

The Bible Student.

CONTINUING

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Number 1.

**The Speeches
In Acts.** There is nothing in the Book of Acts more remarkable than the series of speeches incorporated into it. If we look at them merely quantitatively, their number and mass are so great as to constitute them an outstanding feature of the book. The slightest penetration beneath the surface reveals in them a freshness, a variety, a fitness to the several occasions on which they are said to have been spoken, to the several speakers to whom they are attributed, to the general proprieties of the several situations and the stages of development of the Church and of doctrine at which they are introduced, that are nothing less than astonishing. Their presence in it not only gives a marked vitality and vividness to the narrative, but adds to it a *vraisemblance* which is almost irresistible. It is scarcely possible to rise from an attentive perusal of these speeches without the conviction that they represent speeches actually delivered by the persons to whom they are attributed at the points of time and on the occasions to which they are assigned. Decidedly, they constitute a phenomenon with which those who would have us believe that the Book of Acts is more or

less a piece of imaginative literature, dating from post-Apostolic times, must reckon.

Are They Inventions of The Author?

What critics of this class would fain have us think of them we may learn as well as elsewhere from the article on Acts contributed by Professor PAUL W. SCHMIEDL to Dr. CHEYNE'S *Encyclopaedia Biblica* (I. 47). "With regard to the speeches," says he, "it is beyond doubt that the author constructed them in each case according to his own conception of the situation. In doing so, he simply followed the acknowledged practice of ancient historians. Thucydides (I. 22, 1), expresses himself distinctly on this point; the others adopt the practice tacitly without any one's seeing anything in it morally questionable." That is to say, briefly, the author of the Acts is to be supposed to have placed within the mouths of his characters speeches composed by himself, according to his idea of what on such occasions these characters might well be imagined to have said; and the speeches he presents us are, therefore, only a part of his art in giving vividness to the narrative, and are to be read rather as embodying his

SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BOOK OF ACTS.

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I.

The book which we know as "The Acts of the Apostles," or, by a very natural abbreviation, simply as "The Acts," has borne this title from at least the middle of the second century. It is the only title for it, in fact, that has been transmitted to us. Nevertheless, it is not a perfectly appropriate title. The book is nothing so little as a narrative of the deeds of the Apostles. The very names of most of them occur in its pages only in the list incorporated in its first chapter. The fortunes of no one of them are recounted with anything like completeness. The acts of only two of them fill any large place in its story. Even a cursory reading will make it clear that the task to which the author addressed himself was something quite different from the recital of either the labors of the Apostles severally, or even their collective work. The fact probably is that he gave the book no title at all. To him it was no separate "treatise," as it is miscalled in our English version of its first verse, needing therefore a particularizing title; but only a Second Book of a larger treatise, sharing with the First Book the common title of the whole work. What this common title was, we have now, to be sure, no means of confidently determining. When the two Books of which the work consisted (at least so far as it was ever completed) were torn asunder and assigned in the current copies of the New Testament, each to the place among the Sacred Books suggested by the nature of its contents, a separate title was necessarily given to each, and the general title common to the two (if such a formal general title ever existed) passed out of use and out of memory. The preface to the whole work still stands at the head of its First Book, and from it we may learn the author's purpose in writing; and from the preface to the Second Book we may obtain a notion how the two Books are related to one another. Any reconstruction of the general title to the whole is, however, purely conjectural; although (what is of chief importance) we may still read the two Books in the light of the author's conception of them.

The First Book of the extended historical treatise of which our

so-called Book of Acts is the Second is the book that has come down to us under the name of "The Gospel according to Luke." This is not only assured by the unbroken testimony of antiquity which ascribes both books to the same author; but is evidenced by many internal proofs of the most convincing kind. It counts for something that both books are addressed to the same patron, a certain Gentile Christian of high rank, named Theophilus. But it counts for much more, that in the preface attached to Luke much more is promised to Theophilus than that book provides, while what is lacking is actually found in Acts; and Acts explicitly puts itself forward, in the preface attached to it, as the Second Book of a treatise to the First Book of which is ascribed the compass and contents of the Gospel of Luke. Moreover, the Gospel of Luke closes somewhat abruptly and apparently points forward to something yet to come; and the Book of Acts so opens as to supply precisely what seemed thus left untold, and this affords the only satisfactory explanation of the manner of the Gospel's closing. Still again, the two books are bound together by such kinship not only in language and style and historical method, but also in tone, point of view, and underlying purpose, as to suggest that they are not merely products of a single hand, but parts of a single whole. It is difficult, in short, to refuse to recognize in these two books consecutive portions of a large historical work written throughout with a single aim and on a carefully adjusted plan, and intended to make a definite impression as a whole.

Whether in these two books we have the whole of this great historical treatise as projected by its author is more doubtful. It may fairly be contended, indeed, that the two, taken together, meet all that is required by the terms of the general preface (Luke i. 1-4). What seems to be promised there is, briefly, a comprehensive, accurate, orderly history of the origins of Christianity brought down to date,—such a history (to use its own words) as will supply a satisfactory basis for confidence with respect to those matters which had been (at the time of writing) consummated among Christians. Clearly the writer's mind was occupied with a feeling that Christianity had accomplished great things in the world. It had reached a stage of development which could be looked upon as a consummation, and back from

which its history could be surveyed as a process leading up to this goal. His point of sight, accordingly, cannot be supposed to be taken merely from the ascension of our Lord: this marked rather the time of the entrance of Christianity into the world than an advanced stage of its progress. He was evidently looking back over a considerable past in which much that was notable had occurred, in which Christianity had wrought out a history in some sense complete, worth the labor of ascertaining with exactitude, and worthy of a grateful record. There seems no such stringent reason, however, why his point of sight may not be supposed to be taken from the completion of the great work of Paul, as Apostle of the Gentiles, as marked, say, at least potentially, by his arrival at Rome and his two years of unhindered preaching of the Gospel in the Capital of the world. The spectacle laid before us in the Book of Acts, of the rapid advance of the Gospel from its starting-point, and the progressive establishment of the Christian Church in the great centers of population and influence from Jerusalem to Rome, may well be thought accomplishment enough to satisfy whatever sense of the attainment of great things may be thought to underlie the calm but pregnant words of this preface.

Nevertheless, on closer scrutiny, it does not seem likely that these two books constitute the whole treatise which the author had it in mind to write. We observe the Book of Acts to come to a close after a fashion quite similar to the closing of the Gospel of Luke; and it has all, and more, of the same suggestion of something yet to follow. In fact, if the manner in which the Gospel ends would seem abrupt and unsatisfying on the supposition that it was the absolute end of the story, much more is this true of the manner in which Acts ends. Here the reader has had his expectation kept on the strain through many chapters for the climax of the visit to Rome (xix. 21; xxiii. 11; xxv. 11, 21, 25; xxvii. 24; xxviii. 14-16; cf. Rom. i. 10-15; xv. 22-29) and his interest has been apparently purposely fixed especially upon the approaching trial of Paul before the emperor of the world (xxv. 10; xxvii. 24). Yet when the culmination of the whole story is reached,—absolutely nothing is made of it. Paul reaches Rome, calls the leaders of the Jewish community there to a conference,—apparently with a view to ascertaining whether they had been primed

from Jerusalem to press for his condemnation,—and then the trial itself is not even mentioned; and all that the reader had been led to believe the attainment of his long cherished desire to reach Rome meant to Paul drops utterly out of sight. The book closes abruptly with a brief notice that he preached two whole years in Rome without molestation. These two years, it must be remembered, were already over when this account was written: a change in Paul's condition had taken place; the author knew whether the issue had been the release or the execution of his hero. Could he have intended to leave his readers uninformed of this issue by even the slightest hint? It seems incredible that the work should close thus. But that the Book should so close lies quite in the nature of the case and is in the closest analogy with the way in which the Gospel of Luke, the First Book of this history, is brought to its close. It seems exceedingly probable, therefore, that a Third Book was to follow, opening—somewhat after the fashion in which Acts opens with reference to Luke,—with a detailed account of Paul's work in Rome, of his trial and release; and thence carrying the story of the foundation of Christianity in the world on up to the consummation originally intended and hinted at in the preface set at the head of the Gospel of Luke. All that is strange in this otherwise very strange ending of the book passes away on the simple hypothesis that it is only the Second Book of the history, and not the history itself, that closes with the close of Acts.

And now we observe that in his description of this Book, the author has himself really told us that it does not bring the whole work to a conclusion. For, in the opening verse of Acts, he does not, as our English version misrepresents him, speak of the "*Former* Book" but rather of the "*First* Book" of his treatise as already in the hands of Theophilus: and there is no reason to suspect that this language is not employed with sufficient precision to distinguish between the implication of "former" and "first." Let us add, further, that the hints in this preface of the scope of the remainder of the history seem to hold out a broader promise than the Book of Acts meets; so that we should be justified on this ground in believing that a Third Book was probably to follow the two we have, in order that there might be recorded in it the rest of what Jesus continued to do and to teach through His servants,

after He was received up, until witness had been borne Him even "unto the uttermost part of the earth." It is idle, of course, to speculate minutely as to the proposed contents of this projected Third Book. We can be sure it was to begin with an account of Paul's work in Rome and of his trial there and its issue. We can be sure also that it was to continue with such a narrative of the work of Jesus in establishing His church in the world as would not only bring the story "up to date," but round it out as a complete whole, calculated to convey the impression of a definite attainment of Christianity, as is suggested in the preface to Luke. But it is hidden from us whether this continued narrative was to follow in the main the work of Paul and throw its stress on the development of the Church in organization and efficiency (which seems most probable); or whether (as is at least possible) it was to revert to the work of the other Apostles and exhibit the extension of the Church to the East and South of Jerusalem through their labors, thus giving us a completer view of the place occupied by Christianity in the world at the point of time set by the writer as his *terminus ad quem*. It is enough, meanwhile, to be assured that a Third Book was contemplated; and that our Book of Acts is not to be looked upon as a complete treatise upon even Apostolic history, but only as the middle section of a great historical work, projected but never completed, which was to contain the history of the beginnings of Christianity, with a view especially to exhibiting its divine origin and mission and its divine fitting for the great work committed to it.

It is only a particular portion of this comprehensive program, that the section of the work included within its Second Book,—our Book of Acts—is intended to carry out. Speaking *sub specie temporis*, we may perhaps say that the First Book—our Gospel of Luke—was devoted to the preparation for the Church of Christ: the Second Book—our Book of Acts—to the establishment of the Church in the Roman empire with its center in the Capital city: while, perhaps, we may not unfitly suppose that the Third Book was to exhibit the equipment of that Church for its great function in the world. But the author of the work, it must be clearly noted, does not himself look at the matter *sub specie temporis*. By him the whole development is conceived *sub specie aeternitatis*. Accordingly, he puts the matter thus (Acts i. 1): The

First Book treats of all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day on which he was taken up; the two subsequent Books were, therefore, to treat of all that Jesus continued to do and to teach after his ascension. To him, thus, this second section of his history was not the "Acts of the Apostles," except in so far as the Apostles may be conceived as the instruments through whom Jesus prosecuted his work of establishing His church in the world. It was specifically the Acts of the Risen Christ. It is, therefore, that it begins with an account of the forty days which Jesus spent with His disciples after His resurrection, and of the Ascension itself which brought them to a close by his session on the throne of His power; this whole account having been purposely held over from the Gospel, and here so ordered as to throw into relief the relation of the events recorded rather to what was yet to come than to what was already past. It is therefore, also, that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is particularly dwelt upon in this account, and that the narrative hastens on to the record of the descent of the Spirit on the great day of Pentecost, when "the promise of the Father" came and the nascent Church was endowed for its work with a supernatural power, or rather with a supernatural Agent. It is therefore, again, that at every step in the progress of the history, explicit stress is laid upon its divine direction; and not only is the course of the narrative studded with references to the hand of God as the real factor operative in the production of the several stages of advance, but the whole course of the history itself is represented as in every step a product of direct divine leading. It has been sometimes imagined that the miraculous element might be sifted out from the Book of Acts and a residuum for a natural history of the origins of Christianity left. Nothing could be more impossible. This, not merely because the miracles recorded are inseparably interwoven with the narrative, and the whole must be taken or the whole left; but much more because the whole history is conceived from a supernatural point of view, and developed as a distinctively supernatural product. To the author of Acts the Church was not established in the Roman empire by the self-directed efforts of men who wrought no doubt with the Divine approval, and enjoyed a high measure of the Divine favor, and were, therefore, aided in their arduous labors by the Divine power, intruded here and there

to rescue them from special dangers or to give them at particular crises special acceptance in the eyes of men. It was established by the constant and unintermittent activity of the Lord Jesus, sitting on the throne of the universe and ordering the course of history according to his will, so that the whole development is to be conceived as a supernatural work.

It cannot surprise us, therefore, that the program of the work is derived from a heavenly source, and that it seeks to present the history as the sheer unfolding of the announced purpose of the risen Lord. It does not seem to be going too far to discover something very like the formal announcement of its theme in Luke xxiv. 47, and Acts i. 1—our Lord's prophetic announcement that after "the promise of the Father" had been received by his followers, repentance and remission of sins were to be preached in His name "unto all the nations, beginning with Jerusalem;" or, more specifically, that His followers should receive power when the Holy Ghost had come upon them, and should be His witnesses, "both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." It is certainly much in the manner of this author to prepare the way for his detailed treatment by anticipatory communications of this sort; and the more specific of these announcements seems to supply, in the transformed shape of narrative, the place of the second member of the sentence in which he had begun to contrast the two Books of his treatise, and, therefore, appears to be in effect a formal description of his intention with reference to the Second Book. In fine, there is every reason to suspect that, by his careful and prominent record of these predictions of the risen Jesus, the author wished to forecast the outline of the narrative upon which he was about to enter. And certainly the actual contents of the Book as it lies before us encourage this suspicion, and justify us at least in saying (as it has been admirably phrased) that the terms of our Lord's promise "implicitly involve a table of contents" of the book. "Ye shall receive power when the Holy Ghost is come upon you (Acts ii. 1-13), and ye shall be my witnesses—both in Jerusalem (ii. 14-viii. 1); and in all Judea and Samaria (viii. 1-xii. 25); and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (xiii. 1-xxviii. 31). The last of these topics, to be sure, is not exhausted in this Book. There is a sense, no doubt, in which even it, though

not "actually" is yet "potentially" carried to its conclusion. In Paul's journey to Rome and unhindered preaching there and in the consequent firm footing obtained for Christianity "in the metropolis of the human race, the strong-hold of heathendom," we may unquestionably see such an earnest of the end afforded as will "leave no doubt of its ultimate accomplishment." But there is a certain subtlety in so conceiving the author's meaning which appears foreign to his method. We seem to be pointed by this forward look not so much to history as yet incompletely unrolled as to a Third Book of records, in which, we can scarcely doubt, a course of events was set down which afforded at least a fuller earnest of the complete accomplishment of the great promise. In any event, however, the purpose of the author seems to have been to portray the history of the Christian Church as the fulfilment of our Lord's prophetic outline.

The common view of the disposition of the book, therefore, is a very close transcript of the author's intention. It seems naturally to fall into three parts, the narrative revolving in turn about Jerusalem, Antioch, and Rome, as the opening, middle, and end points in the development of the history. The progress thus runs in ever widening circles—at each shifting of the center a point on the periphery of the preceding circle becoming the center of its enlarged successor. The circle swept from Rome as a center is left, indeed, for the Third Book; the narrative of the Second Book closing with the attainment of this new center. Within its limits the whole progress of the movement up to the establishment of the Church in this third center of its development—which was at the same time the center of the world—is unfolded. The Book of Acts, then, in effect, gives us not so much the history of the spread of the Church—much that would necessarily enter into such a history is omitted,—as the history of the establishment of the Church successively (or perhaps we should say, progressively) in the three great centers, Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome; and the movement of the narrative falls into complete order only when it is looked at from this point of view. First we have explained to us the process by which the Church was firmly established in Jerusalem (i. 1-viii. 1). Then the radiation of the Church from Jerusalem is described, working up to the firm establishment of a new center for its activities at Antioch (viii. 1-xii. 25).

Lastly, the missionary circuits from Antioch as a center are described, culminating in the establishment of a new center at Rome (xiii. 1-xxviii. 31). The author's effort seems to be in each case, to trace out the factors that co-operated in obtaining for the Church a firm footing and center of development in these three great centers in turn. His narrative thus advances in something like a spiral movement steadily upwards towards its goal.

Following out this conception of the general scheme more into detail, we shall obtain something like the following table of contents for the book:

PREFACE: The Commission and Promise of the Risen Jesus.

i. 1-II.

- I. The Establishment of the Church at its first center, Jerusalem i. 12—viii. 1
 1. The Period of Expectation i. 12-26
 2. The Coming of the Promise ii. 1-47
 3. Formative Vicissitudes iii. 1—viii. 1
 - a. First External Assault and its Effect iii. 1—iv. 57
 - b. First Internal Danger and its Effect v. 1-16
 - c. Second External Assault and its Effect v. 17-42
 - d. Second Internal Danger and its Effect vi. 1—viii. 1
- II. The Establishment of the Church at its second center, Antioch viii. 1—xii. 25
 1. Transition Statement viii. 1-4
 2. The Radiation from Jerusalem viii. 5—xi. 18
 - a. Philip's Mission viii. 5-40
 - b. Saul's Conversion and Early Work ix. 1-31
 - c. Peter's Experiences ix. 32—xi. 18
 3. The Foundation of the Church at Antioch, xi. 19—xii. 25
- III. The Establishment of the Church at its new center, Rome xiii. 1—xxviii. 31
 1. Paul's First Mission Journey and its Sequences xiii. 1—xv. 35
 2. Paul's Second Mission Journey xvi. 1—xviii. 28
 3. Paul's so-called Third Mission Journey and its Sequences xix. 1—xxvi. 32
 4. The Journey to Rome and its Sequences xxvii. 1—xxviii. 31

(To be continued.)

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CONTINUING

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Number 2.

Hard upon the heels of Pentecost comes persecution. How complete and vivid the contrast between the scenes recorded in the closing verses of the second chapter of the Acts and those portrayed in the opening paragraphs of the fourth chapter! On the one hand an ideal condition, the after-glow of Pentecost lingering in the young church, the account reading like an idyl:

"And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding daily to the church such as were being saved."

The whole of the third chapter is occupied with the miracle of the healing of the lame man at the beautiful gate of the temple, and Peter's discourse growing out of it. This wonderful and benign event serves as the occasion of the first dark cloud, itself the very shadow cast by the radiant brightness of preceding events. So soon as Pentecost becomes a demon-

strated power, jealousy is aroused and the first opposition emerges, and, alas! that we should have to say it, the opposition begins in the house of God. As the representatives of religion had been the instigators of the death of Christ, so these same representatives take the initiative in the persecution of his followers. This would seem passing strange had not history made it so sadly familiar; the truth is that there has been no bitterer nor more relentless persecutor of the religion of Christ than an apostate church.

Whenever and wherever any church has become entrenched in civil power, forgetting its purely spiritual sphere and losing its distinctive spiritual character, drunk with the lust of the flesh and seduced by the pride of life, it has resisted unto blood and persecuted unto death all who shamed its reproach by a purer life or attempted to reform its abuses by a more spiritual doctrine. And this it has done with a persistence and a cruelty equal to anything exhibited in the most virulent persecutions of heathendom. Every age of the world,

SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BOOK OF ACTS.

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II.

In the January number of *THE BIBLE STUDENT*, we obtained some insight into the outline of the Book of Acts. In filling out this outline the author fulfils his promise of an orderly narrative. The order of narration is not always, to be sure, chronological. He permits himself, for instance, freely to illustrate a period by parallel instances (e. g. viii.-xi.) ; and he uses the device of general statements afterwards illustrated in one or more of their parts by particular instances. Yet he is careful of chronological sequences and writes with a clear and firm grasp upon the actual line of development. Very few points of contact occur with the course of events in the secular world, from which we may calculate an absolute chronology for the history. The whole action of the book is included between the ascension of our Lord and the release of Paul from his first imprisonment : and these two events may be dated with some confidence A. D. 30 and 63 respectively. The time actually covered by the story, therefore, is just that 33 years which we conventionally ascribe to a generation, and corresponds as nearly as possible with the time covered by the First Book of this history,—the life of Jesus having extended to about 33 years. Just at the close of the second period of the history as here depicted, when the establishment of a new church-center at Antioch had been accomplished and the series of events was about to begin which ended in the shifting of the center finally to Rome (Acts xii.), there is introduced an account of the death of Herod Agrippa I., which fell in A. D. 44. Between A. D. 30 and A. D. 44, therefore, the action of the first twelve chapters is to be distributed. Of more importance in fixing the chronology, would be the accession of Festus to the procuratorship of Judea, which is mentioned toward the close of the book (Acts xxv. 1), if we could only be absolutely sure of the date of that event. On the whole, A. D. 60 seems its most probable date. From this point we can work back by the aid of fairly continuous notices of time-intervals to the Council of Acts xv. ; and for the period before

that we receive aid from certain chronological hints in the Epistle to the Galatians (i. 18; ii. 1). Other allusions to events of secular history,—such as the dominion of Aretas over Damascus (ix. 25), the great famine (xi. 28), the edict of Claudius expelling the Jews from Rome (xviii. 12), the proconsulship of Gallio in Achaia (xviii. 12), supply only a series of general checks to the adjustments thus arrived at. The following chronological scheme for the history here recorded is thus suggested:

- A. D. 30. The Ascension of the Lord Acts i.
- A. D. 34-35. The Conversion of Paul Acts ix.
- A. D. 44-45. Paul's (Second) Visit to Jerusalem Acts xii.
- A. D. 47-48. Paul's First Missionary Journey Acts xiii., xiv.
- A. D. 50-51. The Council at Jerusalem Acts xv.
- A. D. 51-53. Paul's Second Missionary Journey
 Acts xv. 40-xviii. 22.
- A. D. 54-58. Paul's so-called Third Missionary Journey
 Acts xviii. 23 *seq.*
- A. D. 58. Paul's arrest Acts xxi. 27 *seq.*
- A. D. 60. The Accession of Festus Acts xxiv. 27.
- A. D. 61. Paul's Arrival at Rome Acts xxviii. 16.
- A. D. 63. End of Paul's Imprisonment Acts xxviii. 30.

It is immediately evident from even a cursory survey of the plan and contents of the book, that it is no dry and colorless chronicle, recording the facts as they occurred without further interest in any of them. Not all the facts that took place during the period covered by this narrative have been given a place in it; nor even all that came under the notice of the author. The Epistles of Paul, for example, supply facts in his life of the utmost interest, which are not recorded in Acts. It is quite plain that a very rigid selection has been employed and only those facts have been made use of that fell in with the purpose the writer had in view; and those that have been made use of have been given prominence according to a very keen sense of proportion and value, measured again, of course, with respect to this purpose. If this is what is intended by ascribing "tendency" to a book, this book is undoubtedly a tendential writing,—as is every historical work whose author rises above the mere mechanical cataloguing of events and seeks to understand them and to convey his convictions as to their significance to his readers. It is more usual to

speaking of a book written out of so clear a conception of the drift of the history as Acts exhibits, and marshaling its material with such skill with a view to conveying this conception to its readers, as a historical treatise of the first rank, whose view of the progress and meaning of the stretch of history it records is worth inquiring into.

The conception which this author entertained of the history of the Apostolic age is too clearly conveyed to be easily missed, and in its main traits has been already cursorily suggested. He saw in it, above everything else, the continued activity of the Lord Jesus Christ, establishing his Church in the Roman Empire. Nothing is more characteristic of his presentation of it than his supernaturalism. It is primarily this that gives unity to his view of its course, and color to his handling of its details. The whole history is unfolded by him as the evolution of the divine plan, under the immediate direction of the divine hand. Closely connected with this pervasive supernaturalism is the universalism of the narrative. The divine plan of which the history is treated as the unfolding is announced at the outset as involving a distinct universalism (Luke xxiv. 47; Acts i. 8); and the writer makes it his business,—we might almost say his primary concern—not only carefully to trace the steps by which this universalism was actually realized, but also to exhibit with the utmost clearness its essential implication in every stage of the developing history. This involves, naturally, a theological attitude, since the universalism of the gospel depends on a conception of the terms of salvation. It is, therefore, not surprising that an attachment to the Pauline doctrine of justification is traceable in the very fabric of the history.

Three further traits of the author's conception of the history stand in close relation to this fundamental design. The most important of these is what has been miscalled his conciliatory tendency. He undoubtedly conceived the history as having developed in a right line, and the final universal outcome as having lain implicitly in the situation from the beginning. And it lay in the very nature of an attempt to exhibit this orderly development that the implicit universalism of the early stages and of the early teachers should be drawn out as clearly as possible. The inevitable effect of this is to throw the differences in details that may

have existed between the several stages of growth, or between the successive leaders of the movement, more or less into the background in comparison with their more important agreements; and so, perhaps, to produce a superficial appearance of an attempt to harmonize conflicting elements or views. A similar origin has produced also the trait which has sometimes been spoken of as an "apologetical tendency." It is so far real that the narrative is undoubtedly directed to supply a historical account, and therefore justification, of the course of development taken by the Church under the leading of Paul. To the author, Paul is unquestionably the great hero of the early Church: and the Church of Christ is to him essentially the Church as it was formed and given shape and character by Paul's teaching. The Pauline Church in the Roman Empire, is, in a word, the consummation whose divine origin and formation he has undertaken historically to exhibit; and of course, he makes it his business to justify every step by which this consummation was attained, as the divinely led explication of what was implicit in the church from the beginning. This naturally makes his history in a sense an apology for Gentile Christianity,—for the Christianity of Paul: only he obviously conceives himself as exhibiting this as the teaching of the facts simply and truly related, and not as artificially imposing it upon them. Somewhat more remotely is what has been called the "political tendency" of the book also the outgrowth of its fundamental standpoint. It was not from the universalizing empire, but from narrow racialism that the Church was at first in danger. A certain implicit sympathy existed between the universalism of Rome and the universalism of the Pauline Church, by which they were made in some sense natural allies. A sense of this seems impressed upon the narrative, which appears to lay some stress on the fact that the Church had spread through the Roman Empire without coming into serious conflict with it, and was thus exhibiting itself as an affair of the Empire,—that is not a provincial but a world phenomenon, proclaiming a gospel to be preached "in all creation under heaven." The apparent care with which the freedom of the Church from all complications with the Roman state, and even a favorable attitude towards it on the part of the Roman officials is suggested, may, to be sure, have had an immediate apologetic intent, and may be meant to carry a plea for con-

tinued relations of amity, if not of alliance, between the two. If so, however, this is assuredly secondary. The main significance of this phenomenon, lies, we may be sure, in the recognition on the author's part of the contrasting effects of the Church's actual universalism on the representatives of national exclusiveness, on the one side, and of universal empire, on the other.

There is one further trait, not so much of the author's conception of the history, as of his presentation of it, which attracts attention at this point. We refer to his strong artistic instinct. This has, no doubt, conditioned somewhat both his selection and his use of his materials, and has thus become a not unimportant factor in the moulding of his narrative. We see it at work, for example, in the choice of the incidents by which, in his opening chapters, he seeks to convey a vivid impression of the "formation and maturing of a mother church, a model church within the precincts of the Holy City." This is accomplished by an artistically arranged alternating series of disturbances and trials, from without and from within, by which the infant church was purified and hardened (chaps. iii.-vii.). We may see it at work, again, in the parallel which can be traced to a certain very obvious extent (but by no means throughout) in the recorded experiences of Peter and Paul, suggestive somewhat of the art of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*. It is particularly visible, however, in the multitude of graphic details which are introduced, in the incorporation of the very speeches delivered by the actors on this or that important occasion, and in the vigorous touches that enliven and give force to the whole narrative. There lies in these graphic touches a hint of the intense personal interest with which the author prosecuted his task of composition; and it is not surprising that he sometimes seems to have inserted details or lingered over incidents, for all that appears, chiefly because of his own lively interest in them. From a strictly aesthetic point of view, (as also from the point of view of strictly "scientific" history,) this tendency to permit his own interest, now and then, so to speak, to run away with him, to the injury of a nicely calculated proportion, may possibly be considered a flaw; but it adds a trait of naturalness to the narrative which is as charmingly human as it is calculated to increase the reader's confidence in a narrative so obviously written out of the heart.

Considered merely as a piece of literary composition, thus, the work shows a breadth of conception, a grasp of the historical situation, a command of its material, a firmness of handling, a faculty of graphic narration, and an artistic instinct and human interest which must place it among the world's great examples of historical composition. Considered, on the other hand, as a historical document, it evinces itself by every test we can apply to be a remarkably accurate transcript of the facts with which it deals, and a thoroughly trustworthy account of the course of the events which it portrays. The geographical, historical, and topographical tests for which its subject-matter affords opportunity, are exceptionally numerous and varied; and the result of their application is to evince what must be called a wonderful exactitude both of formal statement and of incidental allusion. The narrative carries us into the intimate life of a multitude of communities scattered through the whole East—Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor, Greece,—and then to Rome. Amid all the complicated conditions and changeable circumstances of the times it portrays, it moves with firm and sure step. Geographical, topographical, political details positively swarm in his pages; but the author seems never to have been betrayed into an error. The personages he introduces act thoroughly in character, and when known from other sources, are recognizably themselves in his pages. The speeches, for example, which he records, reproduce not only the characteristic ideas of their authors, but their very diction and linguistic peculiarities. James, Peter, Paul speak in the Acts, each with the same accent with which we are made familiar by their extant epistles. This is the more remarkable as there is no trace of the use of these epistles by the author of the Acts. So far as his narrative is concerned, we should not know that a single one of them was in existence. Nevertheless, there is room for all of them that were written during the time covered by it, within the compass of his narrative; and a comparison of their incidental allusions to events with the narrative of Acts exhibits such a mass of what are called "undesigned coincidences" as affords a fresh basis of confidence in its trustworthiness. In short, the ability of Acts as a literary composition is fairly matched by its value as a record of facts; and its claim to recognition as a history of the first rank is rooted no more firmly in its clear conception of its task and strong and

artistic handling of its material than in its evident possession and faithful use of excellent first-hand sources of information.

Inquiring more closely into the nature of the sources which the author had at his command, our attention is, of course, called in the first instance to the circumstance that certain passages occur in the course of the narrative which are couched in the first person, as if the author were also an actor in the scenes described. These famous "we-passages" embrace sections in the narrative of Paul's second and (so-called) third missionary journeys, including the final journey to Jerusalem and to Rome (xvi. 10-17; xx. 5-15; xxi. 1-18; xxvii. 1; xxviii. 16); and their contents fully bear out the natural implication of the use of the first personal pronoun. They are obviously the description by an eye-witness of experiences in which he had borne a personal part, written with all the vividness and detailed exactness natural in these circumstances. The author of the Book of Acts, at the least, therefore, certainly had access to what may not unfitly be called a journal of one of the companions of the Apostle Paul. The sections of his narrative excerpted from this journal (if that is the proper way to account for them) are the immediate composition of an eye-witness of the events recorded: and the mere fact of the author's access to such a journal raises the query whether he may not have derived much more of his material, especially that concerned with the work of Paul, from the same, or from some equally good source. But here another fact of the first importance imposes itself upon our notice. It develops upon examination that these "we-passages" not only contain cross-references to other parts of the narrative, but in manner, diction, stylistic, and linguistic peculiarities, differ in no respect from the remainder of the Book of Acts or the Gospel of Luke. Despite minor distinctions, obviously arising from variations in subject and underlying differences of sources, the whole book, from a literary point of view, is of a piece; and it is unreasonable to doubt that the author of the "we-passages" is the author also of the entire book. It becomes at once clear, therefore, that the author of the book comes forward in these "we-passages" as himself a companion of Paul, and marks by the change of person his presence at or absence from the transactions described. All the phenomena support this certainly eminently reasonable—or per-

haps we should say, almost necessary,—supposition.

But in the recognition of this fact the problem of the sources of information for the history takes on a new complexion. For a considerable portion of the work of Paul,—the portion described in the “we-passages,”—the author was himself an eye-witness and a primary source. For the remainder of the work of that Apostle, his long and intimate companionship with Paul, and his association with others of Paul’s companions, provided him with the best conceivable means of information. Nor need we stop here. We learn that the author of the “we-passages,” who is also the author of the whole book, accompanied Paul on his last visit to Jerusalem; abode, along with him, “many days” in the house of Philip at Caesarea; lodged with him with one of the “primitive disciples” named Mnason, on the way up to the city; was taken by Paul with him “unto James” and made known to “all the elders” of the Church at Jerusalem; and was still with him when, two years later, he sailed from Caesarea for Rome,—apparently having lived with him in the cradle-region of Christianity throughout the whole intervening time. Nor must we forget the opportunities he must have had, as a companion of Paul for so long a period, for intercourse with others of his companions (say, for example, John Mark, the “interpreter” of Peter) who were intimately acquainted with the history of the Church from the beginning. He enjoyed, in short, every conceivable opportunity to collect from the actors themselves authentic information as to the origins of the Christian Church.

The Book of Acts comes to us, therefore, from the hand of one whom we know to have been in long-continued and intimate contact with the primary sources of information for the matters with which it deals, and who, according to his own account, borne out by the results, made it his business to “trace the course of all things accurately from the first.” It is in the strictest sense of the word, therefore, history at first hand. This is curiously illustrated by a fact which would otherwise be puzzling,—the fact, to wit, already incidentally alluded to, that the epistles of Paul, for example, are not put under contribution by the author as a source for his history. Only a writer in possession of more immediate, and, so to say, better sources of information could have ventured to neglect Paul’s own letters in drawing up an

account of his missionary labors. A late writer could not possibly have done so: or had he essayed it, could not possibly have avoided contradicting their data. Thus a phenomenon seemingly strange in itself receives its adequate explanation from the circumstances of the case. Paul's letters were not used by this author, for the very sufficient reason that they were not needed. He had even more direct means of information at his command, and comes before us as a co-witness with Paul's letters to the life and labors of the Apostle, rather than as dependent on their testimony for knowledge of the events of his life.

(To be continued.)

MIRACLES OF JUDGMENT IN THE BOOK OF ACTS.

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There are four events recorded in the Book of Acts which may be regarded as Miracles of judgment. These are:

1. The death of Ananias and Sapphira, v. 1-11.
2. The infliction of blindness on Saul of Tarsus, ix. 1-9.
3. The death of Herod, xii. 20-23.
4. The infliction of blindness on Elymas the sorcerer, xiii. 6-12.

The object of the following discussion is to vindicate the agency of the Apostles in these events from the aspersions of infidel critics, and to relieve the minds of some devout believers who are troubled in view of the severity manifested; a severity somewhat alien apparently from the general mild and loving temper of the New Testament.

Inasmuch as the agency of the Apostles was in no way involved in the death of Herod and in the blindness inflicted for a time on Saul, these events will not be considered. The reader's attention will be confined to the events marked 1 and 4.

Two views of the agency of the Apostles in these events have been held. One is that Peter and Paul acted simply as prophets announcing the impending judgments. They had no agency in the infliction of the judgment; and, therefore, no responsibility. In this respect they were like officers of the United States Weather Bureau predicting the storm which devastated the city of Galves-

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Christianity Christianity is the one revealed religion. **And Revelation.** That is to say, while the tenets of other religions are the product of human thought, the doctrines of Christianity are communications from God. Christianity thus stands fundamentally in contrast with all other religions. Nothing could be less true, therefore, than *SAINTE-BEUVE*'s declaration that "Christianity is only the perfection of the total body of universal beliefs,—the central axis that fixes the sense of all deviations." If what the Christian Scriptures contain is nothing but "all that the sages have said," and what Jesus has done may be fairly summed up as only "confirming with his own impress, the common law of righteousness," then Christianity also is only a "natural religion," possibly the purest product of human thought on religious themes, but essentially nothing but a product of human thought. It is on the contrary, however, the one "supernatural religion."

Religion and Revelation. It is very possible, to be sure, to overpress this contrast. Christianity does not stand in an exclusively antithetical relation to other

religions. There is a high and true sense in which it is also their fulfillment. All that enters into the essence of religion is present in them no less than in it, although in a less pure form. They too possess the idea of God, the consciousness of guilt, the longing for redemption: they too possess offerings, priesthood, temples, worship, prayer. Israel's Promise, Christianity's Possession, is also the Desire of all nations. Nor can we deny to them absolutely revelation itself. Though Christianity is the religion of revelation, it is not to be supposed that the human intellect has had no concern in its teachings: and though the ethnic religions are the religions of nature, it is not to be imagined that God has left any people wholly without revelation of himself. There are elements of human thought in the teachings of Christianity, and there are elements of revelation in all religions. Or, rather, revelation and religion are correlates, and there can be no religion save on the basis of revelation. Wherever religion exists at all; wherever there is discoverable any knowledge of God—however dim or degraded—there revelation must be inferred. For it is only as God makes himself known

SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BOOK OF ACTS.

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III.

In the February number of *THE BIBLE STUDENT*, we learned that the Book of Acts was certainly written by a close companion of the Apostle Paul. Who this companion of Paul was, we could scarcely learn from Acts itself. But the unanimous voice of early tradition identifies him with "the beloved physician, Luke," of whom the Apostle speaks in his later epistles as a specially trusted fellow laborer (Col. iv. 14; Philem. 24; 2 Tim. iv. 11); and to this must be added the weight of the equally consistent tradition that its companion Book, the Gospel of Luke, came from Luke's hands. The very obscurity of Luke increases the credibility of this tradition. Pure invention might well have selected an Apostle, or at least "some great one" to whom to attribute the authorship of so substantial a portion of the New Testament. But it would scarcely have singled out a person who would have been unknown even by name, save for passing allusions in the closing words of two or three later epistles. Still further weight is added to it by the thorough fitting in of the allusions to Luke in these epistles with the implications of the "we-passages"—a thing that cannot be said of either Timothy or Silas or Titus, to whom modern speculation has pointed as alternative possibilities. It would seem that if we do not assign the book to Luke, there is no one to whom we can assign it; and it does not appear likely that the authorship of such an important duad of works could have utterly perished from the memory of the early church. Let us add that the diction of these books is redolent of the phraseology in vogue among the Greek medical writers; which again points to Luke, "the beloved physician," as its author. There are thus no internal considerations to break the force of the historical attestation; but all the internal indications, on the contrary, fall well in with it. The matter is not of the first importance; but a natural interest attaches to singling out the very person to whom we owe so important a portion of the New Testament.

Little is added by the passages in Paul's epistles in which Luke is mentioned, to what is revealed to us of his personality in his own writings. We learn that he was of Gentile origin, a native possibly of Philippi, a physician by profession,—and, let it be noted, apparently a practising physician during the period of his companionship with Paul, and therefore the first medical missionary. He seems to have joined Paul first at Troas, in the midst of the second missionary journey, and to have accompanied him to Philippi. There he appears to have remained until Paul's return to Philippi in the course of his so-called third missionary journey (A. D. 58), and to have gone with him to Jerusalem and thence to Rome. He seems to have remained with the Apostle at Rome until his release. During the second imprisonment of the Apostle he is again found by his side at Rome (2 Tim. iv. 11),—but this is beyond the limits of the history as presented to us in the two Books which alone he was enabled to finish. Tradition adds nothing trustworthy to these meagre facts.

A good deal of the significance of an inquiry into the date at which the Book of Acts was written is evacuated by the identification of its author with a companion of Paul, who had enjoyed exceptional advantages for informing himself of the details of the early history of Christianity. No matter when he actually worked his *collectanea* into this highly organized treatise, it is first-hand information he is giving us, wrought into shape by one who had not only been at pains to trace the course of all things accurately from the first, but had meditated deeply in the sequences and significances of the history as a whole. Nevertheless, it is not merely an idle question when the book was written. Certain difficulties in understanding it,—as, for example, its relation to the epistles of Paul—seem to be increased by carrying it down to a late date. It would become very hard, if not impossible, to account for the entire absence of allusions to their very existence, to say nothing of the omission of many details of Paul's experiences recorded in these epistles, if the book be thought to have been put into shape at a time when these epistles had for nearly a generation been the sole source of information about Paul's work accessible to the churches, which had long been lovingly studied and had created a tradition concerning it. It is far easier to understand Luke's entire detachment from them as sources of

his narrative, if he wrote not merely as a contemporary, but actually contemporaneously with them,—knowing of them, of course, so far as they were in existence when he wrote, but looking upon them rather as sent out from his circle than to his circle.

There is very little in the Book of Acts itself to suggest a date for its composition, and what there is certainly does not point to one late in the century. It contains no allusion to any event whatever occurring later than the scope of its own narrative. We cannot, to be sure, infer from its abrupt close, with a bare reference to Paul's two years preaching in Rome, that it was written immediately at the expiry of those two years: for this abrupt close is only a finger-post pointing us to a Third Book which was to carry the narrative further. But there is little in the Book to suggest a much later date for it. Almost the only hint that has weight in this direction is derived from the character of the "we-passages." These are so full of detail of an inherently unimportant kind as to create a suspicion that they may be excerpts from a journal, incorporated without substantial alteration into a later narrative. There is a problem raised by this phenomenon which has not yet received a perfectly satisfactory solution. Perhaps the key to it is to be found in recognizing a trait of the author's manner which has already been adverted to,—a tendency, that is, to permit the keenness of his own personal interest sometimes to sway his choice of material. Possibly, this tendency being fully allowed for, we need not suspect that these passages rest at all on written sources: and the passing over of such written sources as Paul's letters in favor of oral means of acquiring information, fall in with this supposition. It is questionable whether a very few years—six or seven, say,—may not, in any event, suffice to meet the whole force of this consideration.

Everything else, certainly, points to a date of composition only a few years at most removed from the events last recorded. The considerations leading many critics to seek a later date are derived chiefly from the supposition that the record in the Gospel of Luke of our Lord's prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, is so phrased as to imply that this had already taken place when the record was made. And as the Second Book of the treatise must have been written subsequently to the First, this would carry its composition down to a date not earlier than, say, A. D. 80. This

argument appears, however, to be somewhat strained, and, one may suspect, rests ultimately on a certain chariness in allowing the reality of very detailed predictive prophecy. There seems to be in Luke's record of this prediction really nothing to suggest a date for it later than A. D. 70, which could not be applied similarly to Matthew's record, or indeed to Daniel's original prophecy. On the other hand, it seems that a reference to Luke's Gospel can scarcely be eliminated from I. Tim. v. 18, without resort to very artificial interpretation; and if this reference be allowed, it is quite certain that Luke's Gospel was written prior to the date of that epistle,—say, A. D. 68. Acts would naturally follow after no very extended interval. On the whole it seems not unlikely that the Gospel was written either during the long stay of Paul and his companions at Caesarea, when leisure would naturally be found for much that would have been difficult to accomplish during the course of the more active years that immediately preceded; or else during the two years of imprisonment at Rome: and that Acts was written possibly before Paul's death, say, during the second imprisonment at Rome; or at all events, not long after it, as certain early Christian writers (Irenaeus, for example) affirm. The manner in which the book closes renders it certain that it was not written until after Paul's release from his first imprisonment: but there is no hint of his death. At the time when it was written a Third Book was in contemplation; and it is natural to suppose that enough time had elapsed since Paul's arrival in Rome to supply the material which it was intended to incorporate in it. But events hastened in those formative days. And it would appear that from a standpoint of 67 or 68 A. D., there would be accumulation enough to justify the contemplation of another Book. In any event, we cannot argue confidently from the conjecture that the Third Book was to be differentiated from the Second chiefly by the period covered by it. The possibility lies open that the difference lay in the main in the topics treated,—say, the organization of the churches and their fitting for their function as permanent witnesses of Christ in the world; or the progress of the Gospel in the rest of the world through the labors of the rest of the Apostles. On the whole, the earlier the date assigned to the book, the better are its phenomena accounted for; and the most likely time would seem to be the months just preced-

ing or just succeeding Paul's execution.

The revelation of the author's personality on the other hand adds zest to the observation of the literary manner, style and diction of the book, which correspond rather remarkably with what might be expected of the person who wrote it. Occasion has already arisen for speaking of the strong flavor of medical phraseology which pervades its whole language. It is scarcely possible that any one but a physician would have written just as this book is written. It is just as obviously the production of a Greek, and of an educated gentleman. The Greek instinct for the sea, for example, is continually in evidence. It is clearly a landsman that is writing; but a landsman habituated to think of human intercourse in the terms of a seafaring people. Thus, for example, he is always careful to mention the ports of the towns which he visited. On the other hand, he describes the management of a ship, the incidents of a voyage, and the behavior of a vessel in the sea after a fashion that suggests one dependent on what he heard about him for his terms and modes of expression. The ease with which he takes up the language of sailors is perhaps a hint of the versatile talent of his race. Certainly, throughout the book there is apparent what we may perhaps call a remarkable transparency of diction; through which continually shine the traits of the particular sources (oral or written) which are for the time being drawn upon. Thus a great variety is introduced into the underlying tint of the narrative, despite its essential unity in language and diction. The contrast thus induced, for example, between the opening and the closing chapters is very marked and corresponds with the change of moral and spiritual atmosphere (as it has been happily phrased) from the Hebrew beginning to the Hellenic end of the history. These variations of tone, nicely adjusted as they are to the gradually changing conditions of the Church, are obviously not due to calculated artifice, but to the sensitiveness of the author's feeling for language, under the influence of which his own speech insensibly takes on the tint of the sources used.

Were the book written in the formal language of the schools, no doubt the influence of its sources upon its diction would have been far less marked. But this is not at all the case. Of the fashionable rhetorical devices of the day—the elaborate structure

of sentences, the parallelisms and rhythms of clauses,—that had been set in vogue by the Greek Sophists, it exhibits no trace. It is written throughout rather in the simple language of educated conversation, and exhibits all the flexibility and transparency of that most versatile of vehicles. The English version scarcely does justice to it in this respect, and throws over it a veil of far too formal, not to say stately diction. To revert from it to the Greek often brings a little shock, until adjustment is made anew to the clear, rapid, flexible, but somewhat familiar tone of its more conversational manner.

Another trait of the method of the book is possibly due in part to the author's mental habits as an educated physician. We refer to the place accorded in his presentation to the mere hard facts. He is not much given to reflections; nor does he often pause to point out the working of causes or their nexus with their effects. He appears to feel that if the facts are duly and clearly set down in their proper relations, they may be safely left to tell their own story. Few books at all events, even among historical treatises, have ever been written, which are so compact of the bare facts. And it is a great testimony to Luke's genius that he has been able to produce by this method not a chonicle, or dry body of collections, but a treatise of the first rank, vivid, vital and vitalizing, conveying with clearness and force the conception of the historical development which he had himself formed. The essentials of the highest dramatic talent are latent in such a performance.

The value of the Book of Acts is not exhausted, however, when we note its excellence as a piece of literature or its importance as a historical document. It commands our admiration as literature. It is precious to the student of ancient history, and preserves for him probably the most trustworthy and vivid picture that has come down to us of the conditions of social life in the Eastern provinces at about the middle of the first century of our era. To the sacred historian it is inestimable, as the sole authentic history of the planting and early training of the Church. But above all these claims upon our attention, it can urge this supreme one,—that it has come down to us as a portion of those sacred writings which are able to make men wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus. From the very beginning of its history it has held a secure place in the Christian canon. The First Book of the

treatise of which it is a part is, indeed, attested by Paul himself (1 Tim. v. 18), as standing along with Deuteronomy among the "Scriptures" which bring the Word of God to man; and there is sufficient independent evidence of its own assured place in the same collection to preclude all hesitation in extending this attestation to it also.

In its internal characteristics it justifies the character thus attributed to it. For it is not ordinary history that it offers us. In the strictest sense of the word, it is sacred history. It is even obviously written less in the interests of pure history, than in those of religious edification. The interest Luke feels in the events he recounts, the emotions they arouse in him, communicate themselves to his narrative; he clearly seeks to produce the same emotions in his readers, to set before them examples for their imitation, to communicate to them a religious view of history. The book, as we have seen, takes its standpoint not from earth but from heaven. What it essays to inform us is not how the Church spread from Jerusalem to Antioch and from Antioch to Rome; it is to reveal to us how the risen Jesus has established his Church in the world, and how he is fulfilling his promise to be with his followers to the end of time. As truly as is done by the Apocalypse itself, this book draws aside the veil that we may see in the events of earth, who are the real actors and to what end all things are really tending. This is "revelation." And as the vehicle of such a revelation, the Book of Acts takes its fitting place between the Gospels and the Epistles, and we read it, with no sense of incongruity, within the complex of 'the Word of God. He who reads it with the heart and understanding also will be led by it to know God better; will by it be more fully taught his power and purpose to save the world; and will be made to feel more profoundly that Jesus Christ is God over all, blessed forever, and that God is in him reconciling the world with himself. And as he reads and ponders, it will be no fault of the book's if he does not set his seal to it, as a book which speaks of God, and leads to God, and which doubtless also came from God.