

**NEW COMMENTARY
ON ACTS OF
APOSTLES. VOL. 2**

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ON
ACTS OF APOSTLES

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COMMENTARY ON ACTS.

PART THIRD.

PAUL'S TOURS AMONG THE GENTILES.

(XIII.—XXI.)

SEC. I.—THE FIRST TOUR.

(XIII.—XIV.)

1. BARNABAS AND SAUL, SET APART TO THE WORK, XIII. 1-3.

VER. 1. The opening sentence of this part of Acts stands closely connected with the preceding part, taking its start from the return of Barnabas and Saul to Antioch; and yet, because of the new subject here introduced, its style is the same as if it were the beginning of an independent narrative.¹ (1) Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers, Barnabas, and Symeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen foster-brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

The distinction between prophets and teachers is not clearly drawn in the New Testament, except to the ex-

¹The new and quite different subject matter now introduced, sufficiently accounts for the author's style here, without aid from any of the suppositions mentioned by Meyer, including one of his own.

tent that the former were men who spoke by inspiration, while the latter sometimes did and sometimes did not. The previous statement of Luke, that "there came down prophets from Jerusalem to Antioch" (xi. 27), of whom Agabus was one, may have included the prophets who are here mentioned.

The order in which the five names are written is probably that of the relative reputation of the men. Barnabas, having been sent from Jerusalem, and having been an eminent man there, was naturally looked upon as the most important person, while Saul was at this time the least noted of the five. Symeon, as his name proves, was a full-blooded Jew; and though his surname Niger (black) can scarcely justify the conclusion that he was an African Jew,¹ it could scarcely have been given to him without some allusion to his complexion. Symeons were so numerous among the Jews that it was necessary to distinguish them in some way, and it is highly probable that this one, from having an unusually dark complexion, was called black Symeon.² As some of the second group of preachers who had come to Antioch were men of Cyrene (xi. 20), it is natural to suppose that Lucius of Cyrene was one of these, and that he was therefore one of the founders of the church. Manaen is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Menahem. Having been the foster-brother of Herod the tetrarch, his mother having nursed the two when they were infants, he had in all likelihood kept up through life an acquaintance

¹ "From his appellation Niger, he may have been an African proselyte." (Alford, *in loco*).

² It is quite common in America, when two or three men with the same name live in the same vicinity, to distinguish them by their shades of complexion, or the color of their hair: *e. g.*, Red Tom, Black Tom, etc.

with that prince; and it is not improbable that Luke learned through him something of Herod's thoughts and words concerning John the Baptist and Jesus, which he had recorded in his previous narrative (Luke ix. 7-9).

Vv. 2, 3. Symeon, Lucius and Manaen had been the chief teachers of the church during the absence of Barnabas and Saul on their mission to Jerusalem, and now this work is to be left to them again. (2) And as they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. (3) Then when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands upon them, they sent them away. The ministering to the Lord here mentioned has no special reference to the public worship, but rather to their service in supplying the wants of their brethren; for such is the meaning of the original word when used in reference to Christian¹ service. It was their habitual, daily work. For what cause they were fasting just at this time we have no intimation; but from the instruction of the Master on the subject (Matt. ix. 15), we may safely infer that it was in consequence of some affliction which had befallen them.

The command of the Holy Spirit, to separate Barnabas and Saul, must have been addressed to the other three brethren, and it was doubtless communicated through one of them to the others. The clause, "the work whereunto I have called them," implies that they had both been called to this work before this time. Paul

¹Such is the usage of the verb, *λειτουργία*, to minister; and of the nouns, *λειτουργία*, and *λειτουργός*, ministry, and minister, as is seen in Rom. xv. 16, 27; II. Cor. ix. 12; Phil. ii. 17, 30. The fact that the word liturgy is derived from it is suggestive of the great departure from Scriptural ideas and usage indicated by ancient and modern liturgies.

was called to it in the commission given to him by the Lord at the time of his conversion, as we learn from his own lips farther on (xxvi. 16-18); but when Barnabas was called we have no means of determining. Saul had been preaching to Gentiles as well as to Jews, as we may safely conclude, ever since he had heard of the baptism of Cornelius by Peter; but he had never yet made the former his chief work. It should be observed, that the thought of separating the two to this work did not originate with the brethren; but it was expressly communicated to them by the Holy Spirit.

The purpose of the fasting, prayer and laying on of hands is clearly indicated in the context: for what they did was doubtless what they were told to do; but what they were told to do was to "separate" the two to the work indicated; and, therefore, fasting, praying and laying on of hands was the method of separating them. This is the ceremony deemed suitable for such a separation by those under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and it follows that on all similar occasions, such as separating a brother to the ministry of the word, or separating one who is already an experienced preacher, as were both Barnabas and Saul, to some new and different field of labor, it is proper for those concerned in the movement to lay hands on him with fasting and prayer. The modern conception, that hands may be imposed only by those holding an office superior to that which is to be filled, is the invention of an unscriptural hierarchy, having no support in the New Testament. In the instance before us, hands were imposed on Barnabas by three men who were his inferiors in the estimation of the church; and on Paul, the called apostle of Jesus Christ, by men who were not apostles, and, so far as our information extends,

not even elders of the congregation in which they were teachers and prophets. This incident clearly demonstrates another fact in regard to this ceremony, that it possesses none of the magical power to impart spiritual graces which has been superstitiously ascribed to it; for surely Barnabas and Saul were not destitute of any grace which could be imparted to them by Symeon, Lucius and Manaen. The truth is, that this ceremony, now no longer called ordination¹ in the English Scriptures, was nothing more than a method of solemnly commending a man to God for the ministration to which he was being set apart. The subject will come before us again in regard to Timothy under xvi. 1-3.

Only the teachers and prophets are mentioned in connection with this proceeding, but we are not to suppose that they acted in private. Doubtless the ceremony of laying on hands was in the presence of the congregation; and after the command of the Spirit was received, there was doubtless time given for the apostles to prepare for the journey, and for the congregation to be notified. These considerations make it probable that the fasting connected with the imposition of hands was not the one in which the teachers and prophets were already engaged, but one specially appointed for the occasion.

2. THEIR LABORS IN CYPRUS, 4-12.

Vv. 4, 5. The journeys now entered upon by Saul are among the most momentous ever undertaken, whether by one man or many. They are worthy therefore of the space allotted to them by our author, and of the most

¹The revisers have wisely disconnected this English word from the accounts of appointments to office, and confined it to decrees and appointments of God.

careful study by every one interested in human progress. (4) So they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. (5) And when they were at Salamis they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John as their attendant. Seleucia was the seaport of Antioch, sixteen miles distant, where all large vessels lay at anchor; for although the Orontes, on the banks of which Antioch was situated, was navigable for small vessels, it was too shallow for those of the deepest draught. Embarking here on some trading vessel, they sailed to the port of Salamis,¹ which is at the eastern end of the island of Cyprus.

In choosing this island as the first point in the wide world to which they directed their course, they were moved in part, no doubt, by the fact that it was the birth-place of Barnabas, where his personal acquaintance would be of advantage to them; but also in part by the consideration that there were many Jewish synagogues there, furnishing starting points for the work, and that the gospel had been proclaimed there already with some success (xi. 19, 20).

The John mentioned as the attendant of Barnabas and Saul is the "John surnamed Mark" of xii. 25. He had not been set apart to the work, as had his older companions, but he had undertaken voluntarily to go with them as an attendant. His work was to assist them in every way in which a young man can serve his elders.

Luke is entirely silent in regard to the success of the preaching in Salamis, leaving us to suppose that it was

¹Salamis was afterward destroyed by war and earthquakes, and its site is now marked by ruins about four miles north of the modern town Famagosta.