversmiths were expecting to do a brisk trade in their little trinkets. Instead of this, business was unusually slack. The Gospel had, in fact, made such way as sensibly to diminish the demand for the idolatrous charms; and the alarm of the craftsmen is not to be wondered at. The speech of Demetrius is a remarkable testimony to the success of St. Paul.

In the meeting called by Demetrius three classes appear: he is the 'silversmith,' the master-manufacturer (and probably other masters were also present); the 'craftsmen' are the designers and modellers; and the 'workmen' are the inferior labourers.

6. In ver. 26 we have a significant illustration of the tendency of having material representations of objects of worship. The educated ancients did not regard the *images* as being actually gods; but the populace did, as Demetrius implies when he complains of St. Paul's teaching that 'they be no gods which are made with hands.' And the same tendency may still be observed where images are set up 'to assist devotion.'

7. The crowd that collected at the sound of the shouts of the craftsmen seems first to have sought for St. Paul—probably at Aquila's house; and, not finding him there, to have seized Gaius and Aristarchus, and rushed to the amphitheatre, the usual place of popular concourse (see Addit. Note VIII., p. 102). See a similar incident in chap. xvii. 5, 6. It may perhaps have been on this occasion that Aquila and Priscilla risked 'their own necks' to save Paul's life (Rom. xvi. 3, 4).

8. The 'chief of Asia' (literally, *Asiarcha*) were wealthy citizens, elected annually to super-

intend the May festivities, upon which they were expected to spend large sums from their private means. (See C. & II., II., chap. xvi., p. 95; Kitto, p. 409.) That such men should be friends of St. Paul, though apparently not converts, speaks much for the personal respect in which he was held, and confirms what the 'town-clerk' says in ver. 37.

9. The incident in ver. 33, 34, appears to have been that the Jews, fearing that they, not being worshippers of Diana, would be involved in the fate that threatened the Christians, put forward Alexander (perhaps the 'coppersmith' of 2 Tim. iv. 14) to defend them; but the only result was to inflame the passion of the crowd.

10. The 'town-clerk' was the chief local functionary; see Addit. Note VIII., p. 102. His speech is a rare specimen of tact and prudence. First he conciliates the excited people by referring to the reputation of the city and its goddess. Then he asks what likelihood there is of any one being able to injure it, especially men who (whatever their opinions) led quiet lives, neither committing sacrilege against the temple ('churches' is a strange mistranslation), nor openly speaking evil of Diana. (A remarkable testimony to the moderation of Paul's teaching: with all his zeal, he was no mere iconoclast; he did not waste time by attacking Diana, but just preached Christ.) Then the 'town-clerk' reminds the multitude that the assizes were actually then being held (literal meaning of 'the law is open'), and that the proconsuls were ready to hear causes, if Demetrius had any action to bring; or, if it were a matter of public concern, it could be brought before the regular legal assembly of the people (see Addit. Note VIII.); but such an uproar as that only endangered the municipal privileges they enjoyed at the pleasure of the Romans.

The 'deputies' or proconsuls were the Roman governors of the province (see Lesson XXII., Note 6). Usually there was but one; but there is historical evidence that there were two at this time,—another instance of St. Luke's minute accuracy; see Smith's *N. T. Hist.*, p. 440.

11. Some think that when St. Paul speaks (1 Cor. xv. 32) of having 'fought with beasts at Ephesus,' he refers to this tumult. But it is almost certain that the epistle was written *before* the tumult, so the allusion must be to some event not recorded. We find other dangers hinted at in Acts xx. 19. The words are almost certainly figurative: had he literally fought in the arena, he could scarcely have omitted it in the list of his 'perils' in 2 Cor. xi.

12. On ver. 21, 22, and St. Paul's plans and movements at this period, see next Lesson.

## Lesson XXXV.—The Care of all the Churches.

'They watch for your souls, as they that must give account.'

Read—Passages referred to in the Sketch; Learn—2 Cor. i. 3, 4; 1 Thess. v. 12, 13. (Hymns, 121, 122, 123, 232, 263, 264.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

In arranging this Course of Lessons, opportunity has been taken from the incidents of this part of St. Paul's life to exhibit him as a pastor, laden with 'the care of all the Churches,' and thus to introduce the subject of the work of the Christian minister. Children should learn to know something of the pastoral cares of their parochial clergyman. These cares are very little understood, and a really good work will be done by this Lesson if the teacher can utilise it in the way indicated. Reference might be well made to the work of our Bishops, which is still more nearly parallel to that of St. Paul; but that

of the clergy will be more readily appreciated, and the suggested application flows more directly from its consideration. The application in the Sketch is necessarily vague, because the local circumstances of different parishes and congregations vary so much.

In many schools, St. Paul's words, 'To spare you, I came not yet unto Corinth,' can be effectively illustrated by a reference to the teacher or the superintendent having passed over a child's fault from sheer kindly reluctance to inflict punishment.

Very careful study of the references on which the historical part of this Lesson is based, will be necessary if the Lesson is to be taught successfully. In teaching, the map should be freely used.

Whenever Scripture references are turned to and read by the scholars, the teacher should be most careful, if the whole of any verse should not be required, to direct the reader which part of it to read. If only the first part be wanted, the reader should be stopped at the right point with the words, 'That will do,' and a question to test whether the point of the reference is observed. If only the latter part, the teacher can say, 'I don't want all: begin at—.' This plan is always useful; but the reasons why it is specially suggested *here* will appear when the references in the Sketch are turned to.

#### SKETCH OF LESSON.

We have seen St. Paul in all sorts of perils and troubles. Look at his list of them in 2 Cor. xi. 23—27: which have we seen him in? But besides these, what troubles does he say 'came on him daily'? ver. 28—'the cure of all the Churches.'

Think of all the Churches Paul had founded in different countries—could he forget them? We have seen how he wrote to the Galatians [Lesson XXVII.], and to the Thessalonians [Lesson XXX.]; and how anxious he was about the latter when at Corinth [Lesson XXXII.]; and he was just like this always—thinking of one convert's sin, another's ignorance, a third's danger, a fourth's sorrow—longing to rebuke, to teach, to warn, to comfort.

See this particularly in the period we have now come to. But nothing about it in the Acts. Only three verses about the next ten months after the tumult at Ephesus (xx. 1—3). Yet St. Paul's doings at this time very interesting: can find them out from his letters.

#### I. ST. PAUL AND THE CHURCH AT CORINTH.

1. *News from Corinth.* Ships constantly sailing between Corinth and Ephesus: Paul to Ephesus by one, Apollos to Corinth by another (xviii. 18, 27). If any Corinthian Christians came to Ephesus, on business or otherwise, during those three years of Paul's work there, whom, think you, would they care most to see? And how glad Paul to see them, and to ask after all his friends at Corinth, after Crispus, household of Stephanas, &c.! One day, a fresh arrival—sons or slaves of Greek lady named Chloe (1 Cor. i. 11); and, about same time (perhaps by same ship), three Corinthians, bringing a letter from the Church to ask certain questions of Paul (1 Cor. xvi. 17, vii. 1). Bad news brought by them (see what presently). Think of Paul at Ephesus, toiling for his daily bread, going from house to house in tears to warn the people against sin [see Lesson XXXIII.]—and then suddenly struck down with

grief and anxiety about his converts across the sea!

2. *A Letter to Corinth.* Immediately Paul writes this 'First Epistle' [see Note 1 a]. From it we can see what the bad news was, and what questions the Corinthians had sent to ask him. (a) They were split up into parties (i. 11, 12, iii. 3, 4, xi. 18); what does he say about this? i. 10, xiii. 4—7. (b) They were 'keeping company' with bad people, drunkards and evil livers, and even joining in their sins; what does he say of that? v. 11, 13, vi. 19, 20, x. 31. (c) Some actually disputed the Gospel Paul had preached, saying there was 'no resurrection' (xv. 12); all chap. xv. in answer to these. And many other things beside. Some thought he would not come there again, so they might do as they liked—see what he says to these, iv. 18—21.

3. *Waiting for further news.* The letter gone—can Paul wait quietly for the answer? Too anxious—must send one of his own helpers to Corinth, to put things right, and then to come back and report. Sends Titus (2 Cor. xii. 18) [see Note 1 c]. And now at last, time to leave Ephesus. Whither go next? Acts xx. 1. To get to Macedonia, go to Troas and take ship there (as before, xvi. 8—12). Paul very eager to reach Troas—why?—because hoping there to meet Titus, come back from Corinth—longing to hear of his beloved converts. Does he find Titus there? see 2 Cor. ii. 12, 13—how disappointing!—'no rest'—cannot quiet his fears—perhaps could not sleep (*you boys* always sleep well, but when grown up, will know misery of sleepless nights when anxious). Might do much good at Troas—people ready to hear Gospel (ver. 12, 'open door')—but can't stay—must press on to meet Titus. Arrived in Macedonia, no doubt at Philippi [see Note 1 d], among his kindest friends (Phil. i. 7, iv. 1, 15); yet any peace? see 2 Cor. vii. 5—still no Titus!—what can have happened? can the whole Church



have rebelled? Now, why did not Paul go to Corinth himself at once, and find out? see 2 Cor. i. 23—because he was too kind—feared if he went he must punish—could not bear to do that—for a time even sorry he had written severely to them (2 Cor. vii. 8—‘*I did repent*’).

4. *Return of the messengers—Another Letter to Corinth.* At last Titus comes—what news? see 2 Cor. vii. 6—15: the Corinthians had received him ‘with fear and trembling’ (15), had ‘mourned’ over Paul’s rebukes (7, 8), and not only mourned, but set themselves with ‘carefulness,’ ‘zeal,’ ‘vehement desire,’ to get rid of the sins he rebuked (11), and showed ‘obedience’ to his orders (15). No wonder the anxious Apostle overjoyed (13). What does he do? Writes this ‘Second Epistle,’ and sends Titus back with it. See how he begins, i. 3, 4 (our first text for rep.)—praising ‘the God of all comfort, who comforteth,’ &c. But, as we have seen, he tells them all the trouble they have caused him (see also ii. 4). It is in this Epistle that he speaks of ‘the care of all the Churches’ (xi. 28). And the letter not all joyful—Titus had told of some who still opposed him and went on in sin—see the solemn threatenings to these, x. 10, 11, xii. 20, 21, xiii. 2, 10.

5. *Visit to Corinth.* See Acts xx. 2, 3—this all we know of this visit, except that Paul lived with the hospitable Gaius, Rom. xvi. 23 [see Note 4]. But whatever troubles he may have had, how different from his first arrival there, sick, lonely, downcast [see Lesson XXXII.]—now at all events a large Church of believers in Jesus! Whether he had to expel some, as he feared (texts above), we know not; but, many years after, Clement, Bishop of Rome, wrote a letter to Corinth, in which he rebuked them, as Paul had done, for being so divided! [See Note 3.] So hard is it to get rid of sin!

## II. ST. PAUL AND OTHER CHURCHES.

Did he give all his care to the Corinthians, and forget the rest?

(a) At the very time he wrote 1st Cor., what was he doing? ‘Ceasing not’ to teach and preach at Ephesus (xx. 18—21, 31). [See Note 1 a.]

(b) When he went to Troas (above), was it only to meet Titus? see 2 Cor. ii. 12—it was, as always, ‘to preach Christ’s Gospel.’

(c) Then in Macedonia, while constantly thinking about Corinth, what was he doing? Acts xx. 2—‘much exhortation’ (and this was for several months). [See Note 1 f.]

(d) All this while, not forgetting the poor Christians at Jerusalem—shall see this in next Lesson.

(e) At this time, too, the bad news from Galatia of those troublesome Pharisee Christians leading his converts astray—had to send off an Epistle to them also. [See Note 4.]

(f) Yes, and he finds time to think of and to pray for (Rom. i. 9) Churches he has never visited! That wonderful letter to the Romans written during the stay at Corinth. [See Note 4.]

Do you wonder now at his calling ‘the care of all the Churches’ a burden that ‘came on him daily’? Look at some texts which describe what a man he was: John ix. 4; 1 Cor. xv. 58; Gal. vi. 9, 10; Eph. v. 16; 2 Tim. iv. 2.

*So you see what an anxious life a minister of Christ has.*

Do you think a clergyman now-a-days has less to think of than St. Paul? So he may: yet quite enough to feel ‘the care of all his people’ ‘coming on him daily.’ He hears from his helpers—teachers, visitors, &c.—how this one and that one is getting on, just as Paul did from Titus, &c. When boy or girl goes wrong, how grieved! When sees them trying to serve Christ, how glad! Others may ‘care for your soul’ too; but the clergyman especially, because God has given him the souls in his parish to look after. So ‘they watch for your souls, as those that must give account’ (Heb. xiii. 17).

Three things the people should do for the pastor:—(a) ‘Esteem him very highly in love for his work’s sake’ (2nd text for rep.); (b) Let him not have to grieve for them (Heb. xiii. 17); (c) Pray for him (Eph. vi. 19; Col. iv. 3; 2 Thess. iii. 1; Heb. xiii. 18).

## NOTES.

1. It may be well to bring together into one Note the scattered references on which the history of this period is based, and throw them into a connected narrative:—

(a) The 1st Epistle to the Corinthians was written from Ephesus a short time before the departure of St. Paul after his three years’ residence there (1 Cor. xvi. 8). The allusions to the Passover in chap. v. suggest that it may have been written at the season of that feast. The subscription of the Epistle is clearly wrong in stating that it was sent from Philippi (these subscriptions are not of high authority, though generally correct); but it is probably right in saying that the amanuenses and bearers were ‘Stephanas, and Fortunatus, and Achaicus, and Timotheus.’ The three former had lately come

from Corinth with a letter from the Church (xvi. 17, vii. 1), and would naturally carry back the answer; and Timothy is specially commended to the Corinthians in the letter (iv. 17, xvi. 10, 11). St. Paul was anxious that Apollos (who must have returned to Ephesus from Corinth) should accompany them, probably that the latter might repudiate the partisan use of his name; but he did not go (xvi. 12).

(b) Just at this time, however, Timothy was dispatched, with Erastus (a Corinthian, and chamberlain of the city, Rom. xvi. 23), ‘into Macedonia’ (Acts xix. 22). Perhaps these two were to go to Corinth by that route, while the three messengers made the direct voyage across the Aegean Sea. But it is probable that Timothy was detained in Macedonia, and did not reach

Corinth; as there is no allusion to any visit of his in either Epistle, and he was certainly at Philippi when the 2nd Epistle was sent from thence, as his name is joined with that of St. Paul in the opening salutation (i. 1).

(c) The mission of Titus to Corinth (with two unnamed 'brothers,' 2 Cor. xii. 18), was certainly a distinct one from that of the bearers of the 1st Epistle, as he is not named in it; but it must have been very soon after. Its object would no doubt be that intimated in the Sketch.

(d) St. Paul doubtless left Ephesus, as he intended (1 Cor. xvi. 8), after Pentecost; as the tumult of Demetrius was probably in May (see last Lesson, Note 5), and he left directly afterwards (Acts xx. 1). Between this and his return into Asia at Passover-time in the following year (Acts xx. 6), there is an interval of ten months. The last three of these were spent in Greece (Acts xx. 2, 3), and the previous seven, therefore, are occupied by his journey to Macedonia, and preaching there. Of his sojourn at Troas we learn from 2 Cor. ii. 12, 13. Thence he would sail, as before (Acts xvi. 11, 12), to Neapolis; and he was doubtless at Philippi when Titus arrived from Corinth, as (according to the subscription, probably here correct) the 2nd Epistle was written from that city.

(e) The subscription also mentions 'Titus and Lucas' as the bearers of this 2nd Epistle; and, as before remarked (Lesson XXVIII., Note 2), Luke had probably remained at Philippi since St. Paul's first visit there. He was, perhaps, one of the two 'brothers' who accompanied Titus back to Corinth with the Epistle (viii. 18, 22). The other is supposed to have been Trophimus or Tychicus, who may have come with St. Paul from Asia (see Acts xx. 4).

(f) Most writers include in the words of Acts xx. 2, 'When he had gone over those parts,' St. Paul's journey to Illyricum (Rom. xv. 19), a country which lay contiguous to Macedonia on the north-east.

(g) Of what happened at Corinth when St. Paul at length arrived there, we have no account. Howson has an interesting conjectural picture of him there, acting towards the opposers and offenders as he said he should do if it were necessary.

2. From the words 'the third time,' in 2 Cor. xii. 14, xiii. 1, and also from the language of 2 Cor. ii. 1, xii. 21, xiii. 2, many commentators (including Howson) think that St. Paul paid a short second visit to Corinth during his three years' stay at Ephesus, and that the visit of

Acts xx. 2 was the *third*. Such a voyage across the *Egean* is very likely to have been made, the communication being frequent and easy; but some writers doubt the correctness of the inference from the above passages, and explain them differently. Howson further thinks that, on his return to Ephesus after this short visit, St. Paul wrote the Epistle which seems referred to in 1 Cor. v. 9, and which (if written) is lost.

3. The Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, the oldest of the Christian writings not included in the Canon of Scripture, has some interesting notices of the Church of Corinth. This Epistle was probably written by the Clement of Phil. iv. 3, who is believed to have been one of the first Bishops of Rome. From internal evidence it seems to have been written before the destruction of Jerusalem, and therefore within a few years after St. Paul's death, and during the lifetime of St. John. It praises the Corinthians for their 'most excellent and firm faith,' their 'sober and gentle piety in Christ,' 'the greatness of their hospitality,' and their 'perfect and solid knowledge.' It speaks of them as 'humble,' 'high-minded in nothing,' 'more ready to give than to receive.' But their besetting fault still clings to them: 'Why,' asks Clement, 'are stripes, and wrath, and dissensions, and divisions, and contention among you? why do we read and tear in sunder the members of Christ, and revolt against our own body, and come to such a pitch of folly as to forget that we are members of one another?' And he goes on to remind them of the warnings addressed to them in 'the Epistle of the blessed Paul the Apostle.' A cheap shilling translation of this interesting letter, entitled *What the First Bishops of Rome taught*, is published by the Religious Tract Society.

4. That St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans was written during this visit to Corinth is clear from the allusion in it (xv. 25, 26) to the collection for the poor saints then being made; see next Lesson. Observe too that he was intending, after his contemplated visit to Jerusalem, to proceed to Rome (xv. 28); which exactly corresponds to his design on leaving Ephesus (Acts xix. 21). The Epistle to the Galatians is fixed also to belong to this period by the relation of its language to that of 2nd Corinthians and Romans, by which Professor Lightfoot shows that it must have been written after the former and before the latter. See Lesson XXVII., Note 7.

## Lesson XXXVI.—The Collection for the Poor Saints.

*'Freely ye have received: freely give.'*

Read—Parts of 2 Cor. viii., ix.; Learn—1 Chron. xxix. 14; 2 Cor. ix. 6, 7. (*Hymns*, 95, 115, 139, 159, 176, 177, 237, 253, 364, 365, 367.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

This Lesson, like the preceding one, not only introduces a series of incidents in St. Paul's history which, although of peculiar interest, the cursory reader is apt to miss altogether, but also enforces a practical Christian duty in the most effective way. Various texts of Scripture upon charity could easily be strung together, and a sufficiently suitable application be drawn from them; but there is nothing like an *example* in all such matters, and St. Paul's exhortations to liberality will be all the better listened to because regarded in their historical aspect as addressed to the Corinthians.

No attempt should be made to read and expound the two chapters in Second Corinthians, verse by verse. They are indeed very interesting, and well worth study; but they contain several passages of unusual difficulty; and the object of the Lesson can be gained as well, or better, by merely referring to the particular verses cited in the Sketch.

## SKETCH OF LESSON.

Those two letters to the Church at Corinth—where written?—when?—why? [*recapitulate*]. One particular thing St. Paul wrote about which we did not see last Sunday: look at it to-day. See 1 Cor. xvi. 1—‘the collection for the saints’; and in 2 Cor., two whole chapters about it, viii. and ix.

We have collections for all sorts of things—for the poor, building and keeping up churches and schools, for missions at home and abroad [*mention recent instances in the locality*]. What was this collection for, about which St. Paul wrote? See Rom. xv. 26—‘for the poor saints at Jerusalem.’ The Christians there mostly poor people—no doubt had lost much in the persecutions—and many famines in Judea at that time [*see Lesson XXI., Note 7*]. What did the Church of Antioch do for them in one of these famines? Acts xi. 28–30. And another time, when Paul and Barnabas at Jerusalem, see what Peter, John, and James asked *them* to do, Gal. ii. 9, 10. To-day we shall see how St. Paul did ‘remember the poor.’

Whom did he ask to give to this collection? Rom. xv. 26 says, ‘the Churches of Macedonia and Achaia,’ i.e., Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Corinth, &c. But others in it too: see 1 Cor. xvi. 1—‘Churches of Galatia’; perhaps also Ephesians, see Acts xx. 35. St. Paul wanted all the Gentiles to help; see why presently. Now let us see,—

## I. ST. PAUL'S DIRECTIONS ABOUT GIVING TO THE COLLECTION.

The Corinthians were to give,

1. *Regularly*. Some people give plenty of money, but only by fits and starts, and then it seems such a great deal. See St. Paul's plan, 1 Cor. xvi. 2—something to be given every week. Why this better? Because a little given often is not felt, yet it mounts up wonderfully. ‘Little drops of water, little grains of sand,’ &c. Why on the ‘first day of the week’? This their sacred day (see about it in next Lesson). So, when boy or girl puts into missionary-box every Sunday, this obeying St. Paul's rule.

2. *According to their ability*. 1 Cor. xvi. 2—‘as God hath prospered him.’ Each man to count up his week's gains in his business, or what he has earned, and put aside a certain part. We know not how much; but see what Jacob gave to God, Gen. xxviii. 22; and what the rule in Israel, Lev. xxvii. 30; 2 Chron. xxxi. 5, 6, 12; Neh. xiii. 12; Mal. iii. 10. That is, of every ten pence one penny to God; of every half-sovereign, one shilling to God. If people would do *that* now, what collections we should have!

3. *Willingly*. 2 Cor. ix. 7—‘not grudgingly, or of necessity’—not because others did, and so they *must*—not for the *look* of the thing, but because they *cared* for the

‘poor saints’—not like Jas. ii. 15, 16, or 1 John iii. 17, but like Exod. xxv. 2, xxxv. 5; Deut. xv. 7.

## II. ST. PAUL'S ARGUMENTS TO INDUCE THEM TO GIVE.

1. *Because they owed the money*. How this? See Rom. xv. 27. The Jews had given the Gentiles ‘spiritual things’—where had the Gospel come from?—and who brought it to Corinth? So if Gentiles gave Jews ‘carnal things,’ it was only repaying a very little of what they owed. So now, think of the tea we get from China, cotton and rice from India, coffee from Ceylon—do we not *owe* them the Gospel?

2. *Because in the Church there should be equality*, 2 Cor. viii. 13, 15. Not that there are to be no rich and no poor, for what did Christ say? John xii. 8. But those who have much are to help those who have little, like the Israelites with the manna, Exod. xvi. 18.

3. *Because others had set them such a good example*, 2 Cor. viii. 1–3. The Christians at Philippi and Thessalonica ‘in deep poverty’—in great trial of ‘affliction’ too (very likely persecuted)—yet how generous—ver. 3, ‘beyond their power.’ Just like the Philippians before (Phil. iv. 15, 16; 2 Cor. xi. 9), and after (Phil. iv. 10, 18). Poor man's sixpence often a greater gift in God's sight than rich man's sovereign, because more in proportion to what he has; see 2 Cor. viii. 12; and what did Christ say of the poor widow? Luke xxi. 1–4. Thus Paul would ‘provoke’ the Corinthians ‘to love and good works’ (Heb. x. 24).

4. *Because of what Christ had done for them*. How tenderly St. Paul reminds them of this! 2 Cor. viii. 9—‘Ye know the grace of our Lord,’ &c. Think of His riches as God—all the world His. Think of His poverty on earth—a poor working carpenter—afterwards ‘nowhere to lay His head’ (Matt. viii. 20). What all this for? ‘For our sakes’—‘that we might be rich’; for by His sufferings what did He purchase for us? Rom. viii. 32; 1 Cor. iii. 21–23. How easily we can *count* what we give!—but God's great gift of His Son beyond reckoning—an ‘unspeakable gift,’ 2 Cor. ix. 15.

5. *Because what they gave would come back to them*. Is this hard to believe? But see God's promise, Prov. xix. 17. Ask those who have given whether they have ever lost what they gave: they will tell you they have found Prov. xi. 24, 25 strictly true. Just like *seed*: you throw it away on to the ground, but what comes of it? is it lost? No, the harvest to come; and who will have the richest harvest? see 2 Cor. ix. 6. See also Matt. x. 42; 1 Tim. vi. 18, 19.

## III. ST. PAUL'S PURPOSE IN MAKING THE COLLECTION.

Was it only to help the poor? Something beyond that. What good does

charity do? Not only relieves want, but *unites giver and receiver*. Giver gets to care for person he gives to; receiver gets to love giver. Charity a cord of love binding them together. [*Illustr.—England and America: America sending relief in cotton famine; England subscribing for Chicago.*]

But whom did St. Paul want to unite? The Jewish and Gentile Christians. Have we not seen how the former were jealous of the latter?—how the converts at Jerusalem did not like Paul, because of his work among the Gentiles? [See especially, *Additional Note IV.*, page 76.] And now, after many years' work in Greece and Asia, he is going to Jerusalem. Oh, if he could once for all win the Church there to regard the Gentiles as brethren! If he can take with him large and liberal gifts from the Gentiles to the 'poor saints,' will not this touch the hearts of all the Jews? will it not bind them together as one?

This why St. Paul so anxious about it. See how carefully he plans it all: messengers from each Church to go with him and present the money, 1 Cor. xvi. 3; 2 Cor. viii. 18, 19, 23; Acts xx. 4. And here is a letter (Ep. to Romans) written just as he

is starting (Rom. xv. 25, 26): his mind so full of it, that he begs even those far-distant Roman Christians to pray that the offerings 'may be accepted of the saints' (xv. 30, 31).

What would St. Paul think if he were among us now? Would he find us all so full of love and kindness to one another as not to need stirring up? Would he not lament all the selfishness and quarrelling and envy he would see? How would he try and remedy it? He would say, 'Help one another: then you will come to love one another.'

Any of you so poor that you feel, 'Ah, I have nothing to give'? No one can say that. Have you no money? But you have hands, and feet, and brains—what can you not do with them? Think of our second text for rep.—what is it that pleases God? But do you want to keep what little you have for yourself? Then think of our first text for rep., and remember what you have is *not your own*, but *lent* to you by God to use for Him. 'Freely ye have received: freely give.'

## NOTES.

1. The purpose in St. Paul's mind in taking the Gentile contributions to Jerusalem, which is briefly indicated above, is drawn out at length in a very striking manner in Baumgarten's *Apost. Hist.*, ii., pp. 308–316. St. Paul, he remarks, had now completed the great work given him to do in the Asiatic, Macedonian, and Greek provinces. Not that all the heathen were converted, by any means: but Churches had everywhere been 'planted,' which was the special work of St. Paul (1 Cor. iii. 6, 10), and he had now 'no more place in those parts' (Rom. xv. 19, 23). He now desired to go further west: to visit Rome, and afterwards Spain (Rom. xv. 22–24, 28, 29). But first he must go once more to Jerusalem (Acts xix. 21). *Why?* To report all that he had done (see Acts xxi. 19), and make a final

effort to unite the two great branches of the Church. He will take with him representatives from all his fields of labour, as living witnesses of God's favour to the Gentiles: and accordingly their names, and the places they represent, are carefully enumerated by St. Luke (Acts xx. 4). The place of the 'collection for the poor saints' in his plan, as the peace-offering which was to soften the hearts of the Jewish Christians, is revealed by the touching passage in Rom. xv., written (see last Lesson, Note 4) just as he was starting for Judæa. And, in his defence afterwards before Felix, he says distinctly that the object of his going to Jerusalem was 'to bring alms to his nation' (Acts xxiv. 17).

2. On the two 'brothers' mentioned in 2 Cor. viii., see last Lesson, Note 1 c.

## Lesson XXXVII.—The Lord's Day at Troas.

*'The first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread.'*

Read—Acts xx. 4–12; Learn—Ps. cxviii. 24; Heb. x. 25; 1 Cor. x. 16. (*Hymns*, 4, 5, 107, 206, 211, 256, 261, 268–272, 275–277, 290, 332–337.)

## TO THE TEACHER.

We have here a glimpse into the Church life and customs of the primitive Christians, which is not only peculiarly interesting in itself, but affords a good opportunity of referring to the sacred ordinances of the Lord's Day, public worship, and Holy Communion, among ourselves. In particular, the difficulty felt by some about the 'Sabbath' being kept on what at first sight seems the wrong day, is not uncommon among inquiring boys and girls; and the occasion of explaining the matter should not be lost; see Division I. of Sketch, and Note 4. With regard to the Lord's Supper, it would not be right for teachers to disturb the children's minds respecting what may be the usage in their own parish; but it is at least curious that primitive custom can be contrasted with the practice of *both* sides in certain current controversies; for it is an unquestionable fact that the Eucharist was, in the early Church, celebrated *every Sunday* on the one hand, and *in the evening* on the other.

In this Lesson, the different points of application can most conveniently be taken up as they arise at the end of each of the five divisions. The final one appropriately brings them all into combination for the close of the Lesson.

#### SKETCH OF LESSON.

St. Paul is now on his way to Jerusalem. Which way is he going? see Acts xx. 3—intended to go in ship sailing direct from Corinth to Syria (Seleucia or Cæsarea)—why did he not? To escape plots of his old enemies, obliged to change plan, and go the long round by Macedonia [*shew map*]. However, this enables him to visit his dear friends at Philippi—stays with them for the Easter festival [see Note 3]—then on to Troas. His party gone on there already—who? ver. 4, 5 [see Note 1]. Who is Paul's own companion? ver. 5, 6—'us,' 'we'—Luke with him again now—and, as far as we know, always with him afterwards, even to the last (see Acts xxi. 17, xxviii. 16; Col. iv. 14; 2 Tim. iv. 11).

Twice before St. Paul has been at Troas, Acts xvi. 8; 2 Cor. ii. 12. [*Lessons XXVIII., XXXV.*] Could not stay long before, and cannot now—how long? ver. 6. But from what happened on the last night of his stay, we learn much about the early Church that is very interesting.

#### I. THE LORD'S DAY.

'The first day of the week,' ver. 7 [see Note 4]. So the Church had a weekly service, when all came together, to 'render thanks for the great benefits received at God's hands, to set forth,' &c.—(*Exhortation*). Why weekly? see Gen. ii. 1—3: God 'blessed the seventh day'—why? See also 4th Commandment. But the Church at Troas kept the *first* day, not the *seventh* day. Yes, but did that matter? [*Illustr.—Seven pennies in a row: you mean to put one of the seven in missionary-box—does it matter which?*] Any day is 'first' or 'seventh,' according to where you begin to count.

But why did they choose the *first* day? Two great events happened on first day of week: Jesus rose from the dead (Mark xvi. 9), and the Holy Ghost came down at Pentecost [see Lesson II., Note 2]. Thus we keep Easter Sunday and Whit Sunday. Twice in the evening of the 'first day,' Jesus appeared to the assembled disciples, John xx. 19, 26: this would make that time sacred to them. Thus it came to be the regular time of worship, and the first day was called 'the Lord's Day'; see 1 Cor. xvi. 2; Rev. i. 10.

And so ever since, to the present time. We keep *one day in seven*, because (a) God blessed it when He finished His work of creation, (b) the 4th Commandment directs it. We keep the *first day*, Sunday, because (a) Christ rose, (b) the Spirit came down, (c) the Church chose it from the first.

#### II. THE LORD'S SUPPER.

What used the Christians to come together for? ver. 7—'to break bread' [see

Note 5]. What was that? Not just eating together—much more solemn. It was obeying the Lord's dying command to 'do' something in remembrance of Him' (Luke xxii. 19, 20)—what? See 3rd text for rep. Bread broken—wine poured into cup—solemnly blessed—all partake—what would it remind them of? 1 Cor. xi. 26—the Body of Jesus, wounded and killed for them—the Blood of Jesus, shed for them—would feel, Yes, it is all true, He *did* die, and died for us—then *how thankful*, how happy, how strong to conquer sin! Thus they '*fed*' upon Christ—their souls 'strengthened and refreshed by the Body and Blood of Christ, as their bodies were with the bread and wine' (*Catechism*); see John vi. 53, 56. This too has been kept ever since, and is still; and how long will it be kept? 1 Cor. xi. 26—'till He come!'

#### III. THE NIGHT MEETING.

Let us look in at that Christian meeting at Troas. No handsome church or fine music—these things quite right when can be had, but not to be had there in those early days. A large upper room on third floor (ver. 8, 9)—biggest rooms very often at top of house (see Mark xiv. 15; Acts i. 13)—this, no doubt, lent by some well-to-do convert, like Justus at Corinth (xviii. 7). Evening—can't meet in day-time—all at their daily work—Gentile employers knew nothing of weekly day of rest. 'Many lights' (ver. 8)—no bright gas—many of their dim lamps needed to light up room.

Look at the congregation—perhaps a few rich and great folks, but mostly poor and humble, labourers, slaves, &c.; see 1 Cor. i. 26; Jas. ii. 5. But see how earnest in their prayers, in singing their 'hymns to Christ' [see Note 4], in listening to St. Paul. How often we get tired of even a short sermon—how long was his? several hours! ver. 7—'until midnight.' Do you think, if you had St. Paul to listen to, you could attend so long? Not at all—unless really interested in what he was saying—*this* what kept the Troas converts so attentive—to them the greatest treat to hear about their Father and Saviour.

#### IV. THE DEATH OF EUTYCHUS.

But here is one young man who can't keep awake so long. Must not be too hard upon him—perhaps weary with day of toil—and the 'many lights' seem mentioned on purpose to excuse him—would make the air oppressive. But imagine the alarm among them all at his sudden fall from the window—how anxiously rush down stairs to pick him up—what grief when found dead!

A death in a church!—would it not be very startling? Yet it may happen to any

of us—to you to-day. So we pray in Litany, 'From sudden death, good Lord deliver us!' If it *did* happen to you, what terror all around—what grief! But *you* would know nothing of *that*—you would be standing before God—are you ready for *that*? Can you say 2 Tim. i. 12 with all your heart?

#### V. THE RAISING OF EUTYCHUS.

What will St. Paul do?—try and comfort the sorrowing friends? What *does* he do? ver. 12—just like Elijah and Elisha, 1 Kings xvii. 21; 2 Kings iv. 33—35. [See Note 6.] Paul has been ill himself [see *Lessons XXVII., XXXII.*—did he cure himself miraculously? No: it was not God's will to relieve him (2 Cor. xii. 8, 9), and miracles only worked as God gave power; but now God gives the power to raise Eutychus. What overpowering joy that night! how eagerly and thankfully all listening now again to St. Paul, hour after hour, even to 'break of day'!

Could such a thing be now? No: miracles ceased long ago; if sudden death (or *any* death), no coming to life again till the

great day. Yet see John v. 25—'the hour *now is*, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God'—how is that? Well, *some* miracles do still take place. Think what they are:—

Why do some people *not* keep the Lord's Day, *not* come to the Lord's Supper, *not* care to worship with the Church, *not* hang upon the preacher's words?

Because *dead*—'dead while they live' (1 Tim. v. 6), 'dead in sins' (Eph. ii. 1). But the Holy Ghost, the 'Giver of Life' (*Nicene Creed*), can raise them up, make them 'alive unto God,' make them 'walk in newness of life' (Rom. vi. 4, 11).

'Living or dead'—which are you? Can you heartily say our 1st text for rep. about the Lord's Day? Are you hungry for food, as all the *living* are?—for the 'sincere milk of the Word'? (1 Pet. ii. 2)—for 'the spiritual food of Christ's most precious Body and Blood'?

'This day the Lord, for sinners slain,  
In might victorious rose again:  
O Jesus, may we raised be  
From death of sin, to life in Thee!'

#### NOTES.

1. The companions of St. Paul mentioned in ver. 4 represent his different spheres of labour (see last Lesson, Note 1). Sopater of Berea is probably the Sospater, a kinsman of Paul's, who was with him at Corinth (Rom. xvi. 21); Aristarchus is mentioned in Acts xix. 29, xxvii. 2; Col. iv. 10; Philem. 24; Secundus is quite unknown. These three, with Luke (whose presence is revealed by the 'us' of ver. 5, and who was probably the bearer of the Philippian share in the collection), represented Macedonia. Gaius of Derbe (not the Gaius of Corinth, Rom. xvi. 23; 1 Cor. i. 14; nor the Macedonian Gaius, Acts xix. 29), and Timothy (of Lystra), represented the inland Asiatic provinces. Trophimus (an Ephesian, Acts xxi. 29; see also 2 Tim. iv. 20), and Tychicus (see Eph. vi. 21; Col. iv. 7; 2 Tim. iv. 12; Tit. iii. 12), represented Asia proper. No representatives of Corinth and the other Churches of Achaia appear: perhaps their contributions were entrusted to Luke and Trophimus, if these were (as supposed) the 'brothers' of 2 Cor. viii. 18, 22.

2. Either contrary winds or calms caused the voyage from Philippi to Troas to occupy five days. Two days was enough with a fair wind (xvi. 11; see Lesson XXVIII., Note 5). On Troas, see same Lesson, Note 4.

3. The mention of 'the days of unleavened bread,' in ver. 6, seems to imply that St. Paul stayed at Philippi to keep them with the Church there. It is not likely that the observance of the Jewish Passover prevailed in the Gentile Churches; but probably the time of our Lord's death and resurrection was kept sacred, and grew into the Good Friday fast and Easter feast of later times; see 1 Cor. v. 7, 8.

4. There is no direct authority for the view that the first day was deliberately fixed on by the Apostles as a Sabbath instead of the seventh day. But there is abundant evidence that the first day was the day of the Church's assemblies from the beginning; and as the observance of the seventh day led to a Judaizing strictness, which St. Paul earnestly deprecates (Col. ii. 16), it seems probable that the Christians gradually

transferred to their own 'Lord's Day' the ideas of sacredness attaching to the old Sabbath, and thus retained what was no mere Mosaic institution, but a Divine ordinance existing even before the Fall, viz., the solemn observance of one day in seven.

Bishop Wordsworth quotes the following from Justin Martyr, who wrote in the 2nd century:—'On the day called Sunday, our common assembly is held; and we read the writings of the Apostles, and the books of the Prophets.' Then, after a description of the sermon, the Eucharist, and the collection of alms, these words follow: 'We assemble on the day called Sunday, because it is the day on which God created the world out of darkness, and on which Jesus Christ our Saviour arose from the dead.' And the heathen Pliny reports to the Emperor Trajan that the Christians 'met together on a certain day' 'to sing hymns to Christ as to God,' and to partake of 'a simple and innocent meal.'

5. The Lord's Supper was originally celebrated (as it had been instituted, see Matt. xxvi. 20) in the evening, and in connection with the 'love-feast.' See Wordsworth, *in loco*. In course of time, as persecution compelled the Church to meet at and after midnight, the evening celebration merged into the morning one. At Troas, on this occasion, though the meeting was an evening one, St. Paul's prolonged address delayed the Eucharistic feast till early morning, as it was after the raising of Eutychus that he 'broke bread' (ver. 11). On the term 'breaking of bread' as meaning the Lord's Supper, see Lesson IV., and 'Life of Our Lord,' Lesson LXXXVI. 'Had eaten' is distinct from the sacrament itself, and refers to a subsequent meal.

6. St. Luke clearly implies that Eutychus was really dead. That his words, 'was taken up dead,' must be taken literally, is shown by the different way in which he elsewhere speaks of *apparent* death (xiv. 19). Paul did not say, 'His life is in him,' till *after* the miracle had actually been wrought.

## Lesson XXXVIII.—Going up to Jerusalem.

*'None of these things move me.'*

Read—Parts of Acts xx., xxi.; Learn—Rom. xv. 30, 31; Ps. xvi. 8. (*Hymns*, 124, 126, 127, 130, 132, 166—171, 192, 202, 226, 340, 369.)

## TO THE TEACHER.

The parallel between this 'going up' of St. Paul to Jerusalem, and that other 'going up' to which our Lord 'stedfastly set His face,' is so striking, that the teacher may be not a little helped in his efforts to enter into the spirit of the narrative by a reference to Lesson LX. (also LI. and LXXII.) of the 'Life of Our Lord.' The picture to be drawn is similar; the same illustrations can be used; the application is substantially identical. The central figure of the Apostle, steadfast and resolute among his sorrowing and anxious friends, must on no account be allowed to be obscured by the numerous interesting details of the voyage. Yet these details should not be passed over; and indeed the bright scenery and prosperous sailing may be made to throw into deeper contrast the dark prospect before the minds of the travellers. This is one of the cases, however, in which it is impossible to communicate in any way to these pages the picturesqueness of the descriptions in 'Conybeare and Howson.' They must be read to be appreciated. The tracing of the ship's route upon the map (see the map at the beginning of the volume) will interest most classes; but this should be accompanied, if possible, by just enough description to make the islands and cities something more than mere names.

In accordance with the general plan of these Lessons, no attempt has been made to expound St. Paul's address to the Ephesian elders in detail. Note 5, however, will help those who wish to do so. Its references to the Apostle's life while at Ephesus have been already introduced in Lesson XXXIII.

The Sketch ends with a reference to one of our Church Collects. Teachers will often find the application of a lesson helped by suggesting one of them, or some other familiar petition in the Prayer-book, or the verse of a well-known hymn—in each case carefully and appropriately chosen—as a guide to the children in their private prayers.

## SKETCH OF LESSON.

You remember, when our Lord was on earth, where most of His time was spent? Not at Jerusalem—only there now and then, at feasts; but—? Do you remember 'the last great journey' [*see 'Life of Our Lord,' Lessons LX., LXXII.*—when He left Galilee 'to go to Jerusalem,' to death?—and how He went?—'stedfastly,' eagerly (Luke ix. 51, xii. 50)—and this though He knew all that was before Him (Matt. xx. 17, 18). To-day see something like this—one following in His steps.

Look what Jesus said of His servants, Luke vi. 40 (*'as his master'*). St. Paul calls himself Christ's 'servant' (Rom. i. 1): see to-day how he followed his Master.

He, too, is 'going up to Jerusalem.' Why? Who with him? How far did we bring him last Sunday?—[*recapitulate*]. Now, look at,—

preaching, &c.—now wants solitude—to think about his great work—to look up to God and get strength for coming trials. No doubt very glad of that lonely walk. In this, the servant like his Master, see Mark i. 35; Matt. xiv. 23.

(2) Quiet time soon over. At Assos on board the ship. Then beautiful voyage—winding in and out between fruitful islands and rocky mainland—all bright with the fresh green of spring-time [*see Note 1*]. They pass near Ephesus—how must Paul have thought of those three years spent there—how must have longed to see his beloved converts! Why did he go in ship not stopping there? ver. 16 [*see Note 2*]. But a little further on, at Miletus, ship does stop a few days. Just time to send for elders (clergy) of Ephesian Church [*see Note 6*] to come to him, ver. 17. Here are Paul's parting words to them, ver. 18—35 [*see Note 5*—the last he expects ever to speak to them—why so? ver. 25. See the little group, on their knees, ver. 36—very likely on sea-shore (as in xxi. 5)—how earnestly praying! Then the farewell, ver. 36—how sorrowful!—can scarcely bear to part [*see Note 10*—but ship now ready—can't stay—away she sails with Paul and his party—fair wind [*see Note 3*], quick voyage to Patara (xxi. 1).

(3) Ship not going further—cargo landed

## I. THE JOURNEY.

(1) Troas, early on Monday morning—congregation dispersed after that night service—Paul's companions gone on board ship—where is Paul himself? see xx. 13—on the road to Assos—a twenty miles' walk alone, over hills and through oak-forests [*see Note 4*]. Why this? Think—when do people want to be alone? When much to do, or think about, which cannot explain to others. Paul has been very busy

here—what to do now? ver. 2. Fortunately, another ship just starting for Syria—again fair wind and fast sailing [see Note 3]—soon at Tyre. Old Phœnician city—King Hiram reigned there (1 Kings v. 1)—but God had taken away its greatness, for its pride and wickedness (Isa. xliii.; Ezek. xxvi.—xxviii.); yet even here a little band of Christians, ver. 4—perhaps ‘scattered’ by Saul’s persecution (viii. 3, 4, xi. 19)—now a holy and happy week with that very Saul! But then another sad parting—another prayer on the beach, ver. 5—this time not ‘elders’ only—who else saying good-bye to Paul?

(4) One more short sea-voyage—whither? ver. 7; thence by land [see Note 4] over the river Kishon and Mount Carmel to Cæsarea. Who the host there? Where have we seen Philip before? [Lessons IX., XII., XIII.] Then at length, up from the coast into the hill-country—the long two months’ journey at length ended at Jerusalem.

## II. THE PROSPECTS OF THE JOURNEY.

What makes a journey pleasant or painful? Sometimes things by the way; but chiefly what we look forward to at the end. [Illustr.—To death-bed of friend, or to new start in life; emigrant going out; traveller coming home.] What were St. Paul’s prospects?

1. *A bright prospect?* Yes: glad and solemn feast to keep (xx. 16); joyful news to tell—success of Gospel among Gentiles; liberal gifts for the ‘poor saints’—from whom? [Lesson XXXVI.]

2. *But a dark prospect too.* See in it—

(a) *Uncertainty.* ‘Not knowing,’ &c., xx. 22. This often a great trial [illustr.—boy or girl going from home to strange place]. But sometimes unknown things give us pleasant surprise: would it be so with Paul? No, for there was also,—

(b) *Certainty*—of something—what? xx. 23, ‘bonds and afflictions.’ How did he know? ‘The Spirit witnesseth’—the Holy Ghost put it in hearts of disciples to warn him what coming—and this ‘in every city,’ so no mistake. [See Note 9.] But what kind of suffering, from whom, how long to last, all uncertain; yet what did he expect? xx. 24, 25.

(c) *Probability.* Why did he think that meeting with his Ephesian friends the last one?—he expected to ‘finish his course’—looked forward to death. This at Miletus; but as he goes on, the dark prospect darker—more and more warning voices. What said at Tyre? ver. 4. And then, while stopping at Cæsarea, news of his arrival reaches Jerusalem; and who at once goes to meet him? ver. 10 (see xi. 28). See the strange scene: Agabus tying up his own hands and feet with Paul’s girdle—what meant? ver. 11. Luke, Timothy, &c., can stand it no longer—had not joined before in others’ entreaties—but now, as they look at Agabus, they fancy they see their dear

master in chains. See their tears—hear their appeals (ver. 12, 13). How can Paul resist them? We shall see.

## III. HOW ST. PAUL FACED THE DARK PROSPECTS.

1. *He was ‘bound,’* xx. 22. Not with ropes or chains—with what? 2 Cor. v. 14 (comp. 1 Cor. ix. 16). Not only felt it his duty to go to Jerusalem, but longed to go, to tell the Jews how the Gentiles had believed in Jesus, to unite the Churches by means of those gifts [Lesson XXXVI.]—felt he *must* go (comp. Luke ii. 49, ix. 22; John ix. 4). (How different are they who say, ‘I am not bound to do this—shall do as I like,’ &c.!) And therefore,—

2. *He was unmoved,* xx. 24. Did he not care for the tears and entreaties of his friends? ah yes, they were near breaking his heart, xxi. 13—yet could not change his purpose. Why not? see 2nd text for rep.—he ‘set God before Him,’ i.e., always asked (as on that day outside Damascus, ix. 6), ‘Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?’—and so God ‘at his right hand,’ and he ‘not moved.’ But more than this—

3. *He was ‘ready,’* xxi. 13. Ready for what? For death—‘to die.’ What made him ready? (a) *Looking back.* What would he die for?—for the name of the Lord Jesus—remembered what Jesus had done for him (1 Tim. i. 12–16)—had died for him, so he ready to die for Christ. And remembered what he had done for Christ—no sad looking back on wasted life—what could he say to the Ephesian elders? xx. 18–21, 26, 27, 33–35. This not boasting, but thankfulness, see 1 Cor. xv. 10. (b) *Looking forward*—to ‘finish his course with joy,’ xx. 24 [illustr.—boy running race—keeping up to end—winning prize]. This prospect so glorious that he could scarcely see the nearer dark prospect (2 Cor. iv. 17, 18; Rom. viii. 18). Like his Master, ‘for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame’ (Heb. xii. 2).

*We have seen St. Paul like Christ: shall not we try and be like St. Paul?* What would he say to us? 1 Cor. xi. 1.

How can we be like him?

(a) By feeling ‘bound’ to go on in the way of God’s commandments—‘How can I do this, and sin against God?’ (Gen. xxxix. 9); ‘I must do what my dear Saviour wishes.’

(b) By being *unmoved* by others’ arguments, persuasions, taunts, opposition, persecution. This *will* come, *must* come (2 Tim. iii. 12)—never mind—don’t give up the race—‘so run, that ye may obtain’ (1 Cor. ix. 24).

(c) By being *ready* for whatever God may appoint us. Pray Collect 20th S. aft. Trin.—‘that we, being ready both in body and soul, may cheerfully accomplish’—what?—our own plans?—no, but ‘those things that Thou wouldst have done.’



## NOTES.

1. In no other part of Scripture, except in Acts xxvii., are the details of a journey given so minutely as in this passage. The whole narrative is that of an eye-witness: St. Luke was evidently with St. Paul throughout, except during the latter's walk from Troas to Assos (ver. 13). And besides what is directly stated, other facts are implied, the knowledge of which enhances the vividness of the account. Thus the mention of the Passover and Pentecost (ver. 6, 16) tells us that it was spring-time, when (to use Dean Howson's words) 'the advancing season was clothing every low shore, and the edge of every broken cliff, with a beautiful and refreshing verdure: when the winter storms had ceased to be dangerous, and the small vessels could ply safely in shade and sunshine between neighbouring ports'; while the prevalence of north-westerly winds at that season—a fact familiar to navigators of the Levant—explains more than one verse (see Note 3).

2. In considering this and other voyages of St. Paul, two points should not be forgotten. First, he did not travel by steamers. The time occupied in a journey of a certain distance would therefore vary according to the wind (e.g., comp. Acts xvi. 11 with xx. 6). Secondly, he sailed in the ordinary merchant vessels as a passenger, and was therefore dependent upon their movements and stoppages. Some commentators write as if he had chartered a ship and could control its course; which is a mistake. The ship in which the first part of this voyage was taken was bound from Troas to Patara (xxi. 1, 2), stopping at Miletus: the other stoppages being apparently owing to the weather, or to the danger of sailing in the night through those narrow seas. The statement that Paul 'had determined to sail by Ephesus' need not mean that he prevented the ship from putting in there; rather that, fearing to go there, lest he should be detained, he determined to take his passage in a ship going to other ports.

3. The chronology of the voyage seems to have been as follows.—The ship left Troas early on Monday morning, which was, according to Mr. Lewin's calculations, April 17th A.D. 58, the Passover having been on March 27th, and the departure from Philippi on April 4th. Four days were occupied on the voyage to Miletus, two or three days spent at Miletus (allowing time for the elders to be sent for and to come from Ephesus, 30 miles), three days in sailing thence to Patara, two or three days to Tyre, seven days at Tyre, three thence to Cæsarea. This would bring St. Paul to Cæsarea about ten days before Pentecost; so that he evidently reached Jerusalem in time for the feast.

Although from Philippi to Troas the wind was contrary (see last Lesson, Note 2), it was very favourable in the latter part of the voyage (see Note 1). The words in xxi. 1, 'came with a straight course,' mean 'sailed before the wind,' as in xvi. 11 (see Lesson XXVIII., Note 5). And in ver. 3 there is a nautical expression in the Greek which implies fast sailing; 'discovered Cyprus' means literally that the mountains of Cyprus rose rapidly above the horizon.

As it was full moon at the Passover, it must also have been full moon when, just a month later, St. Paul was sailing from Patara to Tyre; and this, together with the favourable wind, would embolden the captain of the ship to take the direct course across the open sea (see map). The run, under these circumstances, could be made in forty-eight hours. See C. & H. ii., chap. xx., p. 281.

4. It would be impossible in these Notes to describe all the places at which the ship touched.

Full information concerning them will be found in C. & H. The following brief remarks may, however, be made:

The road from Troas to Assos passes through dense oak-woods, the acorns of which, under the name of *Valonea*, are largely imported to England for dyeing purposes. Mitylene is the capital of the island of Lesbos, at its eastern end. Chios (the modern Scio) is another island, a paradise of beauty and fertility. Samos is a mountainous island in the bay opposite Ephesus, and as the ship sailed *inside* it, towards the promontory of Trogyllium, St. Paul would look with regretful feelings towards the city in which he had spent three years, but which he could not stay to visit. Miletus was a more ancient city than Ephesus, but its importance had then departed. Cos (*not* Coos) has classical memories; and Rhodes has been distinguished in history in every age. Patara was the port of Lycia. Tyre is one of the most interesting cities of antiquity, and much might be said about it. In St. Paul's day it retained little of the greatness so vividly depicted in Ezekiel's prophecy. Ptolemais is the Acho of Judg. i. 31, the Acre of the Crusades, and the St. Jean d'Acre of modern times. On Cæsarea, see Lesson XVIII., Note 1. Ver. 7 should read, 'Finishing our voyage, from Tyre we came to Ptolemais'; implying that the journey southwards from Ptolemais was by land.

5. St. Paul's address to the Ephesian elders is one of the most affecting passages in the Bible. Its general design seems to be to incite them, as Christ's ministers, to diligence and faithfulness, by reminding them of his own example whilst among them. It may be thus analysed:—

(a) *Retrospection*.—1st. Concerning his personal life at Ephesus: his humility, tears, trials (ver. 19), and unselfish labour to support himself and his companions (33–35). 2nd. Concerning his preaching at Ephesus: diligently (20, 31), faithfully (21, 26, 27).

(b) *Anticipation*.—1st. Concerning himself: suffering and death (22–24). 2nd. Concerning the Church: danger from false teachers (28, 30).

(c) *Counsel and Comfort*.—He believes that they will see him no more (25); therefore he exhorts them to take heed to their ministerial work (28), and commands them to God (32).

The concluding words of the address are peculiarly interesting, as recording a saying of our Lord's not found in the Four Gospels. There would, of course, be many words of His current in the early Church which the Evangelists did not insert in their biographies.

6. The 'elders' (literally *presbyters*) from Ephesus are called by St. Paul 'oversers,' or, as the word is everywhere else rendered, '*bishops*' (*ἐπισκόποις*, *episcopous*). The words 'presbyter' and 'bishop' were both applied at that time to the second order of the ministry. Subsequently the word 'bishop' was limited to those who succeeded the Apostles as the *first* order. This subject will be more fully treated in Lesson XLVIII.

7. The Philip with whom St. Paul stayed at Cæsarea is identified with the Philip of Acts vi. and viii. by being called 'one of the seven.' His first arrival at Cæsarea is mentioned in viii. 40; and he seems thenceforth to have made that city his home; but his title, 'the Evangelist,' shows that he did not give up his preaching journeys; as this word means, in the N.T., not (as with us) a writer of one of the Four Gospels, but an itinerant preacher or missionary, as distinct from the pastors or elders of a settled Church. His 'four daughters which did prophecy' are examples of the fulfilment of Joel's prophecy (ii. 28, 29), quoted in Acts ii. 17, 18.

8. There are several examples in the Old Testament of symbolical acts like that of Agabus, done to give vividness and force to a prophecy; see 1 Kings xxii. 11; Isa. xx. 2, 3; Jer. xiii. 1-11, xxvii. 2, xxviii. 10, 11; Ezek. iv. 1-13, xlii. 2-6. Our Lord also adopted the same method, see Matt. xviii. 2; John xiii. 5.

9. It may be asked, if the warnings given to St. Paul were uttered by the Spirit's inspiration (xx. 23, xxi. 4, 11), ought he not to have attended to them? But, although the gift of prophecy enabled those who possessed it to foretell his dangers and trials, it did not guide them as to his duty. 'To his own Master he stood or fell'; and he could not but follow the path of duty, even against the opposition of the best human counsellors. The considerations which governed him are admirably explained by Baumgarten (*Apost. Hist.*, ii., pp. 308-316, 355, &c., 389).

He was conscious, says that acute writer, of having a great work before him. That work was (a) 'the exhibition of the Gentile Church at Jerusalem, with a view to effecting a closer union of it with the Jewish Church,' (b) 'a final manifestation of grace to the hardened people of Israel.' On the first, see Lesson XXXVI., Note 1. The design of the second, Baumgarten suggests, may be traced in the Apostle's language in Rom. ix., x., xi. He speaks there of his 'great heaviness and continual sorrow' on account of the blindness of his countrymen (ix. 1-3). 'That

they may be saved' is his 'heart's desire and prayer' (x. 1). He knows their blindness is but for a time, 'until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in' (xi. 1, 11, 25). Now, had not 'the fulness of the Gentiles' already come, in a certain sense? Could not St. Paul go to Jerusalem and say to his countrymen that he had finished the work given him to do, that the Gentiles were 'grafted in,'—and would they not then at length be persuaded, and embrace the Gospel? If this conjecture is correct, what an impressiveness does it give to this 'going up to Jerusalem'! How natural that Paul should bespeak the prayers even of the Church at far distant Rome! How natural, too, that he should press on to such a mission, despite the warnings 'in every city' 'that bonds and afflictions awaited him'!

10. Several words in this passage need explanation. 'Overseers,' 'straight course,' 'discovered,' and 'finished our course,' have already been noticed. 'Kissed' (xx. 37) is the imperfect tense in the Greek, implying that they kissed him again and again in their sorrowful affection. 'Gotten from them' (xxi. 1) should be 'torn ourselves away from them.' 'Carriages' (ver. 15) is an old English word, meaning what can be carried, the baggage. So in Judg. xviii. 21, 1 Sam. xvii. 22. Crammer's Bible has, 'We took up our burthens.' The exact force of the Greek is probably, 'We packed up.'

## Lesson XXXIX.—Doubtful Friends and Bitter Foes.

*'In perils by mine own countrymen.'*

Read—Acts xxi. 17-40; xxii. 1-22; Learn—1 Cor. x. 32, 33; Rom. x. 1, 2, 21. (*Hymns*, 95, 141, 144, 145, 160, 176, 196, 233, 354, 355.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

Those who use this Lesson may be surprised, when they compare the passage with the Sketch below, to find that, out of forty-six verses in the former, scarcely twenty are referred to in the latter,—all remarks upon the ceremonies in which St. Paul joined in the Temple, and upon the contents of his speech to the crowd, being relegated to the 'Notes.' The fact is, that what the teacher needs in his preparation, and what the scholars will need if they are to be interested, is to understand something of the *motives, feelings, and objects* of St. Paul and his different opponents. The Sketch, therefore, is chiefly occupied in depicting these, and no space is left for several points in the narrative, which will fall into their proper place without difficulty when the Lesson is given from the open Bible. The teacher should, moreover, on no account omit to refresh his memory by looking back, in course of preparation, to the Lessons and Notes (referred to in the Sketch) in which the Judaizing controversy has already been explained. And, in teaching, great care will be necessary to distinguish between the *Jews* and the *Judaizers*—i.e., the *unbelieving* Jews and a section of the *believing* Jews.

The Lesson is purposely made to end abruptly with the outcries which interrupted St. Paul's address, in order to turn at once to an effective application. And in this application the teacher should speak of *his own* feelings towards his class, if he be able, as he *ought* to be, to describe them truly in the language suggested.

It is impossible to refrain from pointing out, in a single sentence, the striking lesson which this narrative contains for theological and Church parties. St. Paul's controversy with the Judaizers was on no minor point. The question at issue, paltry as it may seem to us, was *then* a vital one—certainly as much so as those of our own day are *now*. Moreover, he did not shrink from controversy: he met his opponents boldly; he 'gave place by subjection' to them, 'no, not for an hour.' And yet he acknowledges them as Christian brethren; he meets them in common council and common worship; he conciliates them in every possible way (witness the collection, and the 'purification' in the

Temple); and although the impression he made on them was not permanent, it was a victory not to be despised that they should join in 'glorifying God' at the close of his recital of his missionary work.

Before reading the Sketch, the teacher should refer back to Lesson XXXVI., Note 1, and last Lesson, Note 9, which supply a key to much of its contents.

#### SKETCH OF LESSON.

Always interesting to visit familiar place after long absence. We look out for houses, trees, &c., which we know well. Very small and common things please us if recognised then [*illustrate, if possible, from personal memories*]. But what do we look for most? Not things, but people—familiar faces. This, doubtless, what St. Paul thinking about as he walked through the old streets of Jerusalem to Mnason's house—about the people he should see.

Pleasant to us to look forward to friendly welcomes and hearty greetings. Could St. Paul look forward to these? Yes: and he *had* them directly he arrived, ver. 17. But no such bright prospect about other expected meetings: Paul not sure how some even of his *friends* would receive him—quite sure to meet some *foes*; a painful uncertainty and a painful certainty, as we saw last Sunday. Let us see how he fared with both.

#### I. THE DOUBTFUL FRIENDS.

Next day, a great assembly, ver. 18—'all the elders' (i.e., clergy)—not only of the Jerusalem Church, for many from other cities and countries come up for Pentecost. Who presiding? 'The Lord's brother,' first Bishop of Jerusalem—the holy St. James, whom even unbelieving Jews called 'the Just.' [See Lesson XXV., and *Additional Note V., page 77.*]

Why any doubt how St. Paul will be received? Must they not give such a great missionary a hearty welcome? Ah, but these elders all strict Jews. True, they have not, like most of the nation, rejected the Gospel—have believed in Jesus as King and Saviour; but some don't understand letting these Gentiles into the Church—think they ought first to become like Jews, be circumcised, keep strict Pharisee rules, &c. They know Paul is the man who has been letting the Gentiles in, so don't like him. What have some of their party been doing? Going after Paul, speaking against him to his own converts, insisting on circumcision, &c. [See Lessons XIX., XXV., XXVII.; and especially *Additional Note IV., page 76.*] This why St. Paul anxious. Does it seem strange that fellow-Christians should disagree so, and be so suspicious of one another? But is it not so still?

Now look at the assembly. (a) Paul speaking—telling of his wonderful success in Greece and Asia—of idols thrown away, wicked ways given up, praises of Jesus sung in every city; telling, too, of what he has brought—that collection [Lesson XXXVI.]—generous gifts of Gentile converts to their poverty-stricken Jewish

brethren—will not *this* conquer all jealousy and suspicion? (b) His Gentile friends at his side, Luke, Trophimus, &c. (see xx. 4)—bearers of the money from the various cities—themselves proofs of what God has done [*illustrate—like things brought home by traveller, shewing where he has been*]. (c) St. James—he all right—had settled it with Paul before (xv. 13; Gal. ii. 9); others, too, no doubt, as large-hearted. (d) The Pharisee Christians listening to Paul, with 'envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness.' (e) The doubtful ones—wishing to think well of Paul, but fearing he has 'gone too far,' been 'too bold,' &c.

What result? Paul wins them over as he did before [Lesson XXV.]—no doubt the Holy Ghost there to guide their hearts, see ver. 20—'they glorified God'—all unite in solemn thanksgiving for spread of Gospel!

But only the 'elders' won yet. How manage with the great body of Jewish believers? They have all sorts of false notions about Paul, ver. 21 [see Note 1]; will they be so easily persuaded? Better not try to talk them over: rather let Paul do something to *show* them he is not so bad as they think. See the plan, ver. 23, 24 [explain to classes that can understand; see Note 3].

#### II. THE BITTER FOES.

Surely those Pharisee Christians bitter enough—more like foes than friends—who can be worse? There are worse foes. Who have tried over and over again to kill Paul? (See ix. 23, 29, xiii. 50, xiv. 5, 19, xvii. 6, 12, xviii. 12, xx. 3, 19.) Yes, Judaizing believers bad enough; but what to be expected of Jews who don't believe at all, who detest the name of Jesus, who stoned Stephen, and were pleased (xii. 3) when Herod killed one apostle and imprisoned another?

What does St. Paul feel about these unbelieving countrymen of his? No anger—remembers how *he* just the same once—only grief for their blindness, love for their souls, longing desire for their salvation (Rom. ix. 1, 2, x. 1)—oh! if he could but persuade them to believe in Jesus! [See last Lesson, Note 9.]

Not many in the city who know him now—absent so long—no doubt grey and worn from years of hardship. But one day, who recognise him in the street? ver. 27, 29—old enemies at Ephesus, who know his Ephesian companion too—'Ah! that Paul here: we must watch him!' Where do they find him next? (ver. 27, xxiv. 18). Courts of Temple full of Pentecostal wor-

shippers—just the time to excite them against him—look at the false accusation, ver. 28.

See Paul in midst of angry mob, yelling and shouting, ready to tear him in pieces. From street to street the rumour spreads (you know how quickly a crowd gathers)—people rushing to the Temple—'all the city moved.' Paul dragged out of sacred courts [see Note 4]—blows on him from all sides (see ver. 32)—will they stone him, like Stephen?—how he must have remembered Stephen then!

Suddenly, the tramp of armed men—who? where from? ver. 31, 32 [see Note 5]. People fall back—let Paul go. Who does the Roman captain think it is? ver. 38 [see Note 6]—so fastens him with chains to two soldiers, ver. 33. Not far to go—castle close to Temple—stone steps to go up—yet how difficult to get Paul up there!—why? ver. 35. Of whom had a Jewish mob cried 'Away with him!' before? see John xix. 15.

But now the shouts and uproar hushed—a great silence—Paul addressing the crowd from the top of the steps. Think what he must feel as he stands above that sea of heads. *He has a chance now*—that dense throng those very countrymen he longs to save—all listening to him—what if his speech, by the Spirit's power, should touch them, as Peter's did the 3,000 on that other Day of Pentecost? They are zealous in God's service, only they *don't know* (xxii. 3; Rom. x. 2; John xvi. 2)—but they *shall* know now—and what if it should end with that other cry, 'What shall we do to be saved?'! [On the speech, see Note 7.]

Did it end so? What was the cry? ver. 22, 23.

1. The 'elders' who assembled to meet St. Paul were the 'presbyters' or clergy of the Church at Jerusalem, together (doubtless) with many others who had come from different parts of Judæa and elsewhere for the Feast. The 'multitude,' in ver. 22, are the Christians in Jerusalem generally: the sense of the words is, 'a multitude will assuredly assemble,' i.e., will meet and discuss your proceedings. What St. Paul had done in Greece and Asia had been diligently reported at Jerusalem, by the Judaizers who followed him, with many untrue and slanderous additions: hence the prejudice against him. The particular accusation, described in ver. 21 in very strong language (literally, 'Thou teachest apostasy from Moses'), was plainly false: St. Paul did assert that the ceremonial law was not binding on *Gentile* converts, but we never find him encouraging *Jewish* converts to abandon their hereditary usages. On the contrary, he himself did for Timothy what had not been done for him in infancy, viz., circumcised him (xvi. 3). On St. Paul's principle in such matters, see Lesson XXVII., Note 1.

2. The feeling against St. Paul did not subside even after his death. The Judaizing Christians developed into a distinct sect called the Ebionites, who entirely rejected his authority; and a work is still extant, 'The Clementines,' written about a century after, in which he is the object of the most bitter attacks. See Prof. Lightfoot, *Galatians*, Essay on 'St. Paul and the Three'; Stan-

Thus we see the result of this journey of St. Paul to Jerusalem. Has not God heard those earnest prayers offered up about it? (see Rom. xv. 30, 31; Acts xx. 36, xxi. 5). Yes: (a) The message and token of peace from the Gentile Churches was 'accepted of the saints' [see above]; (b) Paul had been 'delivered' from a cruel death. But yet, (a) the ill feeling in Jewish Church towards Paul and his Gentile converts revived again afterwards, and got worse [see Note 2]; (b) though not killed, Paul a prisoner—and, worst of all, the nation has once more rejected Christ.

#### ARE THESE THE RESULTS OF THE EFFORTS OF CHRIST'S SERVANTS NOW?

Ah! too often so! Ministers, teachers, parents, Christian friends, know it well. Here is a teacher, of whom our 2nd text for rep. true—his 'heart's desire and prayer' for his scholars 'that they may be saved'; of whom the 1st text for rep. true also—tries to 'please them in all things'—'not seeking his own profit'—this, too, 'that they may be saved.' How often is it true also (2nd text for rep., ver. 21) that he 'stretches forth his hands to disobedient children'! How is it in this class?

And what of *Christ's own work for men*? He came 'to save them' (Luke ix. 56; John iii. 17)—did He 'seek His own profit'? (John viii. 50; Rom. xv. 3). Yet what did He say to the Jews thirty years before Paul's rejection? Luke xiii. 34; Matt. xxiii. 37—'How often would I have gathered' . . . 'but ye would not.' Can He say this to any of us? Then look at the terrible warning in Prov. i. 28—31; but this need not come on us: if only turn to Him now, see the promise, Hos. xiv. 1, 4.

#### NOTES.

ley, *Sermons and Essays on the Apostolic Age*, Essay on 'The Judaizers.'

3. The 'four men' who had 'a vow on them' were evidently Nazarites. A Jew who desired to show publicly his thankfulness for any special mercies took the Nazarite vow, by which he bound himself for a given period to abstain from wine, &c., and to let his hair grow. See Num. vi. 1—12. Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist were under the vow for life; but generally it was taken for thirty days. At the end of the period, the Nazarite came to the Temple and presented certain offerings; and his hair was then cut off and burnt on the altar; see Num. vi. 13—18. Occasionally a rich man would provide these offerings for a poor man who could not afford them; and Herod Agrippa had done so, when he took possession of the kingdom, in order to 'please the Jews' (which he was anxious to do, see Acts xii. 3). The plan proposed to St. Paul by the elders was this: that he should bear the expense of the offerings for the 'four men.' In doing this, he must join them for the seven days prescribed for the ceremonies in the Temple; and being seen there day by day, there would be ocular evidence that 'he himself walked orderly, and kept the law.' This plan involved no compromise of the great truths for which St. Paul had contended; and he readily assented to it on the principle affirmed by him in 1 Cor. ix. 19—22, x. 23, 31—33; see also Rom. xiv.

4. St. Paul was probably seized in the 'Court

of the Women' (so called, not as exclusively for women, but because they might not go beyond it), in one of the chambers of which the Nazarites performed their vows. Between this court and the outer court was a gate with heavy folding-doors and strong bars, requiring (says Josephus) twenty men to close them. These are, no doubt, the doors which were shut (by the Levites on duty, to prevent further sacrifice) after Paul was dragged into the outer court (ver. 30). On the balustrade separating these two courts, were inscriptions in Greek and Latin forbidding all Gentiles to enter on pain of death (one of which has recently been discovered by M. Clermont-Ganneau). They were allowed in the outer court, which was on this account called the Court of the Gentiles. The Jews of Asia charged Paul with having taken Greeks within the sacred enclosure. On the exact position of these courts, authorities are much divided; but a conjectural plan is given in the 'Life of Our Lord,' Lesson LIV., p. 146.

5. The 'castle' (xxi. 34, xxiii. 24, xxiii. 10, 16, 32) is the Castle of Antonia, a strong building erected by Herod the Great, and named after Mark Antony. It stood on the north side of the Temple, and from at least one of its turrets the whole of the sacred area was overlooked. A flight of steps ran up to it from the Temple cloisters; and these are alluded to in our narrative, not only in xxi. 35, 40, but also in ver. 31, where 'came' is literally 'went up,' and in ver. 32, where it is said the soldiers 'ran down.' So 'brought down' (xxiii. 30), 'go down' (xxiii. 10), 'bring down' (xxiii. 15, 20).

'Band,' in ver. 31, is the technical word signifying the Roman 'cohort' or regiment forming the garrison of Jerusalem. The word rendered 'chief captain' means a commander of 1,000 men. The castle could accommodate that number, and the full complement would be there at the time, to keep order during the Feast of Pentecost,—as the Turkish troops do in Jerusalem now, at the Easter celebrations of Greek, Latin, and Armenian Christians. The ill-concealed hostility of the people towards the garrison, under these circumstances, can be imagined. Tumults and bloodshed were frequent; and the high-priest Jonathan had been murdered in the Temple itself, with the connivance of the governor Felix, probably in the year preceding that of St. Paul's arrest.

6. The 'Egyptian,' whom the chief captain took St. Paul to be, is mentioned by Josephus. A short time before this, he had gathered a large body of discontented Jews on Mount Olivet, declaring that the walls of Jerusalem would fall down at his word. Felix marched out against the insurgents, and dispersed them, but the Egyptian escaped. Among his followers were 4,000 of the *Sicarii* (Assassins, from *sica*, a dagger), a numerous band of brigands who, says Josephus, stabbed people in open day in the streets of Jerusalem; and the words of Lysias in ver. 38 are literally, '*those four thousand men of the Sicarii*'—alluding to a well-known and recent event. See Jos., *Antiq.* xx. 8, 6; *Bell. Jud.* ii. 13, 5.

7. St. Paul's address to the angry crowd is a rare example of skillful and conciliatory oratory. His choice of the Hebrew language contributed not a little, as St. Luke says, to secure him an attentive hearing. (The mention of this, by the way, is an incidental proof that it was an exceptional thing, that he usually addressed even the Jews in Greek, and that the latter language was generally understood.) Then observe both the matter and the style of the speech. First he speaks of his Pharisee education under their great Rabbi; then of his persecuting zeal against 'this way,' acknowledging, in passing, their 'zeal towards God.' And then follows a plain and straightforward narrative of his conversion, and of his subsequent vision, which (he does not omit to state) took place while he was praying in the Temple. Throughout, his words are skillfully chosen to disarm prejudice. He speaks respectfully of the *sanhedrim* ('all the estate of the elders'), who are not mentioned in chap. ix.; he calls the Jews at Damascus 'the brethren'; he does not obtrude the name of Jesus, but speaks of Him simply as '*He*,' or as 'that Just One'; he refers to Ananias in terms which his audience would appreciate and approve. And they did listen until the hated name of 'Gentile' revived all the excited feelings which the speech had so far succeeded in allaying.

St. Paul's mention of St. Stephen (ver. 20) is justly called by Bishop Wordsworth 'a noble endeavour to make public reparation for a public sin, by a public confession in the same place where the sin was committed.'

## Lesson XL.—The Strife of Tongues and the Still Small Voice.

'Fear not, for I am with thee.'

Read—Acts xxii. 23—30; xxiii. 1—11; Learn—Ps. lvi. 3—6, xxxi. 20, xci. 1. (*Hymns*, 132, 145, 162, 180, 194, 197, 200, 202, 285, 291, 322, 343, 344, 347, 379.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

The teacher has in this Lesson unusual opportunities for picturing, of which he should make the most. Especially let the quiet of the castle at night, and the dejection of St. Paul (implied in the words, 'Be of good cheer'), be depicted as vividly as possible, in order to enhance the impression of the comfort conveyed by the Lord's words. Unless the class are made to *feel*, however feebly, what that 'still small voice' was to the Apostle, the application will have scarcely any force at all.

There need be no hesitation in telling Sunday-scholars that the sense of St. Paul's words, 'I wist not,' &c., is uncertain (see Note 4). It is a very good lesson for young inquiring minds to learn, that we are not to expect Scripture to tell us everything, or that what it does tell us must always be perfectly plain. Nothing has done more to promote the minute study of the Bible than these little difficulties. Even if the teacher should feel able to adopt definitely one of the explanations of this passage, he will do well to inform an intelligent class that there are other views respecting it.

## SKETCH OF LESSON.

You know how noisy a playground is, when school turned loose into it. What a 'strife of tongues' (second text for rep.) it is!—not always 'strife' in sense of quarrelling, though sometimes *that*,—but 'striving' which shall cry out loudest [*illustrate*]. You like being there, do you not? Why then should David hope that God would keep him from the 'strife of tongues'? Ah, so would *you*, if all those tongues crying out *against you*: then, how glad to get away to quiet home, where the voices kind and loving! [*Or, illustrate from London streets, and turning into stillness of St. Paul's or other church.*] See something like this to-day.

## I. THE STRIFE OF TONGUES.

Where did we leave St. Paul? On steps of castle—people raging below, clamouring for what? ver. 22. Fancy the 'strife of tongues' there! How escape? Romans will not let even a bad man be killed thus—must first find out what he has done—so soldiers keep back crowd, and bring him safe within strong walls and gates of Antonia.

How is Lysias to find out Paul's crime? —[*See Note 1.*] From the people? But see xxi. 34. Shall he ask Paul? But, he thinks, 'he won't confess, of course.' Therefore, what? xxii. 24—barbarous custom of torturing people to make them, in their agony, confess *something*, whether guilty or not! But though Romans did this to conquered nations, never to a Roman—that illegal. Now see ver. 25—29: here is Paul, being bound with great leather thongs to a pillar to be scourged—what does he say? Is he afraid of suffering?—flinching after those noble words at Miletus and Tyre (xx. 24, xxi. 13)? Ah no—ready to bear *anything* that is necessary, or that will help the Gospel—but *this* useless—so, as he can claim exemption, he will. But was it true?—was he not a Jew? Yes, but Romans let foreigners in certain cases be called 'Romans,' and have their privileges. Lysias himself not really a Roman (perhaps a Greek)—had *bought* this privilege, ver. 28; but Paul had enjoyed it from birth, because his father had it. [*See Note 1.*]

What is Lysias to do now? see ver. 30—thus find out what it all means.

Now see the great Jewish Council, the Sanhedrim, sitting—seventy-two famous and learned men in a half-circle, scribes with their rolls of the law at either end. Once before we have been here with Paul; but where did he sit then? where stand now? [*Lesson X., and XI., Note 2.*] Then one of Stephen's judges—now a prisoner, like Stephen! Look at xxiii. 1—can you not fancy his earnest gaze round the assembly, looking for faces of old friends, no doubt recognising many?

What does he say? [*See Note 2.*] Like this—'Many of you know how conscientious I used to be, trying to keep all the law strictly: don't think I am changed—in all

I have done the last twenty years, I have been trying just the same to do right in God's sight' (comp. xxiv. 16; 2 Cor. i. 12). Will these words touch the judges? They do touch *one*—the high-priest himself—he knows he could not speak so—much too wicked—so can't bear to hear Paul speak so—how stop him? ver. 2. [*See Note 3.*] Is that legal? Lev. xix. 35; Deut. xxv. 2—and how sternly Paul tells him so!—'Thou whited wall!'—like a wall of mud and rubbish plastered over to look like stone—fair outside, foul inside (comp. Matt. xxiii. 27)—just what he was. 'God will smite thee'—true words—God did—he was murdered soon after. [*See Note 4.*]

But as trial goes on, Paul sees the judges not all alike. Pharisees dislike him, for calling Jesus Messiah and preaching to Gentiles. But others hate him much more, for always insisting that Jesus is *alive*, that He did die, but rose again. Who are these?—why angry at that? ver. 8. Paul sees he has no chance with *them*, so what does he say? ver. 6—appeals to Pharisee party—like this:—'You don't agree with these Sadducees—you know there is a resurrection—so do I—I and my fathers always were Pharisees and believed that—why join these sceptics in condemning me?—why give them a triumph which will be over *you* as much as over me?' [*See Note 5.*]

See the effect of this, ver. 9, 10—Pharisees gained to Paul's side—then great uproar—another 'strife of tongues,' confusing and deafening. And not only *tongues* striving—both sides struggling to lay hold of Paul—bodily danger again, ver. 10. How rescued?

## II. THE STILL SMALL VOICE.

Now think of Paul that night in the castle—not in foul dungeon as at Philippi, but yet 'in custody,' chained to a soldier [*see Note 1.*]. Think of all he has gone through these two days [*recapitulate*]. Truly he might say with David, Ps. lv. 9, lvii. 4, lxiv. 2, 3. But all this he would not mind, if he could have his two ardent wishes, (a) to bring the Jews to Christ [*last Lesson*], (b) to go and preach at great Rome (Rom. i. 10, 11, xv. 23). What prospect of these now? How he must feel, in those silent hours, (a) that his work at Jerusalem has failed, (b) that death or prison will prevent him from ever seeing Rome?

But now, in stillness of night, a Visitor to the quiet cell, unknown to the soldier. Who? ver. 11. The same Lord who appeared to him on the road to Damascus (ix. 5), in the Temple (xxii. 17, 18), at Corinth (xviii. 9). Do you remember, when Elijah fled for his life, how God came to him at Horeb? 1 Kings xix. 11, 12. And after all that 'strife of tongues,' how sweet to the wearied apostle that 'still small voice' of Jesus!

‘O blessed Voice of Jesus,  
Which comes to end our strife!’

What does He say? The same loving words He used to say when on earth (Matt. ix. 2). *Why* 'be of good cheer'?

(a) 'Thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem.' Did he think his work there a failure? How could he know? It was his business to testify of Christ—that he had done faithfully—and the Lord is satisfied. *Results* not his affair, but God's. Why then be cast down?

(b) 'Thou shalt bear witness also at Rome.' Yes, he is not to be disappointed: his going may seem very unlikely—never mind—the Lord 'will bring it to pass' (Ps. xxxvii. 5).

Thus, words of comfort for both causes of dejection (see above). The angry voices in that 'strife of tongues' may ring in Paul's ears still, but will he mind them now, after hearing *this* Voice? See what Ps. xxix. says of the Voice of the Lord, and look at the last verse. Well might Paul say our second text for rep.!

*Have you ever heard that 'still small Voice'?*

You will not hear it with your bodily ears. But is that the only way of hearing?

(a) Have you ever had a letter from

some one dear to you?—as you read it, did it not seem as if the familiar voice were speaking to you? And you may read Christ's written words in the Bible. Try and read them as if spoken to you.

(b) Have you ever had a present from one dear to you? Did not that present (however small) tell of the giver's love, just as plainly as if he had spoken of it? And Christ's gifts are Voices of His.

(c) But you may hear the 'still small voice' more as Paul did—speaking in your heart. People *do* hear it—even children—and you may. Not if you *like* the 'strife of tongues'—not if you join in the quarrels or the bad talk of those who love not Christ. But if these things are painful to you, and you go apart from them, and think of the Lord Jesus, and listen for His Voice, you will surely hear it. Others, though close to you, may know nothing of it—even one in same room at night, like the soldier with Paul—but to you it will bring pardon, peace, comfort, strength, hope.

Be like the Psalmist (Ps. lxxxv. 8), and like Habakkuk (Hab. ii. 1). Let your prayer be, 'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.'

#### NOTES.

1. On St. Paul's 'Roman citizenship' and its privileges, see Lessons XIV., Note 2, and XXIX., Note 8. 'The centurion believed Paul's word, because a false claim of this kind, being easily exposed, and punishable with death, was almost an unprecedented thing' (Hackett, *in loco*). The statement of the chief captain, that he had purchased his citizenship, is illustrated by his name (see xxiii. 26): *Lysias* being a Greek name, and *Claudius* a Roman one—the latter having been no doubt assumed when he became a 'Roman.' When it is said that *Lysias* 'was afraid' because he had 'bound' Paul, the reference cannot be to the chain by which every one in 'military custody,' even though a 'Roman,' was fastened to a soldier (see next Lesson, Note 4), but either to an unnecessary severity in the 'binding,' or to the special 'binding with thongs' preparatory to torture (ver. 25). It should be observed that *Lysias* would not understand Paul's Hebrew speech to the people, and was therefore still in total ignorance as to the cause of the outcry against him.

2. It may be asked, Why did St. Paul, when brought before the Sanhedrim, at once begin his defence, without waiting for the accusation? The answer is, that this is not affirmed. We do not know what may have occurred before he spoke.

The word used by him, 'I have lived in all good conscience,' &c., is a noteworthy one. It is derived from the Greek word for 'city' (*πόλις*, *polis*), and contains the same idea as our (similarly derived) words 'politics,' 'polity,' &c. What he meant to express by it was this, 'I have been, before God, a true and loyal citizen of Israel.'

3. To strike a speaker in the mouth is still a common Eastern mode of expressing dislike of his words. The stroke is usually inflicted with the heel of a shoe: hence, 'Give him the shoe,' 'Give him plenty of shoe,' are well-understood expressions. (Kitto.)

4. St. Paul's words to the high-priest are

literally, 'God is about to smite thee,' and read more like a prophecy than a threat; and they were fulfilled, as Ananias was murdered afterwards by the Sicarii (see last Lesson, Note 6).

The greatest difference of opinion exists as to the light in which these words of St. Paul's are to be regarded, and still more as to the meaning of those in ver. 5, 'I wist not that he was the high-priest.' The point is purposely left open in the Sketch. The opinions may be divided into three classes:—

(a) Some think that the rebuke, however well-deserved, was spoken with undue warmth—contrasting the words with the meek utterance of Jesus under similar circumstances (John xviii. 22, 23); and that, in ver. 5, St. Paul apologises for his momentary loss of temper, 'I wist not,' meaning, 'I reflected not,' 'It did not occur to me.' The objections to this view are, 1st, that it does not seem likely that the specially promised guidance of the Spirit in speaking before judges would fail St. Paul just when he needed it; 2nd, that it is doubtful whether 'wist not' will bear the meaning suggested.

(b) Some think that the rebuke, though not improper if addressed to any other member of the Council, was not what St. Paul would have addressed to the *high-priest*, for the reason mentioned by him in ver. 5; and that 'I wist not,' &c., is an explanation that he did not know Ananias was the high-priest. But here again opinions differ as to *why* he did not know this: some questioning (but on insufficient grounds) whether Ananias was then legally in office; others thinking that Paul's long absence would account for his ignorance (but the *seat* of Ananias in the council would reveal his office); others that, owing to his weak sight, or some other cause, Paul did not notice *which* of the judges gave the insulting order, but addressed the rebuke to the unknown speaker whoever he was. This last solution would seem reasonable, only that the expression, 'thou whited wall,' would be mere abuse if not addressed to an individual already known to be a hypocrite.

(c) Some think that the rebuke was spoken by St. Paul as God's prophet, and meant for Ananias as high-priest; that 'whited wall' is parallel with the 'whited sepulchres' of Matt. xxiii. 27; that 'God shall smite thee' is a deliberate sentence of Divine judgment, like that of Nathan upon David; and that 'I wist not' is the utterance of a solemn and transparent irony, meaning that Paul could not and would not recognise such a tyrant and hypocrite as 'God's high-priest,' and therefore that words seemingly disrespectful to the office might be rightly spoken to one who degraded the office. To this view it may be objected that the explanation of ver. 5 is rather forced.

After much consideration and comparison of authorities, the writer confesses himself unable to make up his mind on the point; but he rather inclines to (c), which view is ably argued by Stier and Baumgarten, and well put in the S.P.C.K. Commentary, but opposed by Bishop Wordsworth, who adopts (a), by Alford, who adopts the last of those under (b), and by many other writers. Dean Howson leaves the question undecided.

5. St. Paul's appeal to the Pharisees against the Sadducees must not be understood as a

mere device for securing his own safety. He had come to Jerusalem 'to reconcile the sincere Jews, if possible, to the Gospel as the fulfilment of the Law. He desired to prove himself a faithful Israelite by his very testimony to Him whom God had raised from the dead. Both these objects might be promoted by an appeal to the nobler professions of the Pharisees, whose *creed*, as distinguished from that of the Sadducees, was still, as it had ever been, his own. Of that creed, faith in the risen Lord was the true fulfilment. He wished to lead his brother Pharisees into a deeper and more living apprehension of their own faith; and seeing now the hopelessness of gaining over the Sadducees, he made a last appeal to the party of which there remained any hope' (*Smith's Student's N. T. Hist.*, p. 463).

An admirable sermon on 'Christian Prudence,' as manifested by St. Paul on this occasion, and also in joining in the Nazarete ceremonies, in making his conciliatory speech to the mob, and in pleading his 'citizenship,' occurs in Vaughan's *Church of the First Days*, ii. p. 190.

On the Sadducees and their tenets, see 'Life of Our Lord,' Lesson LXXVII., Note 2.

## Lesson XLI.—Jewish Conspirators and Roman Protectors.

*'The powers that be are ordained of God.'*

*Read*—Parts of Acts xxiii., xxiv., xxv.; *Learn*—Ps. xxxvii. 32, 33; Isa. liv. 17. (*Hymns*, 18, 156, 180, 192, 194, 243, 298—300, 304, 370, 380, 382.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

The question might naturally be asked, Why is so large a section of the Acts taken up with detailed accounts of the circumstances which followed St. Paul's arrest at Jerusalem, and led to his being sent to Rome? The answer seems to be twofold: first, because the fact of St. Paul's going to Rome was so important that everything relating to it needed to be recorded (see Introductory Note 'On the Book of the Acts'); secondly, to shew the over-ruling power and wisdom of God in the whole relation of the Roman dominion and laws to the spread of the Gospel. This latter point is the subject of the present Lesson, and, in the following Sketch, the different occasions on which we see the influence of Rome upon the life and work of St. Paul are brought into one view, in order that it may be understood once for all. The moral might be drawn from the narrative immediately before us in chap. xxiii. even if taken alone, but it is much more impressive when one instance of 'Roman protection' is multiplied by ten.

The next two Lessons will gain much by the completeness of this one. The outline of the external events being given here, and their general significance pointed out, the way is left open to dwell more fully, on the following Sundays, upon the solemn teachings of the two great contrasts, Felix and St. Paul, and Agrippa and St. Paul.

The two points of application suggested below, both flow naturally from the subject; but if time should run short, it may be better to take the first alone, not only because of its intrinsic importance, but because our Sunday-school lessons do not often give us an opportunity of dwelling on the sacredness of even human laws, the duty of obeying and honouring those in authority, and the religious obligation of being loyal subjects of the sovereign. It would scarcely be irrelevant, if the teacher were to go on to shew that if 'the powers that be are ordained of God,' it cannot be wrong for the State to recognise religion by the Establishment of the Church.

### SKETCH OF LESSON.

Were the various countries to which we have followed St. Paul ruled by different kings? Everywhere we find only 'governors' or 'magistrates'—why? Because all belonged to one great empire—all under one sovereign at Rome. A king for a short time in Judæa (Acts xii. 1), but he could only reign there by permission of Romans.



Even Britain then only distant province under Roman governor (like India now under English one).

Was this good or bad for progress of Gospel? (a) Easier for Apostles to travel about, when all under one rule—no wars or different customs to interrupt. (b) Romans liked 'fair-play'—their laws good laws (some of *ours* come down from them)—would not punish a man without fair trial—did not persecute men for their religion (at least not *then*—they did in later years).

But it had not been so for long, and it had never been so before. Nations all separate, and always fighting, till Romans conquered them. So, a good thing that the Gospel had to be preached just at that time. But how came it so? Because God had been watching everything all along—making all that happened 'work together' to do what He willed; then, when 'fulness of time come,' 'sent forth His Son' (Gal. iv. 4).

Now have we not seen how Roman government and Roman laws helped St. Paul in his work? Think—

1. *At Philippi*. True, he suffered there; but that not the fault of the laws, but of the magistrates who acted illegally. If he had thought it right, could have avoided that suffering—how? By appealing to a Roman law; and when he *did*, what came of it? Acts xvi. 37—39. [See Lesson XXIX., Note 8.]

2. *At Corinth*. When Jews accused him there, saved by Roman 'fair-play'; Gallio would not punish for religion—only for breaking laws; Acts xviii. 12—16.

And in our last two lessons:—

3. How saved from that tumult in Temple-courts? xxi. 31—35.

4. How saved from cruel scourging? xxii. 25—29,—although the Roman officer going to torture him, Roman law protected him. [See last Lesson, Note 1].

5. How saved from being torn to pieces in the Council? xxiii. 10.

*Five deliverances—all due to Roman government, and justice of Roman laws. To-day we shall see five more:—*

6. What danger to God's servants does our first text for rep. speak of? St. Paul had been in danger many times before from Jewish conspirators, but the worst of all now. Read xxiii. 12, 13. Let us see,—(a) *Why this plot?* His enemies so enraged because the trial before the Council failed [last Lesson]. (b) *Who were in the plot?* Only the forty assassins? ver. 14—even the grave priests and scribes! (c) *What kind of plot was it?* *Cruel*—for what was their intention? *Cunning*—they knew no chance of getting at Paul while safe in the castle—how then? ver. 15. *Resolute*—they knew the risk they ran—Roman soldiers prompt and strong—but cost what it might, the thing must be done—see the dreadful oath, ver. 12 [Note 1].

But what did they forget? Ps. x. 14;

Prov. xix. 21. And the Lord who 'stood by' Paul the night before [last Lesson] took care that some one should find out the plot. Who? ver. 16. Read how Paul's nephew told Lysias, and what wise and prompt orders Lysias gave, ver. 17—24. [On the letter, see Note 2.]

Dead of night—strong body of Roman soldiers (how many?) marching out of city gates, away over hills of Benjamin, ver. 31—36. All to take care of *one* Jewish prisoner—why? Because a 'Roman citizen'—Rome bound to protect him—must not spare all that force to maintain laws and just rights.

7. How provoked the Jews next day! What does Lysias answer to their request? see ver. 30—they can't have Paul before them now—safe at Cæsarea—let them accuse him there if they like. No time lost: five days after, there they are before the governor, with a hired Roman lawyer to 'conduct the prosecution,' xxiv. 1. Next Sunday see the charges, and Paul's defence; but what result? ver. 22, 23. Felix sees well enough he is not guilty—law can't condemn him. Jews once more baffled by Roman justice.

8. Why, then, Paul not released? Here again, not the law's fault—only because Felix a bad man: ver. 26 shows he could (and therefore ought to) have released Paul, and why he did not. How long Paul kept chained? ver. 27—two whole years in the soldiers' barracks at Cæsarea. [See Note 4]. What a weary time for him! How miserably wasted, he might think! Ah, but God knew best—perhaps he needed quiet and rest. And not only heathen soldiers with him—friends could visit him—no doubt Luke, Timothy, Philip and his four daughters (xxi. 8, 9)—perhaps the converted Roman officer (x. 1) there still. And suppose he had been released—very likely murdered by Jews. All that while safe under Roman protection.

9. A new governor now instead of Felix, xxiv. 27. See what comes of this: Jews have never forgotten that hated prisoner—just as cruel and cunning after two long years—a fresh conspiracy! see xxv. 1, 2. But again, Paul saved by just laws of Rome, ver. 4, 5, 16.

10. Another trial now at Cæsarea, ver. 6—8; the old charges again—Paul again on his defence. But a fresh danger, ver. 9—Festus yielding to the Jews. And once more, Paul saved by the law. See his words, ver. 10, 11—'I appeal unto Cæsar.' Prisoner had only to say that, and no governor or magistrate could touch him—must send him away to Rome, to be judged by the Emperor himself [see Note 6]. Festus will not dare to violate that great law—must attend to it—Paul safe. Yes, and he is to go to Rome, as he so much wished, and as the Lord promised him. And all brought about by Roman law and government!

Now observe, all these deliverances not because the rulers good *men*. Sometimes, in Old Testament, God's servants favoured by good kings, &c., like Joseph's Pharaoh. Not so here. Many of the Roman rulers wicked—Felix particularly (as we shall see in next Lesson). The Emperor himself, to whom Paul appealed, was Nero, one of the worst men that ever lived. But they had good laws, and (generally) governed accordingly. So we see,—

### I. WHAT A GREAT BLESSING A GOOD GOVERNMENT IS.

And that was a heathen one, too. Then how much better off are we in a Christian country! English kings and rulers have not always been good; but are they not *now*? And then the *laus* good, and they are *kept to*—much better even than those of Rome. When you thank God for 'all the blessings of this life' (*Gen. Thanksg.*), don't forget this one.

What is our duty to 'the Queen, and all that are put in authority under her'? (a) 'Honour and obey' them (*Catechism*); see Prov. xxiv. 21; Rom. xiii. 1, 7; Tit. iii. 1; 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14, 17. (b) Pray for them, 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2. So we do in church: for the Queen [*refer to the prayers*]; for the 'Lords of the Council', and 'magistrates'

(*Litany*); for Parliament (*Prayer for High Court of P.*); for all in authority (*Prayer for Church Militant*).

But many think themselves very loyal, who don't always obey the laws. But only those who obey have a right to sing,

'May she defend our laws,  
And ever give us cause  
To sing with heart and voice,  
God save the Queen.'

### II. HOW GOD ORDERS ALL THINGS.

Did the Romans know what they were doing when they protected Paul? What can we see which they could not see? *God's guiding hand*—His purposes fulfilled by those who knew nothing of them. So God used Pharaoh's daughter to save Moses, Cyrus to restore the Jews, &c.

But, earthly powers not always on side of God's people. Never mind—*God always is*, Rom. viii. 28, 31. St. Paul's citizenship gave him protection for a time; but he had a greater citizenship than that—belonged to heavenly city, a subject of the King of kings (Eph. ii. 19; Phil. iii. 20; Heb. xi. 10, 16, xii. 22; xiii. 14); therefore always safe, in life or in death. Are we safe as he was? Is the second text for rep. true of us?

### NOTES.

1. The forty conspirators were very likely Sicarii (see Lesson XXXIX., Note 6). 'Bound themselves under a curse,' literally 'anathematized themselves.' The same word is used of Peter's cursing, Mark xiv. 71. Such oaths were not uncommon among the Jews; but absolution for the non-performance of them could be obtained from any Rabbi.

2. The letter of Lysias to Felix would probably be written in Latin, the language of all official papers, and its terse style even in the Greek is considered to reveal its Latin origin. The form of address, 'To the most excellent governor,' probably gives the official title, as the words 'most noble,' applied by Tertullus to Felix (xxiv. 3), and by St. Paul to Festus (xxvi. 25), are the same in the Greek. Hence Howson suggests that Theophilus, to whom St. Luke addressed his Gospel and the Acts, held official rank, being also called 'most excellent' (Luke i. 3). The governors of our colonies bear the similar title of 'His Excellency.'

The statement of Lysias in ver. 27, 'having understood that he was a Roman,' is evidently a dexterous falsehood to avoid confessing that he had nearly scourged a Roman citizen.

Baumgarten observes, 'We need not wonder that St. Luke thought it worth while somehow to procure for himself this document. . . . Even the Old Testament writers are particularly anxious to communicate, in an authentic form, the orders and arrangements of the kingdoms of the world which are favourable to Israel (see Dan. iv.; Esth. viii. 10—13; Ezra i. 2—4, vi. 1—12, vii. 11—26). All such decrees are evidently so very remarkable for this reason, that they are a proof of the secret power which God exercises over the rulers of this world.'

3. The route of the soldiers and their prisoner from Jerusalem to Caesarea is minutely and picturesquely described by Howson (O. & H. ii., chap. xxi., p. 330). On Caesarea, see Lesson XVIII., Note 1.

4. During the two years of St. Paul's detention at Caesarea, he was in what was technically called 'military custody,' as distinguished from 'public custody,' which was confinement in the common gaol (as at Philippi), and from 'free custody,' a very mild form of detention only permitted to men of high rank. In the case of 'military custody,' the prisoner was kept always chained by his right hand to the left hand of a soldier, who was responsible for the safety of his charge, and incurred death if the latter escaped. Sometimes, under this guard, a prisoner was allowed to live at a private house, as St. Paul did at Rome (xxviii. 16, 20, 30). It appears from xxiv. 23, that Felix gave Paul as much indulgence as the rules of 'military custody' permitted, and particularly the important privilege of being visited by his friends; but that the *chain* was not dispensed with is clear from xxiv. 27, xxv. 14, xxvi. 29.

5. On Felix, the speech of Tertullus, St. Paul's defence, &c., see the Notes to next Lesson.

6. The right of appeal to the Emperor was one of the most important of the privileges of a 'Roman citizen,' as it protected him from the arbitrary judgments of local governors. No written petition or other legal form was required; the simple utterance of the word '*Appello*' immediately suspended all proceedings. There is an interesting note on the subject in Smith's *Student's N. T. Hist.* p. 471.

Neither Cæsar nor Augustus (xxv. 21) were proper names of individual emperors. The former was the family or surname of the first twelve occupants of the imperial throne, and was afterwards adopted as a title by their successors. From it came the modern titles of 'Kaiser' of Germany, and 'Czar' of Russia. 'Augustus' was also a title assumed by all the emperors. Popularly, we confine the name 'Cæsar' to Julius, and 'Augustus' to his nephew Octavius. The 'Cæsar' to whom St. Paul appealed was Nero.

## Lesson XLII.—St. Paul and Felix—An Approving Conscience and a Condemning Conscience.

*'If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.'*

Read—Acts xxiv.; Learn—1 John iii. 20, 21; Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24. (Hymns, 19. 60. 105, 111, 143, 154, 172, 175, 359.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

It is customary, in teaching on this chapter, to take Felix as the type of procrastination in religion. To do so, however, it is necessary to strain unduly the force of the expression, 'convenient season'; for, in the sense in which Felix used the words, it is incorrect to say (as is usually said) that 'the season never came' (see ver. 26). Moreover, there is no connection between such an application and the narrative as a whole: the chapter has to be nearly finished before the lesson to be enforced comes in view at all; and it is always well, as far as possible, to let the entire passage lead up to the application. In the present case, there is no difficulty in observing this rule: St. Paul's allusion to his strivings after 'a conscience void of offence' throws into vivid contrast the uneasy conscience of Felix, as revealed by his 'trembling'; and thus the two great figures in the picture are made to stand out (as it were) in bold relief one against the other, while the unmoved hardness of Drusilla—which, though not stated, certainly seems implied—comes in to clench the application with unexpected force.

The subject is peculiarly appropriate to the young, because (as was observed on Lesson LXXXII. of the 'Life of Our Lord') the characteristic mark of childish religion is undoubtedly *tenderness of conscience*, often amounting to scrupulosity. It is often the case that an act which appears to us as an infinitesimal fault has really been done against the clear voice of youthful conscience, and is therefore a serious sin. Now, although the attention of Sunday-scholars is apt to flag when the narrative, or the picture, or the anecdote merges into the application, this is because the application is usually vague and commonplace. Let it be direct and definite—i.e., let it touch their actual daily circumstances and thoughts and feelings,—and it will very often excite keen and manifest interest. And it should be so in this Lesson, because children *know*, by personal daily experience, what conscience is.

Students of Butler's *Analogy* will find it a help, even in teaching Sunday-scholars, to recal the argument of the famous 5th chapter, on 'the weakening of passive impressions by repetition,' and to adapt it by means of some such illustration as this:—You desire to rise early: you set an alarm to wake you at the right time; but, *if you pay no attention to it*, the sound will every morning become more familiar and less startling, until at length it ceases to wake you at all; *so with Conscience*. Those who happen to possess the *Church Sunday School Magazine* for 1865 (now out of print) will find some suggestions on this point, by the present writer, in chap. 7 of 'A Teacher's Gatherings from Butler's *Analogy*.' Bishop Butler's Three Sermons on Human Nature are also a great authority on the subject of Conscience.

The result of 'exercising oneself to have a conscience void of offence' cannot be better illustrated than by Mr. Spurgeon's anecdote of the servant-girl, who mentioned, as an evidence of her conversion, that '*now she swept under the mats.*'

### SKETCH OF LESSON.

Henry and Robert go out for a walk—ordered by father not to go near 'that river,' or beyond 'those gates'—Henry obeys faithfully—Robert thinks, 'What harm?' and disobeys. Return home—Henry's face bright and happy—Robert tries to look so, but can't—afraid to meet father's eye (though father knows nothing)—turns red if any one mentions river or gates—quite uneasy. What is it that makes Robert uneasy? Knowing he has done wrong? But what keeps reminding him of his fault, so that he can't forget it?

*It is Conscience:* that voice inside you which is always telling you what is right and wrong—making you feel easy or uneasy about what you do and say. Henry's conscience *approved* what he had done—made him happy; Robert's *condemned* him—made him unhappy. See both these in our lesson to-day.

### I. AN APPROVING CONSCIENCE.

We are in the Roman governor's court of judgment at Cæsarea. Felix on 'the bench'—who at 'the bar'? who the 'pro-

secutor'? who 'counsel for the prosecution'? ver. 1 [see Note 3]. Three charges against the prisoner, ver. 5, 6:—(a) *rebellion*—'a mover of sedition'—stirring up Jews against Romans—(about as true as the charge against Jesus, Luke xxiii. 2, 5); (b) *heresy*—'ringleader of Nazarenes'—(same charge as at Corinth, Acts xviii. 13); (c) *sacrilege*—'to profane the Temple'—(how? xxi. 28, 29).

Now see Paul's defence, ver. 10—21. To the first charge, 'not guilty,' ver. 11—13. To the second, ver. 14—16:—confesses he does belong to that hated sect, but denies that there is anything guilty in this. To the third, 'not guilty,' ver. 17, 18. [See Note 4.]

All this St. Paul might have said with pale face and trembling voice—nervous about the result: was it so? see ver. 10—'cheerfully'—why? Because innocent; and if he did suffer, nothing to be ashamed of, see 1 Pet. iv. 15, 16. Like Henry (above), he had an *approving conscience*.

See what he says of his conscience, ver. 16:—

(a) '*Void of offence toward God and man.*' A conscience not offended by anything we have done!—not blaming us for disobedience, or forgetfulness, or want of love, towards God,—for selfishness, or unkindness, or wrong, towards men. What a blessing! See what it is called: 'a pure conscience,' 1 Tim. iii. 9; 'a good conscience,' Acts xxiii. 1; 1 Tim. i. 19; Heb. xiii. 18.

(b) '*Always.*' Not enough to have good and pure conscience one week, and 'break out' the next. Only way to be happy is to have it always.

(c) '*I exercise myself.*' Was St. Paul's conscience quite clear? Was he perfect? See what he says of himself in his old age, Phil. iii. 12; 1 Tim. i. 15. But he *tried*—he 'exercised himself'—i.e., he *practised*. Can you write well, or do sums quickly, or play on an instrument or at a game, without *practice*? And to keep our conscience 'always void of offence' is just the very hardest thing in the world. So we must be always watching, praying, 'exercising.' Even then, how only can we succeed? comp. John xv. 5 with Phil. iv. 13.

(d) '*Herein.*' What does that mean? 'In this'—in what? see verse before—in *hope of the resurrection*. Paul might often be weary of struggling against sin—feel he *must* give way (do we not feel so?)—but then he thought of the great Day coming—knew he could only be 'saved' then if—look at Matt. xxiv. 13.

## II. A CONDEMNING CONSCIENCE.

Felix cannot condemn Paul—sees clearly enough he is not guilty; but will he release him? He *ought*: but wants not to offend the Jews (ver. 27)—and thinks, too, if Paul such a leader, will not his friends be willing to *pay* for his release?—thus may make money by him (ver. 26). So

decision put off, ver. 22; and Paul in custody (as we saw last time) for two years.

But Felix interested in his prisoner. Knows something of the Christians [see Note 5]—some of his own soldiers belonged to them (see Acts x.)—would like to hear what this great 'ringleader' has to say.

See Felix and Drusilla sitting in state—guards and officers around them—listening to a plain, humble man with chains on his wrists. Watch them—one of those three trembling. Is it the prisoner, trembling at coming punishment? No, he is speaking boldly and without fear. Is it Drusilla, a weak woman frightened by his stern preaching? No, *she* cares not what he may say. It is the governor himself!

Felix trembling! Why? Because *his conscience* is troubling him. See what Paul spoke about, ver. 25. (a) *Righteousness*—doing right in sight of God and man: and Conscience reminds Felix how he murdered the Jewish high-priest, and has treated multitudes with cruelty; how he has for bribes released bad men from prison, and for want of them kept good men there—injustice both ways. (b) *Temperance*—governing oneself—not letting evil passions break out—not indulging wicked thoughts and wrong wishes—keeping the body in temperance, soberness, and chastity' (Catechism); and Conscience reminds Felix how he got *that wife* [see Note 2]—enticing her away from her first husband simply because he liked her—no matter who was wronged by it—only cared for himself. (c) *Judgment to come*—on whom? see Eccl. xi. 9, xii. 14; Rom. ii. 6—9; 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10; Gal. v. 19—21; 2 Thess. i. 8; Rev. xxi. 8. And Conscience tells Felix that he deserves God's terrible judgment. No wonder he trembles!

What will he do? Cry as the jailor did (xvi. 30)? Ah no! he crushes the rising thought, silences the voice of Conscience, puts off thinking of such disagreeable things. See his words, ver. 25. Did the 'convenient season' come for talking to Paul? Yes, many times—but what did he talk about when it came? ver. 26. It was *never* 'convenient' to repent of his sins and turn to God.

*Is it bad to have a Condemning Conscience?* There is a worse thing even than that—*To have a Conscience which ought to condemn you, but does not.*

Why did Drusilla not tremble? Because she had an approving conscience? No: if Felix was bad, she was worse: he did tremble, she was too reckless to tremble. Worse than Joseph's brethren, or Ahab, or Herod Antipas, or even Judas! (Gen. xlii. 21; 1 Kings xxi. 27; Mark vi. 20; Matt. xxvii. 4.) How so? Had God given her no Conscience? Yes, all have it. But she had been deaf to its voice for so long, that now it had ceased to speak! See what St. Paul says of such, 1 Tim. iv. 2—'having

their consciences seared with a hot iron'; and so, Eph. iv. 19, 'being *past feeling*.'

Nothing so grievous in boys and girls as a 'don't-care' spirit—no shame even when found out in sin—laughing at parents' tears and teachers' prayers. Does your conscience warn you when you are going to sin? Does it trouble you when you have sinned? Then be thankful for its voice, and ask God to make it still more powerful. Then two things:—

(a) When Conscience convinces you of sin, remember our first text for rep., and seek pardon at once. How? see Heb. ix. 14, x. 22.

(b) Try—try hard—'exercise yourself,' as St. Paul did—to keep Conscience 'void of offence.' Pray the 2nd text for rep.—

'Quick as the apple of an eye  
O God! my conscience make;  
Awake my soul when sin is nigh,  
And keep it still awake.'

#### NOTES.

1. The character of Felix, as depicted in this chapter, is in accordance with what we know of him from secular history. He was of servile birth, and the historian Tacitus describes him as 'wielding kingly power with the disposition of a slave, disgracing it by all manner of cruelty and lust.' He showed some vigour in suppressing brigandage (hence the compliment in ver. 2), but he procured the murder of the high-priest Jonathan, to gratify his personal revenge. He had been procurator six years at this time. He was recalled two years after to answer certain charges brought against him of conniving at a massacre of the Jews at Caesarea, but was acquitted through the influence of his brother Pallas with the Emperor Nero.

Felix was not the only governor of Judæa who tried to enrich himself by getting bribes to release prisoners (ver. 26). Albinus, who succeeded Festus, was guilty of this meanness.

The date of the recall of Felix, which can be fixed from secular history with tolerable certainty, in A.D. 60, is one of the pivot dates of Biblical chronology. From it, together with that of the death of Herod Agrippa (A.D. 44), all the dates in the Acts are calculated. See Norris, *Key to the Acts*, p. 155.

2. Drusilla was daughter of Herod Agrippa I., and sister of Agrippa II. and Bernice. See Lesson XX., Note 1. She was enticed away by Felix from her lawful husband, Azizus, King of Emesa, with the aid of a magician named Simon (supposed to be Simon Magus). She, and her son by Felix, perished in the great eruption of Vesuvius which overthrew Pompeii and Herculaneum.

3. Tertullus was evidently one of the Roman advocates who were accustomed to 'go on circuit' (as we should call it) in the provinces, by way of practising for the keener legal contests at the capital. He probably spoke in Latin, as the official language, and his speech has a peculiarly Latin construction. His three leading points are shown in the Sketch. His sycophantic flattery of such a man as Felix, and his unscrupulous abuse of such a prisoner as St. Paul, should be noticed. Ver. 6 reveals the nature of his application to the governor: the Jews wanted Paul to be delivered up to them, on the pretence of 'judging him according to their law.'

4. The defence of St. Paul is singularly complete. His allusion to the long time that Felix had been in Judæa is an appeal to the latter's personal knowledge that he had been no 'mover of sedition.' On the contrary he had been absent abroad, and had only arrived at Jerusalem twelve days ago—five of which (ver. 1) had been spent in Roman custody. What time, then, had there been for these crimes charged against him? Why, he had not even been engaged in the most harmless 'disputing' (ver. 12). With regard to the second charge, he acknowledges (ver. 3) that he *does* belong to the sect named ('heresy' is the same word in the Greek as in ver. 5, and should

be translated as there, 'sect'); but he still worships the same God, and believes the law and the prophets: therefore he claims the usual Roman toleration enjoyed by other 'sects,' like the Pharisees and Sadducees. Then, turning to the third charge, he affirms that, so far from having profaned the Temple, he was engaged in one of its strictest ceremonies at the very time of his arrest. Finally he skilfully appeals to the well-known principle of the Roman law, that the accusers should be those who had seen the offence (ver. 19); 'but, if the Sanhedrim ('these same here,' ver. 20) are my accusers, let them speak of what they know: did they in their own council find me guilty of any crime?—unless they call belief in the resurrection a crime, which (ver. 15) they themselves also allow.'

5. Ver. 22 means that Felix, from his long residence at Caesarea, was too well acquainted with Christianity ('that way') to be deceived by the misrepresentations of the Jews.

6. There are various ways of reckoning the 'twelve days' of which St. Paul speaks. It depends upon how many of the 'seven days' of purification (xxi. 27) had elapsed when St. Paul was arrested, and where the 'five days' of xxiv. 1 begin. The most probable reckoning seems to be that adopted by Lange and Wordsworth, viz.:—1st day, Arrival at Jerusalem; 2nd, Interview with the elders; 3rd, Beginning of the 'seven days'; 7th, The 'seven days almost ended'—the arrest; 8th, Before the Council; 9th, Conspiracy—departure by night; 10th, Arrival at Caesarea; 13th, Trial—on the *fifth day* after the departure from Jerusalem.

7. Conscience is thus defined by Dr. Vaughan (*Ch. of First Days*, iii. p. 250):—'Conscience—the word I mean—denotes a fellow-knowledge; a knowledge shared with another, and yet that other oneself. St. Paul says, in one of his Epistles, 'I know nothing by myself': it is properly 'with myself': I have no fellow-knowledge with myself of anything to be ashamed of. That fellow-knowledge is Conscience. Conscience is a man's privacy to his own conduct, in thought and word and deed. Out of this all its workings and all its effects spring. *I know with myself*. I am so made that I cannot help this fellow-knowledge. I must perforce take cognizance of my own actions, and sit in judgment upon my own secret thoughts. This is Conscience.'

The word Conscience occurs more than thirty times in the N. T., and of these more than twenty are in St. Paul's writings.

8. In preaching to Felix, St. Paul's object was to convince of sin. He desired the law to be the 'schoolmaster' to bring his hearers to Christ (Gal. iii. 24). He acted on the principle of 2 Cor. v. 11—'Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.' To have at once proclaimed the good news of free forgiveness through Christ to such auditors would have been 'casting pearls before swine.'

## Lesson XLIII.—St. Paul, Festus, and Agrippa—Fettered Hands and Fettered Hearts.

*'An ambassador in bonds.'*

*Read*—Parts of Acts xxv., xxvi.; *Learn*—Rom. vii. 23, 24; John viii. 34, 36. (*Hymns*, 93, 108, 126, 151, 167, 330, 340.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

In two respects this Lesson works out like the preceding one. First, there is in each a conventional line of application to be deviated from: in the former, that based on the words 'a convenient season'; in the latter, the familiar warning to the 'almost Christian.' Neither of these lines—however important in themselves—can be followed without straining unduly the real force of the words (on the latter, see Note 6); and even if this were not so, a long passage has in each case to be gone through before the point of application is reached. Secondly, the best way of applying both subjects seems to be by exhibiting the contrast between St. Paul and his judges; and all risk of sameness is avoided by confining ourselves to the specific points of contrast indicated in the respective titles of the two Lessons.

Joseph John Gurney's Essay *On Habit* is a book to be met with in many parochial or institute libraries. Those who refer to it will find not a little to help them in unfolding the idea of a 'fettered heart.' The very word 'habit' suggests that which *habet*, *has*, a man—holds him fast in its grasp.

This Lesson can easily be lengthened or shortened at pleasure, by entering more or less fully—or not at all—into the argument of St. Paul's speech. It will interest elder scholars; and teachers who propose to take it up will probably find sufficient guidance in the brief summary at the beginning of Division I., and in Notes 3—5.

If the teacher should have failed, for want of time, to get through the incidents of chap. xxv. 1—12 in Lesson XLI., he will have to do so briefly at the opening of this one.

### SKETCH OF LESSON.

There is a thing which boys and girls—and men and women too—care for almost more than anything else—their *freedom*—to be their own masters, do as they like, have their own way, be independent. Do you not sometimes envy those who seem to be perfectly free? But we make mistakes about this: people *seem* free when they are not; others *seem* bound though really free. See this to-day.

The Roman governor Festus has to send Paul to Rome. Why? [*Recapitulate; see Lesson XLI.*] Has to write a letter (as Lysias wrote to Felix), to say why the prisoner is sent. But what is he to write?—can't make out what Paul has done, or why the Jews hate him so (see xxv. 18—20, 25—27). Just then, who come to Cæsarea? ver. 13. [*See Notes 1, 2.*] Come to pay respects to new governor. Agrippa half a Jew—well acquainted with Jewish religion, laws, &c.; so Festus will ask his advice about Paul, xxv. 14—21.

Agrippa curious to see this prisoner, ver. 22; no doubt plenty of gaiety at Cæsarea during royal visit—feasts, theatres, processions, &c.—now something else, great preacher to hear! Same 'pomp' for this as for other public doings, ver. 23: all some in state—many invited, military officers and leading citizens. Not to see review of troops, or races and sports, but—what? A humble Jew, 'weak in bodily

presence' (2 Cor. x. 10), worn with hardship and self-denial, getting old now (two years older than when before Felix and Drusilla), a prisoner too—this the sight before that grand company!

*Now notice a great contrast—*

What could one see about that prisoner different from every one else present? Not merely that so many of them great and rich folk, for the common soldiers like him in that matter. But look—those *fetters on his hands*—chaining him to his guards—no one else like that. In all that assembly, we should say, only one man *not free*—this the great difference.

But in saying this, we should be quite wrong! In reality, that one man *free*—most of (perhaps all) the rest *in bonds*! Let us see how.

#### I. THE MAN WITH FETTERED HANDS.

Here, in chap. xxvi., is St. Paul's speech before that great company. See what he says of himself. He tells of two periods of his life. He tells—(a) *What he once was*: a strict Pharisee, ver. 5: looking, like all the Jews, for God's great promise of a coming King and Saviour to be fulfilled, ver. 6, 7; hating and persecuting those who dared to think Jesus of Nazareth was the King, ver. 9—11. (b) *What he is now*: a believer in that very Jesus, and a missionary to tell others of Him, ver. 19—23. Why? Because he has *seen* and *heard* Him

[see Note 4], and knows that the despised 'criminal' who was killed is the risen, living, reigning Lord! Now observe,—

1. *Why is he in bonds?* Because of that great change; because of what he believes (ver. 6, 7), and what he does (ver. 20, 21). If he had remained an unbelieving, persecuting Pharisee, would those fetters have been on his hands? Why, he could have done just as he liked: see ver. 9, 10—'I thought within myself'—Which thing I also did.'

2. *But was he really free before?* What does our 2nd text for rep. say?—a sinful man is 'the servant (i.e., slave) of sin.' Are not some of us slaves to bad habits—would like to be free from them, but can't? [Illustr.—Lying, passion, laziness, drunkenness.] See also 1st text for rep. ('captivity'); 2 Tim. ii. 26 ('taken captive by the devil'); Rom. viii. 21 ('bondage of corruption'); 2 Pet. ii. 19 ('servants of corruption').

3. *And is he not free now?* See 2nd text for rep.; Rom. vi. 14, 18, 22, viii. 2, 15; Gal. iv. 7, v. 1. He has become *Christ's* slave ('servant' in Rom. i. 1 means *slave*); and found His 'yoke easy' (Matt. xi. 30), His 'service perfect freedom' (2nd Coll., Morn. Prayer). Even his hands cannot be fettered unless God permit it; and as to his soul, what can sin or Satan do to him?

## II. THE MEN WITH FETTERED HEARTS.

There sit the two rulers, the stern Roman officer, the pleasure-loving king. What do they think of this fettered man and his speech?

1. *Festus.* See ver. 24—'beside thyself'! 'mad'!—why? Because Paul talks of having seen and spoken to a man whom Pilate executed years before, and of 'showing light' to Greeks and Romans (ver. 23) by telling them of *that*!—what sensible man, what *sane* man, would talk so? Very likely Paul used to read many books during his long confinement (comp. 2 Tim. iv. 13)—perhaps (thinks Festus) all that study, that 'much learning,' has turned his brain. But see Paul's reply, ver. 25—how respectful! how manly! how reasonable! (just like 2 Tim. ii. 24—26): are these the words of a maniac? Why will not Festus believe? See the real reason in 2 Cor. iv. 4—Satan has 'blinded' him, so the Gospel seems 'foolishness' to him (1 Cor. i. 23, ii. 14).

2. *Agrippa.* Quite different from Festus—not ignorant—see what Paul reminds him of, ver. 26—he does know what wonderful things done in name of risen Jesus—the miracles and conversions not the delusion of a few silly people, 'not done in a corner.' How earnestly Paul speaks, ver. 27—if he could but win this king to Christ!

—'King Agrippa! you know these things are true—you know what God's prophets said—you believe the prophecies—why not believe in their fulfilment?' Can Agrippa speak as Festus did? can he say Paul is mad? He knows better—he feels it would not be a mad thing to believe in Jesus—and what does he say? ver. 28. What meant? That he is nearly induced to become a Christian? Ah no!—only means this: 'You think you can easily persuade me.' Agrippa a *Christian*!—he, rich and proud, join the most despised of sects!—no, it would take a great deal to persuade him to *that*. [See Note 6.]

Now think of these two men—great and powerful as they are—are they really *free*? No fetters on their hands; but are there none on their hearts? Festus fast bound in his ignorance—yes, and in another way too—Why had he not released Paul before the 'appeal'?—because *durst* not offend Jews—not *free* to do what he knew was right. Agrippa fast bound in his royal pride, and gay, sinful habits. Both needing, like the other Gentiles to whom Paul was sent, to be 'turned from the power of Satan unto God' (ver. 18).

See Paul's last word, ver. 29—what a wish to utter! The best thing the poor persecuted prisoner can wish for the rulers of the land, and all their lords, soldiers, &c., is—that they may be *what he is*! Why? Because he knows *they are slaves* to sin and Satan; knows *he is free*, longs to see them free too; knows it is Christ (2nd text for rep.) who can make them free. But what does he *not* wish? See his hands uplifted—hear the fetters clanking—no, he does not wish *that* for them—'Except these bonds'! How thoughtful and tender! How *free* from all anger or complaint!

*What would St. Paul wish for you?*

*The very same thing.* Not that you might have fetters on your hands, but that, 'except the bonds,' you might be *what he was*.

Which of you are *not* what he was? Those who have *fettered hearts*, like Festus and Agrippa. Some of you are like Festus—don't understand religion—dislike it—despise those who love and serve Christ. Some like Agrippa—feel all we tell you is true—know the right and good thing would be to 'be a Christian,' i.e., a real one—but somehow *can't*. *Why is this?* Do think—let each one try and find out for himself. You will find your hearts are *fettered*—Satan has chained them with ignorance and sin. Does rescue seem impossible? Christ *can* do it. Pray, 'Though we be tied and bound with the chain of our sins, yet let the pitifulness of Thy great mercy loose us!'

## NOTES.

1. The Agrippa of this passage was Herod Agrippa II., son of Herod Agrippa I. (the Herod of chap. xii.); see Lesson XX., Note 1. He only reigned over the northern parts of his

father's kingdom, Iturea, Abilene, &c. The original kingdom of Herod the Great (the Herod of Matt. ii.) was divided on his death among his sons, one portion, Judaea, coming soon after

under the direct Roman rule of Pilate and other governors (see Luke iii. 1). All these petty provinces were reunited under Herod Agrippa I., but again divided at his death: Judea, Samaria, and part of Galilee, being retained by the Romans and governed by Felix, Festus, &c., and the rest being given to the young Agrippa. Though zealously devoted to Judaism, Agrippa was distrusted by the Jews on account of his Roman tastes and sympathies; and when the last war broke out, which he vainly attempted to prevent, he sided with the Romans, and took part in the siege of Jerusalem.

2. Bernice was the sister of Agrippa, as was also Drusilla. She was very beautiful, and the history of her life is a succession of scandals. Titus, the conqueror of Jerusalem, wished to make her his empress, but even a Roman populace was roused to indignation by the proposal, and it was abandoned.

3. The following paraphrase of St. Paul's speech, from Vaughan's *Church of the First Days* (iii., p. 324) will assist teachers in explaining its argument:—

'It is I—it is not my accusers—who adhere to the faith of my fathers. For the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain. Once I interpreted that faith as they do. None so bitter once as I against the name and the discipleship of Jesus. I was a persecutor. I took long journeys to persecute. I was on a persecuting mission at the moment of my great change. How that change came to me you shall hear. I was not predisposed to it: every single habit of my life, every fixed and rooted principle of my mind, was against it. Yet I was convinced, I was converted, I was changed. And how! By the direct intervention and interposition of Him whom I was declaring to be a dead man. He stopped me, He spake to me, He commissioned, and He sent me. Take into account the man and the life; take into account the circumstances preceding, attending, and following; remember what I was, and what I am; see me changed from a persecutor into an Apostle; behold me giving up ease and fame, liberty and life, in the maintenance of a faith which once I set myself to destroy; and you cannot say there is nothing in it. Now you have what you wanted: somewhat to write about me to your lord. These are the causes of all this hostility. It is for believing what I know, and witnessing what I have seen, concerning Christ, the hope of Israel, that the Jews seized and

would kill me. But God has thus far helped me. I continue this day firm in the revelations of Moses and the Prophets, concerning Him who by resurrection from the dead should become both a light to lighten the Gentiles, and also the glory of His people Israel.'

4. It should be noticed how careful St. Paul is to show that the appearance of Christ to him could not be an illusion. The light, he affirms, was brighter than the sun, and that at mid-day. The language spoken to him was one he recognised immediately as Hebrew. And he was addressed by name.

5. In ver. 16—18, St. Paul condenses into a single sentence the substance of what was said to him by the Lord as he lay on the ground, by Ananias in Damascus, and by the Lord afterwards at Jerusalem; see ix. 6, 15, xxii. 14, 15, 21. 'Nor can this,' observes Alford, 'be considered any deviation from truth. It is what all must, more or less, do who are abridging a narrative, or giving the general sense of things said at various times. There were reasons for his being minute and particular in the details of his conversion; that once related, the commission he thereupon received is not followed into its details, but summed up as committed to him by the Lord Himself.'

6. The famous words, 'Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian,' are agreed by almost all expositors not to represent the original accurately. Literally it is, 'In a little (*ἐν ὀλίγῳ*, *en oligo*) thou persuadest,' &c. Bishop Wordsworth renders it, 'In a trice thou art persuading me to be a Christian!'—as if spoken scornfully. Alford has, 'With small persuasion thou thinkest,' &c. Dr. Vaughan thus paraphrases it: 'To become a Christian!—to forfeit perhaps fortune, and rank, and royal title, and become the disciple of a despised Nazarene—the brother and the fellow of an outcast like thee—that's somewhat sudden—thy words must needs be persuasive if they counsel that! Such sudden changes may do for thee, a common Jew, an enthusiastic, impulsive, hasty man, converted by a sunbeam, by a voice, by a vision: they are not for me!'

7. Ver. 32—'This man might have been set at liberty,' &c. St. Paul's appeal to Cæsar (see Lesson XLi., Note 6) took his case entirely out of the jurisdiction of the governor. Festus could neither punish nor release him now—only send him to the capital as speedily as possible.

## Lesson XLIV.—The Voyage—An Example of Christian Influence.

'Lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.'

Read—Acts xxvii. 1—38; Learn—Ps. cvii. 23—26; Isa. xxvi. 3; 1 Pet. ii. 12. (*Hymns.* 9, 21, 47, 197, 198, 290, 291, 363, 366, 371, 379, 380.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

Much preparation will be needed for this Lesson. The teacher should thoroughly 'get up' all the nautical details of the voyage—which, if worthy to be recorded in an inspired book, must certainly be worthy of being studied by readers of that book. Not that every detail need be communicated to the scholars; but every effort should be made to give them a most vivid idea of the dangers, terrors, and privations of the voyage, and this can only be done by one who has followed every incident of it intelligently with his mental eye. The great authority on the subject is Mr. James Smith's exhaustive work, *The Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul*; but Conybeare and Howson's account (from which almost all the particulars in the Notes are derived) is quite full enough for all



ordinary students. It is believed, however, that a careful perusal of the Sketch and Notes, with due study of the map at the beginning of this volume, and the two small plans subjoined, will prove sufficient for the information of most teachers. Those who can give their classes their own personal experience of rough weather at sea, or who, failing that, can relate or refer to the story of some shipwreck, will no doubt find the Lesson work all the more easily.

The plan adopted in the Sketch is to go right through the narrative of the voyage (up to the anchoring on the fourteenth night) first, and afterwards to go back and take up all together the incidents which exhibit St. Paul's position and influence on board—which then glide imperceptibly into the application. The subject of influence is a large one, and there is scarcely any limit to the variety of points which might be urged upon children respecting it. The hints given in the Sketch must be understood as necessarily few and meagre.

#### SKETCH OF LESSON.

When you are starting on a journey, are you not generally bright and happy? You think of where you are going, or what you will see on your way. Do you ever think that perhaps you may not reach the end of it? Accidents may occur [*illustrate*] even in day's excursion—how much more in long journey to distant land! A good prayer in the Litany, 'That it may please Thee to preserve all that travel by land or by water.'

To-day follow St. Paul on a very dangerous voyage.

(1) *Ver.* 1—3. Down from the military barracks at Cæsarea to the harbour—on board ship. We have seen Paul embarking on the sea many times, but never like this before—how so? A prisoner now—in chains with other prisoners (like his Master, 'numbered with the transgressors,' Isa. liii. 12; Mark xv. 28). Whither going? Why? [*recapitulate.*] Does he like going? see Acts xix. 21; Rom. i. 10, 11, xv. 23; rather go in custody than not at all. And he has some comforts: two friends with him (*ver.* 2—'we' and 'us' showing Luke there); a kind Roman officer in charge (*ver.* 3); Christ's promise to cheer him (xxiii. 11).

(2) *Ver.* 4—6. See the way they sail [*show map; see Note 3*]: on the right Paul can see familiar mountains of his native Cilicia; on the left, the island where he first went as a missionary (xiii. 4). Ship not going to Rome—can only take them part of way [*see Note 2*]; but at Myra find a large ship from Egypt carrying corn to Italy [*see Note 4*]—go in that.

(3) *Ver.* 7—13. Contrary wind—ship can't get on; at last, instead of sailing away westward, with hopes of soon landing her cargo in Italy, anchored in harbour far out of her course, waiting for change of wind, *ver.* 8. [*See Note 5.*] But meanwhile time going on—summer just over—can't go such a long voyage in winter months [*see Note 6*]—what to be done? What does Paul advise? *ver.* 9, 10. But if impossible to reach Italy now, sailors would like a better place to spend winter in, *ver.* 12; capital place a little further on—try and get in there. [*See Note 7.*] Presently just what they want, a soft south wind—

off they go merrily—'Who cares for what this Jew prisoner says? what can he know about it?'

(4) *Ver.* 14—19. Suddenly, a violent gale from the north-east, coming down off the mountains right on to them [*see Note 8*]. No sailing against that—ship blown quite back. Sailors now hard at work fighting against the storm. See what done: first, take in the boat dragging behind—and that not easy, *ver.* 16; then, great ropes passed under ship to prevent her falling to pieces, *ver.* 17; then, all rigging not wanted taken down, *ver.* 17; then, next day, throwing all useless things overboard, to make ship less likely to sink, *ver.* 18; then, on third day, even useful things must be thrown out, and even the prisoners made to help, *ver.* 19 ('we')—no doubt Paul's fetters off now. [*See Note 9.*]

(5) *Ver.* 20. Just think of their situation. A great vessel, with 276 people on board (*ver.* 37), perfectly helpless—tossed up and down on the waves, wind howling, sea dashing in—every one wet and cold—cooking impossible, and no heart to eat (*see ver.* 21, 33)—sky so black that no sun to be seen by day or stars by night, and sailors can't tell where they are, or whither drifting. Surely all this bad enough for one day—each minute seeming an hour in the misery and terror—each hour, oh, how long! But when day and night, night and day, go by, until a whole fortnight passed (*ver.* 27), and storm as bad as ever, no wonder 'all hope taken away'! See a picture of such a scene, Ps. cvii. 26, 27.

(6) *Ver.* 27—29 [*missing ver.* 21—26]. At last, after fourteen days of this, at midnight, a cry of 'Land!'—can't see it—only hear roar of breakers [*see Note 11*]. Is that good news? True, a chance of escape; but what if ship driven on rocks and dashed to pieces now in middle of night? So what do they do? *ver.* 29. Then, ship still wildly tossing, but held back from the rocks by the anchors, how they 'wish for the day'!—what anxious watching for first gleam of morning!

Next Sunday see what became of them all. But now look back at some things we have missed.

Wherever a large company of persons, one or two generally take the lead. Even in school-boys' games, are there not leaders? What makes any one a leader? Strength, skill, cleverness, amiability, popularity on any account. Such an one starts plans and projects, decides which out of two or three things shall be done, &c.—others look up to and follow him. [*This can be illustrated further at pleasure.*] What do we say of such an one? That he has, over others, great—? INFLUENCE. Now,—

WHO HAD MOST INFLUENCE ON BOARD THAT SHIP?

The captain would have much of course; also the 'master' or pilot (ver. 11), no doubt an old and skilful seaman; also the Roman centurion, as chief passenger; also any other important person. But who would have *least* influence? Surely the prisoners in chains. If you saw a gang of handcuffed convicts in charge of policemen, what would you think of them? Would you expect any of them to be men you could respect, men who would have *influence* over you? Yet, on board that ship, one of the prisoners gained more influence than even captain or centurion! *Who*, do you suppose?

1. See what wonderful influence St. Paul came to have.

Look at ver. 3. This shows Julius a kind man, certainly; but did he let all the prisoners go ashore?—evidently he had already learned to respect Paul.

Look at ver. 9—11. True, Paul's warning not heeded—but this not to be wondered at, if the best seamen thought differently. The wonder is that one of the prisoners should be able to give advice at all.

Look at ver. 21—26. In midst of that terrible storm, when all worn out and in despair (ver. 20), only one voice to give comfort—not a hardy sailor, not a brave Roman soldier, but the Jewish prisoner again! Imagine him 'standing forth in the midst'—all listening to him—all feeling his influence and catching his calmness! And see his wondrous message, ver. 24—their lives given to him—all to be saved for his sake!

Look at ver. 30—32. They are anchored, on that fourteenth night, close to the unknown shore, and 'wishing for the day.' What do the sailors do? Try and escape quietly by themselves, leaving the rest to their fate. How is this selfish plot revealed?

Again, it is Paul the prisoner who detects it and defeats it; and see how readily the soldiers believe and obey him.

Look at ver. 33—37. What a scene! Discontented crew, indignant soldiers, wretched prisoners, captain, pilot, centurion, all gathered round this one calm, fearless, wise, sympathising man!—he presiding at the meal, he giving thanks to God before all, he speaking words of comfort and hope,—and remember, furious wind howling around them, drenching waves dashing over them, all the while!

2. How came St. Paul to have such an influence?

See the reason in ver. 23—'Whose I am, and whom I serve.' He was a Christian—and what was the consequence? (a) It made him *tranquil* (2nd text for rep.): he could say Rom. xiv. 8, and Phil. i. 21; and whether he was to be drowned or saved, could say 'The Lord's will be done!' (b) It made him *trustful*: ver. 25—what a grand thing to say!—never mind what the storm did, one thing it could not do, prevent God's promise being fulfilled (see Ps. cxlviii. 8—'stormy wind fulfilling His word'). (c) It made him *kind and sympathising*: he might have thought, 'These men nothing to me—why should I tell them what I know? why trouble myself for them?' What did he do? (d) It made him *bold for God*: they were heathens, and despised his religion—did he shrink from avowing it?

All who are like St. Paul—tranquil in danger, trustful in God's promises, kind to those around, not ashamed of Christ—will have influence.

Do you doubt this? Do you say, No, it is not religious boys who have influence? Then if so, it is because they are not enough like St. Paul—half-hearted people never do have influence. Do you say, Those who are just the opposite have more? Yes, for a time; but it won't last. When trouble comes, then people always go to a Christian for guidance and comfort.

Two things to do:—

1. Yield to Christian influence. You have some who would warn, direct, comfort you. Listen to them, and you will get what those sailors got—safety. And listen to no others.

2. Exercise Christian influence. You all have some influence over others [*illustrate*]—but is it good influence? Let none ever be able to say of you, 'He led me wrong!'

#### NOTES.

1. 'Augustus' band,' to which the centurion Julius belonged (ver. 1), is not mentioned by secular writers; but it must have been a body of picked troops attached to the Emperor's person. Julius may have been sent to Syria on some special service.

2. Adramyttium, whither the ship was bound in which Julius and his prisoners sailed from Caesarea, was a port in Mysia, near Troas. Of course they were not going there; but there was no vessel at Caesarea bound for Italy, so it was

necessary to take this coasting-vessel for part of the way.

3. 'Sailed under Cyprus' (ver. 4) means 'under the lee of Cyprus,' i.e., sheltered by Cyprus from the wind. The direct route from Sidon to Myra would have been straight across, leaving Cyprus on the right—the same course by which St. Paul sailed from Patara to Tyre before (xxi. 3); but the wind, the same that was then so favourable (see Lesson XXXVIII., Note 3), was now contrary, i.e., from the north-west, and

therefore the ship had to be steered northward round the east end of Cyprus, and then between that island and Cilicia. Here she would be aided by a current which is always flowing westward, and could slowly 'beat up' on a zigzag course to Myra.

4. The 'ship of Alexandria' which Julius found at Myra had doubtless been driven thither by the same north-westerly wind, which would prevent her taking the direct course from the mouth of the Nile to Italy. She was probably one of the numerous corn-ships which conveyed the grain products of Egypt to the teeming population of Rome. To the Italians then, as much as to Jacob's family ages before, it was an important fact that there was 'corn in Egypt,' and the trade was on an extensive scale. Very large vessels were built for it, and it is calculated that this particular ship, to carry her cargo and 276 persons (ver. 37), must have been over 500 tons burthen.

5. The same wind continued blowing hard after they left Myra, and it took 'many days' to 'beat up' along the coast; and when, off Onidus, they lost the shelter of the coast, and were exposed to the full force of wind and sea, they were compelled to run down to the southward and get 'under the lee of' the large island of Crete. Partly sheltered by this island, the ship could then 'beat' westward again, exactly as she had done along the shores of Lycia. But at a particular point called Cape Matala, the south coast of Crete trends northwards (see the plan below), and here the same difficulty would arise as at Onidus; therefore they made no attempt to pass this point, but anchored in the harbour called (and still called) 'Fair Havens,' just short of the Cape.

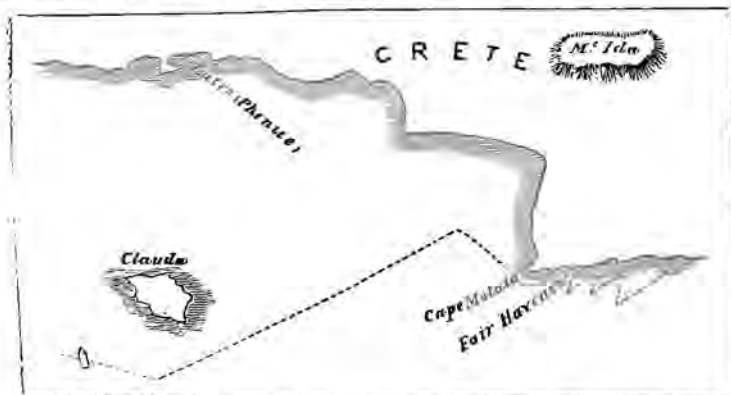
6. The N.W. wind still continuing, they were detained at Fair Havens until after 'the fast,' i.e., the Great Day of Atonement, the 10th day of the 7th month in the Jewish kalendar (Lev. xvi. 29, xxiii. 27), i.e., about the beginning of October. Of course the sailors did not reckon their time by 'the fast,' which would be unknown to them; St. Luke uses the expression just as we use an ecclesiastical and not a civil term when we say 'after Michaelmas.' It was now very late in the season for such a voyage as lay before them. The ancient navigators were ignorant of the compass, and could only direct their course by observing the sun by day and the stars by night; therefore at a time of the year when the sky was often obscured, sailing

out of sight of land was dangerous. On the other hand, Fair Havens, though affording shelter from the N.W. wind, was open to other winds, and therefore 'not commodious to winter in'; hence the anxiety to reach another harbour if possible.

7. Phenice—or rather Phoenix—is the modern Lutro, which is much the best harbour on the south coast of Crete, being almost land-locked, and described as 'like a mill-pond' even when a storm is raging outside. The words 'lieth toward the south-west and north-west' (ver. 12) have been considered a difficulty, because if this means 'open to the S.W. and N.W.,' the harbour would not be a safe one. But that is not the meaning. 'Lieth' should be 'looketh'; and Howson explains it as describing the appearance of the harbour to sailors entering it. Now this is just the appearance of Lutro: owing to the position of a small island at the entrance, the harbour seems to the approaching mariner to lie open to him exactly in those two directions. St. Luke's pithy description is in fact accurate in a singular degree. Alford, and Porter (in Notes to Kitto), give another explanation, which however comes to the same result.

8. The distance from Fair Havens to Phenice being only forty miles, it was thought an easy thing to reach the latter place when the N.W. gale at length ceased, and a soft southerly breeze sprang up. But in the Levant such a breeze is generally quickly followed by violent northerly winds (instances of which are given in C. & H.), and so it proved in this case. 'Arose against it,' in ver. 14, should be 'blew down from it,' i.e., from the high mountains of Crete. The lofty peak of Mount Ida rises just opposite where the ship was. 'Eurolydon' should probably be 'Eura-cylon,' a word which would imply that the wind was east-north-east; and that it was so is nautically certain from what follows.

9. The ship, 'caught' suddenly by the gale, was driven in a south-easterly direction towards the little isle of Claudia. Coming 'under the lee of' this island, they were for a short time sheltered from the wind, and seized the opportunity to make what preparations they could for a serious struggle with the storm. The boat, which (in the careless ease with which they had started from Fair Havens) they had been towing astern, was got on board, though with difficulty. The 'undergirders'—stout ropes always carried in an ancient ship—were passed under the vessel, and drawn tight, to keep the planks from



PLAN OF PART OF THE SOUTH COAST OF CRETE.



PLAN OF PART OF THE NORTH COAST OF MALTA.

starting with the violence of the waves. (This operation is still sometimes practised, and is called 'frapping.') 'Strike sail,' in ver. 17, should be 'lowered the gear,' i.e., the upper rigging used only in fair weather; had they really taken in all sail, what they were anxious to avoid would inevitably have happened: they would have been driven into 'the quicksands,' i.e., the Syrtis Major, the very dangerous bay on the African coast between Tunis and Tripoli.

10. What now happened, it is most important to understand correctly. We are not to suppose that the words 'were driven' imply that the ship was left to itself to be blown anywhere. Under the circumstances of the case—viz., an E.N.E. gale, and a fear of being driven straight before the wind into the Syrtis gulf—what a skillful seaman would do is this: he would set storm-sails, and put the ship's head as 'near the wind' as possible, and then the tendency to be blown to the W.S.W. would be neutralised by the tendency of the ship to move forward. Now, with such a wind, an ancient ship could be steered in a north-by-west direction—i.e., 'within seven points of the wind,' and the combined result of this steering and of the gale would be that she would drift sideways exactly in a west-by-north direction (i.e., a little north of due west.) The position of the ship and the direction of the drift is shown in the plan on the preceding page.

Now suppose a ship drifting W. by N. for thirteen days from the Isle of Claudia (one day having already elapsed) at a rate of a mile and a-half per hour (the actual rate under such circumstances), where would she then be? *She would be off the north coast of Malta*, the very place where this ship did arrive. Could there be a more wonderful proof of the strict accuracy of St. Luke? ('Driven up and down' (ver. 27) does not mean driven about in various directions, but merely drifting, and this would be continuously in one direction.)

11. No doubt it was the sound of the breakers on the coast which led the sailors (ver. 27) to 'deem that they drew near to some country.' On the north coast of Malta, there is a promontory called Koura Point (see plan), which a ship drifting as above described would just pass. The shore is too low to be seen at night, but the spot is well known for its breakers. And immediately after passing it, the depth is actually twenty fathoms, and a little further fifteen fathoms! More than this: if the ship anchored at the spot where an anchor is marked in the plan, the sailors would, in the morning, find themselves in a place very likely to be unfamiliar to them (this bay being unfrequented); a creek with a pebbly beach does lie just where

they would see it (ver. 39); and the narrow channel between the little isle of Salmonetta and the mainland has exactly the appearance of 'a place where two seas meet' (ver. 41). The identification is complete at every point. The bay between Koura Point and Salmonetta is still called 'St. Paul's Bay.'

It is unnecessary to refer here to the old belief (now entirely exploded) that Melita is not Malta, but Meleda in the Adriatic. The chief argument was the mention of 'Adria' in ver. 27; but this term in ancient times comprised the whole extent of sea between Greece and Italy.

12. Anchoring by the stern (ver. 29) is not common; but it is still done in the Levant, and a painting found at Herculaneum represents a ship of St. Paul's time thus secured (see copy of it in O. and H., ii., chap. xxiii. p. 415). At the battle of Copenhagen, the British fleet were anchored astern; and the interesting fact is recorded that on the morning before the battle Nelson was reading Acts xxvii. Ver. 40 does not render the Greek correctly: it should be that they cut the anchor-ropes and left the anchors in the sea—having no further use for them.

13. The following extract from Canon Norris's *Key to the Acts* (p. 127) judiciously answers a question which has been asked by many:—

'Here is an inspired writer occupying himself wholly, throughout a long chapter, with details of geography and navigation, . . . scarce a word added of directly spiritual import. How is it? The minuteness of the narrative may be accounted for by the circumstance that St. Luke was himself on board the ship, and kept the diary. But why was he inspired to embody it all in Holy Scripture! . . .

'First: Holy Scripture knows not this modern distinction between what is religious and what is secular. . . .

'Secondly: This voyage was a crisis, or rather the crisis, of St. Luke's whole narrative. . . . He wrote in Rome for Western Christendom. To show how the gospel came there, was the great purpose he kept steadily in view from first to last. From St. Paul himself he had learned to regard Rome as the goal of his course; when his history had reached it he felt that his task was done. How naturally, therefore, his narrative, at first sketchy and discursive, comes to confine itself more and more to him who was specially intrusted with this westward mission; narrowing at last to a single thread of biography, as it becomes more and more evident that the fulfilment of this mission hangs upon this one life. And how naturally, when at length the Apostle is embarked on the final voyage, the interest culminates, and every peril becomes invested with critical importance!'

## Lesson XLV.—The Shipwreck and the Island.

*'I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him.'*

Read—Acts xxvii. 39—44, xxviii. 1—11; Learn—Ps. xci. 13—15; Heb. xiii. 2, 8.  
(Hymns, 9, 12, 16, 145, 157, 180, 194, 285, 290, 304, 370, 382.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

It is unnecessary to say much by way of introduction to a narrative so simple and so easily pictured as that before us. The teacher will have no difficulty in interesting his scholars; all he has to be careful about is that the *teachings* of the passage are not lost. But here, too, he has an easy task, because the words of the motto (taken from the first text for repetition) are illustrated by almost every verse. Where a text learned by the children can conveniently be used as this one is in the Sketch, no slight advantage is gained; words so continually recurring, and so strikingly exemplified at every point, can scarcely fail to remain in the memory.

The application may be considered somewhat unpractical; but it is well now and then to enlarge on privileges which may be beyond the experience of the children, in order, if possible, and by the Divine blessing, to awaken in them a desire to attain to the enjoyment of them.

### SKETCH OF LESSON.

We all like to have a promise made to us [*illustrate*]; but what do we like still better? To have that promise fulfilled. Last Sunday we saw a promise given—by whom?—to whom?—what? (xxvii. 24). And what promises to God's servants in our 1st text for rep. !—particularly 15th ver. (of Ps. xci.)—(a) 'He shall call upon me, and I will answer him'; (b) 'I will be with him in trouble'; (c) 'I will deliver him'; (d) 'and honour him.' To-day see these promises fulfilled.

But did we not see them fulfilled last time? *Deliverance* not yet—we left the ship still in danger—yet had there not been preservation for fourteen days and nights, when each hour seemed like the last? But the others? *God's presence*—there stood by me this night' (ver. 23). *Honour*—was it not honour for a prisoner to get such influence in the ship? *Answer to prayer*—don't you think Paul had been praying for the sailors, and the promise that all should be saved an answer to it? (see ver. 24, 'God hath given thee all that sail with thee').

Now see the complete fulfilment.

I. GOD'S PROMISES FULFILLED IN THE SHIPWRECK, xxvii. 39—44.

Think again of that dark, wet, boisterous night: ship anchored, but rolling and pitching at every wave—roar of breakers on rocks terrifying the sailors lest ship driven on them—all straining their eyes to see first streak of daybreak.

Yes! there it is! morning come and ship still holding. Now where are they? none know—unfamiliar coast; but not all rocky—a little piece of beach to be seen—try and run the ship ashore there—so escape. But wind and waves too strong—can't steer in there—ship strikes in wrong place—planks give way—waves pour in—all will be lost!

No—for the promise cannot fail:—

(1) What are the soldiers thinking of? 'What the good of being saved, if then condemned to death for letting the prisoners escape?—that won't do.' How prevent prisoners' escape? ver. 42. But will they kill Paul after all that has passed?—ah! Roman soldiers have little feeling—only care for themselves. How Paul saved? ver. 43. Thus God sends *deliverance*.

(2) But now ship broken up—Paul in the foaming waves—a terrible moment—must have felt like Jonah (Jon. ii. 3, 5)—yet we may be sure Isa. xxvi. 3 was true of him then. Once before he had been 'in the deep'—for how long? 2 Cor. xi. 25. Was delivered *then*—and now the promise fails not—he feels the ground under his feet, finds himself on shore, wet, cold, exhausted, but still spared—once more God has sent *deliverance*.

(3) But are no others delivered from these two perils? First, from the Roman swords: see ver. 42, 43—all the prisoners spared *for his sake*. Then from the rushing sea: imagine 276 men struggling in the waves—some trying to swim—some clinging to spars and fragments of the ship—how unlikely that all would be saved!—in such a case only hope for a few. Yet presently, there they all are on shore, ver. 44—soldiers, sailors, prisoners—not one missing! *Why?* ver. 24—the promise fulfilled—God has given them to Paul—all saved for his sake! What *honour* thus granted to God's faithful servant!

II. GOD'S PROMISES FULFILLED IN THE ISLAND.

News of the shipwreck soon spreading— Islanders [see Note 1] running together to the place. Sometimes much wickedness in such a case—no care for shipwrecked men—only to steal cargo washed ashore. Was it so here? ver. 2. But what to be done with all this wet and weary company? Probably no houses near—so great fire

made up (perhaps in large cave) for all to dry and warm themselves at. What will be said at the Last Day to those who act so? Matt. xxv. 35, 40.

Now again see God's promises fulfilled.

(1) Every one helping—Paul busy with others, picking up sticks to lay on fire. Suddenly, another peril, ver. 3—Paul's hand bitten by poisonous snake. Islanders know well what comes of *that* (ver. 6)—have no doubt seen the rapid swelling, the ghastly paleness, the certain death [see Note 2]—see them eagerly watching Paul—no attempt to heal the bite—that perfectly useless—and besides, what do they suppose the *reason* of so strange a thing, a man escaping sea and then dying another way? ver. 4. Were they right or wrong? Right in two things: (a) that 'accidents' come not by chance, but by God's will (Matt. x. 29), (b) that 'evil pursueth sinners' (Prov. xiii. 21). But wrong in two things: (a) thinking calamities *only* come on the wicked (Heb. xii. 5—11; see Luke xiii. 1—5), (b) and therefore in thinking as they did of Paul. But *does* the calamity come on him? ver. 5—the promise of deliverance again fulfilled—and special promises too, 1st text for rep. (Ps. xci. 13); Luke x. 19; Mark xvi. 18. Yes, and great honour—what did the islanders think now? ver. 6. Would St. Paul take that honour? what did he say when the Lys-trians thought the same? xiv. 11—15.

(2) The common people have done what they could; now the governor's turn to show kindness, ver. 7. What does our 2nd text for rep. say of hospitality to strangers? May 'entertain angels unawares'—or, at all events, those who can abundantly recompense us. Thus with Abraham, Gen. xviii. 2—10. These Maltese only thought of befriending poor destitute sailors; but see how God rewarded them, ver. 8, 9. And these miracles had another purpose: would

show the people that Paul, though not a god, was God's messenger, and make them listen to him when he told them of Christ. And *this* the greatest blessing God could give him—to see souls saved—as no doubt he did.

(3) Now see him leaving three months after, ver. 10—loaded with honours, and supplies for his wants. And another mercy too—his great wish about to be fulfilled—once more (in another corn-ship from Egypt) on the way to Rome. Would the islanders forget him? To *this* day, the place of his shipwreck called *St. Paul's Bay*. That island, now Malta, belongs to England: English ships and soldiers and merchants there; hundreds of English have seen the very spot.

*Are the same promises for us?*

Ask yourselves. Have you had the things mentioned in our 1st text for rep., answers to prayer, God's presence, unexpected deliverances, undeserved honours? Do you say, 'Not I! God does not do such things now'? Are you sure? And if He does not, why is it? See Isa. lix. 1, 2—not because 'His arm shortened' or 'His ear heavy'—but, why? [Illustr.—Boy formerly a favourite with father or teacher—now does not see the old smiles, receives not the old favours—why? it is himself who has changed, not father or teacher.]

Would you like to have God for your friend—to have Ps. xci. and Isa. xxvi. 3 true of you—to be able to say what David did, Ps. xxiii. 4, 6, and St. Paul, 2 Tim. i. 12—to have not only promises but fulfilments, so that you may say Joshua's words (Josh. xxiii. 14), 'Not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord spake'?

*You can, if you can say what St. Paul said to the sailors in the storm (xxvii. 23), 'Whose I am, and Whom I serve.'*

#### NOTES.

1. The inhabitants of Malta were of Phœnician origin, and came from the Phœnician colonies of North Africa (of which the famous Carthage was the most important). They would therefore speak a Punic dialect, and on *this* account would be called 'barbarians' (ver. 1, 4); as the Greeks applied this term to all who did not use their own language or Latin (comp. Rom. i. 14; 1 Cor. xiv. 11; Col. iii. 11). It is worth noting that the part of Africa from which the Maltese came is still called *Barbary*. Malta was governed, under the prætor of Sicily, by a Roman officer called *Protes*, literally 'first,' and answering to our 'Primus' or 'Primate.' This title is not mentioned by classical writers, but has been found in an inscription on the island, and is the identical word used by St. Luke (rendered in our version 'chief man'). Publius, too, is a Roman name.

2. The viper had no doubt laid itself up among the sticks for the winter, but the heat roused it out of its torpor. 'Out of the heat' means driven out by the heat. Sudden collapse and death followed from the bite of the asp. Shakspeare says of Cleopatra, 'Tremblingly she stood, and on the sudden dropped' (*Ant. and*

*Cleop.* v. 2). The writer once saw a viper 'fasten on' the wrist of a friend in a place familiar to most London Sunday-schools, Epping Forest. The whole arm rapidly swelled to an enormous size, and though life was saved, the sufferer was in imminent peril for some days, and an invalid for months.

3. 'Whose sign was Castor and Pollux'—rather, 'figure-head,' the carved and painted figure at the prow, from which the vessel was named. Castor and Pollux were minor divinities, said to be twin sons of Jupiter and Leda, and favourable to sailors, so that many ships were named after them. They were supposed to look down from the two well-known stars (the *Gemini*, 'Twins' of the Zodiac) which bore their names.

4. Some Greek words in this passage are worth noticing. The rain, ver. 2, is heavy and continuous rain. 'Kindness,' in the same verse, is the word from which our 'philanthropy' is derived. The word used for the disease of the father of Publius is the original of our 'dysentery.' 'Came,' in ver. 9, means 'kept coming,' i.e., all the time St. Paul stayed in the island.

## Lesson XLVI.—Christ's Apostle in the Imperial City.

'God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty.'

Read—Acts xxviii. 12—31; Learn—Dan. ii. 44; 1 Cor. i. 27—29. (Hymns, 87, 88, 102, 120, 195, 235, 237, 238, 274, 363, 387).

### TO THE TEACHER.

The reader of the following Sketch will observe that the design of the first three divisions is to exhibit the striking contrast between the 'mightiness' of heathen Rome and the 'weakness' and 'baseness' of the instrument used by God to 'confound' it (see motto above); and that the object of the fourth division is to bring within the general scope of the Lesson those two interviews of St. Paul and the Jews which chiefly occupy the passage to be read. If it be preferred to give greater prominence to these interviews, Lesson XXIII. (on St. Paul at Antioch in Pisidia) will suggest a suitable line of application. But the special subject of the Sketch will probably be more generally interesting.

Every effort should be made to give force to the contrast above-mentioned, more especially as children of the 19th century find it hard to think of St. Paul as the obscure preacher of a despised sect. Suppose a Hindoo were to be sent by one of our Indian governors in custody to London for trial on some local charge, and we were to be told that this Hindoo was the apostle of a new Brahminical sect, and desired the English people to change their religion. That is scarcely an exaggeration of the position of St. Paul at Rome.

Teachers who may wish to have a brief and clear explanation of the prophecy of Daniel, referred to in the Sketch, will do well to get a little book by the Rev. E. P. Cache-maille, *The Five Great Monarchies in Daniel's Prophecy and in History* (London, F. B. Kitts).

### SKETCH OF LESSON.

In reading the Acts, how many great cities we have visited!—Jerusalem, Cæsarea, Damascus, Antioch, Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus. This last chapter brings us to the greatest of all: ver. 14—'and so we went toward Rome.'

#### I. THE IMPERIAL CITY OF ROME.

A few Lessons back [*Lesson XLI.*], we talked about that great Empire which extended almost everywhere. In all St. Paul's missionary travels, never went outside it. Now we come to the centre and capital of all. All the governors we have met, Sergius Paulus, Gallio, Festus, Publius, &c., got their power from Rome. All the soldiers, Cornelius, Lysias, Julius, &c., bound to fight for Rome. Rome supreme over all.

How came Rome to be so great? In days of King Solomon, no such place. When Nineveh and Babylon the greatest cities, Rome a small town by itself, with no dominions. But the Romans a strong and brave people—in course of time conquered all countries and nations round, one after the other—nothing could stand against them—Roman troops everywhere victorious; at last the little city the greatest on earth, and capital of immense empire.

A good thing for the Gospel that Rome ruled everywhere then—why? Not because Romans liked it, but—[see *Lesson XLI.*—because God used Rome to help His cause. But Rome soon learned to hate

the Gospel, and to persecute the Church cruelly. Why? Because Rome a heathen city—chief of all heathen cities—'full of idols,' like Athens, and full of sin, like Corinth; and Rome soon saw that if heathen temples, priests, sacrifices, &c., to be kept up, the Gospel must be put down. So Rome became the great enemy of Christ on earth—Satan's head-quarters.

#### II. GOD'S PURPOSE CONCERNING ROME.

In the chapter our 1st text for rep. taken from, see how God, by Daniel's mouth, told Nebuchadnezzar about Rome 600 years before (Dan. ii. 37—45):—four great kingdoms to rise and fall one after the other (see Ps. lxxv. 7—God 'putteth down one and setteth up another'); the fourth to be 'strong as iron,' 'subduing all things'—*this was Rome.*

But what then? 1st text for rep.—*another kingdom to rise, to destroy the rest, but never to be destroyed itself—what is that?* see Dan. vii. 13, 14; Luke i. 31—33: Heb. i. 8; Rev. xi. 15.

How would Christ's kingdom destroy Rome? Not by overthrowing the city, and dethroning the emperor (this *did* happen, but not through Christianity); but by *conquering its heathenism*. Isaiah's words (il. 17, 18) to be fulfilled—the idols to be 'utterly abolished,' the Lord 'alone exalted.' And so it came to pass. Rome tried to put down the Gospel—killed thousands of Christians—no use—more and more



believed—at last there was a Christian emperor, and the temples were taken for Christian churches!

### III. THE AMBASSADOR OF THE KING OF KINGS TO ROME.

Whom did God send there for this great work—the proclaiming of Christ's kingdom [see *Lesson XXX.*] in Rome—the overthrow of Rome's heathenism? Suppose you had known that on a certain day God's ambassador was coming along the great road, the 'Appian Way' [see *Note 2*], and going to enter the city,—and you stood at the gate to see,—what would you expect? Why, even an army of angels would not seem too great for such a work as *that*! You hear the tramp of soldiers—see them coming along, escorting—whom? Not a grand prince or noble with his suite, but a *gang of prisoners in chains*; and one of them is God's ambassador to the greatest city in the world!—as he calls himself (Eph. vi. 20), 'an ambassador in bonds.' Many military processions had entered Rome by that gate—victorious armies returning home, &c.; and *this* man is coming to conquer the conquerors. What says our 2nd text for rep.? 'God hath chosen the weak,' and 'base,' and 'despised,' to 'confound the mighty'!

St. Paul is at Rome at last. How did he come? We saw that long and terrible voyage, and how he started afresh in the ship 'Castor and Pollux' [*last Lesson*]; now read ver. 11—16. Landed at Puteoli [see *Note 1*].—then along the 'Appian Way' towards Rome.

Paul sad and downcast as he trudges along—worn with trial and suffering—perhaps his heart sinking at the thought of what is before him: to stand up for Christ in that great heathen city—what a task!—and he a poor man, almost alone, a despised Jew, and not even free! But before he enters the gates, his sadness all gone—full of joyful hope—how is this? ver. 16. Paul always longed to see friends (Acts xviii. 5; 2 Cor. ii. 13, vii. 6); but now especially pleasant—the meeting showed him he would not be alone in Rome, nor have to *begin* the work—a faithful Church there already [see *Note 7*]. He knew this indeed—had written to them that great 'Epistle to the Romans'—but now he *saw* them, and his own wish (Rom. i. 11, 12, xv. 32) fulfilled. You see God's ambassador 'weak' as well as 'despised'—only a man after all.

### IV. THE PROCLAMATION OF THE KINGDOM IN ROME.

(1) To whom first? We could hardly guess. Paul has come from Jerusalem, after being utterly rejected there by the Jews: now he, the Apostle of the Gentiles,

is in the great Gentile capital; and what does he do? Sends message to chief of *Jews* there—can't give up his own countrymen whom he loves (Rom. ix. 1—3, x. 1)—must try them first. Read ver. 17—23: for a whole day, 'from morning till evening,' earnestly appealing to them, telling them of 'the Kingdom of God' (ver. 23)—the 'Kingdom' Daniel prophesied of. What result? ver. 24 [see *Note 6*]. And then see Paul's solemn farewell to them, ver. 25—28: his last words to his nation.

(2) But now the tidings of salvation go to the Gentiles, and *they* hear and believe (ver. 28). How preached? Paul can't go about, as he used to do at Corinth and Ephesus—still *chained*. But see ver. 30, 31: the 'ambassador in bonds' preaches 'the Kingdom of God' to all visitors in his own humble dwelling. See more of his work next Sunday.

But now think of two things:—

#### 1. *How little all earthly greatness is.*

You boast of being English boys and girls—of belonging to greatest empire in world—'on which sun never sets.' Romans might boast like that in Paul's day; but what has become of their empire?

You can see how much greater Paul was than any heathen Roman—why? Because belonged to Christ's Kingdom, which should never pass away. Well, so now. 'He that is least in Kingdom of heaven greater than' greatest kings, statesmen, generals.

Many of Christ's people *now* poor, humble, unknown, perhaps despised. But when *all* empires have gone for ever—yes, even England—when 'the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ' (Rev. xi. 15)—*then* who will be great? How many who are now great will be very small then!—and even if they are great then, it will not be because of their greatness now, but because they are Christ's people *also*. How many who are now thought little of will then be held in highest honour!—but if so, will it be *because* they are little thought of now? No, but because they are Christ's—that is the thing.

#### 2. *What great things God can do by very weak means.*

Can you not do something to help forward Christ's Kingdom? Perhaps very little: but God can do much with your little. 'Little drops of water, little grains of sand,' &c. [*Illust.*—*acorn and oak; spark and fire; formation of coral islands; small 'governor' to great machine.*] And suppose much is not done—only a very little. Still, see Christ's promise, Matt. x. 42: and remember his words about Mary (Mark xiv. 8), 'She hath done what she could.'

### NOTES.

1. The route of the 'Castor and Pollux' from Melita to Puteoli can be easily traced on the map. 'Fetched a compass,' i.e., made a circuit:

the wind not permitting them to take a straight course. Rhegium is the modern Reggio. Puteoli (now Pozzuoli) was the chief port of Italy at



that time. It was at the north-western corner of the Bay of Naples, and as St. Paul crossed the Bay, he would see on his right Mount Vesuvius, in the eruption of which Drusilla afterwards perished. The philosopher Seneca mentions that all ships were obliged to strike their topsails on nearing the port, *except* the Alexandrian corn-ships—so that the latter were at once recognised, and crowds assembled to witness their arrival. By such a crowd, therefore, St. Paul's ship would be received. The ruins of the mole, within which these vessels were moored, can still be seen.

2. St. Paul approached Rome by the most famous of all the great imperial highways (see Lesson XXX., Note 1)—the 'Queen of Roads,' as it was called—the *Via Appia*, which led from Rome to Brundisium. 'Appii Forum' and 'The Three Taverns' were well-known stations, the former 43 and the latter 33 miles from Rome. Horace (*Satires*, i. 5) has a very amusing narrative of a journey by this road, and mentions Appii Forum as full of taverns, the resort of the bargemen on the neighbouring canal. (See Cowper's translation of this Satire, in any complete edition of his poems.)

3. It is believed by the best writers (though not without some difference of opinion) that an allusion in Phil. i. 13 reveals the place to which St. Paul was taken in Rome. 'Palace' in that verse should be 'Prætorium,' which is thought to mean the head-quarters of the Prætorian Guards, the picked troops in attendance on the emperor. This was attached to the imperial palace on the Palatine Mount. The 'hired house' which St. Paul occupied (ver. 30) is supposed to have been within the precincts of the barracks—in fact to have been part of them, but affording exceptional privacy and comfort; for he was still a prisoner, always chained to a soldier (see ver. 16). See further, *Addit. Note*, below.

4. The 'captain of the guard,' to whom Paul was delivered by the centurion Julius (ver. 16), was the 'Prefect of the Prætorian Guard.' The use of the singular ('captain,' not 'captains') is significant. The office at that time was held singly by Burrhus, a famous soldier, of high character and great influence. But in the following year (62) Burrhus died, after which there were two prefects. Another instance of St. Luke's accuracy.

5. St. Paul seems to have called the chief of the Jews together with two objects: to explain his own position, and to invite them to hear the Gospel. If they had heard of the proceedings against him in Judæa, they might be prejudiced against him, especially as he would appear to them as having appealed from his own nation to the Roman power. He therefore carefully explains that he had no alternative but to appeal, and that he did not wish to accuse his countrymen

(ver. 18). It turned out, however, that they had not heard of the proceedings. *Before* the appeal, there was no occasion for the Jews in Judæa to write to their countrymen at Rome about a man they were prosecuting before the local governor; and *after* it there was scarcely time, for St. Paul reached Rome sooner than any deputation or letters would do. The word 'brethren' (ver. 21) means *Jews*, not Christians.

6. In ver. 24, the word 'believed' is not the usual one implying real faith. It rather means 'were convinced.' Even those who were most impressed by St. Paul's address seem to have got no further than to 'reason among themselves' (ver. 29). Hence the peculiar solemnity of the Apostle's farewell words. He had now tried, last of all, that community of Jews which was the least likely to be swayed by the prejudices so rife in Jerusalem, and had failed. The rejection of the Gospel by the nation was now finally consummated. This is perhaps the reason why the history of the Acts now breaks off. It has traced the progress of the Gospel from Jerusalem to Rome. At each step it has shown how the Jews rejected Christ and the Gentiles were 'grafted in' (see Rom. xi.); and now that the crowning instance of this has been related, St. Luke lays down his pen. See Smith's *Dict. Bible*, Art. 'St. Paul'; *Student's N. T. Hist.*, p. 493; and the last chapter of Baumgarten.

7. The Christian Church in Rome had probably been founded by those proselyte 'strangers of Rome' who were converted on the day of Pentecost (see Acts ii. 10). Many of those to whom St. Paul sends salutations in Rom. xvi. must have been Jewish and Greek settlers whom he had known in Greece and Asia, e.g., Aquila and Priscilla (ver. 3). Two of them were relatives of his own (ver. 7). The faith of the Roman Church had in some way become widely known (Rom. i. 8); but probably there was little organisation in it before his arrival. (See Professor Lightfoot on the *Philippians*, p. 13.) It arose, like the Church of Antioch (Acts xi.), from the efforts of private believers; and the presence of an apostle was needed, as at Antioch, for its complete establishment (see Rom. i. 11).

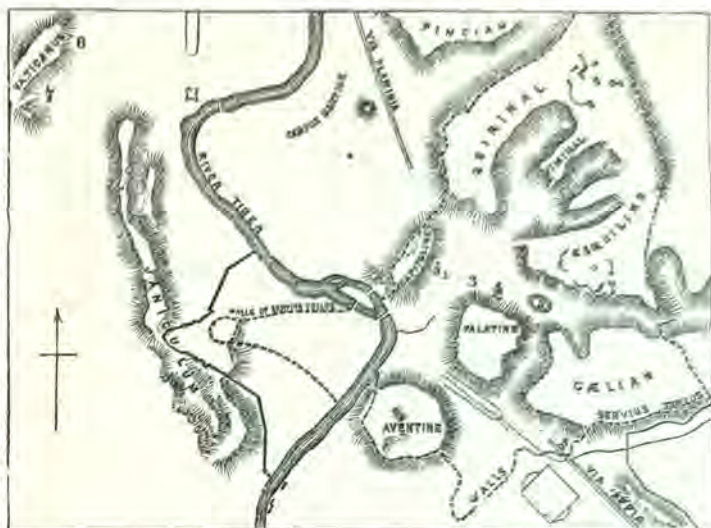
8. The long confinement of St. Paul in Rome would be because the trial was delayed. It was necessarily suspended until the Jewish prosecutors arrived from Palestine; then they would be in no hurry to hasten it, having every reason to expect the acquittal of Paul, and being better pleased at his being meanwhile in custody; then delay might arise from the necessity of producing witnesses from the various cities in which he had preached. And when we consider the duration of important legal proceedings even in these days, we need not be surprised at the lapse of two years in this case. On the result, see Lesson XLVIII., Note 1.

## ADDITIONAL NOTE IX.

### ROME.

The city of Rome in St. Paul's day was not at the height of its glory. It was after the great fire (which occurred between the end of his two years' residence and the supposed date of his martyrdom) that the finest buildings were erected; the Coliseum was built in the reign of Vespasian; and later emperors, Hadrian especially, added greatly to its splendour. Nevertheless, Rome was a grand city, even then. Although its only walls were the old ones, said to have been built by Servius Tullius

six centuries before, it was by no means confined within them, but spread out in populous suburbs in all directions. The enclosed area, however, which included the far-famed 'seven hills'—the Quirinal, the Viminal, the Esquiline, the Capitoline, the Palatine, the Cælian, the Aventine—was the focus of Rome's greatness. In the hollow between the Capitoline, Palatine, and Cælian hills, was the Forum, which was to Rome what the Agora was to Athens (see Lesson XXXI., Note 1). Here was



PLAN OF ROME.

1. Forum.
2. Temple of Jupiter.
3. Via Sacra.
4. Arch of Titus.

5. Colosseum.
6. Site of Vatican.
7. Site of St. Peter's.

the 'Golden Milestone,' whence thirty-one roads radiated, leading to all parts of the Empire. Above it rose the famous Capitol, on the hill of that name. From the south end issued the chief street, the *Via Sacra* (Sacred Way).

On the Palatine hill was the imperial palace; and if, as supposed, it was at the barracks attached thereto that St. Paul was handed over to the prefect Burrhus (see Lesson XLVI., Notes 3, 4), his route on entering the city is easily ascertained. The Appian Way would bring him to the *Porta Capena* (Capuan Gate); from thence he would pass between the Cælian hill on the right and the Palatine on the left, and then, turning to the left, go up the *Via Sacra*, past the spots where the Coliseum and the Arch of Titus were afterwards erected—the latter in commemoration of the final overthrow of his own nation at the fall of Jerusalem.

The Tiber divided the city into two unequal parts, and in the smaller portion—a notoriously low quarter—dwelt the Jewish residents.

What the population of Rome was in Nero's time is very uncertain, but it is usually estimated at two millions. Certainly enormous numbers were crowded together in a comparatively small compass, most of them living in squalid lodging-houses of many storeys, which Howson compares to the old houses in Edinburgh. There was not the gradation of classes and the division of labour found in a great

modern city. One half the population were slaves, and as almost all skilled labour and professional occupations were in their hands, the free section of the populace was to a large extent pauper, and subsisted on the State or on charity. There was no middle class, and no free artisan class. To quote Dean Howson again, 'Rome was like London with all its miseries, vices, and follies exaggerated, and without Christianity.' What more need be said?

Modern Rome lies mainly outside the line of the ancient walls. The most important part of the city is built on the old Campus Martius, the military review ground of imperial Rome; while the Vatican and St. Peter's Cathedral stand on the west side of the Tiber, at the foot of the Vatican hill, and on the site of the gardens in which the Christians were so frightfully tortured in the later years of Nero's reign.

Visitors to Rome are shown many localities traditionally connected with St. Paul and the early Church. An interesting account of these is now accessible to most teachers in the introductory chapter of Dr. Macduff's recent volume of sermons, *St. Paul in Rome*. Dr. Macduff is disposed to give considerable credit to many of these traditions. On ancient Rome in its connection with St. Paul generally, see Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*; Conybeare and Howson, chap. xxiv.; and the article by Professor Stanley Leathes in the *Church S. S. Mag.*, Sept., 1872.

## Lesson XLVII.—Labours, Trials, and Comforts, in Prison.

*'Always abounding in the work of the Lord.'*

Read—Phil. i. 12—24, ii. 25—30; Philem. 8—20; &c.; Learn—Phil. i. 12, 18; Gal. vi. 9, 10. (*Hymns*, 158, 159, 160, 168, 174, 202, 327, 328, 330.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

No two lessons could well be more diverse in character than the preceding one and this one. The former is chiefly occupied with the expansion and application of a single thought—viz., the contrast between 'Christ's Apostle' and 'the Imperial City'—upon which its interest entirely depends. This one, on the contrary, consists in putting together various scattered notices in certain Epistles, and constructing from them a picture of St. Paul's experiences and occupations in the Roman Prætorium. Its success depends upon the readiness with which the teacher can refer to the numerous passages cited, and the skill with which he can weld together the scraps of information thus gathered. The 'Notes' add a few interesting items, but almost everything that is necessary is included in the Sketch. It will be understood that the Epistles to Timothy are not alluded to, because they were written at a later period.

Conybeare and Howson and the *Student's New Testament History* are both extremely interesting on this period of St. Paul's life. Professor Lightfoot's valuable edition of the Epistle to the Philippians, with its able essays on 'St. Paul at Rome,' 'The Epistles of the Captivity,' 'Cæsar's Household,' &c., is full of important matter.

In many localities, the 'preaching Christ of contention,' mentioned in Phil. i., can be illustrated by the rivalry of neighbouring places of worship or schools; but, for obvious reasons, this must be done cautiously, and two things should be remembered: (1) the noble spirit in which St. Paul speaks of the contentious preachers, (2) that this did not make their proceedings any more commendable in themselves.

### SKETCH OF LESSON.

We have come to the end of the Acts, leaving St. Paul in custody at Rome. But several Epistles written during his imprisonment there: by searching in them can find out how he spent those 'two years.'

First, where was he? Not in dungeon with other prisoners as at Philippi (Acts xvi. 24), but in 'his own hired house' (xxviii. 30). Yet was he free? see xxviii. 16—'with the soldier that kept him'—still chained by the arm to his guard—could not go about as he liked. Most likely the 'house' was in the barracks, or close by them, that the guard might be changed easily; so, as at Cæsarea [*Lesson XLI.*, Note 4], Paul must have seen much of the rough soldiers. And these soldiers the Emperor's own guards, so Paul would hear much of his wicked doings: a soldier might have been engaged one day in executing one of Nero's old friends—even his wife! [see Note 3]—and next day in keeping hold of Paul's chains. In an Epistle written at this time, see how St. Paul speaks of the armour those soldiers wore, Eph. vi. 13—17. As he wrote, he would see the helmet, breast-plate, shield, &c., on the very man he was chained to—uses them as illustrations of what *Christ's soldiers* want, righteousness, hope, faith, &c.

Now try and find out,—

#### I. ST. PAUL'S LABOURS IN PRISON.

##### 1. *Preaching and Teaching.*

Where could he preach? Would like, no doubt, to have gone about the city—

this impossible—but visitors permitted freely to come to him (Acts xxviii. 30, 31). In that humble dwelling how many faithful sermons! how many long and earnest conversations! how many fervent prayers and hymns! Would he mind the guard hearing? ah no, only glad of it—and think how the soldiers must have wondered at him, going on so untiringly, and how his hearers must have been touched as they heard the clank of the chains every time he lifted his hand in his earnestness!

What results? What does the 1st text for rep. say? Positively a good thing he was in custody! Why? His 'bonds manifest in all the palace' [see *last Lesson*, Note 3]—his case became widely known—his sayings repeated among the troops, and all about the Emperor's court. How so? No doubt the many soldiers who had turns in guarding him would talk of this strange prisoner—others would come and see him—so Gospel would get known in most unlikely quarters. (Perhaps in this way brought to *Britain*, military reinforcements being frequently sent thither from Rome.) See Phil. iv. 22—there were Christians in 'Cæsar's household' [see Note 1]—even wicked Nero had some in his service who believed in the crucified Jesus. How they would be laughed at! [see Note 2]—then how comforting to come to Paul's room and hear his animating words!

But though probably a few converts of high rank [see Note 1], no doubt most of them humble people (as elsewhere, 1 Cor. i.

26). One we know of—a runaway slave. See Ep. to Philemon, ver. 10—20. What had Onesimus been? Philemon's slave at Colosse (ver. 16; see Col. iv. 9)—but 'unprofitable' to him (ver. 11)—perhaps had robbed him (ver. 18). What was he now? Paul's 'son,' i.e., 'son in the faith,' converted by him (ver. 10; see 1 Tim. i. 2; 1 Cor. iv. 15); so 'profitable' (ver. 11) [see Note 5], and so 'faithful' (Col. iv. 9), that Paul would like to have kept him altogether (ver. 12)—why not?—because it was his duty to go back to the master he had wronged. Paul writes this letter, to beg Philemon to receive the returning servant kindly, ver. 15—17; and see what he promises, ver. 18, 19.

2. *The care of all the Churches.* As we saw before [Lesson XXXV.], so now, St. Paul has this upon him. Even in prison, can't forget his friends far away. Four of the Epistles we have (and no doubt many others), written at this time: 'Ephesians,' 'Philippians,' 'Colossians,' 'Philemon' [so *Luther's Bible, a fruit of his confinement in the Wartburg, and Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress of his in Bedford jail*].

In all, his chains mentioned, Eph. vi. 20 (also iii. 1. iv. 1); Phil. i. 7, 13, 14, 16; Col. iv. 3; Philem. 10; especially Col. iv. 18, where he writes the concluding salutation (like 'yours sincerely,' &c., with us), with his own hand, and, having to lift up the heavy chain to do so, begs them to 'remember his bonds.'

In all, his prayers mentioned, Eph. i. 16; Phil. i. 4, 9; Col. i. 3, 9; Philem. 4;—though he can't go to his friends, he can get at them by a nearer way, 'round by the throne of God.' Especially, see Eph. iii. 14—think of him 'bowing his knees' before the Lord while fastened to the heathen soldier at his side!

In all, his messengers mentioned: though could not go himself, could send faithful helpers, Tychicus (Eph. vi. 21, 22; Col. iv. 7), Timothy (Phil. ii. 19), Epaphroditus (Phil. ii. 25).

How true our motto of St. Paul, 'Always abounding in the work of the Lord'! (see 1 Cor. xv. 58).

## III. ST. PAUL'S TRIALS IN PRISON.

Seeing all these labours, would you think St. Paul free from troubles, griefs, discouragements? Surely, most annoying for an active traveller like Paul to be confined for two years—and that chain always painful. Then the anxiety about his approaching trial—what would come of it (Phil. ii. 23)—whether the cruel Nero would kill him. Did he fear death? Why desired to live? see what he says in one of these letters, Phil. i. 20—24.

But two particular troubles mentioned:—

1. See Phil. i. 14—18. Many Christians, seeing how bravely Paul bore his 'bonds,' encouraged to preach fearlessly. Was not this a thing to be glad about? Yes, but see what led some to preach, ver. 15—

'envy and strife.' Very likely some of those 'Judaizers' we have met before, who did believe in Christ, did desire to spread Gospel, but wanted to make Gentiles keep Jewish customs, and disliked Paul: now thought they could bring Roman converts to their party—thus (ver. 16) 'add affliction to his bonds.' How vexing to Paul, to know they were going about Rome in that way, while he unable to move! Was he vexed? ver. 18—rather rejoiced—better the heathen should hear of Christ even in that way, than not at all. The true way to meet troubles!—look at them on the bright side.

2. See Phil. ii. 25—27. Do you know what it is to have a dear friend 'sick nigh unto death'?—the anxious watching, the fear of what is coming? *This*, too, Paul had to suffer. And there must have been many troubles on him just then which we know not of—see ver. 27, if Epaphroditus had died, it would have been 'sorrow upon sorrow.' [See Note 4.]

## III. ST. PAUL'S COMFORTS IN PRISON.

It was not all labours and trials. Paul knew by experience that his God was 'the God of all comfort,' 2 Cor. i. 3, 4. As we have seen, he was comforted in his labours—many converted; and comforted in his trials—even his rivals did 'preach Christ'—and his friend did not die. But see other comforts:—

1. Faithful friends with him, see Col. iv. 10—14: Aristarchus, who had been with him in many dangers (Acts xix. 29, xxvii. 2); Mark, who had once failed him (Acts xv. 37), but was now 'profitable' (2 Tim. iv. 11); Luke 'the beloved Physician'; &c.—these, says he, 'a comfort to me,' ver. 11.

2. Gifts from his old friends at Philippi, Phil. iv. 18. Poor as they were (2 Cor. viii. 1, 2), always generous (Phil. iv. 15, 16).

3. Goodness of other Churches, Eph. i. 15, 16; Col. i. 3, 4, ii. 5; Philem. 4, 5.

*Here is an example for us!* See in one of these very letters, how Paul calls on us to follow his example, Phil. iii. 17.

(1) Can we not labour for Christ as he did? 'As he did!'—you say—'no, indeed.' Yet which of us in so bad a position to work as he, chained to his jailor? Think of the 2nd text for rep.—(a) Be not weary of well-doing. (b) Don't miss any opportunity to do good; and you will find that every one who loves Christ, however weak and humble, can do something.

(2) But if you do, you will, like Paul, have trials—opposition, jealousy, disappointment, weariness.

(3) But then, like Paul again, you shall have comforts too. God will not forget you (Heb. vi. 10) for a single moment; and think of the 2nd text for rep. again—'in due season,' what? So Ps. cxxvi. 5, 6—the sowing may be in tears, but what shall the joyful reaper 'bring with him' by-and-by?

## NOTES.

1. The expression 'Cæsar's household' does not imply that the Christians referred to were of high rank. The phrase includes all in any way connected with the court, from the imperial family to the meanest slaves. Some of them were probably converts before St. Paul's arrival, as, in many instances, the persons to whom greetings are sent in Rom. xvi. bear names known, from inscriptions, to have belonged to the Emperor's household. Some of the names, indeed, are too common for any inference to be drawn from them, but Stachys, Tryphena, and others, are not only uncommon, but are proved by inscriptions to have been actually borne by persons at Nero's court; while the households of Aristobulus' and 'of Narcissus' (ver. 10, 11) seem clearly to be identified. See Professor Lightfoot's interesting note on the subject, *Philippians*, p. 169. At least one Roman lady of high rank was probably added to the Church about this time, viz., Pomponia Græcina, wife of Plautus the conqueror of Britain, who was accused of embracing 'a foreign superstition.' (Lightfoot, p. 21.)

2. Although the persecutions of the Christians had not begun at this time, they would, no doubt, meet with scorn and derision, especially in such a place as the barracks of a rough soldiery. A curious discovery has been made in Rome which illustrates this. It is a rude caricature scratched on the ruined wall of the Pre-torian barracks, representing a man worshipping another man *hanging on a cross*, the crucified figure being drawn with the *head of an ass*, and the words roughly written beneath, '*Alezamenos worships God*'—i.e. in effect, 'See what a God Alezamenos worships!' Revolting and hideous as this caricature is, it is deeply interesting as a specimen of the ribald jests to which a Christian soldier was exposed, and also most valuable as a proof that the early Church believed in the Deity of Christ. A woodcut copy of this strange drawing will be found in Macduff's *St. Paul at Rome*, p. 225.

3. The public events in Rome during St. Paul's two years' imprisonment were of considerable importance. The Emperor Nero, during the first six years of his reign, had ruled well, being under the influence of wise and upright men like the philosopher Seneca and the Prefect Burrhus (see last Lesson, Note 4). But in the year following St. Paul's arrival, i.e., in A.D. 62, Burrhus died and Seneca lost his power, and Tigellinus, whose cruelty is notorious, succeeded (with another jointly) to the former's office. About the same time Nero, at the instigation of a wicked Jewish proselyte named Poppæa, divorced his wife Octavia, and afterwards caused her to be murdered.

Howson, Alfrod, and others, think that these changes unfavourably affected St. Paul's position: that Tigellinus would make his confinement more strict than Burrhus had done; that Poppæa, who did on two or three occasions obtain favours for the Jews, would be also willing to humour Paul's accusers; and that hints of this altered position are to be found in the Epistle to the Philippians, which they date towards the end of the two years. Professor Lightfoot, however, dates this Epistle much earlier, before the three others, and explains the supposed allusions differently. Any inferences from either view are avoided in the Sketch.

4. The statement in Phil. ii. 30, that Epaphroditus had risked his life 'to supply the lack of service' of the Philippians, is no reflection upon them. In chap. iv., Paul thanks them unreservedly for the contributions sent by them. But those gifts could only reach Paul if some one conveyed them: *this* Epaphroditus did, thus doing a service which the other Philippians were unable to do. Probably the fatigues of his journey brought on his illness, and thus his being 'nigh unto death' was due to his zeal in supplying this missing link.

5. The name Onesimus means 'profitable,' so there is probably a play upon words in Philem. 11.

## Lesson XLVIII.—The Youthful Bishop.

*'For the edifying of the body of Christ.'*

*Read*—Passages in 1st and 2nd Tim.; *Learn*—Eph. iv. 11, 12; 2 Tim. ii. 1, 2.  
(*Hymns*, 121, 122, 162, 165, 168, 363, 390.)

## TO THE TEACHER.

A period of four or five years probably elapsed between St. Paul's first and second imprisonments (see next Lesson, Note 10). Lessons XLVII. and XLIX., being therefore separated by that period, the intervening Lesson will help to give reality to the interval; and such a Lesson can appropriately be based upon the steps actually taken by St. Paul at this very time to complete the organisation of the infant Churches, viz., those commissions to Timothy, Titus, and (no doubt) others, which developed into the Episcopate of the next generation. An opportunity is thus afforded of showing the Scriptural authority for, and primitive origin of, the Three Orders of our Church's ministry: an opportunity which, in the present day, should on no account be lost. It is one thing to insist upon membership in an Episcopal Church as essential to salvation—that no teacher of these Lessons is likely to do. It is quite another thing, and both legitimate and right, to vindicate Episcopacy as in fact—if not in name (see Note 2)—the original Church system, which, as a simple matter of history, has come down without interruption from the inspired Apostles themselves, and which we may therefore justly infer to have been part of our Lord's own design for the organisation of His visible 'Church militant here in earth.' See the distinct statement of our Church in the Preface to the Ordination Ser-

vice:—It is evident unto all men diligently reading the Holy Scriptures and ancient Authors, that from the Apostles' time there have been three orders of ministers in Christ's Church: Bishops, Priests, and Deacons.' There is no uncharitableness in conscientiously believing that good men who cannot see this are mistaken.

But in so utilitarian an age as ours, it is well to shew that Bishops are as useful as well as a primitive institution: that this, like Christ's other 'gifts' (Eph. iv.), is 'for the edifying of the body of Christ.' At some periods of Church history, we might have had to content ourselves with saying that this might be and ought to be the case. In our own day we have no difficulty in adducing abundant evidence that it is the case. There are parishes in many dioceses in which 'the Bishop's visit' is remembered as a source of no slight influence for good; and such cases would be more numerous if we could have what good men of all parties now desire, an increase of the Episcopate. To see what a good Bishop can do, and how he may be honoured and valued, Colonial and Missionary records should be turned to. To mention a single instance, the beneficial influence of the visits of the Bishops of Sierra Leone, even to so distant a station as Ibadan, may be seen in the recently published memoir of Mrs. Hinderer.

The plan of the following Sketch is, first to awaken a *local* interest by dwelling on an individual instance of Episcopal work—that of Timothy at Ephesus; then to take the wider view of the necessities of other Churches, and what was done for them; and so to come down to our own time, our own system, and our own need. In this way the transition from the earlier to the later use of the word 'Bishop' is also made clear, and thus the confusion that might arise from its two senses is avoided.

It is strongly recommended that the account of Timothy be considered as merely introductory to the real subject of the lesson, viz., Episcopacy; and that, if necessary, some sections in the earlier portion of the Sketch be omitted, e.g., (b), (2), and (3). But if any teacher should feel a difficulty about adopting this recommendation, he will find quite enough for a good Lesson in the sections about Timothy, and an application can easily be drawn from some of St. Paul's exhortations to him.

#### SKETCH OF LESSON.

You remember Ephesus?—its great temple of Diana, its magicians, its 'silver shrines,' &c.—how St. Paul stayed there longer than anywhere else—how successful he was there? [*Lessons XXXIII., XXXIV.*] Do you remember his farewell to the Ephesian elders, when stopping at Miletus on his way to Jerusalem? [*Lesson XXXVIII.*] Why was that parting so sorrowful? Acts xx. 38 (see ver. 25). For five years certainly they did not 'see Paul's face,' all the while he was a prisoner—at Cæsarea, on the voyage, at Rome. But probably they did afterwards.

St. Paul's trial before the Emperor came on at last—his 'appeal unto Cæsar' heard by Nero. We know nothing of the proceedings or result; but he must have been acquitted (as Agrippa expected, Acts xxvi. 32), for it is almost certain that he travelled again afterwards, confirming the old Churches, and founding new ones, as before. And we may be sure, among other places, he would visit Ephesus. What a joyful meeting that must have been!

But when they parted from him once again, it was to 'see his face no more' (see why next Sunday). Soon they would have no more letters or messengers from him. And so, too, with other Churches. The elders would teach and rule the rest; but who to teach and rule the elders? See to-day what was done—for Ephesus—for other Churches.

#### I. HOW THE CHURCH OF EPHESUS WAS CARED FOR.

See 1 Tim. i. 3.—St. Paul left Timothy there. What to do? These two letters to him (1st and 2nd Tim.) tell us all about it.

(a) See what St. Paul had said would happen at Ephesus, Acts xx. 28–30. He thought of his dear converts there as a flock of sheep: though they had given up Diana, thrown away their 'silver shrines,' burnt their bad books [*Lesson XXXIV.*], they were still weak, ignorant, sinful,—needed faithful shepherds to feed them (i.e., teach them), keep them from going astray. So he begged the elders to 'take heed of the flock,' to 'feed the Church,' to protect the sheep from wolves (comp. 1 Pet. v. 2–4). But these 'wolves'—what were they? False teachers. See when Paul wrote to Timothy seven years afterwards, how many wolves at Ephesus! 1 Tim. i. 5–7, 19, 20, iv. 1–3, vi. 3–5; 2 Tim. ii. 14, 16–18, iii. 2–5, iv. 3, 4. Whence these wolves? see Acts xx. 30—some from among the elders themselves. Would it not, then, be a good thing to have a *chief shepherd* to look after the shepherds? This Timothy's work, 1 Tim. i. 3, 4; 2 Tim. iv. 1–4.

(b) The work at Ephesus a difficult one. Always hard to persuade those who have plenty of money, or who think much of it, to serve God (see Mark x. 23, 24). Now Ephesus a money-getting city (see Acts

xix, 19, 24, 25)—therefore many in danger of 'falling into a snare,' being 'drowned in destruction,' 'piercing themselves with many sorrows,' 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. Would it not be a good thing for the elders to have some one over them, to advise them in difficulties and cheer them in disappointments? *This*, too, Timothy's work, 1 Tim. vi. 17—19.

(c) As the Gospel spread, more ministers wanted—Paul used to ordain them himself: would it not be well for him now to appoint some one else to do so? *This*, too, Timothy's work, 2 Tim. ii. 2 (see also 1 Tim. iii. 1—11).

*Who was this Timothy?* We have met him before. [Lesson XXVII.] It was that little boy at Lystra, who was so well taught the Scriptures by his good mother and grandmother (see 2 Tim. i. 5, iii. 15).

(1) *Was he fit for such a post?* Think how long he had been Paul's companion—with him in nearly all his journeys. Had been at Ephesus (Acts xix. 22), so no stranger there. And how warmly Paul speaks of him! 1 Cor. iv. 17, xvi. 10; Phil. ii. 19, 22; 1 Thess. iii. 2.

(2) *How did he get on at Ephesus?* *This*, too, we can see from the two letters to him. See 1 Tim. iv. 12—'Let no man despise thy youth': some were inclined to look down upon him—perhaps offended at one so much younger being set over them—especially when he had to rebuke any of the elders (for, good as they were, they might do wrong sometimes, see 1 Kings viii. 46). *This* might make him down-hearted; and so would something else, 1 Tim. v. 23—his health weak.

(3) *These two letters to encourage him and stir him up.* See how earnestly Paul writes:—'This charge I commit unto thee'—'I charge thee before God'—'I give thee charge in the sight of God'—'I charge thee therefore' (1 Tim. i. 18, v. 21, vi. 13; 2 Tim. iv. 1): see also 1 Tim. vi. 11, 12, 20; 2 Tim. i. 6, 8, 13, 14, iii. 14, iv. 5. He is to be like a brave soldier, 2 Tim. ii. 3—7. But how could he avoid being despised? 1 Tim. iv. 12—let him be an example to all—then none could find fault with him. And how could he get strength for his arduous work? What does our 2nd text for rep. say?—'strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.'

#### II. HOW THE OTHER CHURCHES WERE CARED FOR.

1. *What ministers had they already?* See Acts xiv. 23—Paul used to 'ordain elders in every city.' These elders, or *presbyters* (same meaning), had another name—'overseers' or 'bishops,' Acts xx. 17. And another order below them—'deacons,' who looked after the poor, the money-matters of the Church, &c., as we saw before at Jerusalem [Lesson IX.]. See both mentioned in Phil. i. 1; and it was these whom Timothy was to ordain at Ephesus, 1 Tim. iii. 1, 8. [See Note 2.]

2. *But now they were to have a higher order of ministers.* Had they not this too already? Yes, the Apostles themselves. But Apostles not to live for ever—must have other chief ministers when they were dead. Therefore men appointed, like Timothy at Ephesus, to be over both presbyters and deacons. See who was set over the Church in the great island of Crete, Tit. i. 5.

3. *What were these chief ministers called?* 'Bishops,' i.e., overseers or overlookers. True, the presbyters called so already, because they 'overlooked' the rest; but now the name to be only for those who 'overlooked' them. So three orders: Bishops, Presbyters, Deacons. [See Note 2.]

4. *And we have Bishops still.* They have been in the Church from that time to this. And do the same work—govern the Church—teach and guide the clergy—ordain fresh clergy—and another thing which we have seen Apostles doing [Lesson XII.], confirm those whom the clergy have baptized and instructed.

#### SEE CHRIST'S CARE FOR HIS CHURCH.

What does the 1st text for rep. say? 'He gave some apostles,' &c. [See Note 3.] When? see 8th ver. (of Eph. iv.)—'When He ascended,' 'gave gifts unto men'—not only pardon, peace, the Holy Spirit—these various orders and ministries equally gifts of our ascended Lord. Ought we to think lightly of them? And why did He give them? 1st text for rep. again—for the perfecting of the saints . . . for the edifying of His body' (i.e., the Church, see Eph. i. 22, 23). Then how good these orders must be! So they are. How much a good clergyman can do! How much a good Bishop can do! [Illustrate: see preface.]

What have we to do with the Bishops? We can honour them, see 1 Thess. v. 12, 13; Heb. xiii. 17. We can pray for them: even Apostles asked the prayers of their converts, Eph. vi. 19; Heb. xiii. 18; even a little child can do that for a great Bishop—[illustr.—as little child can move handle that sets great machine going]—'prayer moves the Hand that moves the world.' How do we pray for them in church? ('Send down upon our Bishops and Curates,' &c.; 'That it may please Thee to illuminate all Bishops, Priests, and Deacons,' &c. See also the Service for the Consecration of Bishops.)

But perhaps a Bishop may never say a word to you (except at your Confirmation). Bishops too few for the people—can't do all the good they might do. Well, there is a Bishop who *does* know you, can do you good. See 1 Pet. ii. 25—the Lord Jesus called the 'Bishop of our souls'—*overlooking us*, to guide, to comfort, to strengthen. Ask Him to 'confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, and bring you to everlasting life.'

## NOTES.

1. The best commentators are agreed that St. Paul, at the end of the 'two years' of Acts xxviii. 30, was released, and resumed his missionary journeys. The evidence is of three kinds:—

(a) The statements of the early fathers. Clement of Rome, probably the Clement of Phil. iv. 3, and therefore a friend and contemporary of St. Paul, says in his Epistle to the Corinthian Church (on which see Lesson XXXV., Note 3), that Paul went 'to the extremity of the West' before his martyrdom. This phrase, used by a Roman writing at Rome, must mean Spain or Britain; and we know that St. Paul had not been to either in the period covered by the Acts. Probably Spain is meant: the Apostle had intended to go there (see Rom. xv. 24, 28), and Chrysostom and other early writers affirm that he did. Eusebius and Jerome also say that he was released by Nero.

(b) The historical notices in the two Epistles to Timothy and that to Titus. A careful examination will show that the journey from Ephesus to Macedonia, mentioned in 1 Tim. i. 3, the visits to Crete (Tit. i. 5) and Nicopolis (Tit. iii. 12), and the sickness of Trophimus at Miletus (2 Tim. iv. 20), cannot be placed anywhere before St. Paul's first imprisonment at Rome, and therefore imply a subsequent period of freedom.

(c) The style and contents of these three Epistles. The style is very distinct from that of the four Epistles of the first imprisonment (Eph., Phil., Col., Philem.); and the allusions to the organisation of the Church, current heresies, &c., indicate a later period.

It is probable that St. Paul, on his release, proceeded first eastward, and fulfilled his intention of visiting Philippi and Colosse (see Phil. ii. 24; Philem. 22); that he afterwards took the long journey to Spain, and remained there about two years; that he then returned to the East, and visited Crete, Asia, Macedonia, Greece, &c. On the place and time of his final arrest, see the notes to next Lesson.

The 1st Epistle to Timothy was probably written from Macedonia; and that to Titus at some place between Crete and Nicopolis.

2. It is now universally agreed that the title of 'bishop' in the New Testament is identical with that of 'elder,' i.e., 'presbyter.' The following passages prove this:—

Acts xx. 17, 28. The same men are here called both 'elders' and 'overseers,' literally 'presbyters' and 'bishops.'

1 Pet. v. 1, 2. Here St. Peter exhorts 'the elders' to 'take the oversight' of God's flock, literally 'to bishop' it.

Tit. i. 5—7. Titus is enjoined to 'ordain elders,' choosing those who are 'blameless,' 'for a bishop must be blameless.' This passage shows also that in 1 Tim. iii. 1, where the qualifications of 'bishops' are enumerated, it is presbyters that are meant.

Phil. i. 1. 'Bishops and deacons.' The use of the plural (for there would be only one bishop at Philippi, if one at all), and the fact that the 'elders' are not separately mentioned, show that by this expression the second and third orders of the ministry only are designated.

In the Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, too, the appointment of 'bishops and deacons' is mentioned, and the 'presbyters' are alluded to as though identical with the former.

The word '*episcopos*' was in use among the Greeks, and answered nearly to our 'commissioner' or 'inspector.' It occurs in the Septuagint version of 2 Chron. xxxiv. 12, 17. The title of 'elder' being of Jewish origin, it was natural that, in the Greek Churches, those who held that office should also be called by a more familiar

term: hence, probably, the origin of the Christian use of the word '*episcopos*' (bishop).

But half a century later, in the epistles of Ignatius and Polycarp, bishops and presbyters are quite distinct: the words are used in their modern sense, and the three orders of the ministry are definitely mentioned. Yet the fathers were quite aware of the identity of the two titles in Scripture. Jerome says, 'Among the ancients, bishops and presbyters are the same, for the one is a term of dignity, the other of age.'

Was there, then, no Episcopacy in the Primitive Church? The true answer to this question does not depend on the use of a particular title. The Church had not the word, in our sense of it; but had she not the thing? It is sufficient to point out this one conclusive fact: there was an authority above that of the presbyters. This was the authority of the Apostles, certainly; but it was an authority which they could and did delegate to others. It matters little what Timothy and Titus were called: the question is what position they occupied, and what duties they fulfilled; and it is indisputable that the instructions given them by St. Paul imply that they had power over the presbyters and deacons in Ephesus and Crete respectively, and that they could ordain new ones. (It is worth noting that there are other indications that Timothy held a position in the Church superior to that of some other of St. Paul's companions. Thus, in the Epistle to the Colossians, there are salutations from several of them, including St. Luke; yet the Epistle is written in the joint names of 'Paul and Timothy' only.) The position of St. James at Jerusalem is also that of the bishop of a particular Church—as, indeed, he is called by the Fathers; see Additional Note V., page 77.

The argument, then, in brief, is as follows:—In the lifetime of the Apostles we find three orders, Apostles, Presbyters or 'Bishops,' and Deacons. In the next generation we find three orders, Bishops, Presbyters, and Deacons. The last thirty years of the first century is almost an entire blank in Church history, so that we cannot distinctly connect the latter with the former; but it is only reasonable to infer from the above facts that the later bishops were appointed to succeed to the position and authority of the Apostles; that the title of 'bishop,' originally common to all presbyters, gradually came to be appropriated to the superior office; and that the idea of local jurisdiction within a 'diocese' arose from such local missions as those of Timothy and Titus.

It may therefore be safely affirmed that the Episcopal form of government subsisted in fact, though not in name, in the Church from the very beginning.

The historical evidence on the subject is given at length in Professor Lightfoot's 'Essay on the Christian Ministry,' in his edition of the Epistle to the Philippians. A recent valuable work, *Outlines of the Christian Ministry*, by Bishop Charles Wordsworth, treats the whole subject fully. The argument will be found succinctly stated in a paper by the Rev. G. Venables, in the *Church S. S. Mag.* for May, 1868.

3. The enumeration of 'gifts' in the early Church, in 1 Cor. xii. 28 and Eph. iv. 11, does not affect the foregoing argument. Prophecy, tongues, &c., were miraculous gifts, bestowed without reference to the recipient's position in the Church. Thus Timothy the bishop, and Philip the deacon, are both called 'evangelists' (2 Tim. iv. 5; Acts xxi. 8). 'Evangelists,' 'teachers,' 'helps,' 'governments,' &c., find their counterpart in our missionaries, teachers, lay-readers, archdeacons and rural deans, &c.



## Lesson XLIX.—The Finished Course.

'So run, that ye may obtain.'

*Read*—2 Tim. iv.; *Learn*—2 Tim. i. 11, 12; iv. 6—8. (*Hymns*, 124, 125, 127, 169, 170, 202, 217, 222, 224, 225, 387, 390.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

The teacher who has gone through this Course of Lessons so far with anything like zest, can scarcely fail to have conceived an interest in the Apostle Paul sufficiently deep and (one might almost say) *personal*, to render the subject of to-day one of peculiar solemnity. We all know what it is to become so attached to the hero of an ordinary biography, or even of a work of fiction, that we cannot read the closing pages without a certain emotion. And there is much greater cause for such feeling in the case of a man whose history and work we have not merely *read*, but studied with a view to teaching others. Those who find themselves unmoved by the contemplation of St. Paul's last imprisonment and martyrdom may well doubt whether they have caught a spark of that enthusiasm concerning the subject taught which is the almost essential characteristic of a successful teacher.

Supposing, however, that the teacher's own feelings have been stirred during his preparation of this Lesson, it may be hoped that he will succeed in communicating them in *some* degree to his class. But if so, how is this to be utilised? Mere feeling is productive of no good—it may produce positive injury—unless it issues forth in action. What should be aimed at is this:—the scholars should be incited, not merely to desire St. Paul's crown, but to follow in his steps,—not to utter Balaam's futile wish, 'Let me *die* the death of the righteous,' but to seek grace to *live* the life of the righteous. We are much too apt to set before the children the one object of 'going to heaven': the natural consequence being that they have a secret idea of enjoying themselves in this world, and then repenting in time and dying happy. Rather let us urge *this* consideration:—Suppose it does so come to pass: you do have the opportunity and the grace vouchsafed to repent just in time, and then do 'die happy'; what then? Are you content to be *just saved*, having given to God none of that life which He gave you for His service? How much *more* happy to be able to look back as St. Paul did, and to say—however weak and sinful—'*I have finished my course*—the path that God marked out for me!'

### SKETCH OF LESSON.

In the city of Rome there is a dark, foul dungeon, the remains of a great ancient prison. In that prison, possibly in that very dungeon, we are told that St. Paul passed his last days. [See Note 3.] If so, *this letter* (2nd Ep. to Timothy) was written there; and from chap. iv., with what we know from other books, we can make out a little about those last days of the great Apostle.

For we have come to the end at last. During many months we have been following St. Paul through his wonderful life. Now we shall see him die.

#### I. THE LAST CONTEST.

What does he say of himself in ver. 7 (2nd text for rep.)? '*I have fought a good fight.*' [See Note 6.] Is not that true? How many struggles we have seen him in!—with bitter enemies, with Satan's power, with Jewish prejudice and Gentile ignorance, with poverty, sickness, and every kind of trial. Now see the last of them.

(1) Five years gone by since he was released from his chains at Rome. [See Note 10.] No doubt travelling and preach-

ing all that while. Meanwhile a great change at Rome. Christians become very numerous; how? Phil. i. 12—18 [Lesson XLVII.]—the increase so rapid that the Emperor has noticed it, and tried to stop it—how, do you think? A terrible fire in Rome—half the city burnt; people believed Nero did it himself (he was quite wicked enough!);—and Nero, to prevent their thinking so, charged it on the Christians! Then a dreadful persecution—Christians thrown to wild beasts, burnt alive, crucified, by hundreds. [See Note 1.]

(2) St. Paul not at Rome then—so escaped. But will his old enemies let him alone, now it is so much easier to get a Christian condemned? Very unlikely! And soon we find him once more a prisoner at Rome. [See Note 2.]

(3) Now he stands before Nero again. The great hall thronged to hear the trial [see Note 4.]—judges sitting in state—lawyers—officials—Alexander there to give evidence against him [see Note 2]. Where is Paul's 'counsel'? ver. 16—'no man stood with me'—not even his fellow-Christians in Rome there to support him—all alone.

What does he say of them? 'I pray,' &c. (comp. Luke xlii. 34; Acts vii. 60); yet not alone, ver. 17 (comp. John xvi. 32)—a mighty Advocate *really* with him (see 1 John ii. 1). How we should like to have his defence! But we know two results of it, ver. 17—(a) all that great assembly heard the Gospel proclaimed, (b) he was acquitted—'delivered from mouth of lion'—yes, from the lions who had torn his brethren to pieces in the amphitheatre—from that furious lion, Nero himself—from the great roaring lion, Satan, who hoped to have made him (like Peter once) *deny* his Lord before that multitude [see Note 5].

Thus, Paul has 'fought the good fight,' and once more won the victory. But is he free? No, other charges yet to be tried [see Note 5]; meanwhile, in custody.

## II. THE GOAL IN VIEW.

Let us go and see Paul in prison. Where? Not now, as before, in 'hired house,' merely chained to soldier. Now treated as a *felon* ('evil-doer,' ii. 9). *In that foul dungeon.* Think now,—

*Might he not well be sad and gloomy?*

(a) Everything about him might make him so. First, being in such a place at all—how shameful to be treated as a vile criminal! Then his friends—many with him before—where are they now? Some away—how he longs to see them!—especially those two young men he had with him on his first two missionary journeys—Mark (once a deserter, now 'profitable'), ver. 11, and his 'dearly beloved son' Timothy, ver. 9, 21 (see i. 2, 4). Some *gone* away—afraid and ashamed (see i. 16) of any connection with him *now*—one especially, Demas, who had been 'a comfort' to him (Col. iv. 14)—why gone? ver. 10. Well does St. John say (1 John ii. 15), 'Love not the world'! Not easy for those who *were* faithful to get at him, or even find where he was, see i. 17; and a risk too—a visitor would be suspected—perhaps seized—perhaps Onesiphorus himself through that visit lost the life that Demas saved by flight [see Note 9]. Only one friend with him when this touching letter written, the 'beloved physician' (ver. 11; Col. iv. 14).

(b) The prospect before him might make him so. Does he not expect to be acquitted next time? ah, he knows his enemies too bitter for that, so—'the time of my departure at hand' (ver. 6). Never to see again many whom he loves—never again to preach the Gospel—never to leave that horrible place (except to be sentenced) until he leaves it to go to execution.

Surely if you could have looked down [see Note 3] into that dark cell, you would have pitied that poor, miserable, gray-haired prisoner!

*Yet do you think he was miserable?* Years before, when suffering and death threatened him, what did he say would give him joy? Acts xx. 24—to '*finish his course.*' And now he has *the goal in view—the goal*

—what the racer must reach to win the prize. See ver. 7—'*I have finished my course.*'

1. *He can look back.* What a course to look back upon! how many snares and pitfalls in the way! how many tempters to draw him *aside*! how much weariness and sinking! (see 2 Cor. iv. 8, 9, xi. 27). And now all over—

'all things done,

And all his conflicts past!'

2. *He can look forward.* To what? To '*That Day*,' ver. 8 (comp. i. 12, 18). Then to stand, not before Nero, his unrighteous judge, but before 'the Lord, the *righteous* Judge.' Then to receive—what? But is he sure? What about his sins? Yes, for—

3. *He can look up.* To whom? To a living Saviour who once died. See what he wrote years before to this very city of Rome, see Rom. viii. 34–39. And now what can he say? (1st text for rep.)—'*I know in whom I have believed.*' There was a time when he did not believe—you remember it—but ever since the day he *saw* the living Jesus who had been crucified, he has *trusted* Him with his soul, and is 'persuaded' He can and will keep it now.

## III. THE MARTYR'S CROWN.

It is not long coming. Very soon after this letter written, a party of soldiers marching out of the city gate, and along a crowded road. What going on? Oh, nothing! only one of these 'Christians' going to execution—a common thing! Quickly the hoary head bowed, the axe lifted, and then—Paul of Tarsus is standing before his Lord receiving the welcome from His voice, 'Well done, good and faithful servant!' And when *That Day* comes, what will he have? ver. 8.

### IS THERE A CROWN FOR US TOO?

Look again at St. Paul's words in ver. 8—'*Not to me only, but to—*'? Do we love Him, and should we like to see Him? If so, none too young to win the crown—

'There's a crown for *little* children  
Above the bright blue sky.'

But Paul's crown was a *prize*; shall we win one too?

There is a 'race set before us' (Heb. xii. 1). Have you begun to run it? Do you say, The course is a hard one? So it is. Do you say, I am not strong enough for it? True, you are not. Those who *have* started feel they are 'sore let and hindered in running the race' (Coll. 4th S. Advent). But had not Paul a hard course? His strength not his own—all from Christ—and you may have the same. And is it not *worth* running? Would not his joy in the face of death be worth having? Is not the prize worth gaining?

'On, then, to glory run—

Be a crown and kingdom won!'

And if you have started, '*so run—*' with patience' and 'looking unto Jesus' (Heb. xii. 1, 2)—'that ye may obtain!'

## NOTES.

1. The great fire of Rome began on July 19th, 64, and lasted six days. Nero took a large part of the space cleared by it to build his new palace, and thus drew on himself suspicion (not, it is believed, unwarranted, of having wilfully caused the devastation. He then sought, says the great historian Tacitus, to divert the public indignation from himself, by charging the crime upon the Christians. 'This name,' says Tacitus, 'was derived from one Christus, who was executed in the reign of Tiberius by Pilate.' He then goes on to describe the tortures inflicted on the Christians by Nero's order: 'they were wrapped in the skins of wild beasts and torn in pieces by dogs, or crucified, or set on fire and burnt as torches to light up the night when daylight ended.' Nero lent his own gardens for the spectacle. The site of these gardens is now occupied by the Vatican and St. Peter's (see plan, p. 141).

2. Dean Howson supposes that St. Paul's arrest was at Nicopolis (see Tit. iii. 12), on the coast of Epirus, opposite Italy. But the opinion that it was at Ephesus seems to have more in its favour. See Smith's *New Testament History*, p. 528. The touching allusion to Timothy's 'tears,' in 2 Tim. i. 4, might well refer to the occasion of St. Paul being dragged from him at Ephesus. That the Apostle's chief accuser was 'Alexander the copper-smith,' is rendered probable by 2 Tim. iv. 14, which should read, '*charged me with much evil in his declaration.*' The warning to Timothy to beware of him implies his presence at Ephesus; and this gives probability to the conjecture that he was the Alexander who was a leader among the Ephesian Jews at the time of the tumult of Demetrius (Acts xix. 33), and also the Alexander whom St. Paul had (at Ephesus) 'delivered unto Satan' (1 Tim. i. 20), i.e., excommunicated (see 1 Cor. v. 3-5). As the chief witness, he would have to attend the trial at Rome; and to his conduct there the words would naturally apply, 'he hath greatly withstood our words.'

3. It has always been the tradition that St. Paul, in his second imprisonment, was confined in the Mamertine prison. Of this prison, two dungeons remain, one over the other. The upper one is only entered by an aperture in the top, and a similar hole in its stone floor gives access to the lower one. The historian Sallust, writing a century before St. Paul's time, describes it as, from its darkness, uncleanness, and foul air, a loathsome and frightful place. Traces of other adjoining dungeons have been recently discovered, which removes some difficulties in the way of identifying the Mamertine with the place of St. Paul's confinement; see Macduff's *St. Paul at Rome*, p. 76. A woodcut of the lower cell appeared in the *Church S. S. Mag.* for Sept. 1872, p. 453.

4. The Roman courts of justice were called Basilicas. It is probable that St. Paul was tried in the great Basilica adjoining the imperial palace on the Palatine hill, the ruins of which have been recently excavated (see Macduff, p. 64). The form and arrangements of the hall are described by Howson (ii. chap. xxvii., p. 579). A large portion was devoted to the public, and, when an important trial was on, would be crowded; which explains St. Paul's words, 'that all the Gentiles might hear.'

5. The expression, 'at my first answer,' indicates that Nero followed on this occasion his usual practice of hearing the different charges of an indictment separately. The first charge was very likely the common one against the Christians of that time, of conspiring to destroy the city (see Note 1); to this St. Paul's defence was suc-

cessful, but he was sent back to prison until the next charges should be taken. What his exact meaning is in the phrase, 'delivered out of the mouth of the lion,' is uncertain. Had the verdict on the charge of arson been against him, even his Roman citizenship would scarcely have saved him from the popular cry, 'The Christians to the lions!'—and this may be the allusion.

6. '*I have fought a good fight*' does not allude to the battle-field. The words are strictly, 'I have striven the good strife,' or, 'I have completed the glorious contest,' and refer to the wrestling and similar contests in the arena. So in Eph. vi. 12, 'We wrestle not against flesh and blood'; and in 1 Cor. ix. 25, 'Every man that striveth for the mastery.' '*I have finished my course*,' alludes to the other kind of games—the foot-races; 'course' is the technical term.

7. The meaning of the word rendered 'cloak,' in ver. 13, is much disputed. Some have thought it was the *toga*, which, with the 'parchments,' would prove his 'citizenship'; some that he needed a *wrap* for the winter in that cold dungeon; some, that it was his 'eucharistic vestment'! Others render the word 'bag' or 'case.' The books and parchments were very likely copies of the Scriptures and of his own Epistles.

8. Much interest attaches to the names, 'Pudens and Linus, and Claudia,' in ver. 21. Linus is mentioned by Irenæus and Eusebius as the first Bishop of Rome. Pudens and Claudia are believed to have been husband and wife, the former a distinguished Roman, the latter a *British princess*, daughter of Cogidubnus, a chieftain to whom the Romans granted a petty kingdom, comprising part of Sussex. The evidence of their identity is very curious, and is obtained by combining two incidental statements in the epigrams of Martial, another in Tacitus, and an inscription on a marble dug up at Chichester. See C. & H., ii. p. 594, note; Smith's *N. T. Hist.*, p. 530; Alford, *Gr. Test.*, iii., p. 104.

9. The prayer for the '*the house of Onesiphorus*' in i. 16, the peculiar expression concerning him in i. 18, and the greeting to his '*house*' in iv. 19, appear to warrant the common opinion that he was himself dead when the Epistle was written. As he had visited St. Paul in the prison, his death must have been quite recent; and the conjecture is not unreasonable that he suffered for his courage in acknowledging, by that visit, that he was a Christian. Others, indeed, also visited Paul; but it does not follow that all would be arrested; Pudens and Claudia, for instance, would be preserved by their high position.

10. Several early Christian writers mention St. Paul's martyrdom, and agree that it took place in Nero's reign, and that he was beheaded. Nero died in June, A.D. 68; and Howson places the Apostle's execution only a month or so before that. Other critics place it a year or two earlier. The reason of his death being by decapitation instead of by crucifixion, or some other cruel mode, would be his Roman 'citizenship.' Some of the Fathers also mention the place of his execution, outside the Ostian gate, on the road to Ostia, the seaport of Rome. This gate and road are not given in the plan at p. 141, but the spot would be a little south of Mount Aventine. The site is marked by a pyramid—the mausoleum of a Roman noble—on which St. Paul's eyes may have rested as he bowed his neck to the headsmen's stroke, and which exists to this day; and it is remarkable that this is the very spot granted by the Pope as a burying-ground for English and other Protestants.

## Lesson L.—The Last of the Apostles.

*'In the isle that is called Patmos, for the testimony of Jesus Christ.'*

**Read**—Rev. i.; **Learn**—1 John ii. 28, iii. 23; Rev. xxii. 20. (*Hymns*, 1, 75, 81—86, 116, 124, 176, 217, 225, 383, 390.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

This Course might very well have finished with the preceding Lesson. But it is right that we should be reminded of the fact that St. Paul was only *one* of the Apostles, though the greatest as a missionary; and that the early history of the Church is not confined to the limits of a single biography. By mentioning the deaths of the other Apostles, and the fall of Jerusalem, we shall give the Course a historical completeness it could not otherwise have; and these three concluding Lessons enable us just to introduce to our scholars that wonderful Book upon the reading of which a special blessing is pronounced (Rev. i. 3).

Although Rev. i. appears above, and in the Syllabus, as the passage for reading, it is not intended that this chapter should be read through and expounded. It will be more interesting and (for our present purpose) useful, to take the Lesson in the historical form adopted in the Sketch. It will be easy to leave out certain sections if it should prove impossible to bring in all; and, on the other hand, Note 3 gives the traditional anecdotes of St. John which some may wish to relate, and Note 5 will furnish a few hints to those who wish to go more fully into the vision of Rev. i.

On all connected with St. John, the concluding chapter of Smith's *Student's N. T. History*—in which is reproduced much of Professor Plumptre's article in the *Dictionary of the Bible*—is admirable. Miss Yonge's *Pupils of St. John* (in Macmillan's "Sunday Library") can also be recommended.

### SKETCH OF LESSON.

Let us suppose it is nearly thirty years since St. Paul's death. What has happened since then?

(1) There is a great change in Judæa. There is *no Jerusalem*. The holy city gone—the Temple gone—Christ's words fulfilled, 'not one stone left upon another' (Mark xii. 2)—the plough ploughing up the ground where those great buildings once stood! Multitudes of the Jews slaughtered—and the remnant scattered in all directions. How came this? We have seen again and again how the Jews hated the Romans—at last rebelled—then desperate fighting—Romans victorious—Jerusalem utterly destroyed. And *why* this dreadful catastrophe? All through these Lessons we have seen Jews rejecting Gospel—therefore God's wrath on them, see Matt. xxi. 39—41; Luke xix. 42—44; 1 Thess. ii. 15, 16.

(2) Little change to be seen in great Roman Empire. Still wicked emperors, unjust judges, hard soldiers, gay idlers, superstitious idolaters. Yet a change is going on—little noticed—slow, but sure. *The Church is growing*. In every city now large numbers of Christians. More persecutions—but the Gospel not put down—rather extending the faster.

(3) A great change within the Church. All the Apostles dead except one. We know very little about them, but probably most of them martyred. James, the holy Bishop of Jerusalem, stoned before the city's fall [see *Additional Note V*, p. 77]. Peter, probably, crucified with his head

downwards, at Rome [see *Note 4*]. Andrew, it is said, martyred in Greece, Thomas in India, Matthew in Ethiopia, &c. All gone now—*except one*.

Do you remember what the two brothers, James and John, asked of Jesus? Mark x. 35—37 [see '*Life of Our Lord*,' Lesson LXXXII.]; and Jesus told them, if they wanted special glory, must have special suffering. *This* they did have; which Apostle the first to die? Acts xii. 2; and now John is **THE LAST OF THE APOSTLES**.

Let us talk a little about St. John.

#### I. HIS EARLIER DAYS.

John an old man now; but think what his memory could look back upon. First, would think of the old home in Galilee—his father Zebedee, his mother Salome, his brother James—the Lake, fishing-boats, nets. Then of those three blessed years with Jesus—how fierce and ambitious he was (Mark iii. 17, x. 37; Luke ix. 49, 54), and yet how Jesus loved him (see John xxi. 20, 24). Then of that terrible day when he stood by the cross, and what a charge his dying Master gave him, John xix. 25—27. Then of the empty grave, the risen Lord, the outpouring of the Spirit, the early growth of the Church, his brother's martyrdom. Probably not much missionary work to look back upon—as long as Mary lived would stay with her—and his work among the Jews (Gal. ii. 9).

#### II. THE WORK OF HIS OLD AGE.

One of the last words Jesus spoke on

earth, a mysterious one about John, see John xxi. 22—perhaps he might 'tarry till Christ came.' So he did in a sense. Forty years after, the Lord came in wrath to destroy Jerusalem—[see *'Life of Our Lord,' Lesson CII., Note 10*—and John alive still. His work in Judæa done then; so he went to Ephesus, and there lived many years. How all the Christians must have revered the aged man who, sixty years before, had 'leaned on Jesus' breast'—the Last of the Apostles!

Even then, God had a work for him to do.

(a) Many false teachers now in the Church. Especially at Ephesus, as Paul predicted (Acts xx. 29, 30; 2 Tim. iii. 1–5). Some said Jesus was only a man, not God; others, that He was God, but not really man. How grieved John would be! What did he do? He wrote his Gospel, and in it he tells us why he wrote it, John xx. 31. Plenty in it to shew Jesus was truly *Man*: 'made flesh' (i. 14)—suffered weariness and thirst (iv. 6, 7)—wept (xi. 35)—really died (xix. 33–35);—and that He was God, i. 1, v. 18, 23, viii. 58, x. 30, xx. 28. And in John's Epistles, too, see what he says, 1st Ep. i. 1, 2, ii. 18, 19, 22, iv. 1–3; 2nd Ep. 7, 10, 11.

(b) Many in Ephesus and elsewhere who were wrong, not only in what they *thought*, but in what they *did*—talked about being 'in the light' [see *Lesson XXXIII.*], and yet were selfish, envious, revengeful. Would not John be grieved about this too? Would remember the Lord's words on that sad last night in Jerusalem, John xiii. 34, 35—'By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another'; and how does he write? see 1 John ii. 7–11, iii. 10–18, 23, iv. 7–11, 20, 21.

(c) One other thing for John to do. In those anxious days of calamity and persecution, how often there would be in the Church 'men's hearts failing them for fear' at what might come next. Do we know what will happen to-morrow, next week, next year? But God does; and sometimes he has *revealed* it (shewn it, unveiled it—like drawing back curtain) to some good man, that he might tell others. So with the old prophets; and so now with John—and the things revealed to John for us are in this book called 'The Revelation.' See Rev. i. 1. Let us see where and how this 'Revelation' was given to John.

### III. HIS VISIONS IN PATMOS.

Not far from Ephesus a little rocky island, which Paul must often have seen in his voyages—Patmos [see *map*]. Romans used to 'transport' criminals there [see *Note 2*]; and nearly thirty years after Paul's death, a very old man sent there, guilty of *worshipping Christ*—the aged John, see Rev. i. 9, 10.

'In the Spirit on the Lord's Day.' The day on which, above sixty years before, he found that tomb empty, and in evening saw

his risen Lord—day never to be forgotten—kept ever since as day of joy, rest, worship. [See *Lesson XXXVIII.*] No happy Christian gathering in lonely, desolate Patmos—John alone—worse off even than Paul in dungeon at Rome, for would get no visitors, no tidings of Church—how sad and anxious he might well be! Yet not alone—'in the Spirit'—feeling God near—able to have 'fellowship' with Him (1 John i. 3), speak to Him and hear His voice in the heart.

Suddenly, 'a great voice,' loud, clear, startling, like a trumpet. What did John see when He turned round? ver. 12–16. Never saw such glory as that. A stranger, then? No—'like unto the Son of Man,' whom John had once known so well. Yet *now* Jesus so glorious, that even the 'beloved disciple' who 'leaned on His breast at supper' falls 'at His feet as dead,' ver. 17. How revived? By those familiar, tender, words, 'Fear not,' spoken of old to John by the Lake (Luke v. 10). Then some solemn messages to Ephesus and other Churches—look at these next time. And then the 'Revelation' of things to come.

Many things in this Book hard to be understood; but one thing in it plain and easy—look at i. 7, xxii. 7, 12, 20—*Christ is coming again*—this the great message to the Church—to us.

### IV. HIS LAST DAYS.

Afterwards, we are told, John was released—went back to Ephesus—continued his work there, teaching, guiding, establishing the Church.

By-and-by, so aged that he could not preach—used to be carried into 'church' and lifted up above the people—then raised his feeble hands and said, 'Little children, love one another!'

At length, the 'Last of the Apostles' joined his fellow-labourers above. Think of them when you sing in the *Te Deum*, 'The glorious company of the Apostles praise Thee!'

### WHAT WOULD ST. JOHN SAY TO US?

If he called all those Ephesian converts his 'little children,' how much more *you*. He would say to *you*, 'My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth' (1 John iii. 18). To *you*, 'Little children, keep yourselves from idols!' (1 John v. 21)—*i.e.*, from all you might love more than Christ. To *you*, 'Little children, it is the last time!' (ii. 18)—it was so *then*—how much more *now*! Above all, 'Little children, abide in Him!' (ii. 28), *i.e.*, cling to Him, keep with Him, go not astray—why? that we may not be 'ashamed before Him at His coming.'

*His coming!*—yes—are we ready for *that*? Perhaps you cannot say as John did, 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus!' (Rev. xxii. 20)—would rather He should not come, yet. Then, first, *come to Him*, as He invites you in this Book—xxii. 17, 'Who-soever will, let him come!'

## NOTES.

1. St. Paul was probably martyred in A.D. 68. The fall of Jerusalem was in A.D. 70. But the persecution under the Emperor Domitian—the second of the ‘ten great persecutions,’ of which that under Nero was the first—was not until 95 or 96. The testimony of antiquity is unanimous that it was Domitian who banished St. John to Patmos; and hence the allusions in the sketch to his great age and the events he outlived. On the destruction of Jerusalem, see ‘Life of Our Lord,’ Addit. Note X., p. 217.

2. Patmos is an island about half the size of the Isle of Wight, in the *Ægean* Sea, south of Samos. It is little more than a barren rock, and has a very rugged appearance. Pliny thus speaks of the convicts who were exiled there in Roman times:—‘They were thrown together into any ship that could be found, and such as escaped the dangers of the waves and storms, and reached the place assigned for their habitation, found there nothing but bare rocks and an inhospitable shore, where they had to pass a life of hardship and misery.’

3. There are many interesting traditions connected with the latter days of St. John. That about his being cast into a cauldron of boiling oil, and coming forth unhurt, is not generally accepted; but those concerning his residence at Ephesus, both before and after his exile to Patmos, have probably a considerable amount of truth in them. Among the most remarkable are the two following:—

He was one day at one of the great public baths of the city, when he heard that Cerinthus, a notorious heretic who denied the Godhead of Christ, and against whose teaching St. John’s Gospel and First Epistle are partly directed, was in the building. He at once hurried out half-dressed, saying it would be no marvel if the bath should fall on the head of such an enemy of the truth. This is, at all events, consistent with the expressions in 2 John 10, 11; and, if true, would show that even the aged Apostle of love had not lost the stern spirit for which he no doubt received from his Master the name of Boanerges.

A young man whom he had baptized fell away from the faith, gave himself up to riotous living,

and at length became the chief of one of the wild robber-bands of the country. St. John rode out into the districts infested by them, hoping to come across the backslider. He was captured by the band, and taken before their chief, who, recognising his venerable friend and teacher, was overwhelmed with remorse, returned with him, and was received back into the Church.

4. The traditions respecting the rest of the Apostles cannot be detailed here. Most of them are very uncertain; but the stoning of James the Just at Jerusalem is well authenticated; and there is good authority for the belief that St. Peter was crucified at Rome. That he was for twenty-five years Bishop of Rome, as Romanists assert, can be plainly disproved even from Scripture; that he was ever Bishop of Rome at all is most unlikely, and there is no evidence whatever for it. But it is unwise to insist that he was *never* at Rome, when his martyrdom there is affirmed by all the early Christian writers who touch upon the subject. There is an interesting article on ‘The Old Age of St. Peter,’ by Professor Plumptre, in the *Sunday Magazine* for Oct., 1865; and Smith’s *Student’s N. T. Hist.* has a good chapter on what is known of the later apostolic age generally.

5. The symbolism of the description of our Lord in Rev. i. may be thus explained:—The ‘garment down to the feet’ is the High-priestly robe, Exod. xxviii. 6–8, 31, &c.; see Heb. iv. 14, viii. 1, ix. 24. The golden girdle, righteousness and faithfulness, Isa. xi. 5. The snowy hair, His eternity (see Isa. ix. 6; Mic. v. 2), or (as some say) purity and glory. The ‘eyes as some say’ fire, His omniscience, Heb. iv. 13. The ‘feet like unto fine brass’ (‘burned in a furnace’), His perfection, like that of refined metal (see Ps. xviii. 30; Rev. xv. 3). The voice, ‘as the sound of many waters,’ His power (see Ps. xxix. 3–5). The ‘sharp two-edged sword,’ ‘out of His mouth,’ His Word, Heb. iv. 12. On the seven candlesticks and the seven stars, see next Lesson. ‘Alpha and Omega’ are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, and signify Christ’s eternity: ‘From everlasting to everlasting Thou art God!’

## Lesson II.—The Seven Golden Candlesticks.

‘I know thy works.’

Read—Passages in Rev. i., ii., iii.; Learn—Rev. ii. 1, 29, iii. 20. (*Hymns*, 19–22, 71, 76, 91, 95, 96, 145, 168, 194, 222, 289, 291, 307.)

## TO THE TEACHER.

The Epistles to the Seven Churches would be a most interesting subject for a course of ten or twelve lessons for senior classes. They could not, however, be taken in detail with ordinary Sunday-schoolers, and in the following Sketch it is only attempted to explain briefly the symbolism of the candlesticks, &c., and then to concentrate attention upon the Lord of the Churches ‘walking in their midst.’ The illustrations of His omniscience, power, and love, are drawn from the seven Epistles; but the whole subject is treated with a view to its practical application. Its teachings in relation to the history and condition of the Church as a whole are reserved for the following Lesson.

Teachers should always aim at exhibiting the omniscience and omnipresence of Christ as facts to be *thankful* for, rather than as causes of alarm. Then, if they should suggest unpleasant thoughts to any one, he would be more likely to feel that this is not because Christ is a hard master, but because *he* is an unfaithful servant.

If it be necessary to omit any sections in teaching, the latter part of Division 1, and Divisions 2 and 4, can be left out with little injury to the symmetry of the Lesson. The

information in the Notes might interest an intelligent class, but it is almost too meagre to do more than give the teacher an idea of how much there is in the subject to reward the student. Among the many works which might be referred to, those of Abp. Trenchard and Canon Tristram on the Seven Churches may be particularly recommended; and the chapter on them in Miss Yonge's *Pupils of St. John* is beautifully written.

#### SKETCH OF LESSON.

Look again to-day at that vision of the Last of the Apostles at Patmos. Whom did he see? Read the account of the wonderful glory in which the Lord Jesus appeared, Rev. i. 12—16.

Two '*sevens*' mentioned here, ver. 12 and 16:—

(a) *The Seven Golden Candlesticks*—what meant by these? see ver. 20—'the seven Churches' [see Note 1]. Which were these? see the names in ver. 11. Why the Churches like candlesticks or lamps? A candlestick holds the lighted candle; a lamp holds the lighted oil. Their use is to give light. See what St. Paul calls the Philippians, Phil. ii. 15—'lights in the world,' i.e., *light-bearers*. So John Baptist 'a burning and shining light,' or *light-bearer* (John v. 35). See also Matt. v. 14—16. The Church's duty—every Christian's duty—to shine—to be a lamp giving out light. *What light?* John viii. 12 (comp. i. 4—9). The Church, each Christian, to show forth Christ.

(b) *The Seven Stars*—what meant by these? see ver. 20—'the angels of the Churches'—their chief ministers or bishops [see Note 2]. Why called 'stars'? What beautiful, clear, unfailing, far-travelling light is a star's light! How poor our most brilliant lights in comparison! So Christ wants all to be who are set over others in His Church. And see who shall 'shine as the stars' in the life to come, Dan. xii. 3. Where did St. John see these seven stars? ver. 16 (also ii. 1)—'in His right hand': Christ sustains and protects His faithful ministers—and how safe they must be there! see Deut. xxxiii. 3; Ps. xxxvii. 24, lxxiii. 8; Isa. xli. 10; John x. 28. And as Christ is the Light, so He is the Star—'brightest and best of the sons of the morning,' see Rev. xxi. 16.

Then what meant by the vision? Here is the aged John in his lonely island prison [*last Lesson*], anxious about his seven Churches and their ministers. What does the vision tell him? It shows him the Lord of the Churches 'walking in their midst'—holding their 'angels' in His hand. Their great apostle and chief bishop may be in exile, but a Greater Apostle and Bishop (Heb. iii. 1; 1 Pet. ii. 25) watches over them—why, then, be anxious and afraid?

Let us now look at—

THE ALL-SEEING LORD WALKING AMONG THE CHURCHES.

1. *Walking among them to watch and observe.*

Do you remember what we said the word 'bishop' meant? [*Lesson XLVIII.*—an

*overseer, an overlooker.* This just what Christ does—'walks in the midst,' watching and superintending. What does He see? *Everything*, see Heb. iv. 13—'all things naked and opened unto His eyes.' Not only what men are doing and saying, but what they are thinking and feeling—see what He says to one of the Seven Churches, ii. 23 (comp. 1 Sam. xvi. 7; 2 Chron. vi. 30; Ps. cxxxix. 1—4; Jer. xvii. 9, 10; John xxi. 17).

Look at all the seven epistles which Christ told John to write to these Churches—all begin alike, '*I know thy works*,' ii. 2, 9, 13, 19, iii. 1, 8, 15.

*He sees what is bad*—backsliding at Ephesus (ii. 4), false doctrine at Pergamos (ii. 14, 15), wickedness at Thyatira (ii. 20), spiritual death at Sardis (iii. 1), lukewarmness and self-righteousness at Laodicea (iii. 15, 17).

*But He sees what is good too.* He notices the patient workers for Him even at backsliding Ephesus (ii. 2, 3). He sees His people at Smyrna, patient in poverty and persecution (ii. 9, 10). He has seen His faithful Antipas martyred at Pergamos, and others still there who, amid false teaching, 'have not denied the faith' (ii. 13). He marks the 'charity and service' of some in wicked Thyatira. His eye is on the 'few even in Sardis' who are yet pure (iii. 4). He looks lovingly (see iii. 9) on faithful Philadelphia.

#### 2. *Walking among them to punish.*

Not willingly (Lam. iii. 33; Ps. ciii. 8—10). Why, then? see what He says to the Laodiceans, iii. 19—in *love*; see also Heb. xii. 5—11; Ps. cxix. 67, 71, 75. Does not punishment often do good? But if it does *not*, what then? *More* may be needed; and it may be *final* (like *capital* punishment).

See how the Lord obliged to threaten Ephesus, ii. 5—it might be like Jerusalem—a 'golden candlestick' there once (Exod. xxv. 31—39)—now 'removed out of its place'—carried away to Rome [see Note 1]—why? Because the Jews 'left their first love,' forsook their God—then He forsook them (2 Chron. xv. 2)—then, utter ruin.

See how Pergamos is threatened, ii. 16. 'Fight against them'! We know Rom. vii. 31 is true—but if God be *against* us, who shall be *for* us?

See how Sardis is threatened, iii. 3.

See how Laodicea is threatened, iii. 16—the Lord utterly *disgusted*—*loathes* them because hypocrites (comp. Matt. xxiii.)—will 'spue them out of His mouth.'

Well may we cry in the Litany, 'From Thy wrath . . . Good Lord, deliver us!'

### 3. Walking among them to supply their needs. Take three cases :—

What does Sardis need? iii. 1—seems alive, but nearly dead—needs *new life*. Candlestick may be 'golden,' but if candle flickering in socket, what use? Lamp may be very handsome, but if light feeble, what needed? *Oil*. This Christ can give—oil a type of the Holy Spirit (see Acts x. 38; 2 Cor. i. 21, 22)—so He says, 'To Sardis write, These things saith He that hath the seven Spirits of God,' i.e., the Holy Ghost with all His gifts [see Note 3].

What does Philadelphia need? It has bitter enemies, and needs *defence*—its candle burning with bright flame, but in danger from keen and sudden draughts. What will Christ do? iii. 10—'I will keep thee' (as we put our hand round candle to keep flame steady, see Ps. cxxi. 5). What a comfort to all the Churches to think of their Lord always 'walking in the midst' to protect them! [*Illust.*—*awake at night—fear of thieves—hear slow tramp of policeman—'all right!' Or, sentinel pacing up and down.*] And this Divine 'keeper' never sleeps, Ps. cxxi. 4. How were those three faithful youths at Babylon kept safe in the fiery furnace? see Dan. iii. 25—the 'Son of God' 'walked with them in the midst of the fire.'

What does Laodicea need? 'Nothing!'—it thought, iii. 17; so first it needs to know its own condition. Like the Pharisee in Luke xviii. 11. Now see Christ's wondrous love and condescension: does not wait to be asked—ver. 20,—the Lord 'standing and knocking' at the heart even of a loathsome hypocrite!

### 4. Walking among them to reward.

Every one of these seven Epistles ends with a promise. See ii. 7, the Tree of Life; ii. 10, a Crown of Life; ii. 17, Hidden Manna, a White Stone, a New Name; ii. 28, the Morning Star; iii. 5, White Raiment; iii. 12, a Place in the Heavenly Temple; iii. 21, a Seat on Christ's Throne. Can't fully understand all these; but must mean glorious blessings. [*Illust.*—*If ragged boy to be promised all the things a prince has, would he understand all?*]

But to whom are these promises given? All depend on the same thing, see ii. 7, 11, 17, 26, iii. 5, 12, 21—all 'to him that overcometh.' Won't do to fight a little while, and then give up—must, like St. Paul, 'fight the good fight,' 'finish the course.'

### CHRIST IS STILL WALKING IN THE MIDST.

Not only among the Churches. Among the houses of this parish—the classes of this school—the boys in this class! To each one He can say, 'I know thy works.'

Is this an unpleasant thought? It ought not to be. The bad things He sees He can remedy—pardoning, cleansing, delivering. The good things He will reward, however humble and imperfect they be. And His protection—what a blessing that is! For there is *another also 'walking about,'* seeking whom he may devour—who is that? 1 Pet. v. 8.

Only—shut not the door of your heart against Him. Even if you are doing so now, He is 'standing and knocking'—He wants to be your Friend, Guide, Protector, Sanctifier—can you refuse Him?

### NOTES.

1. There is an evident symbolic connection between the 'seven golden candlesticks' and the golden candlestick or candelabrum, with its seven branches, in the Temple. That represented the one Jewish Church. These represent the Christian Churches, which, however, are 'no less really united in One common Lord, the Author and Source of light' (Dr. Currey, in S.P.C.K. Commentary).

The form of the Jewish candelabrum, as described in Exod. xxv. 31—39, agrees with that sculptured on the Arch of Titus at Rome. This arch was erected to commemorate the conquest of Jerusalem, and on it is represented the triumphal procession of the victor, in which the chief treasures of the Temple are being carried as trophies.

2. That the 'seven stars' mean the 'angels' of the Churches is clearly stated. But who are the 'angels'? Some think they are literally guardian angels; others that they are mere ideal representatives of the Churches. But most commentators regard them as the chief ministers or 'Bishops,' to whom the letters would actually be sent. The officiating minister of a Jewish synagogue was called 'the angel of the church.' For the evidence that presiding ministers had, ere this, been appointed over the several Churches, see Lesson XLVIII., Note 2. Among ourselves, the use of the word 'stars,' to designate the leading men of a profession or place, is familiar.

3. The number seven, which is so prominent in these chapters, and throughout the Apocalypse,

is used in Scripture as a symbol of perfection. Thus there were seven days in the divinely-appointed week; and, under the Mosaic law, the seventh day, the seventh week, the seventh month, the seventh year, and the seven times seventh year, were all specially consecrated. Here the Seven Churches stand for, and through them Christ addresses, all branches of the universal Church. The expression 'seven Spirits of God' (i. 4, iii. 1) is a remarkable instance of this symbolism: the phrase undoubtedly means the seven-fold perfections of the Holy Ghost,—as we sing in the Ordination Hymn,—

'Thou the anointing Spirit art,  
Who dost Thy seven-fold gifts impart.'

4. 'Asia,' here, as elsewhere in the N. T., means the Roman province so called, at the west end of what we call Asia Minor; see Addit. Note VI., p. 86. A glance at the map will show that the seven cities form two sides of a triangle, and are enumerated here in geographical order.

5. Concerning *Ephesus*, see Additional Note VIII., p. 102; also Lessons XXXIII., XXXIV., XLVIII., L. The 'angel' of this Church would be Timothy, or one of his successors; but the rebukes of the epistle are of course addressed to him, not personally, but as representing the Church. On the sect of the Nicolaitanes, mentioned in ver. 6, much has been written, but any account of it would be superfluous here.

6. The Epistle to the Church of *Smyrna* has



been called 'the Martyrs' Epistle.' Polycarp, the most illustrious of the early Christian martyrs, was appointed Bishop of Smyrna by St. John, and may have been the 'angel' here addressed. He was burnt alive during a brief period of violent persecution (see ver. 10, 'ten days') about A.D. 160. The narrative of his death (which will be found in Foxe, and in all the Church histories and books on the Seven Churches) is extremely interesting.

The title which Christ assumes in this epistle — 'the first and the last, which was dead and is alive' — would have a peculiar significance at Smyrna, where the legendary *death and resurrection* of Bacchus, the patron deity of the city, was celebrated with great pomp. The officiating priests, too, were presented with a crown; to which there may be an allusion in the promise, 'I will give thee a crown of life.'

7. In the Epistle to *Pergamos* there are probably two or three allusions to the external circumstances of the Church. The deity of the city was *Æsculapius*, the god of healing, whose emblem was a serpent; and a living serpent was kept in his temple, and virtually worshipped. *Pergamos*, therefore, was 'where Satan's seat is' (ver. 13). It was a metropolis of Paganism; and the old difficulties about idol-feasts and meats offered in sacrifice would be sure to present themselves there (see ver. 14). Against those who indulged in the shameful sins always connected with these feasts, the Lord would 'fight with the sword of His mouth' (ver. 12, 16), as the sword of Phinehas had slain those who tempted Israel in the same way; while those who 'overcame' should have another and a better feast of the 'hidden manna,' and an engraved 'white stone' more valuable than the charms worn by the *Pergamenes*.

8. Little is known of *Thyatira*; but some think that by the 'woman Jezebel' (ver. 20) is meant a priestess who, under the name of the sybil Sambethe, practised magic there, and

who tempted the people as Jezebel tempted Ahab.

9. In the Epistle to *Sardis* there are no local allusions. It is noteworthy that this Church and that of *Laodicea*, which received the strongest condemnation, are those in connection with which neither external trials nor internal heresies are mentioned. Both had exceptional spiritual advantages, and both failed to profit by them.

10. *Philadelphia* was chiefly remarkable for its earthquakes, which had repeatedly destroyed its fine buildings. The promise to this Church is therefore peculiarly appropriate, viz., that it should be made a pillar in God's eternal and indestructible heavenly Temple. Those who had so often fled from the city at the first rumblings of the earth should 'go no more out.'

11. *Laodicea* was a great commercial city, and, says Trench, 'to the merchants and factors Christ addresses Himself in their own dialect. He invites them to dealings with Himself (I counsel thee to buy of Me, &c.); He has gold of so fine a standard that none will reject it. The wools of *Laodicea*, of a raven blackness, were famous throughout the world: He has raiment of dazzling white for as many as will receive it at His hands. There were ointments for which the Asiatic cities were famed: He has eye-salve more precious than all. Would it not be wise to transact their chief business with Him?' The 'gold' of course means the 'true riches'; the 'white raiment,' Christ's righteousness; the 'eye-salve,' the enlightening grace of the Spirit.

12. *Philadelphia* and *Smyrna* are the only two of the Seven Churches which are addressed in language of unmingled approbation; and it is surely no mere striking coincidence that these two cities, alone among the seven, have remained prosperous to the present day. *Pergamos* and *Thyatira* still exist, but with scarcely a remnant of their ancient greatness; and *Ephesus*, *Sardis*, and *Laodicea* are utterly gone.

## Lesson LII.—The Church Militant and the Church Triumphant.

'The whole family in heaven and earth.'

Read—Matt. xxiv. 9–14; Rev. vii. 9–17; Learn—John xvi. 33; 1 Pet. v. 10; Rev. vii. 13, 14. (*Hymns*, 88, 102, 103, 104, 123, 127, 135, 203, 215–228, 377, 383–391.)

### TO THE TEACHER.

The following Sketch is the longest as well as the last of the Course. This arises from its being written somewhat more *in extenso* than the others; as the historical allusions in the earlier portion would be scarcely intelligible if more condensed. Many teachers, too, will be obliged to omit that part altogether, for want of sufficient knowledge to fill out the Sketch—a want which it would be impossible to supply in Notes of average length. But those who can follow the outline given, being themselves acquainted with the facts referred to, and having classes that would appreciate them, should certainly do so. It will convey the idea of a *continuity* in the Church, uniting us with the age of the Apostles, and give reality to the thought of the 'so great cloud of witnesses' surrounding the runner of the Christian race in these latter days. There is great power in 'the sympathy of numbers'; and eternal life would be a more attractive thing if it were regarded less as a mere personal 'going to heaven,' and more as a partaking in the triumph of 'the holy Church throughout all the world.' We ought more often to remember that article of the Creed, 'I believe in the Communion of Saints.' And the fate of the lost is far more terribly solemn when they are thought of as having *missed* what so many have gained, and as overwhelmed with the consciousness that it might have been otherwise. Let it be our constant prayer for ourselves and our scholars, 'Make us to be numbered with Thy saints in glory everlasting!'

## SKETCH OF LESSON.

To-day we finish this Course of Lessons. Do you remember how it began? The Lord Jesus had just ascended—disciples were waiting for promised Gift of the Spirit—what for? To fit them for a great work—what? They were to *build Christ's Church of living souls*. How? By proclaiming everywhere the King's message of pardon to His rebel subjects, and gathering them into the loyal and 'blessed company of all faithful people.'

Through all this year we have been reading how they did this—of the *acts of the Apostles*—of the growth of the Church.

Think what we have seen—how the Holy Ghost came down—how 3,000 were brought in and baptized the first day—how the infant Church lived—how Satan fought against it by persecution without and sin within—how Stephen, James, &c., were slain—how the chief persecutor became a great Apostle—how the 'door of faith' was opened to the Gentiles—how Paul and others preached far and wide—how Churches were established in the great cities—how the Jews tried to ruin the work, and the Judaizers to spoil it—how the Romans at first protected the Church, and then became its fiercest persecutors—how Paul and other Apostles were martyred—how bishops, presbyters, and deacons were appointed to carry on the work—and how all the while the all-seeing Lord was 'walking in the midst,' watching, helping, saving. Is it not a grand history?

To-day let us think of the Church *since then*—the Church *now*—the Church *hereafter*; of the Church *on earth* and *in heaven*.

Look at a beautiful prayer in our Communion Service—'for the Church militant here in earth.' Why called 'militant'? Means *fighting* (comp. 'military,' 'militia,' &c.)—'the Church *fighting*.' But at end of this prayer a thanksgiving—for whom? 'For those departed this life in Thy faith and fear.' Are *they* fighting? No, they fought once—they overcame—now have the reward of 'him that overcometh' [*last Lesson*]. We are the 'Church Militant'; they are the 'Church Triumphant.'

## I. THE CHURCH MILITANT ON EARTH.

See a picture of it, drawn by the Lord Himself, Matt. xxiv. 9—14.

1. *The Church's Dangers.*

Four mentioned:—(a) Persecution from foes, ver. 9. (b) Alienation and desertion of friends, ver. 10. (c) False doctrine, ver. 11. (d) Love growing cold, ver. 12.

Have we not seen these dangers in the early Church? (a) again and again; (b) Acts. xv. 38, 39; 2 Tim. i. 15, iv. 10, 16; (c) Acts xv. 1; 1 Cor. xv. 12; Gal. i. 6, 7, vi. 12; 1 John ii. 22, 26, iv. 1—3; Rev. ii. 14, 15; (d) Gal. v. 7; Rev. ii. 4, iii. 16.

The same dangers have beset the Church

*ever since*. For two hundred years after St. John's death persecution lasted; multitudes of men, women, and children burnt alive, thrown to lions, &c. Some could not bear it: yielded, worshipped idols, then spared; and some of these *did* turn against those who stood faithful, and betrayed them. After that, many false teachers arose, and brought in what St. Peter (2nd Ep. ii. 1) calls 'damnable heresies.' One (Arius) said Jesus was not truly God; another (Pelagius) that men were not naturally sinful, and could do good of themselves; thus they 'deceived many.' Then that great impostor Mahomet, who called *himself* God's prophet: he and his followers forced myriads to join them, and even now the Holy Land, Egypt, the cities where St. Paul and St. John founded Churches, are all Mahometan! Then, for hundreds of years, almost the whole Church filled with false doctrine: people worshipping the Lord's Mother more than Himself, looking more to God's ministers to pardon them than God; and the Bishops of Rome setting themselves up over the whole Church, and claiming almost Divine power. Then, when God raised up men to proclaim the old truth, terrible persecution again. By-and-by, when the Church in our own and some other lands had shaken off these errors, it fell into the *fourth* danger: 'the love of many waxed cold'; it was 'dead' like Sardis, 'lukewarm' like Laodicea (Rev. iii. 1, 16).

Yes, Satan has fought against the Church in all manner of ways; but there have always been *some* faithful enough to be '*militant*' against him: Ignatius, Polycarp, &c., in the early days of persecution; Athanasius and Augustine against the old heresies; Wickliffe, Savonarola, &c., in the long dark night of false doctrine; Luther, Latimer, &c., to deliver from it; Wesley and Wilberforce to awake the sleeping Church. The all-seeing Lord has never ceased 'walking in the midst'; His own farewell promise (Matt. xxviii. 20) always fulfilled.

*But what of this present time?* Why: just the same dangers to be guarded against. Have we no persecutions? We are not thrown to the lions now; but is it not *very hard* to serve Christ in some homes, some playgrounds, some workshops? Are there not boys and girls who are 'hated for His Name's sake'? And even *martyrdom* in some lands: think of the mangled bodies of Madagascar Christians—remember Bishop Patteson! Then again, false doctrine all around us: there are Sunday-scholars who have gone back to those old errors of the dark ages—others who have given up worshipping the Lord Jesus—others who have thrown the Bible away altogether. Above all, *cold hearts*—how many of them in every church, in every school!

2. *The Church's Duties.*

Two mentioned in our passage. Both duties of warfare, duties of a Church *Militant*. (a) 'Endure unto the end,' ver. 13—like an army on the *defensive*, standing firm against all attacks. (b) 'Preach the Gospel in all the world,' ver. 14—like an army on the *offensive*, marching on to conquer the enemy's country.

(a) A glorious thing to look back over all those long centuries, and, notwithstanding much to mourn over, to see how many in every age *have* 'endured unto the end'; to look over the wide world, and think of the thousands who are *now* 'enduring.' *Are we?* Remember ver. 13: they who do endure, who bear every persecution, who resist every false doctrine, whose cold hearts are continually warmed with the love of Christ, 'shall be saved'—and no others!

(b) *This* duty—of preaching the Gospel in all the world—the Church has *not* always done. We have seen how St. Paul did it; a few other noble men afterwards travelled far and wide (as Columba in Scotland, Boniface in Germany, &c.); but, for many centuries, no missionaries! *Now* the Church is awake—her messengers gone all over the world; so perhaps ver. 14 may soon be fulfilled—'then shall the end come!' Meanwhile, what are *we* doing to help?

## II. THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT IN HEAVEN.

See a picture of this, Rev. vii. 9—17. One of the aged John's visions in Patmos—'After this I beheld'

What did he see? ver. 9, 10. 'A great multitude,' too many to be counted. Where from? 'From Greenland's icy mountains', &c. How dressed? What do the 'white robes' mean? Rev. xix. 8 (see Phil. iii. 9). What holding? Palms a sign of joy and victory (see John xii. 13). What doing?

'Ascribing salvation to Jesus their King.'

Who were these people? Not angels. Not apostles, prophets, martyrs, only. See ver. 14:—

(a) They had been sinners. How then there in heaven? Had come to Christ, the Lamb slain for them, whose blood was as a fountain to cleanse them from all sin, Zech. xiii. 1; 1 John i. 7; Rev. i. 5—

'Bathed in that pure and precious blood,  
Behold them white and clean!'

(b) They had come out of tribulation. Had been in the Church *Militant*, 'fighting manfully under Christ's banner.' This had brought suffering on them, but this only to be expected (John xvi. 33; Acts xiv. 22; 2 Tim. iii. 12), and for their good

(Rom. v. 3—5; 1 Pet. i. 6, 7, iv. 12—14). They had 'endured to the end', and now,

'They who, with their Leader,  
Have conquered in the fight,  
For ever and for ever,  
Are clad in robes of white.'

What is their lot in heaven? ver. 15—17.

(a) They are with God. Once 'far off'; then 'made nigh,' Eph. ii. 13. Then, while on earth, God was with them (John xiv. 23; 2 Cor. vi. 16); now they are with Him.

(b) They 'serve Him day and night.' Is it a great thing to be one of the Queen's servants, always about her? What then must *this* be! They began to serve God on earth (Rom. vi. 22, xii. 11), but then they were such 'unprofitable servants'—sometimes disobedient—often ignorant, weary, discontented—even the best of them could not 'serve day and night.' Now they are never tired, and always happy.

(c) They suffer no more. No hunger—every want supplied. No thirst—every desire satisfied. No troubles (such as used to be like the scorching eastern sun, Matt. xiii. 6, 21)—but 'the Lamb's' constant care. No tears—but bright eyes and joyful hearts, every day, always, for ever!

THE CHURCH MILITANT AND THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT—are they two Churches? No, ONE CHURCH—the whole family in heaven and earth' (Eph. iii. 15)—

'One family we dwell in Him,  
One Church above, beneath.'

And the members of the family continually passing from 'beneath' to 'above'—when? When *we* mourn for dead soldiers of Christ, they are rejoicing at having left for ever the trials of the Church *Militant*, and entered for ever on the glories of the Church *Triumphant*. And one day, there shall be *no* Church *Militant*—all in the Church *Triumphant*. Of that time, too, St. John saw a picture: read it in Rev. xxi. 1—4.

Are you members of the Church *Militant*?

At your Baptism, received 'into the congregation of Christ's flock'—enlisted in Christ's army. But are you fighting? or are you deserters? Thousands who have been baptized into the Church *Militant* will never reach the Church *Triumphant*! Think of the 'weeping and gnashing of teeth' of those 'cast out'! How earnestly, then, we all pray for you,—

'Defend, O Lord, these Thy children with Thy heavenly grace, that they may continue Thine for ever, and daily increase in Thy Holy Spirit more and more, until they come to Thine everlasting Kingdom!'

THE END.

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