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Arthur William Klinck
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, ir_klincka@csl.edu

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CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE ACCORDING TO THE BOOK OF ACTS

A Thesis presented to the

Faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary

in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Bachelor of Divinity

by

A. Klinck

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A. Klick

INTRODUCTION.

Analysis of the Situation.

The first point which strikes the reader of this book is that it purports to have been written by the author of a "former treatise" (Acts 1:1) addressed to the same person, Theophilus; a treatise which gave an account of all the Acts and words of the Lord from the beginning to the conclusion of His earthly ministry, terminated by His ascension.[1] There is only one Gospel which this description will fit, the Gospel of Luke, which is dedicated to the same man, Theophilus. The progress of thought from Luke to Acts is quite logical. Luke ends with the ascension of Christ; Acts reviews the circumstances of the ascension and then goes on with the history. The former is a history of Christ, the latter, a history of the early Christian Church.

The arrangement and plan of the two books is so clear, the doctrine contained in them is in such harmony with the rest of the Bible, that no one in the ancient Church ever thought of questioning them in any way. The only ones who raised any objections at all were the Ebionites and other heretical sects whose disagreement with them was rooted in their own false doctrines. All through the Middle Ages the books were accepted,

1. Canon Cook: "Holy Bible with Commentary" p.306.

but towards the middle of the last century there was a complete reversal of opinion among critics, led by Baur[1] (d.1860) and the Tüebingen School, who utterly denied the Lucan authorship, the genuineness, the unity and the reliability of the books. For decades this school ruled critical opinion, but now, influenced especially by Ramsay[2] and Harnack, who had themselves been supporters of Baur's theory, the pendulum has swung back to the opposite extreme. "One by one the difficulties which had been seen in Acts disappeared because they had their origin in misconceptions as to the period and circumstances of history."[3] "The book has been restored to the position of credit which is its rightful due."[4] However, it will be necessary to examine these evidences which caused such upheaval of learned opinion.

The Evidences of Lucan Authorship.

Besides the claim which the Author of Acts makes for himself that he is also the author of a former treatise (see page 1), there are other internal evidences which prove that the Gospel and Acts are from the same pen. There is the same general style and vocabulary,[5] the linguistic and other peculiarities which distinguish the Gospel are equally prominent in Acts[6] and we find no parallel to them anywhere else in the New Testament.

1. Meyer: "Commentary on Acts" p.9
2. Ramsay: "Pauline and other Studies" p.199.
3. Ramsay: "Pauline and other Studies" p.200.
4. Harnack: quoted in Stand. Bible Encyclopaedia I. p.45.
5. Robertson: "Luke the Historian" p.5.
6. Friedrich: quoted in Robertson, "Luke the Hist." p.6.

"Unless we wish to doubt the truthfulness of the author of Acts, he was a companion of Paul."[1] In the "we-sections" at least, he designates himself as one of the missionary party; otherwise the use of "we" and "us" cannot be explained.[2] Nor are we left in doubt as to his official capacity among the missionaries. "The frequent miracles of healing are described with care natural to a physician."[3] "It has been proved to all who can at all appreciate proof that the author of the Lucan work was a man practiced in the scientific language of Greek medicine--in short a Greek physician."[4] Luke's equal in education and culture was Paul--yet, their language differs widely, Paul uses very few medical terms. It is true that no statement is made in either the Gospel or the Acts that Luke is a physician, but the cumulative linguistic effect is quite conclusive to one who is open to proof.[5]

Now, if the Author of Acts was a physician and a companion of Paul, he must have been Luke. Of course Acts does not mention Luke's name, but this is quite natural. Theophilus would know, as would also the others who would read the book, who was meant by "we". But could it not have been one of the other companions of Paul, Silas, Timothy or Titus? No;[6] as far as we know, Paul's other assistants were not physicians, while Luke is called the "beloved physician". (Col. 4:14).

1. Expositors Gk. Test. Vol II. p.4.
2. Robertson: "Luke the Historian" p.7.
3. Canon Cook: "Commentary" p.331.
4. Zahn: "Introduction" p.340.
5. Hobart: quoted in Robertson, "Luke the Historian" p.9.
6. Expositors Gk. Test. Vol. II. p.7.

So the internal evidence all points in one direction. This physician and companion of Paul is Luke. The external evidence is equally decisive. The testimony of the whole Ante-Nicene Church is summed up by Eusebius[1] who places the Acts among the "books which are uncontested", quotes it throughout his notices of the Apostolic age as Sacred Scripture, and attributes it, as a fact universally accepted, to Luke."[2] "Studied according to the canons of criticism which govern the study of ordinary classical authors, Acts must be recognized as a work in which the expression is perfectly clear and natural in the person to whom it is attributed by tradition, and is unexplained and unintelligible in any other person."[3] "All theories of the authorship of Acts except this, result in hopeless confusion.[4]

Unity of Acts.

Acts is one book, not a compilation. This is proved by the unity of style, the unity of purpose, and the unity of contents.

The unity of style is evident throughout Acts.[5] The author uses a language more akin to the classical than any other writer of the New Testament except Paul.[6] His use of medical language and technical terminology, his habit of close observation, his sympathetic interest in cases of trouble--

1. Eusebius: Hist. Ecc. III.4. p.63.
2. Canon Cook: "Holy Bible with Commentary" p.336.
3. Ramsay: "Pauline and other Studies" p.304
4. Ramsay: "Pauline and other Studies" p.321.
5. Harnack: quoted in Robertson,-p.7
6. Canon Cook: "Holy Bible with Commentary" p.330.

all these are characteristics of his <u>whole</u> book.

But there is also a unity of purpose[1] which is easily discerned by an unbiassed reader. Of course the purpose of Acts has been stated in various ways. Some say it was written to establish a parallelism between Peter and Paul,[2] in order to conciliate the Pauline and Petrine factions. Others ascribe a political[3] purpose to the book, to show the Roman government that the Christians were the legitimate heirs of Old Testament Judaism, or to show the Christians themselves that the Jews and not the Roman Government, were the true enemies of Christianity.[4] But why resort to such speculations. Luke himself states his purpose in the preface: "to show the triumphant advance of Christianity[5] in Judaea and Samaria and to the ends of the Earth", "an advance which progressed from Jerusalen, the centre of Judaism, to Rome, the centre of the world."[6] Nor does the fact that Luke addressed his book to an individual, argue for a political tendency. It was customary, then as now, to dedicate a book to a person as a mark of esteem, and dedication rather favored than limited the circulation of a book."[7] The book was meant, not for a Roman official only, nor for a single individual, but for all Christendom and this was merely the best means of getting it to them.[8]

There is another unity in Acts which has been vehemently

1. Alford, in Meyer "N.T. Commentary" Acts. p.22.
2. Expositors Gk. Test. II. p.14.
3. Schaff. Herzog Encyclopaedia "Acts."
4. Int. Stand. Bible Encyclopaedia p.45.
5. E.E. Nourse "Acts of the Apostles" in Encyc. Americana.
6. Fuerbringer: Introduction p.40.
7. Jamieson, Fausset and Brown "Acts".
8. Meyer: "Acts" p.11.

denied by Critics of the Tuebingen School, with their "Redactor-hypothesis", the unity of the contents of Acts. Here there are two parts of Acts which come into consideration, the "we-sections" and the "Speeches".

Of the "we-sections" Harnack says: "It has been often stated and often proved that the "we-sections" in vocabulary, in syntax and in style are most intimately bound up with the whole work and that this work itself, in spite of all the diversity in its parts, is distinguished by a grand unity of literary form."[1] This ought to be decisive for anyone who is inclined to doubt the geniuneness of the "we-sections". But why doubt them at all? What seems to be the most probable explanation is very simple. When Luke is with the party he writes "we"; when he is absent he tells the story in the third person, having received his information from Paul or from the other Apostles and apostolic helpers.[2]

Regarding the speeches in Acts, the matter is slightly more difficult. Robertson refers to the fact that ancient historians put speeches into the mouths of their heroes, "but it is only in quite exceptional cases that we are to suppose that the speech was actually delivered, or that they mean to say that it was delivered."[3] It was a regular convention of historical writing that the historian should express his view

1. Harnack: quoted in Robertson, "Luke the Historian" p.7.
2. Fuerbringer:"Introduction to Acts" (notes)
3. Robertson: Luke the Historian" p.218.

of a situation by making the chief actors in that situation utter speeches in which it is explained."[1] Is this true of Luke? Did he, in the interest of unity of contents, fabricate speeches for his heroes? No, the speeches have a genuine ring. "It is only necessary to compare the speeches recorded in Acts with the miserable harangues which Josephus puts into the mouths of his heroes in order to see that Luke was not only much better educated than Josephus, but that he regarded much more seriously the obligations of....accuracy."[2] The impression of Peter's religious attitude which we get from Acts, agrees perfectly with his attitude in I.Peter. There is the same concentration of the Gospel message upon the death on the cross, the resurrection, and the second coming.[3] There is also his consciousness of preaching, as an eye-witness, about the closing scenes of Christ's life, to those who, through his testimony are expected to believe without having seen. The speeches of Peter add to, rather than break up, the general impression of unity in Acts, and yet they are geniune.[4] The same is true of Paul's speeches in Acts,[5] though McNeile[6] makes an attempt to disprove it. His whole argument is based upon the assumption that a man, at different times, and confronted by different conditions will always act the same. This premise is, of course, erroneous. The speeches fit in just where Luke puts them--they add to the

1. Robertson: "Luke the Historian" p.221.
2. Zahn: "Introduction to New Testament III. 150.
3. Zahn: "Introduction to New Testament II. 174F.
4. Schaff-Herzog: Encyclopaedia I. 23.
5. Zahn: "Introduction to New Testament II. 150
6. McNeile: New Testament teaching in the Light of St. Paul's p.119

unified impression of the whole book. The only reason to reject them would be to disprove the unity of Acts and this reason would not be justified.

The Reliability of Acts.

It is a strange fact that, when critics start with purpose of picking a work to pieces,[1] they usually find something on which to base even their most fantastic ideas. It formerly was always taken for granted, that, if Luke recorded anything which had not been recorded by some other historian, the account of Luke was an error.[2] The same assumption was made, if Luke omitted anything which other writers noted. But every fair-minded person will admit that an argument such as this carries no weight. "The omission of an event does not constitute a gap, but is merely a proof that the event was not of sufficient importance to enter into the general plan."[3] Besides, many of the historical "inaccuracies", which have been places to Luke's account in the past, have been proved to be correct--general opinion was wrong and Luke was right. "Acts was written by a great Historian, a writer who set himself to record the facts as they occurred, in order to make the truth of Christianity apparent."[4] The "Redactor" hypostesis, which takes for granted that every time Paul adopts an attitude of conciliation towards the Jews, is added by a Judaistic Redactor, and every step of

1. A. E. Breen in Catholic Encyclopaedia "Acts."
2. Robertson: "Luke the Historian" p.167.
3. Ramsay: "St. Paul, the Traveller" p.7.
4. Ramsay: "St. Paul, the Traveller" p.8.

his growing estrangement from them is due to an anti-Judaistic Redactor, is far-fetched. It does not take into account the fact that a historian of the calibre of Luke would record both classes of incidents in the interest of truth.[1]

The historical data in Acts is reliable, so is the geographical and topographical material. "Acts is an authority for the topography, society and antiquities of Asia Minor."[2] By the study of contemporaneous inscriptions, Ramsay discovered that the author of Acts knew more about the ancient geography of Phrygia than any of his modern critics.[3] Ramsay himself says: "It was gradually borne in upon me that, in all its various details, the narrative of Acts showed marvellous truth."[4] Proofs which have convinced Ramsay, whose mind, at the beginning, was not open to conviction, should be sufficient to convince us of the truth of Acts.

Now, if Acts is reliable as to its historical, topographical social and geographical data, if the author spent much time and labor in getting these details correct, are we justified in assuming that in his doctrinal part he would be less reliable?

His sources for this part of Acts would be reliable. He had Paul with him a great deal, he met many of the other disciples, he himself was a witness of many of the events which

1. Ramsay: "St. Paul, the Traveller" p. 13.
2. Ramsay: "St. Paul, the Traveller" p. 8.
3. Cobern: "New Archaeological Discoveries" p.414.
4. Ramsay: "St. Paul, the Traveller" p. 8.

he records.[1] And besides, guided as he was by the Holy Spirit,[2] his doctrinal matter could not disagree with the rest of the Bible. We shall now take up the chief points of doctrine one by one.

1. Robertson: "Luke the Historian" p. 76.
2. Fuerbringer: "Introduction to Acts"

GOD.

"Luke desired to make it clear to Theophilus that, though the Christian church was a body altogether distinct from the Jewish church, yet Christianity was not an entirely new religion; it was the true consummation of Judaism." When the Christian church was organized, they did not call themselves by a new name but took the Old Testament Septuagint title the "Ecclesia". "The God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the God of our Fathers hath glorified his son Jesus, whom ye delivered up."(Acts 3:13). So it was the God of the Old Testament, the God of Israel, whom the Apostles preached. And throughout the Acts, the doctrine of God is in full accord with the teaching of the Bible generally.

We have God represented as the Creator (Acts 17:24) where Paul speaks of "God who made the world and all things therein." "We preach unto you that you should turn from your vanities unto the living God, which made heaven and earth and sea and all things that are therein."(Acts.14:15). "Heaven is my throne and earth is my foot-stool.....hath not my hand made all these things?" This is in full harmony with Gen. 1:1 "In the beginning God created heaven and earth." There is no sug-

McNeile "New Testament Teaching in the Light of St. Paul's (p.117)

gestion of Pantheism, nor of the theory of Evolution--there is a personal God, who created heaven and earth.

Now, since God created heaven and earth and all that is therein, He must have existed before these things came into being, before the beginning of time--He is Eternal.

But God not only created the world, he continues to keep and preserve it. It is He, who "gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful season, filling our heart with food and gladness." (Acts 14:18). He giveth to all life and breath and in Him we live and move and have our being." (Acts 17:28).

This Creator and Preserver of the world, could not but be almighty and this thought is brought out over and over again throughout Acts. Speaking of the preaching of the Apostles, wise old Gamaliel says, "If it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it"(Acts 5:39), thus recognizing God as more powerful than the whole Sanhedrin. His power is above that of all earthly government, for when the disciples had been forbidden to preach and teach, they continued to "preach daily in the temple" (Acts 5:42). But the proof of God's omnipotence is a stronger one than this. God is represented as being above nature. Numerous miracles are related, and all are ascribed to God. Peter is miraculously released from prison, Paul and Silas are liberated by the interposition of God, but the climax is reached, (and the Apostles

recognized this fact), when the Father raised His Son from the dead.(Acts 13:30).

Speaking of the God who made the world and who gives life to all, Paul affirms that "He dwelleth not in temples made with hands."(Acts 17:24), He is not a god like the ordinary idols of the heathen. Though He made "all the nations of the Earth", "He is not far from every one of us, for in Him we live, and move, and have our being." Scattered as the people of the earth are, God is with each one--He is Omnipresent.

Now, a God who is omnipresent, is also omniscient. A God who is "not far from everyone of us" will know what we are doing. This point was indelibly impressed upon the minds of the Apostles by the incident of Ananias and Sapphira,(Acts 5:1f). It was the Holy Ghost in Peter who revealed to him what no man could know, that Ananias was hypocritically holding back part of the price of his land, while pretending to give it all to the church. The people realized, too, that the Holy Spirit was not to be deceived, that He was omniscient, for"great fear came upon all the Church and upon as many as heard these things", (namely the uncanny wisdom of Peter, in his being able to discern the deception). Such a God, whose very servants possessed so much wisdom and insight, must indeed be omniscient, knowing all

things that have happened and also those which are going to happen--such a God would also be able to foretell future events, and this He does. He sends an angel to tell Paul not to fear for his life for the present, that he must be brought before Caesar (Acts 27:23). An angel of God sends Philip to meet the Eunuch of Ethiopia; another Angel tells Cornelius to send men to Joppa "to call for Simon whose surname is Peter", giving exact directions just where this Peter is to be found. Paul says that God knew the future of Christ, that his suffering and death were undergone according to the "determinate council and foreknowledge of God." Luke's doctrine of the omniscience and foreknowledge of God, as expressed in these and many more passages agrees fully with that of David in Psalm 139:1-4.

God, who knows everything, knows also that man is sinful, but He is not going to punish sin at once. He sees the idolatry and sinfulness of men, and "the times of their ignorance God winked at"(Acts 17:30). In the meantime he "giveth rain from heaven and fruitful seasons" (Acts 14:18), and "in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him."(Acts 10:35). There is a chance for all, the Grace of God is universal, yet it does not last forever for,"now He commandeth all men everywhere to repent."(Acts 17:30).

The command has gone out, "Repent and be baptized", the time of grace is still at hand, but God is <u>righteous</u>, He has sworn to punish sin, and He must do it. "He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness."(Acts 17:31). When the time of grace is over, the judgment will come.

However, though the Lord is merciful and long-suffering in this time of grace, there are some sins which do not go unpunished, some gross outbreaks which must be corrected at once. Such a one was the plot of Ananias and Sapphira, people who professed to be Christians, but who, by their conduct, blasphemed the Holy Ghost. The same is true of King Herod who sat upon his throne, arrayed in royal apparel and made an oration unto the people, and then made no denial of their shout,"It is the voice of a god, and not of a man!" "The Angel of the Lord smote him because he gave not God the glory."(Acts 12:23). What a confirmation of the Old Testament statement, I am the Lord, that is my name, and my glory will I not give unto another, neither my praise to graven images."(Isaiah 42:8) and of Christ's quotation from the Old Testament in Math. 4:10. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve."

Thus, in all points upon which he touches, (and he does cover the doctrine of God very well), the writer of Acts

is in full agreement with the rest of the Word of God.

THE TRINITY.

We have seen that Luke teaches a personal God who is eternal, omnipresent, omnipotent etc., and that this God is the God of the Old Testament church. But does he teach the Trinity in Acts?

Unitarians have affirmed that nowhere in the Bible is the Trinity taught clearly enough to accept it as an article of faith, opposed as it is by the evidence of human reason. This sweeping statement naturally includes the Book of Acts. Yet it is a significant fact that just those sects of the early church, (Marcionites, Ebionites, and Manichaeans), who denied the deity of Jesus Christ and the personality of the Holy Spirit, and consequently the Trinity, were just the ones to reject the Acts of the Apostles. Does this not seem to argue that in Acts they found a refutation of their anti-trinitarian doctrines? The fact is, that the Trinity is clearly taught in Acts, and the doctrine will be found at once by anyone who goes at the study of the question with an unbiassed mind. Just to take two passages at random, in Acts 2:38 we find, "Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the HOLY GHOST, for the promise is

unto you and unto your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." And again, in Acts 1:7 "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the FATHER has put in His own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the HOLY GHOST has come upon you and ye shall be witnesses unto ME."

In these two passages the Father, Son, And Holy Ghost are mentioned in close connection. Of course it is not said that "there is a Trinity, consisting of three persons", in so many words, but what other interpretation would fit? The disciples are to baptize "in the name of Jesus." Would they be likely to be asked to baptize in the name of a man? Besides, this same Jesus is called God in numerous places.(see Christology) They are to "receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Would this be the Spirit of a man, or just an indefinite "something, hard to define?" As a matter of fact, Acts also makes the Holy Spirit God (see Holy Spirit). We have already seen that the Father is God. Now if these three are God and still, there are not three Gods, how else can the matter be explained that by saying that there is one God with three persons? There is one other explanation that might be mentioned here, that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are not separate persons, but only manifestations

of the same person. If this were so, then why should Jesus speak of "the times and seasons which the Father has put into His own power", or why mention the Holy Ghost separately at all? God does not waste words--He says what He means. So the Trinity stands unshaken, clearly set forth in Acts.

JESUS CHRIST.

His Humanity.

"Of David's seed hath God, according to promise, raised up a Savior," (Acts 13:23), and "through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." Thus the writer of Acts describes the true HUMANITY of Jesus. He was a real man, of the Seed of David, "of the fruit of the loins of David according to the flesh", (Acts 2:30) and he showed his humanity all through his earthly life. The author had already given an account of the miraculous birth of Jesus in his Gospel, so it is not his purpose to set forth this doctrine here, but by numerous allusions it may be conclusively proved that Jesus Christ was a man. "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved among you by miracles and signs which God did by Him in the midst of you", (Acts 2:22), "who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed of the Devil"[1] (cts 10:38), "went in and out among us, beginning at the baptism of John until that same day that He was taken up from us." (Acts 1:22). These few passages will suffice to show that the author of Acts regarded Jesus as a true man, doing works of loving service to His fellowmen, reviewing in short form, what he has already told Theophilus in his Gospel. But Jesus is more than a man.

1. McNeile,"N.T. Teaching in Light of St. Paul's" p.121.

His Deity.

Acts speaks of Jesus as of no other man. To no one else is holiness attributed. (Acts 3:14) "Ye have denied the Holy One and the Just." Nor is anyone else called "just". No other man is ever called the "Prince of Life" (Acts 3:15). On the contrary it is evident throughout that all other men are mortal. To no other man does God say, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." These facts prove at least this much--Jesus is more than other men, He is DIVINE.

But is He more than Divine? Here opinions differ. Rationalists, modern theologians, heretics at all times in the Christian Church have denied to Jesus anything beyond Divinity. But such an explanation does not satisfy. It is true that Luke "has not written to prove the Deity of Jesus",[1] yet, as parts of his Gospel show, he accepted the Deity to the full. He does not write as a theologian, as Paul does in his Epistles. He makes no theological arguments or definitions, but he reveals his own views by the nature of the material which he presents. The twelve-year old Jesus is clearly conscious of his Son-ship "I must be about my Father's business" (Luke 2:49). God is His father in a sense true of no other man.[2] "It is beyond question that in the account of the baptism of Christ the Gospel of Luke presents the deity of Christ as clearly as does the Gospel of John."[3] Acts 3:18, Acts 18:15 and numerous other passages

1. Robertson: "Luke the Historian" p.156
2. " " " " p.158
3. " " " " p.158

represent Jesus as the Messiah of the Old Testament whose sufferings were already foretold. "Luke presents the real deity of Christ, not the mere divinity"[1] and if that is his point of view in the Gospel, why should we stretch phrases, and put the worst possible construction upon every thing in Acts? We, like Theophilus, have the Gospel of Luke as a commentary on Acts.

His Sinlessness.

This God-man Jesus Christ is sinless. In Acts 3:14, 7:52, 22:14, He is called the "Righteous One","the Holy and Just". Acts 13:28 says that he was "innocently killed", in harmony with Pilate's decision, recorded in the Gospel, "I find no fault in Him." (Acts 3:13).

His Suffering.--Vicarious?

Yet the fact remains that this sinless Jesus suffered. Acts 3:13 tells of the suffering under Pilate, 2:23 and 4:10 remind us once more of the Crufixion. Why did Jesus have to suffer? The only answer is, that He was suffering vicariously. "If the word "pais", servant, which is applied to Christ five times, is an allusion to Isaiah 52:13 and 53:12, it implies a belief that His sufferings were in some sense vicarious."[2] (See also Thayer, "Greek English Lexicon" p.473.) The story of Philip and the eunuch of Ethiopia is conclusive, Jesus is the Messiah of the Old Testament, His suffering is vicarious.

1. Robertson:"Luke the Historian" p. 161.
2. McNeile: "N. T. Teaching in the Light of St. Paul's" p. 125.

Betrayal, Crucifixion, Death and Burial.

Judas was the guide to them that took Jesus (Acts 1:16). The Jews then delivered Him up and denied Him before Pilate (Acts 3:13). "Ye have hanged and destroyed Him, by wicked hands ye have crucified and slain Him, hanging Him upon a tree. (Acts 2:23, Acts 4:10, Acts 5:30, 10:39). The Death of Christ was a real death, by crucifixion, of which the Apostles were witnesses. (Acts 2:23) Then they "took Him down from the tree and laid Him in the sepulchre". (Acts 13:29)

Resurrection and Ascension.

But on the third day (Acts 17:31) "God raised Him from the dead" (Acts 13:30) "and He openly showed Himself alive, not to all the people but to witnesses, chosen before of God, even to us that did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead" (Acts 10:40-2). "David, seeing this before, spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in Hell neither did His flesh see corruption." (Acts 2:31f). For forty days (Acts 1:3) He went about with His disciples, then He was taken up into Heaven. (Acts 1:9).

Exaltation.

According to His promise, "God hath glorified his servant Jesus" (Acts 3:13) and now He "sitteth at the right hand of God exalted" (Acts 2:33; 5:31) where He is seen by Stephen

(Acts 7:55). However, He "whom the heavens must receive (Acts 3:21) is not confined to any one place, for He appears to Saul in His full glory, with the heavenly light shining about Him, a glory so great that Saul is cast to the earth by it. (Acts 9:17).

Predetermination and Messianic Office.[1]

Now it is this Jesu, of whose life and death and resurrection, and ascension the author of Acts gives us an outline picture, it is this Jesus who was predetermined by God to be the Savior of the world. "But these things which God had showed before by the mouth of the prophets, that Jesus should suffer, He hath so fulfilled." (Acts 3:18). The whole Old Testament pointed to Him, by His death, and resurrection and ascension, Jesus proved Himself to be the Messiah. "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." (Acts 2:36).

1. McNeile: "N. T. Teaching in the Light of St. Paul's" p.123.

THE HOLY SPIRIT.

"Nowhere in Holy Writ is the action of the Holy Ghost in the church so forcibly set forth as in the Acts."[1] "This developed doctrine of the Holy Spirit is one of the most marked features of Acts."[2] Now, just what is the teaching of the author regarding the Holy Spirit?

In the first place, the Holy Spirit is God. Disregarding altogether the uncertain doctrine which McNeile tries to draw from Acts on this point,[3] we must insist on the words of the Bible as they stand. Peter says to Ananias, "Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie unto the Holy Ghost? Thou hast not lied unto man, but unto God." (Acts 5:3-4), and again, to Sapphira (Acts 5:9), "How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?"

Speaking of the expressions "to lie against the Holy Spirit" (Acts 5:3) "to tempt the Spirit of the Lord" (Acts 5:9), McNeile says,[4] "None of these necessarily implies a "person" in the sense of the Athanasian Symbol." Granted that none of these necessarily implies (though I cannot see how McNeile gets around the former), there is still the possibility that they would imply a person, and, rather than put our own constructions upon the passages referred to we prefer to let the Bible interpret itself. (cf. Gen. 1:2, Is. 63:10, Math. 3:16, John 15:26,

1. Catholic Encyclopaedia (A. E. Breen) Art. "Acts".
2. Hastings: "Dictionary of the Apostolic Church" Vol. I. p. 29.
3. McNeile: "N.T. Teaching in the Light of St. Paul's" p. 128f.
4. " " " " " " " p. 129.

Eph. 4:10), and especially Luke 3:22 where the author of Acts himself speaks of the Holy Ghost in close connection with the voice which is evidently that of the Father, since He speaks of Jesus as His beloved Son." If we accept the Holy Spirit in Acts as God, Scripture teaching on this point is in beautiful harmony; if we reject it, Acts is completely out of harmony with the rest of the Bible.

Speaking of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on men, Joel says, (Acts 2:17), "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams, and on my servants and on my hand maidens, I will pour out in those days of my Spirit and they shall prophesy." How this was fulfilled in Acts we may see at once by enumerating a few of the instances where the work of the Holy Spirit is mentioned. It is the Spirit who fills the Apostles with knowledge and power on Pentecost; they speak as He bids them speak. The Holy Ghost bids Philip approach the Eunuch of Ethiopia; the same Spirit catches him up when his mission has been fulfilled. The Holy Spirit tells Peter to go to Cornelius, where through his preaching the Spirit falls upon all assembled. He sets Paul and Barnabas apart for the Gentile ministry, telling them

just where they should preach, and where they should not. Jesus Christ is said to be annointed with the Holy Ghost; Stephen is declared to be "filled with the Holy Ghost" and Acts affirms that even on the Gentiles the grace of the Holy Ghost is poured out. "Acts as a whole shows the real nature of the Christian religion--its members are baptized with the Holy Ghost, and they are upheld by His power.[1]

But the chief occupation of the Spirit, according to Acts is church extension, the spreading of the Gospel, the saving of souls, and in order to do this, he inspires the Apostles, thus fulfilling the promise of Christ, (John 14:25-6), "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things and bring to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." He brings back the forgotten part of the teaching of Jesus to the memory of the Apostles,[2] and through the assistance of the Holy Ghost, they are enabled to spread the Gospel "in Jerusalen and Judea and to the Ends of the Earth."

1. A. E. Breen in "Catholic Encyclopaedia" Art. Acts.
2. Keyser: "Contending for the Faith" p.207f.

MAN.

When we come to the study of man we have something more tangible, something which our weak human reason can more readily grasp, for about us we see human beings every day, we know what man is, because we ourselves are human. We know what man is, but there are several things which we do not know about man without revelation, and now the question is, does Acts throw any light upon these subjects? First, there is the ORIGIN of man.

Ordinary, unaided human reason would, if left to its own devices finally arrive at the conclusion that there must be some Creator of the universe, man included. Man looks about him, he sees all the wonders of nature, far too beautiful to have evolved from nothing. He looks at himself, at his body, at the wonderful mechanism of it all, and in contemplation of these things, he recognizes that there must be some Creator, some higher being, about whom he knows nothing, yet whose presence he feels, and whose work he sees. Paul made use of this fact in his oration to the Athenians on Mars' Hill, (Acts 17:22) "For as I passed by and beheld your devotions (the objects of your worship) I found an Altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him I declare unto you." Educated

as the Athenians were in literature and philosophy and in the worship of their gods and goddesses, they still felt that there was something missing. They felt the same impulse which drives the cowering pigmy of Central Africa to throw himself upon the ground during a terrific thunderstorm, and, neglecting the idol which he has made with his own hands, to shriek prayers and incantations to the Spirit of the forest. He loses confidence in his idol in an emergency, his common sense tells him that a thing which he has made cannot help him, and this same common sense tells him that there must be a Great Spirit which he cannot see, just as the Athenians felt the insufficiency of their host of gods, and, to satisfy this feeling, inscribed an additional altar to the unknown God.

And even modern man, steeped as he is in the theory of evolution, must say to himself, "Should <u>this</u> have come up from slime, should <u>this</u> have developed through the ages from protoplasm to jelly-fish to ape to cave-man and finally become this glorious body? Is the ape my brother? The thought is revolting. It ought to drive any rational human being to Divine revelation. And this revelation of the origin of man, if taught nowhere else, would become clear from a study of Acts.

We have already seen (see Chapter on God) that God made heaven and earth and all things that are therein (Acts 17:35),

including man. The passage goes on, "Seeing he giveth all life and breath and all things and has made of one blood all the nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth." He made of one blood all the nations of men. Turning to Genesis, we find that God created only one pair of human beings, so Paul's idea, as quoted in Acts, is scriptural. He made all the nations of men. He did not let them evolve through millions of years, from protoplasm through all the stages mentioned above, but He made them, of one blood. (There is nothing said of man being of one blood with the animals). Thus the Australian bush-man, the Central African pigmy, the cunning Mongolian and the most highly-polished Caucasian are "of one blood", one race, created by God, distinct from every other branch of living creatures.

We have seen that God is Holy and Righteous. Now if a Holy God made man, the natural inference is that He would make him holy also. And yet in Acts we have man represented as an "untoward generation"(Acts 2:40), we have threats that "God will judge the world"(Acts 17:31), and in Acts 17:30 men are commanded to repent. Repent--repent of what? Here Luke does not tell us clearly just how man fell, but he presupposes the fall as may be seen in his representation of the present SINFUL STATE of man.

Man is a sinner. Sins are mentioned all through the

Acts. No one is represented as perfect--no one is siad to be without sin. Even the apostles tell the people that they are sinners like the rest of the world, "of like passions and lusts." There is enough of the divine image left in man for him to know that he is not perfect and it takes only a little preaching of the judgment to come(Acts 25:35) to make even the libertine Felix feel uncomfortable. The same is true of the preaching of Peter (Acts 2:37). When they heard his denunciation of them and their guilt, the Jews were "pricked to the heart", and asked, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

Now, just what constitutes Sin according to Acts? There is no question as to how Luke regarded the stoning of Stephen, or the crucifixion of Christ. Both of these acts are great sins on the part of the Jews. Nor is there any doubt of Peter's view of the hypocrisy of Ananias and Sapphira--the lying words which they spoke and the deceptive thoughts which prompted their words, as well as the desire for honor and glory in the eyes of their fellow church-members, are a plain example of the Catechism truth, "Sin is any transgression of the law of God in desire, thought, word, or deed. "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee...for I perceive that thou art in bond of iniquity", says Peter to Simon,

the Sorcerer.(Acts 8:22). Yes, even the evil thoughts of the heart, though they may never come to light, are sin.

Nor does Luke leave us in the dark regarding the cause of Sin. Certainly this cause is not God himself, for God is righteous, and would not punish man for something that was not his own fault. This leads to the inference that man is responsible for his own sin and must suffer for it himself. However, this fact does not preclude other causes. "Of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."(Acts 20:30). Here men mislead other men--so another cause of sin may be other men. But the chief cause of sin, according to Luke, is the devil. Peter says to Ananias, "Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Ghost." He does not blame the depraved heart of Ananias, nor the wicked influence of his wife Sapphira, but Satan, thus implying that Satan is the original cause of the sin.(cf. Gen. 3).

If God is a righteous God, there will certainly be a penalty for sin. When the apostle speaks of the death and burial of Christ, he mentions the fact that David had prophesied regarding Christ, "Thou wilt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." Now David was not without sin, as he himself confesses, "My sin is ever before me", and he saw corruption (Acts 13: 35-37), so

the only logical conclusion is, that sin is the cause of corruption. As a result of his sin, Ananias died. Judas, (Acts 1:18) despairing of ever receiving forgiveness for his sin, brought death down upon himself. Herod received the wages of his sin by being eaten of worms, so the "wages of sin is death", and since all men are sinners, all must die. Luke does not emphasize this point in Acts, for a very simple reason. Common sense tells everyone that he must die.

But, after death, what then? Here too, the author of Acts leaves the unbeliever no hope--there is no comfort for anyone who thinks that death ends all, that man is blotted out, that he ceases to exist. For he says, "Judas went to his own place"--so there is a place. The apostles preach "the judgment to come" (Acts 24:25), so death is not the end, there is a judgment. In view of these facts--that man is a sinner, that the penalty of sin is death, and that a judgment follows upon death, so emphatically expressed in Acts, how can man be saved? Certainly not by his own resources--the only way the Bible knows, and the author of Acts teaches it also, is by faith in Christ.

PREDESTINATION AND UNIVERSAL GRACE.

Acts, in harmony with the rest of the New Testament, tells us that God has predestined man to salvation. "For the promise is unto you and unto your children, and to all who are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."(Acts 2:39). It is an act of God for "when the Gentiles heard this (the proclamation of universal grace), they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord, and as many as were ordained to Eternal Life, believed." It is God who has ordained us to Eternal Life, it is God who works repentance and faith in the heart, it is God who offers free grace to all;and yet this grace is not irresistible. Stephen, speaking to the Jews who were about to stone him, said, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcized in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost, as your fathers did, so do ye." (Acts 7:51). And when Paul had preached the grace of God in Antioch in Pisidia, he says, "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been preached unto you, but seeing you put it from you, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." (Acts 13:46). Man is not forced to accept the grace of God, but it is offered to him and if he does not accept it, he is lost through his own fault.

No trace whatever is found in Acts, of a predestination

to damnation or of particular grace, on the contrary, the doctrine of free and universal grace precludes this idea at once. Man, and man only is at fault, if he is damned.

JUSTIFICATION AND SALVATION.

"With this book, St. Luke teaches the whole Christian church to the end of the world, the true chief article of Christian doctrine that we must be justified through faith in Jesus Christ alone, without any aid of the Law or assistance of our works."[1]

We have seen that man's nature is utterly depraved and sinful. (see "Man"). Now how can such a creature be justified before a just and holy God? (see "God"). Acts gives us a definite answer on this point.

The author of Acts tells us that "we could not be justified by the law of Moses." (13:39). No, not even the most burning zeal for the cause of Jehovah will suffice to save us, as Paul testifies to the mob of Jews in Jerusalem (Acts 22:4f), for, as we have seen, man is of himself powerless to do good. Nor does the rite of circumcision benefit men at all in this respect (Acts 15:1f) for "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34); before His sight all men are equal, nationality confers no advantage. To all the cry goes out, "Repent!" All are guilty--all are "in like condemnation."

But there is one way in which sinful man is justified before our holy God--through the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

1. Luther:"Preface to Acts"

"Through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." (Acts 13:38). The Justification has been accomplished (objective justification), all men have been justified, it only remains for man to accept this justification which God offers him. We are not told to "work out our own Salvation", but we are told to repent. "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." Acts 3:19. Here "be converted" includes faith for in Acts 16:31 we read "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." So the only means of being saved is the way of repentance and faith for "neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." Acts 4:12. (see also Acts 3:22f).

THE WORD OF GOD.

"For the writer of Acts, the Old Testament was the written source of all revelation. The sufficient proof of any argument, or the explanation of any historical event, was found in the fact that it had been prophesied."[1] Immediately at the beginning of his first recorded speech Peter says, "Men and brethren, this Scripture must needs have been fulfilled which the Holy Ghost spake by the mouth of David."(Acts 1:16). And again, speaking of the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." Paul's view of the Scriptures corresponds fully with this, "And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God has fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus." These passages will suffice to show how the Apostles regarded Old Testament scripture. They were inspired of God; the Holy Ghost spoke through the medium of the prophets, and the scriptures must therefore, of necessity, be fulfilled. "As prophecies the Old Testament books are accepted without question and there is no trace of the Jewish controversy which raised the dispute as to the correct exegesis of the Old Testament, apparently the

1. Hastings: "Dictionary of the Apostolic Church" Vol 1. p.28f.

dispute had not yet arisen."[2]--the literal interpretation of the prophets was fully accepted.

Nor is it alone the teaching of the Old Testament which is inspired. The disciples were "filled with the Holy Ghost", their words were the word of God. Speaking to the Jews of the city of Antioch, Paul says, "It was necessary that the word of God be preached first unto you." Now this cannot mean the word of God of the Old Testament, as some have affirmed, for this the Jews had had all along, nor can it mean the word "concerning" God, but the word of God, as preached by Paul and Barnabas. Their words were God's words--their teaching was inspired.

The first use of the word of God is to show man his utterly depraved condition (Acts 2:23) and to call him to repentance. "Repent" is the note that runs through all the Apostolic discourses. No one is baptized until he has repented--no one receives the gift of the Holy Spirit unless his sins have been repented of. When Simon, the Sorcerer tries to buy the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 8:22), Peter curses him and his money, and tells him, "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee."

When the word has prepared the way by repentance, it next works faith. Nowhere do we read that faith came without

1. Hastings: "Dictionary of the Apostolic Church" p.29.

hearing the word of God, but always, as in Acts 4:4 "Many of them which heard the word believed."

But the word does not stop here--its influence on man must still continue. "And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among them which are sanctified."(Acts 20:32). This is the sanctifying influence of the word of God, exerted on the life of the believer. For three years Paul had been among the people of Ephesus "warning everyone night and day with tears" and now he leaves them to the further influence of the Word of God.

By this bringing to a knowledge of sin, and working repentance and faith, the Word of God <u>saves</u>. In Acts 28:28 Paul identifies the Word of God with Salvation. The word of God has been sent ot the Gentiles, so the door of Faith and Salvation has been opened to them.

Thus, according to Acts, the teaching of the Old Testament and the preaching of the Apostles is inspired, it brings man to a knowledge of his sin, it works true repentance and faith, it sanctifies, and saves.

BAPTISM.

"Baptism is the normal means of entry into the Christian Church"[1] yet it presupposes repentance (Acts 2:38) "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of the Lord Jesus for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, for the promise is unto you and unto your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

As to the mode of baptism, two things are clear from Acts. One of these is, that water was applied. Now, whether this water was sprinkled over the person, or whether he was washed with it, or whether he was immersed, is not said. "And wash away thy sins"(Acts 22:16), leaves this question open. The other requisite of a baptism was that it be done "in the name of Jesus."(Acts 2:38;above). "In the name of Jesus", Hastings[2] calls attention to the fact that here there is nothing said about baptizing in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. But "aus einem Nicht-erwaehnen darf man nicht ein Nicht-geschehen folgen."[3] Neither Luke nor Paul, (in passages Rom. 6:3, Gal 3:27, ICor. 1:14f) profess to be writing a work on dogmatics. They both teach the Trinity,(Luke 4:21-2)(Rom.5:1-5), so it may be assumed that, when they speak of "the name of Jesus",

1. Hastings: "Dictionary of the Apostolic Church" Art. "Baptism".
2. Hastings: "Dictionary of the Apostolic Church" Art. "Baptism".
3. Fuerbringer: "Einleitung in das N. T." p. 41.

the other two persons of the Trinity are included.

The question has been raised, whether infant baptism is commanded in Acts. There is no absolute proof that it was done; yet Peter baptized Cornelius "and his whole house", Paul baptized the keeper of the prison and "all his." Does this not seem to include the children also--if not, just at what age must we recognize children as belonging to the household? The point "for the promise is unto you and unto your children" (Acts 2:39) dare not be pressed: it may mean literally "children", or it may well mean "unto your posterity." At any rate the acceptance of infant baptism at this place makes less difficulty than its rejection.

Now, just what, according to Acts, is the value of baptism? According to Acts 2:41, baptism admits to the external Christian church. Yet it does more than this. "Repent and be baptized and wash away thy sins" (Acts 22:16) leaves no doubt as to the efficacy of the sacrament (see also Acts 2:38), it is a means of Grace. Closely connected with this forgiveness of sins is the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38) which also followed baptism.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

The doctrine of the Lord's supper is not expressly taught in Acts. The words of institution, found in four books of the Bible, are lacking here. The passages which do come into consideration are Acts 2:42 and Acts 20:7. Already in Acts 2:42, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and in fellowship and in the breaking of bread and in prayer", it is implied that the breaking of bread was an established custom. The act is mentioned in close connection to fellowship, the apostles' doctrine and prayer, seeming to imply that it was in some way rather closely related to them.

To quote Dr.R. J. Knowling[1] (following Holtzman and Weizsaecker) "No interpretation is satisfactory which forgets that the author of Acts had behind him Pauline language and doctrine, and we are justified in adducing the language of Paul (ICor.10:16) in order to explain the words before us." If this much be admitted, the expression cannot be interpreted as a common meal--St. Paul's habitual reference of these words to the Lord's Supper leads us to see in them a reference to the commemoration of the Lord's death, although we may admit that "it is altogether indisputable that this commemoration at first followed a common meal."[2]

1. In "Expositor's Greek Testament" Vol.II p.94.
2. In "Expositor's Greek Testament" Vol.II p.94

The same might be said of Acts 20:7 "on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them." The disciples came together "to break bread." What more natural inference than this, that they came together for a religious service, part of which consisted in the "breaking of bread" (Lord's Supper) and part in "the preaching of the Word?" Dr. Kretzmann says[1] "If this expression does not refer exclusively to the celebration of the Lord's Supper, it certainly does not exclude the Sacrament."

The Lord's Supper as a means of grace is certainly not emphasized in Acts, though, on the other hand, there is nothing whatever to oppose the doctrine. Purves,[2] in the usual reformed manner draws the conclusion that it was only a memorial, while Luther and the Lutheran theologians generally, rightly following the literal interpretation of the words of institution, insist upon the sacramental character of the act, holding it to be a real "sacramentum", in which "God gives something to man."[3] But the dogmatical discussion of this point belongs elsewhere.

1. Commentary N. T. Vol. I p. 554.
2. G. T. Purves, "The Apostolic Age" p. 35.
3. Fuerbringer "Liturgik" p.11.

PRAYER.

That prayer was practiced in the early Christian congregations, is evident from Acts 2:42 "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and in fellowship and in the breaking of bread and in prayer." Here it is implied that the prayer was offered in connection with the rest of the service. No doubt this was done in much the same way and for the same purpose as it is offered in our congregations. From Acts 12:5 we see that at times the whole church united in prayer for a single individual, who was in special danger. (Peter in prison, in danger of losing his life).

The early Christians did not pray to idols. Paul, even at the risk of his life, admonishes his converts to put away their idols and turn to the living God. Nor is there any trace of praying to the saints, or of invoking the saints to pray in one's stead--these ideas crept into the church at a later date.

To whom then, does the writer of Acts encourage Christians to pray? To God: (Acts 12:5) "Prayer was made unto God for him." To Christ: (Acts 7:59) "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit". "The Lord Jesus is one whom it was natural to approach in prayer."[1] And, no doubt, the Spirit of God, who dwelt in the disciples

1. Hastings: "Dictionary of Apostolic Church." "Christology".

of Jesus and controlled all their actions (Acts 16:9; 9:8; 8:39; etc) was also included when they prayed to God.

We have already seen that prayer is made for others (Acts 12:5). Other incidences of this are Acts 9:40, where Peter, kneeling at the bedside of Tabitha prayed for the restoration of her life, and Acts 8:24, where Simon begs Peter, "Pray ye the Lord <u>for me</u> that none of these things may happen", and Acts 8:15, where "Peter and John prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit."

Then, of course, there are numerous examples of Christians praying for themselves. (Acts 16:25--Paul and Silas in prison; Acts 7:59--Stephen). Thus the gift of the Holy Ghost is often prayed for (Acts 8:15). So also we have them praying for the forgiveness of sins. (Acts 8:22). But it is also permitted to pray for bodily needs, as may be seen from Acts 12:5, etc.

Regarding the <u>hearing</u> of prayer, the author of Acts does not leave us in doubt. Numerous cases are cited where prayer was heard. Stephen refers to the Old Testament passage (Acts 7:34), "I have heard their prayers (the prayers of the Israelites in Egypt) and am come down to deliver them." The prayers of Paul and Silas are answered by a miracle. (Acts 16:25). Peter's prayer for Tabitha is answered by her coming back to

life. "The effectual fervent prayer of the Christian availeth much"--this point is emphasized strongly throughout Acts.

PNEUMATOLOGY.

An important source of our knowledge of spirits, is Acts.[1] Spirits, according to the author, are of two kinds--good and evil. Nothing is said directly concerning the essence of spirits, but they are in themselves immaterial, they appear and disappear, (Acts 8:26), they assume bodies similar to those of men, as,for instance at the ascension of the Savior.(Acts 1:10). This is quite in accord with other appearances of angels in both the Old and New Testaments.

The occupation of the good angels (Acts 8:26; 11:13) is to carry God's messages to men, giving them instructions. Another occupation is that of comforting the distressed. In the midst of the storm, when all seemed lost, Paul tells his his comrades (Acts 27:23), "There stood by me this night the Angel of theLord, whose I am, who I serve, saying, fear not. Paul, thou must be brought before Caesar," just as it was an angel who came down from Heaven to strengthen our Savior in his suffering. But at times angels have been endued with miraculous powers. One of them came to Peter in the prison (Acts 12:7f), waked him, led him out past the guard, past the iron gate, which opened of its own accord, and then disappeared again as mysteriously as he had come.

1. Kayser: "Contending for the Faith". p.215.

Quite different is the nature of the evil angels, although, essentially they are the same--both classes are spirits. Where Acts always speaks of the good angels as serving both God and man, its teaching regarding the evil angels is the direct opposite. They take bodily possession of human beings (Acts 8:7) "For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many that were possessed of them." They are "unclean." Another passage (Acts 19:15) refers to them as"evil". Acts 13:10 refers to Bar-Jesus as "child of the devil", "full of all subtlety and mischief", "the enemy of righteousness", and perverter of the right way of the Lord."

This, then, is their occupation--to harm and hinder, if possible the plans of the Lord, to work their mischief in man, either by possession, (Acts 13:16) or by tempting him to hypocrisy, shameful lying and blasphemy, as in the case of Ananias. (Acts 5:1f).

Nothing is said of the creation of the angels or of the fall of the evil angels, but these things are presupposed throughout. "God made heaven and earth" (Acts 7:49)--the author no doubt includes the creation of angels when he says, "and all things that are therein". Nor is there any ground for supposing that the evil angels were created evil. It is not in the interest of the writer to go into this subject here--his

description, in all the points upon which he touches, agrees fully with the rest of the Bible.

THE LAST THINGS.

The Resurrection of the Dead.

A resurrection of the dead will take place. It was one of the important themes of the Apostles' preaching. "Paul preached Jesus and the resurrection" (Acts 17:18) and in his trial before the High Priest he makes this the chief point of his doctrine, "of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question." (Acts 23:6).

Then, as now, this doctrine of the resurrection was difficult for human reason to grasp. The Pharisees still held it (Acts 24:15), but the Sadducees, and people of the world generally had dropped it completely. This was the part of the Apostles' preaching which was especially offensive to their hearers. "When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked" (Acts 17:32), they refused even to listen. But to the more earnest among them, the matter, though not easily understood, was one of sufficient importance for them to say, "We will hear thee again of this matter."

Yet, according to Paul, the doctrine of the resurrection is not so incredible after all. It is a miracle, of course, but so are numerous other things which we see about us, why, then, should this miracle be more incredible than any of the others?

(Acts 26:9f). Besides, just this was promised to our Fathers (Acts 26:6), so there is no reason to doubt that there will be a resurrection.

Who will be raised from the dead? Acts does not leave us to conjecture. "So worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets, and have hope towards God....that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust." (Acts 24:15). All men shall be raised, no matter what kind of a life they led here on earth.

The Second Coming of Christ and the Judgment.

The Angel (Acts 1:11) gives the disciples the promise, "This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, will come again in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." The coming will be visible--Jesus will come in his glorified body, just as he went to Heaven.

The purpose of his coming is expressed in (Acts 10:42), "He is ordained of God to be a judge of the quick and the dead." This judgment is preached in numerous places in Acts. (cf. Acts 24:25, 17:31, 3:21, etc). But, though it will be a scene of terror to those who have refused to accept Christ, (Acts 3:23), for the Christians it will be only the door to Eternal Life.

Eternal life is taught clearly. Luke tells us (Acts 13:48), "As many as were ordained to Eternal Life believed."

"Seeing ye judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting Life." (Acts 13:46). There will be a temporal death, as we have seen in the chapter on Man, yet the Christians will rise again to Eternal Life.

But what of the unbelievers? Luke does not say that they will be annihilated, nor does he say that they will have a second chance. "Judas went to his own place." (Acts 1:25). What that place was he does not tell us, but he does tell us of Hell in his Gospel, Luke 16:24f., "In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment", "Have mercy on me and send Lazarius that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame." This doctrine would be brought back vividly to the Apostles by the Holy Ghost and this is the "judgment to come" which they preached.

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CONCLUSION.

Thus we see that

1. Luke's stand is upon the main heads of Scripture

2. Those doctrines which he omits, he does not contradict, and therefore there is no discrepancy between Acts and the other New Testament writings.

1. Keyser: "Contending for the Faith" p.207.

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