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VI. MISSIONS.

The Christian church was, from and in its very beginning, a missionary church. Its birthday was *the day of Pentecost*,¹⁾ a harvest feast for offering "firstfruits unto the Lord." Not the whole harvest, but firstfruits, of the new covenant were brought to the sanctuary by the preaching of the gospel to the pentecostal multitude. The whole harvest was to follow, of which those firstfruits were a part. What took place at Jerusalem was to be *the beginning*;²⁾ the continuation was to extend through Samaria and Galilee and throughout *all nations in all the world*, even to *the uttermost part of the earth*.³⁾ This was not merely a matter of choice and option with the church, but the will of the Master, published in a solemn charge, repeated at various times, even in his very last words spoken to his disciples before the chariot of cloud carried him out of their sight.⁴⁾ Nor were the ways and means to be employed in carrying out this work left to the choice and option of the workmen. The charge of the Master-builder specified also the means whereby his temple should be reared to the end of time. *Preach the gospel to every creature*, he said,⁵⁾ and, *Teach all nations*,

1) Acts 2, 1.

2) Luke 24, 47. Acts 1, 4.

3) Acts 1, 8. Matt. 28, 19. Mark 16, 15.

4) Acts 1, 8. 9.

5) Mark 16, 15.

*baptizing them.*¹⁾ The material, too, of which the church should be built was indicated in these words. Not a gathering of all the Jews in the world or as many of them as would accept Jesus as the Messiah, but a people made up of men of all nations, Jews and Gentiles, chiefly the latter, *ἐθνῶν*, was contemplated by the Lord of the harvest,²⁾ whose *field is the world.*³⁾

They to whom the charge was given were *the disciples, the eleven and they that were with them.*⁴⁾ To the whole number of his disciples, to whom he gave the Holy Ghost, the Lord said, *As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.*⁵⁾ But as when a nation is at war, not all the citizens are in the field, and the actual fighting is done by those who have gone into the war, for which, however, the nation really furnishes the men and the means, so also conquests for Christ and his kingdom should be achieved by the *holy nation, the peculiar people*, whose task it is to *show forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvelous light;*⁶⁾ but the weapons of their warfare should be wielded particularly by those specially detailed to the field. While missionary work is the work of the church, yet there must be missionaries in the stricter sense, men who are sent out while the rest of the people remain at home. Thus it was from the beginning in the church. The same Lord who commissioned his church to preach the gospel to all nations also appointed the first missionaries proper, whose particular task and duty it was to be to perform and execute that which was the business of all disciples. For this purpose he chose and called his *apostles and gave them commandments,*⁷⁾ placing them under his special instructions and laying out for them their special work.

1) Matt. 28, 19; cf. Luke 24, 47.

2) See also Matt. 8, 11. 12. John 10, 16.

3) Matt. 13, 38.

4) Mark 16, 14; cf. Luke 24, 33. 47 ff. John 20, 19—23.

5) John 20, 21.

6) 1 Pet. 2, 9.

7) Acts 1, 1. 4. 8.

According to this instruction this work of missions was begun at Jerusalem, in the metropolis of the nation, one of the great cities of the empire, and at a time when great multitudes also from a distance were gathered there, thousands who would carry with them and spread the news of what they had seen and heard when they should return to their homes. Here a church, an organized congregation, was founded and fostered, as has been shown in previous chapters. Hebrews and Hellenists were united in the same organization, having the same pastors and deacons.¹⁾ But though the pentecostal firstfruits were enough to constitute a strong congregation, the apostles did not discontinue their missionary work in the great city. It appears that they conducted public meetings in the spacious halls adjoining the temple chiefly for the purpose of reaching those not yet won over to Christ and his church.²⁾ Thus was the number of disciples increased from three thousand to *five thousand*,³⁾ and still *believers were added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women*.⁴⁾ When the care of the poor and needy interfered with their missionary work,⁵⁾ the apostles induced the multitude of the disciples to make provision for relief, in order that they whom the Master had specially commissioned to preach the gospel might *give themselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word*.⁶⁾ And as by this measure *the word of God increased*, the result was that *the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly*.⁷⁾

Being the religious, political, commercial, and social center of the district, Jerusalem naturally attracted the population of the surrounding country and the neighboring towns and villages. Here the people round about would transact business, buy and sell, consult lawyers and physicians, appear in court, worship in the temple. Hence a

1) Acts 6, 1 ff.

2) Acts 3, 1; 5, 12. 21. 42.

3) Acts 4, 4.

4) Acts 5, 14.

5) Acts 6, 2.

6) Acts 6, 4.

7) Acts 6, 7.

religious movement in the city would be apt to reach many visitors and sojourners and those to whom they would carry the news of what was going on in the city. Thus we read that *there came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.* This signified a spread of the gospel in various ways. The news of the apostles' doings had reached these people before they came into touch with the apostles themselves, and when they returned to their homes, they "could not but speak of what they had seen and heard," not only of the miracles of which they were now witnesses, but also of the word which the Lord confirmed by these signs as it was preached by his apostles.

There was not the same intercourse between Samaria and Jerusalem, and when to Samaria, according to the Lord's instruction, the gospel was to take its course, it was not by the apostles that it was carried there. When the first great storm of persecution burst over the church at Jerusalem, the apostles remained in the city while the disciples *were scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria.*¹⁾ And here these disciples were mindful of the commission given not only to the apostles, but to disciples of Christ, to witness to Jesus, to preach the gospel to every creature; and *therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word.*²⁾ One of them is particularly mentioned, Philip, the deacon, not the apostle.³⁾ He preached at Samaria,⁴⁾ again the chief city of a district, where he planted a church which remained far beyond the apostolic age. Then, having fulfilled a special mission which resulted in the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch,⁵⁾ probably the founder of the church in Ethiopia, *he was found at Azotus, and passing through, preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea,*⁶⁾ on the coast of the

1) Acts 8, 1.

2) Acts 8, 4.

3) Acts 8, 1. 14.

4) Acts 8, 5 ff.

5) Acts 8, 26—39.

6) Acts 8, 40.

Mediterranean. It should be noted that the apostles, while they also looked upon Samaria as committed to their charge, did not consider Philip a *busybody in other men's matters*,¹⁾ but approved of his work, and when they *heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John*,²⁾ who continued the work begun by Philip, *testified and preached the word of the Lord in Samaria*, and, before they returned to Jerusalem, also *preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans*.³⁾

What the apostles and others, by their missionary labors, built *throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria*,⁴⁾ in all the cities and villages in which they preached the gospel, was everywhere *the church*, ἡ ἐκκλησία.⁵⁾ Though, as the example of the eunuch shows, the saving of a single soul is of sufficient importance in the sight of God to prompt him to send a missionary on the road to Gaza, yet ordinarily mission work should be carried on with a view of gathering the converts into local congregations, of building churches and sisterhoods of churches.

Another rule which may be deduced from the practice of the apostles and the primitive church is this, that the field to be first cultivated is that of home missions. Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, Galilee, were first leavened with the gospel. This was not a mistake owing to narrow-mindedness on the part of the early Jewish church, but compliance with the Lord's instruction and the execution of his plan.

On the other hand, the spread of the gospel was not to be restricted to the Jews and the narrow limits of Palestine. The views which for a time cramped the minds of the disciples, and which, had they prevailed, must have stunted the growth of the church, were soon corrected by divine intervention and guidance and the logic of events brought about, partly by the prospering hand of God, and partly by

1) 1 Pet. 4, 15.

4) Acts 9, 31.

2) Acts 8, 14.

5) Ibid.

3) Acts 8, 25.

the very efforts of the enemies to stay the progress of the work carried on under their eyes. Thus Peter was taught to say, *Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him.*¹⁾ Thus they that were of the circumcision, and who contended with him because he went in to men uncircumcised, were led to hold their peace and glorify God, saying, *Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.*²⁾ Thus the heralds of the gospel, scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, were led beyond the confines of the land of Israel, to *Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch,*³⁾ and from *preaching the word of God to none but the Jews only*⁴⁾ to speaking also unto the Greeks, *preaching the Lord Jesus.*⁵⁾

This was at Antioch, the third city of the Roman empire, ranking after Rome and Alexandria in population, being a city of about 500,000 inhabitants, but outranking even Rome in the display of lascivious sensuality and debauchery, being, with the neighboring Daphne, perhaps the most fascinating moral quagmire in the world. Antioch was from its foundation a Hellenic city. Then there was also a strong Syrian element, and, as intermarriage between Greeks and Syrians was very common, a mixture of races, nominally Greek, reeked within the city walls, while a native Syrian rabble occupied the extensive and numerous suburbs. As other great Gentile cities, Antioch also had its Jewish colony.⁶⁾ And here, in the metropolis of Syria, the first great Christian congregation was planted among the ἔθνη, in Gentile territory, a church made up of Jews and Gentiles.⁷⁾ This was the first church whose members bore the Christian name, probably inflicted upon them by their scurrilous enemies.⁸⁾ And here the work of foreign missions took its rise.

1) Acts 10, 34 f.

2) Acts 11, 1—3. 18.

3) Acts 11, 19.

4) Ibid.

5) Acts 11, 20.

6) Acts 11, 19.

7) Gal. 2, 12—14. Acts 15, 1.

8) Acts 11, 26.

One of the first missionaries whose labors in the foreign fields are recorded was *sent forth* to Antioch by *the church which was in Jerusalem*,¹⁾ of which he had been a prominent member and benefactor.²⁾ The church evidently exercised particular care in the choice of the man for this important mission. Luke expressly describes him as *a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost* and faith. Besides these qualifications of a missionary his nationality recommended him for this particular mission; he was *a Levite of the country of Cyprus*.³⁾ His efforts at Antioch were aimed toward the intensive and toward the extensive growth of the church, to hold and strengthen the flock and to gather others to the fold. He *exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would CLEAVE unto the Lord*,⁴⁾ and *much people was ADDED unto the Lord*.⁵⁾

When the work grew on his hands, Barnabas sought assistance, and, certainly not without the concurrence of the congregation, he now summoned to Antioch the man who was soon to become the greatest missionary of the apostolic age, and of all ages, Saul Paul, of Tarsus.⁶⁾

It cannot be our purpose here to write a biography of this remarkable man. Yet a brief sketch of his personality and previous history is requisite where his work in and for the church must occupy our attention.

The native city of Paul was Tarsus, in Cilicia,⁷⁾ a flourishing city renowned for its higher institutions of learning. Here his father, a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin,⁸⁾ and a Pharisee,⁹⁾ a citizen, a *civis Romanus*, which gave to the son the Roman citizenship by birth.¹⁰⁾ Having probably received his preparatory training in the Greek schools at home, he was, as a young man, sent to Jerusalem, where he became the student of the most eminent Jewish teacher

1) Acts 11, 22.

2) Acts 4, 36.

3) Acts 4, 36.

4) Acts 11, 23.

5) Acts 11, 24.

6) Acts 11, 25 f.

7) Acts 21, 39; 22, 3.

8) Rom. 11, 1. Phil. 3, 5.

9) Acts 23, 6.

10) Acts 22, 27. 28; 16, 37 f.

of his day, Gamaliel.¹⁾ When the gospel of Christ was first preached in Jerusalem, he was not among its early converts, but among the foremost early persecutors of the primitive church, assisting in the stoning of Stephen,²⁾ and causing the imprisonment and death of many victims of the first great persecution.³⁾ What must have been the surprise of the disciples when it was suddenly rumored that the rabid young Pharisee, after an absence from the city, had returned and was seeking to associate with them. Suspecting sinister motives, *they were all afraid of him.*⁴⁾ Then it was Barnabas who stepped in as his sponsor, presented him to the apostles and gave an account of his conversion, *declaring unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.*⁵⁾ And what must have been the surprise of the Pharisees and priests when they suddenly learned that their former partisan and tool was now with the Nazarenes, and that he *spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians.*⁶⁾ Before long, the former persecutor had himself become the object of persecution. His enemies *went about to slay him. Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.*⁷⁾

For years the church and its leaders had lost sight of him. It seems that even Barnabas did not know where he was. But he knew where to enquire after him; he went *to Tarsus, for to seek Saul. And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch.*⁸⁾ Here the two labored side by side, and hand in hand with others who served the church of the great city.⁹⁾

1) Acts 22, 3.

2) Acts 7, 58.

3) Acts 8, 3; 9, 1 f.; 13, 21; 22, 4; 26, 10 f. 1 Cor. 15, 9. Gal. 1, 13. Phil. 3, 6.

4) Acts 9, 26; cf. 13 ff.

5) Acts 9, 27; cf. 9, 3 ff.; cf. Gal. 1, 18 f.

6) Acts 9, 28 f.

7) Acts 9, 29 f.

8) Acts 11, 25 f.

9) Acts 11, 26; 13, 1.

But the time came when greater things were to be achieved by the man to whom God had revealed his Son that he might preach him among the heathen.¹⁾ It was in the fourteenth year after his conversion, that during his sojourn in Judea for the administration of the alms sent by the brethren at Antioch,²⁾ as he was praying in the temple, the Lord appeared to him and said, *Depart; for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.*³⁾ If Paul and Barnabas had intended to tarry at Jerusalem when their charge was fulfilled, this revelation hastened their departure,⁴⁾ and shortly after their return, the church that was at Antioch also received a revelation through the prophets and teachers of the congregation, who were the official spokesmen of God to the church. While these men, two of whom were Barnabas and Saul themselves, were occupied in the performance of their official functions, λειτουργούντων αὐτῶν,⁵⁾ the Holy Ghost said, *Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.*⁶⁾ This revelation was communicated to and acted upon by the congregation. With due solemnity, in a special service, with fasting and prayer and the laying on of hands, they sent them away, ἀπέλυσαν.⁷⁾ The subject of ἀπέλυσαν cannot be the prophets and teachers named in v. 1; for Barnabas and Saul could not be said to have sent themselves. The order, ἀφορίσατε, coming through those through whom God would manifest his will to the church, was intended for the church and was so received and understood by the church, and the formal dismissal of the two missionaries with prayer and the laying on of hands was a solemn act of the church. Thus they went as missionaries of the church by divine order; and when they returned, from whence they had been recommended, παραδεδομένοι, to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled,⁸⁾ they came as the missionaries

1) Gal. 1, 17.

2) Acts 11, 30; 22, 17. Gal. 2, 1 ff.

3) Acts 22, 17—21.

4) Acts 12, 25.

5) Acts 13, 2.

6) Ibid.

7) Acts 13, 3.

8) Acts 14, 26.

of the church, and *having gathered the church together*, not in a pastoral conference, but in a special meeting of the congregation, they reported to the church *all that God*, whose ministers they were, *had done with them.*¹⁾

This is all the more significant in view of the fact that Paul, besides being a missionary of the church, was also and at the same time *an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ.*²⁾ The commission of the church and by the church did not make him an apostle. But it pleased God that this great apostle, who was to be *in labors more abundant*³⁾ than all others, and who gloried in being *ἐθνῶν ἀπόστολος, the apostle of the Gentiles,*⁴⁾ should issue forth upon his wonderful career also as a missionary of the church of Christ. Thus did God for all times establish a conspicuous example of his will and ordinance that the work of mission should be a work of the church. And let it be noted that the sending of Paul and Barnabas was not committed to a sisterhood of churches or their representatives, not to a synod or council, but to a local congregation, *the church that was at Antioch.*⁵⁾ As all the rights and duties of the church rest with the local congregation, so does also the right and duty of Christian missions. When sister congregations united in a synod work together in missionary endeavors, it is not because they are members of the synod and must, therefore, consistently support the work of the synod, but because they are congregations, every one of which is charged to do what, for greater efficiency, they have agreed to perform together. In like manner, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, the work of churchly beneficence was looked upon as encumbent upon each congregation. The church at Jerusalem made provision for the care of its poor and needy members, and the distributions from the common funds went through the hands of the

1) Acts 14, 27.

2) Gal. 1, 1; cf. Acts 9, 6. 15; 22, 14. 15. 21; 26, 16—18.

3) 2 Cor. 11, 20.

4) Rom. 11, 13.

5) Acts 13, 1 ff.

officers of the church.¹⁾ The church of Antioch made a collection for the needy brethren in Judea and administered it by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.²⁾ And when, on a later occasion, more was needed than one congregation was able to furnish, Paul caused the churches of Galatia, Asia, Macedonia and Achaia to join hands in the great churchly enterprise; but his exhortations did not go before the churches in an encyclical; it was in a letter to an individual congregation, the church at Corinth,³⁾ that he said, *As I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.*⁴⁾ The work in which they were conjointly engaged was still the work of the *churches* of Galatia,⁵⁾ the *churches* of Macedonia,⁶⁾ and they who were to deliver the joint collection were the messengers of *the churches*,⁷⁾ chosen of *the churches*.⁸⁾ — But it is time that from this parallel we return to our missionaries. —

The charge upon which the church of Antioch had acted was, *Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.*⁹⁾ What this work was appears from the words of Christ to Paul, *Depart, for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.*¹⁰⁾ It was what we would call to-day the work of foreign mission. Not by his deliberate choice, not because of a repugnance to the work among Israel, least of all as the bold pathfinder of a new departure whereby Christianity had been transformed from a Jewish sect without a future to an ecumenical religion for the ages, did Paul become ἐθνῶν ἀπόστολος, the apostle of the Gentiles with an emphasis on *Gentiles*. On the contrary, Paul's personal preference would probably have been the work among his brethren according to the flesh. When Christ appeared to him at Jerusalem, his intention seems to have been to tarry there and testify for Jesus whom he

1) Acts 4, 35. 37; 5, 2; 6, 1 ff.; 11, 30.

3) 1 Cor. 1, 2.

4) 1 Cor. 16, 1.

6) 2 Cor. 8, 1.

7) 2 Cor. 8, 23.

9) Acts 13, 2.

10) Acts 22, 21.

2) Acts 11, 29 f.

5) Ibid.

8) 2 Cor. 8, 19.

had persecuted. Else why should the Lord say to him, *Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem; for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me.*¹⁾ So far was he from an inclination to turn his back upon Israel even at a later day, that he would willingly have sacrificed himself for those of whom he had *five times received forty stripes save one.*²⁾ Here are his words, *I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.*³⁾ The propensity toward foreign missions among benighted heathen nations in the face of the crying spiritual wants of neglected brethren in the faith or according to the flesh, toward maintaining Christian schools for Chinese or Hindoo children while callously suffering millions of Christian children at home to grow up without adequate religious training in secular schools, is a symptom of a morbid spirituality not on record against the early church. When Paul was made to understand that he was to be *ἑθνῶν ἀπόστολος*, he did not set his will against that of the Lord, and the church was obedient to the same sovereign will and sent the Lord's chosen servants to do the work whereunto he had called them. And when the missionaries returned and made their report to the church, they laid due stress upon the welcome news that God *had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.*⁴⁾ But their report would have been untrue and incomplete if they had not also mentioned their labors among their people. In fact, the very first statement in the inspired record of their missionary labors after their departure from Antioch is, *And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews.*⁵⁾ This remained the constant practice of the apostle of the Gentiles. At Pisidian Antioch,⁶⁾ at Iconium,⁷⁾ and on his later journeys, *as his manner was,*⁸⁾ at Thessalonica,⁹⁾ at Berea,¹⁰⁾ at Corinth,¹¹⁾ at Ephesus,¹²⁾ wher-

1) Acts 22, 18.

2) 2 Cor. 11, 24.

3) Rom. 9, 3.

4) Acts 14, 27.

5) Acts 13, 5.

6) Acts 13, 14 ff.

7) Acts 14, 1.

8) Acts 17, 2.

9) Acts 17, 1—3.

10) Acts 17, 10.

11) Acts 18, 4.

12) Acts 18, 19; 19, 8.

ever he found a synagogue he preached first to Israel according to the flesh. This is all the more noteworthy when we consider that as a rule the testimony of Christ in the synagogue met with stern rebuke and brought upon the missionaries the bitter enmity of the gainsaying Jews. Yet *unto the Jews he became as a Jew, that he might gain the Jews.*¹⁾

Another constant practice of Paul the apostle and missionary was that of planting churches where they would be most likely to work as a leaven upon their surroundings. Pisidian Antioch was the political and social center of a district, *regio*, where the people from the surrounding country and outlying towns would come and go. *And the word of God was published throughout all THE REGION*, says the record.²⁾ That the surrounding territory was taken into account by these missionaries is also indicated when Luke says, *They fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about; and there they preached the gospel.*³⁾ Lycaonia was the political district adjoining the region of Phrygia in the Galatian province, and Lystra and Derbe were in Lycaonia what Antioch was in the region on the other side of the line. That this significance of Lystra and Derbe, as of Antioch, was considered by the missionaries is the more apparent as the *region round about* is not mentioned in connection with Iconium,⁴⁾ simply because this town had no surrounding *regio* of its own, but lay in the region of which Antioch was the chief city. Yet there were two reasons why the missionaries should make a stay at Iconium. This town, though in the region of which Antioch was the center, was situated at a considerable distance from Antioch, near the boundary line of the district, and it contained a *synagogue of the Jews.*⁵⁾

1) 1 Cor. 9, 20.

4) Acts 14, 1.

2) Acts 13, 49.

5) Acts 14, 1.

3) Acts 14, 6. 7.

The same policy was followed by Paul as he continued his work. When he came to Europe he did not preach at Neapolis, the harbor town, but went directly to Philippi, *the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony.*¹⁾ Mark this description. Paul made for the chief city of the district. But was Philippi the chief city? The Philippians thought so. But there were those who contested this claim and gave the first rank to the ancient town of Amphipolis.²⁾ Yet Paul's estimate proved correct; for the time was near when Philippi left its rival far behind. Besides, there was a difference which told in favor of the younger city. Philippi was a Roman colony, which Amphipolis was not.

From Philippi, the apostle evidently started with a fixed plan. He had chosen Thessalonica as his next station. Though Amphipolis and Apollonia lay on the great Roman road on which he traveled, he simply *passed through.*³⁾ The choice of Thessalonica had been determined by the general importance of the city and by the presence of a strong Jewish element and *a synagogue.*⁴⁾ Berea seems to have been resorted to as a place of refuge, not because of the importance of the place. But finding a synagogue there also, Paul made good use of the time he was allowed to stay there, and not without success.⁵⁾ Here, as in the brief stay at Troas,⁶⁾ which also resulted in the planting of a congregation, we have instances of the improvement of unsought opportunities under divine guidance and blessing in missionary work.

Two more instances of Paul's eminently judicious choice of missionary centers appear in the sacred record. Between Syrian Antioch in the east and Rome in the west there were two cities which far outranked all others in all the points that would recommend a city to a great pioneer of Christianity. They were Corinth and Ephesus.

1) Acts 16, 12.

2) Acts 17, 1.

3) Acts 17, 1.

4) Ibid.

5) Acts 17, 10—14.

6) Acts 16, 8 ff.

Corinth was the capital of the Roman province of Achaia, the political and commercial metropolis of all Greece, where, on a system of many converging roads and naval routes thousands of travelers were coming and going, where Roman and Greek citizens, resident and transient foreigners, members of the best families, well-to-do freedmen, slaves of all kinds, people of all grades and shades, Jews and Gentiles, formed a population which afforded every opportunity an apostle of the Gentiles might seek. A year and a half of Paul's continuous labor at Corinth¹⁾ and the subsequent history of the congregation there proved the correctness of the apostle's choice.

Even longer than at Corinth, Paul labored at Ephesus, the commercial emporium on the opposite coast of the Aegean, the capital of the Roman province of Asia, and the seat of one of the most celebrated cults of antiquity in the world-famed temple of Artemis. From here the great highways stretched eastward through and beyond the province and roads of communication radiated toward the populous cities to which the Ephesian trade extended and whence the great temple and statue drew multitudes of worshippers. Here Paul taught in the synagogue and to the Gentiles. *And this he continued by the space of two years, so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.*²⁾ Thus was Asia leavened with the gospel in early days, and before the last apostle closed his eyes there were Christian churches at Colossae,³⁾ Laodicaea,⁴⁾ Hieropolis,⁵⁾ Smyrna,⁶⁾ Pergamos,⁷⁾ Thyatira,⁸⁾ Sardis,⁹⁾ Philadelphia,¹⁰⁾ flourishing churches, which handed down the gospel of Christ through generations and centuries.

In all these and other mission fields of the apostolic age the converts were gathered in local churches with their

1) Acts 18, 11.

2) Acts 19, 10; 20, 31.

3) Col. 1, 2.

4) Col. 4, 13 ff. Rev. 3, 14.

5) Col. 4, 13.

6) Rev. 2, 8.

7) Rev. 2, 12.

8) Rev. 2, 18.

9) Rev. 3, 1.

10) Rev. 3, 7.

local officers, bishops or elders and, if needful, deacons and deaconesses, as set forth in the chapter on *the Ministry*.¹⁾ The organization of these congregations was conducted and supervised by the missionaries²⁾ or their assistants.³⁾ The word, the preaching of the gospel, was everywhere the means whereby the churches were gathered;⁴⁾ by the word, the preaching of the gospel, they were to be preserved and strengthened and increased.⁵⁾ With this end in view the churches were also visited from time to time. Several such visitations of the Galatian churches are recorded. The first was after the council at Jerusalem, when, having spent some time in *teaching and preaching the word of the Lord at Antioch*, Paul said unto Barnabas, *Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do.*⁶⁾ A disagreement concerning the person of Mark caused Barnabas to abandon the plan;⁷⁾ but Paul, taking Silas with him instead, carried it out, not as a private enterprise, but with the approval and concurrence of the church, *being*, as when he set out on his first great journey,⁸⁾ *recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.*⁹⁾ He first *went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.*¹⁰⁾ Then he proceeded to southern *Galatia*,¹¹⁾ and *went through the cities*,¹²⁾ beginning with *Derbe and Lystra*,¹³⁾ where he took Timothy into the service of the cause,¹⁴⁾ before he continued the tour. On this occasion he reported to the brethren what had been done and decreed at the synod at Jerusalem. And the benefit of the visitation is thus described: *So were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.*¹⁵⁾

1) Ante, p. 17.

2) Acts 14, 23.

3) Tit. 1, 5.

4) Acts 2, 37; 8, 4. 5. 14. 25; 11, 19. 20; 13, 5. 26 ff. 49; 14, 3. 7. 21; 16, 6. 31 f.; 17, 2 f. 13; 19, 20. 1 Cor. 2, 2.

5) Acts 6, 7; 14, 21 f.; 15, 41; 16, 5; 20, 32.

6) Acts 15, 35 f.

7) Acts 15, 37—39.

8) Acts 14, 26.

9) Acts 15, 40.

10) Acts 15, 41.

11) Acts 16, 6.

12) Acts 16, 4.

13) Acts 16, 1.

14) Acts 16, 1—3.

15) Acts 16, 5.

Unlike this first visitation in times of peace and quietude, the second one was occasioned by serious troubles in the churches. After the visit of Paul, probably A. D. 50, Judaizing meddlers had appeared on the field and endeavored to lead the churches away from Paul and the gospel he had preached to them;¹⁾ and they had not withstood these evil influences, and were in great danger of losing Christ and being entangled with the yoke of bondage.²⁾ These distressing and alarming tidings were probably brought to Antioch by Timothy, who had visited his friends at home and met Paul at his arrival from Jerusalem, where he had *saluted the church*³⁾ after his second great journey. If this supposition is correct, it is equally probable that Paul at once sat down and wrote his epistle to *the churches of Galatia*, which was evidently written in great mental commotion. In this letter, however, he expresses a desire to be with them and to change his voice.⁴⁾ If he had gone at once without having first written to them, the meeting would have been painful to both parts; for he must then have used language very much like that of his letter. But when the epistle had served its purpose and sobered the bewitched Galatian brethren,⁵⁾ a personal visit, during which he might speak to them in a different strain, held out fair prospects for a completion of the good work. Thus, after he had spent some time at Antioch, he set out and *went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order*, beginning at Derbe, thence proceeding to Lystra, thence to Iconium, thence to Pisidian Antioch, *strengthening all the disciples*.⁶⁾ And peace being restored, it was probably during this visitation that Paul inaugurated the great work of peace⁷⁾ the completion of which gathered about him delegates from all the provinces in which he had labored as the greatest missionary of all times.⁸⁾

1) Gal. 1, 6 ff.

2) Gal. 5, 1.

3) Acts 18, 22.

4) Gal. 4, 20.

5) Gal. 3, 1.

6) Acts 18, 23.

7) 1 Cor. 16, 1.

8) Acts 20, 4.

VII. THE CHRISTIANS AND THE WORLD.

To understand the position of the early Christians in the world it is necessary that we should in a measure understand the character of the world, the makeup of human society, in the beginning of the Christian era.

It is a wide-spread, wellnigh universal error of our day that the world in the fullness of time was ripe for Christianity. Dr. Fisher's *History of the Christian Church* opens with the statement, "The condition of the civilized nations at the birth of Christ was propitious for the introduction and spread of a new religion, in its nature adapted to all mankind."¹) If Christianity is the religion here thought of, which it undoubtedly is, the statement is as far from the truth as it can be, and the very reverse, substituting "unpropitious" for "propitious," is true. The masses of Jews and Gentiles were as far from the kingdom of God as they could be. The leading factions of the Jews were Pharisees and Sadducees, Pharisees bloated with the dropsy of self-righteousness, and Sadducees with the marasmus and gangrene of materialism. Hence, when the great Physician came, they killed him. The Pharisees had no use, but only bitter and implacable hatred for him who is the Lord our Righteousness. The Sadducees had no use for a Savior who would free them from the lust of the eyes, and the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. The very flower of Judaism, the high priests and high council of Israel, cursed and condemned him to death, and the rabble in the streets yelled itself hoarse crying, "Crucify him!" His followers soon experienced the truth of the word, *Because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.*²) Before the Christian church was a year old, its preachers were imprisoned and scourged, its members were chased like criminals or wild beasts, bound, pent up, killed, scattered over the land, and all this in the name

1) Chap. 1, p. 7.

2) John 15, 19.

of religion, publicly, Pharisees and Sadducees working together, priests and the council taking the lead. But were not the three thousand¹⁾ and the five thousand²⁾ who believed sufficient evidence of a disposition in favor of the gospel? Not any more than the conversion of the young Pharisee who assisted in the lynching of Stephen was evidence of his ripeness for the "new religion." Nor was the Jewish diaspora more kindly disposed toward the gospel of Christ. There was not a synagogue in which the preachers of the Crucified did not meet with violent opposition. What was won over was not evidence of ripeness for the gospel, but of the supernatural power of the word which was *unto the Jews a stumblingblock and unto the Greeks foolishness*,³⁾ the power of Him whose weakness is stronger than men.⁴⁾

To the Greeks, the gospel was foolishness, contemptible, damnable foolishness. The Gentile world was, with the exception of the few stoic philosophers, who may be put down as the Gentile Pharisees, a motley mass of Gentile Sadducees. The Empire and the Church in the Empire were born in a materialistic age. Practical materialism, whose "Hosanna in the highest" was "*Panem et circenses*," "Food and fun," had found its law and gospel in the philosophy of Epicure, which was taught in the schools, recited in the streets, sung at banquets, made into elegant verse by such psalmists as Lucretius, who states his purpose with the words, *Religionum animum modis exsolvere pergo*, "I proceed to release the mind from the bonds of religions."⁵⁾ Yet this versification of Epicurian philosophy, which was published by Q. Cicero in a revised edition and of which Ovid in his lascivious *Amores* said that it would endure to the end of the world,⁶⁾ opened with a long prayer to one of the heathen deities. But it was to Venus, the voluptuous goddess of sexual lust, *hominum divomque voluptas, Alma*

1) Acts 2, 41.

2) Acts 4, 4.

3) 1 Cor. 1, 23.

4) Rom. 1, 16. 1 Cor. 1, 25.

5) *De rerum natura*, 1, 931.6) *Amor.* 1, 15, 23.

Venus,¹⁾ that he addresses this prayer, in which he again and again deprecates the oppressive evil of Religion.²⁾ This generation scoffed at Olympus and Oreus, heaven and hell, and made laughing-stock of the whole menagerie of deities which the forefathers had revered. Yet these same abandoned gods and goddesses had their temples and shrines and sacred groves, their priests and priestesses and sacrifices and festivals. And all this largely as of public concern. The emperor was Pontifex Maximus, and the priests were state officials, and the affairs of the state in war and in peace were sandwiched in religious exercises, forms without substance. A conquered nation was supposed to bring with it into the body politic its national gods and to continue its national cults. But it was not lawful for the adherents of such religions to proselyte, nor for others to embrace the religion of a nation not their own, or to take part in its exercises, unless it were the religion of Rome. "It was the business of the magistrates," says Livy, *ut . . . omnem disciplinam sacrificandi praeterquam more Romano abolerent*, i. e., "that they should abolish all religious exercise other than after the Roman way."³⁾ Even the possession of religious books of an objectionable character was prohibited by law, and it was likewise the duty of the officers, *ut vaticinios libros conquirerent comburerentque*, "to seek up and burn prophetic books."⁴⁾

In these and other ways religion, mostly the empty form of exploded religions, was the affair of nations, of the state, of the Empire. But in like manner, throughout the Empire, the private life of the individual, the unbelieving rationalist and materialist, was fringed and tasseled with traditional religious forms. There were family sanctuaries in the dwellings; libations were poured at meals and banquets; wreaths were worn at family festivals in honor of some deity. Clubs and trades' unions had their tutelar god

1) *De rer. nat.* 1, 1. 2.

3) *Ab urbe condita*, XXXIX, 16.

2) 1, 64. 79. 84. 102.

4) *Ibid.*

or goddess, as *cultores Jovis*, *cultores Herculis*, *cultores Apollinis et Dianae*; their meetings were opened with religious ceremonies; the burials of their members were conducted with religious rites. When the butcher killed a calf, he would cut a bunch of hair from its forehead and cast it into a pan of coals as a burnt offering, thus making the whole beast an immolation and placing the meat under the tutelage of the god. This was the form; the substance was merely the idea of a cheap preservative for the meat, as also the libation at the banquet, though originally a drink-offering, had come to signify no more than the modern "here is for luck," or, "your health," with the clink of the glasses. Thus, likewise, the pinch of incense thrown into the flame before the statues of the emperor placed in public thoroughfares throughout the empire for this purpose, was originally conceived as an offering to the *genius* of the emperor. But in an age when few people believed that the emperor had a *genius*, a tutelary spirit, or a personal existence after death, most people performed the ceremony very much as we doff the hat as a token of respect.

Yet these forms of public and private idolatry were kept up, and there were many who were particularly interested in their observance. The temples were large and costly structures, embellished with statuary and other sculptures. The cult required a priesthood, the more numerous, the greater the number and frequency of solemnities would be. The income of the priests depended largely on the offerings brought by the worshipers, the better part of which went to the priests, who consumed what they needed and sold the rest to the traders. Cattle, wine, incense, flowers and other requisites for the sacrifices and festivals were furnished with profit to the various dealers through whom they were procured. Statues of deities were in large demand as long as they belonged to the furniture of a decent dwelling. And thus there were hundreds and thousands, priests and priestesses, dealers in stone and wood and metals and

ivory and cattle and meat and hides and wine, and architects and masons and carpenters and stonecutters and sculptors and artists and designers and draftsmen, painters and potters, coppersmiths and silversmiths, teamsters and drovers, employers and employees, and their families and dependents, all of whom were materially interested in the continuance of these forms of heathen cults, all of whom would suffer loss by their decadence.

To the Christians, on the other hand, these conditions were the prolific source of untold hardships and tribulations, sufferings and anguish, persecution, imprisonment, torture and violent death. Paul is an example. He was the son of a Jewish colonial of Tarsus, a Roman citizen by birth. While he worshiped with his kinsmen according to the flesh, his religion was *religio licita*, the national cult of a conquered nation, his nation wherever he was. As a talented young man of polite education, and, probably, not without means, he was respected, and a brilliant career might have led him to high stations in the world. Indeed, he might have *had confidence in the flesh*.¹⁾ But all this was changed when he cast his lot with Christ. At Jerusalem, where he had been prominent notwithstanding his youth, and had enjoyed the confidence of those in power,²⁾ *they went about to slay him*.³⁾ On his return to Tarsus, his father probably disavowed him and withdrew his hand from him, so that, being now destitute of means, he had only the choice between *living of the gospel*⁴⁾ and earning his living by manual labor, at a trade which, like other men of letters, he had learned for times of adverse fortune.⁵⁾ Where he preached Christ in the synagogue, he was hooted down by the Jews, the same as if he had preached Jupiter on a text from Homer or Virgil. But Jupiter was a Roman god, which Christ was not; and adhering to and worshipping

1) Phil. 3, 4 ff.

2) Acts 22, 5.

3) Acts 9, 29.

4) 1 Cor. 9, 14.

5) Acts 18, 3; 20, 33—35.

Jupiter would have found the sanction of the Roman law, even in a Jew; which the worship of Christ could not. This point was urged by his accusers before the magistrates at Philippi, saying, *These men . . . teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans;*¹⁾ and, as a consequence, Paul was put to the scourge and imprisoned.²⁾ The true reason why these accusers appeared against the apostle was not their faithfulness to the state religion; for they themselves had violated the law which prohibited occult arts, having profited by the sorcery of a slave woman in their possession, who *brought her masters much gain by soothsaying.*³⁾ It was the damage to their material interests, the discovery *that the hope of their gains was gone*⁴⁾ which incensed them against the preachers of Jesus Christ, in whose name the woman had been healed. For a similar reason, Demetrius, the silver-smith of Ephesus, created a riot against Paul. He too professed concern for *the great goddess Diana;*⁵⁾ but the main-spring of his enmity was that *his craft was in danger,*⁶⁾ and, being a man who *brought no small gain unto the craftsmen,*⁷⁾ he had the ear of many when he called them *together with the workmen of like occupation and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have OUR WEALTH. Moreover we see and hear that not alone at Ephesus, but almost through all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands: so that not only our craft is in danger, but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.*⁸⁾ And as this worship brought thousands of strangers and their money to Ephesus, the argument went home with

1) Acts 16, 21.

3) Acts 16, 16.

5) Acts 19, 27.

7) Acts 19, 24.

2) Acts 16, 23 f.

4) Acts 16, 19.

6) Ibid.

8) Acts 19, 25—27.

many who were not of the craft of Demetrius, and the whole city was filled with confusion¹⁾ against Paul and his companions. It may be that the burning of eight thousand dollars worth of books, which, of course, indicated that the publication and sale of such and other heathen literature would experience a set-back in keeping with this act, had prepared the way for the outbreak led by Demetrius.²⁾ For as in the eyes of the Author of the *Acts*, so, doubtless, also in the judgment of those Ephesians whose business interests were at stake, the destruction of those heathen books was connected with and an effect and token of the fact that *so mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.*³⁾

Paul did not stand alone with his experiences. They found their parallels everywhere, for the world was everywhere the world, and to avoid intercourse and collisions with the world, the Christians must have *gone out of the world.*⁴⁾ In many instances they had the world under their own roof, in their own household. There were Christian men who had unbelieving wives,⁵⁾ and Christian women who had unbelieving husbands.⁶⁾ This led to separations, the unbelieving part withdrawing from a union and cohabitation which was apt to bring on innumerable disturbances.⁷⁾ We know that even to-day in mixed marriages, such as unions between Protestants and Roman Catholics, painful dilemmas are of constant occurrence. This was much more so where Christian and heathen were mated. A deep and broad chasm divided the family circle, and all those who associated with the family could not but become painfully aware of it. The Christian part could not do this and could not join in that without denying his or her faith. There was hardly an occasion, public or private, where the disparity would not

1) Acts 19, 29.

3) Acts 19, 20.

5) 1 Cor. 7, 12.

7) 1 Cor. 7, 15.

2) Acts 19, 19.

4) 1 Cor. 5, 10.

6) 1 Cor. 7, 13. 1 Pet. 3, 1.

tell. What was an innocent amusement, or a matter of common politeness, or a sacred rite, to the one was an abomination to the other. The members of the household could not help taking sides by word or deed or both. An invitation was extended to the family by heathen relatives or friends. Was the Christian part included? If so, should the Christian part go?¹⁾ And if he went, how should he conduct himself? The meat on the table had perhaps or probably been sacrificed to a heathen god or goddess. Should the Christian partake of it? Perhaps he might;²⁾ perhaps he might not.³⁾ The circumstances might be such that he would give offence by whatever he might do, whether he ate or abstained. Or there was a death in the family. With what rites should the obsequies be conducted? Should the corpse be buried or burned? Or a wedding. If the party was heathen or Christian, what part should the Christian or the heathen parent take in the celebration? And as to the support of the family. Honest labor was a disgrace for all but the slaves, and dishonest dealings were general. Conversion to Christianity very often necessitated a change of occupation,⁴⁾ perhaps from a life of luxury and ease to one of privations and self-denial, and wage-earning itself was felt as a species of self-denial. Paul had several ends in view when he earned his bread by the labor of his hands. The one he mentions to the Corinthians,⁵⁾ the other to the Thessalonians. Among the latter there were those who *worked not at all*.⁶⁾ To them, not to their ministers, he would set an example,⁷⁾ demonstrating to them that manual labor is below nobody's dignity, not below his and certainly not below theirs, no matter who or what they were. But we must not disregard the choice of his words when he says he had commanded them *that if any would not work, neither*

1) 1 Cor. 10, 27.

3) 1 Cor. 10, 28. 32.

5) 1 Cor. 9, 4—18.

7) 2 Thess. 3, 9.

2) Ibid.

4) Eph. 4, 28.

6) 2 Thess. 3, 11.

*should he eat.*¹⁾ He does not say, DID *not* work, but he says, WOULD *not* work, οὐ θέλει ἐργάζεσθαι. There may have been those who gladly would have worked, but could not, because nobody would give them work. Not everybody was willing to employ a Christian, and there were employments which a Christian could not accept. No Christian in Ephesus could have remained in or entered the craft of Demetrius, and no Christian could have taken or executed a contract to decorate rooms in a manner extant in some rooms of Pompeji which were probably decorated in apostolic days. Besides, the industrial world was honeycombed with open and secret societies and trades' unions to such an extent that they became a menace to the state and were soon after suppressed by police regulations. But a Christian could not remain or become a member of these brotherhoods with their heathen practices.

Yet the most dangerous of all occupations under the hatred of the world, both among Jews and among Gentiles, was that of a Christian minister. *We are, says Paul, made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things.*²⁾ The world knew, perhaps better than many Christians, that it was the preaching of the word whereby the church was built. Hence, to stay its progress, they must silence the preachers. The priests and the Sadducees were *grieved that they taught the people and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.*³⁾ And they conferred among themselves, saying, *That it spread no further among the people let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.*⁴⁾ From threats they proceeded to blows; and *when they had beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus.*⁵⁾ When Stephen testified for Jesus, they silenced him in death.⁶⁾ It was the same among the Gentiles. De-

1) 2 Thess. 3, 10.

3) Acts 4, 2.

5) Acts 5, 40.

2) 1 Cor. 4, 13.

4) Acts 4, 17.

6) Acts 7, 1—60.

metrius the silversmith knew that it was *this Paul* who had *persuaded and turned away much people*.¹⁾ And even before the later emperors expressly proscribed the bishops and elders in special edicts, the impugnors of Christian preachers had the law on their side. To *persuade and turn away much people* from the worship of Artemis was proselyting before the law, and proselyting was prohibited. To preach the law and to warn the people against the prevalent sins of the times in which they lived, and admonishing them to *redeem the time, because the days were evil*,²⁾ exposed them to the charge of *murmuratio contra felicitatem temporum*, "murmuring against the felicity of the times," which was a species of treason, a capital offence under the *lex Julia majestatis*, punishable by decapitation or burning alive or being cast before the wild beasts in the arena. Such a text as the words of St. John, *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world*³⁾ would be readily construed as evidence for the charge of *odium humani generis*, "the hatred of mankind," under which multitudes of Christians were put to a cruel death in the parks of Nero.⁴⁾

Considering all this, some one might ask, how was it that the preachers of the cross were ever out of prison at all or lived a single day, or that not all the churches were scattered as soon as gathered, like the church at Jerusalem? How, we ask in return, was Daniel preserved in the Lions' den? The preservation as well as the creation, not only of the world, but also of the church was and is to this day a wonderful work of God. If Satan and the world had their way, the church would be undone to-day as it would have been in its early days but for the protecting hand of Him who brought it into being. The same God who sent his angel to open the prison doors by night and bring forth the apostles,⁵⁾ or to make Peter's chains fall clanking from his hands and

1) Acts 19, 26.

2) Eph. 5, 16.

3) 1 John 2, 15.

4) Tacitus, *Annal.* XV, 44.

5) Acts 5, 19.

lead him past the first and the second ward and open the iron gate to lead him from the prison,¹⁾ and who caused an earthquake to shake the foundations of the dungeon at Philippi and set his servants free,²⁾ was also able to protect his church and to determine how far the enemies, Satan and the world, should be permitted to go. When Paul was at Corinth, the Lord said to him, *I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee.*³⁾ And behold, when the Jews brought much the same charge against him on which he had been scourged and imprisoned at Philippi, saying, *This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law,*⁴⁾ Gallio the judge *drove them from the judgment seat.*⁵⁾ The law was against the Christians; but the law is one thing and the administration of the law is another thing; and God had many ways and means of preventing the Roman laws from being enforced upon his people. Paul knew what he did when he said to the elders of Ephesus, *I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace.*⁶⁾ And in the midst of violent persecution⁷⁾ St. Peter wrote, *Be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled.*⁸⁾ *Wherefore let them that suffer ACCORDING TO THE WILL OF GOD commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing as unto a faithful Creator.*⁹⁾

A. G.

1) Acts 12, 7 ff.

3) Acts 18, 10.

5) Acts 18, 16.

7) 1 Pet. 5, 8 ff.

9) 1 Pet. 4, 19.

2) Acts 16, 26.

4) Acts 18, 13.

6) Acts 20, 32.

8) 1 Pet. 3, 14.