THE BOOK OF ACTS.

Acts v.

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession.

2 And kept back part of the price, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?

4 While it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

5 And Ananias hearing the words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things.

6 And the young men arose and carried him out, and buried him.

7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife not knowing what was done, came in.

8 And Peter answered her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much.

9 Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out.

10 Then she fell down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost.

THIS book is supposed to have been written by Luke about thirty years after the death of Jesus, as an appendix to the Evangelists. It contains brief mention of a few women of varied characters and fortunes. We have the usual number afflicted with religious mysteries, with the gift of prophecy, and some possessed of the devil, who promptly comes forth at the commands of Jesus and of his Apostles.

The case of Ananias and Sapphira was very peculiar. This example was made, not of avowed enemies, but avowed friends. Many expositors say that Ananias had made a vow to give his estate for the support of the Christian cause, and that sacrilege was the crime for which he was punished. He had, from corrupt motives, attempted to impose upon the Apostles in pretending to give all that he had to the church, while withholding a good share for himself. He had evidently instructed his wife to substantiate his assertions.
Obedience of one responsible being to another may oftentimes prove dangerous, even if the command comes from a husband.

 Acts ix.
 36 Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and alms-deeds.
 37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick and died.
 38 And as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him to come to them.
 39 Then Peter arose and went with them, and they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood weeping, and shewing the garments which Dorcas made.
 40 But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, rise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.
 41 And when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive.

Tabitha was called by this name among the Jews; but she was known to the Greeks as Dorcas. She was considered an ornament to her Christian profession; for she so abounded in good works and alms-deeds that her whole life was devoted to the wants and the needs of the poor. She not only gave away her substance, but she employed her time and her skill in laboring constantly for the poor and the unfortunate. Her death was looked upon as a public calamity. This is the first instance of any Apostle performing a miracle of this kind. There was no witness to this miracle. What men teach in their high places, such women as Dorcas illustrate in their lives.

 Acts xii.
 12 And he came into the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying.
 13 And as Peter knocked at the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda.
 14 And when she knew Peter’s voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate.

 15 And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then they said, It is an angel.
 16 But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished.
 17 But he declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go shew these things unto James, and to the brethren.

Herod the king, at this time, killed James, the brother of John, and cast Peter into prison, and intended to destroy the other Apostles as soon as he could entrap them. Peter, it is said, escaped from prison by the miraculous interposition of an angel, who led him to the gate of one Mary, the sister of Barnabas, where Christians often assembled for religious worship. Although they often prayed for
Peter's deliverance, they could not believe Rhoda when she said that Peter stood knocking at the gate.

Acts xvi.
14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshiped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened unto the things which were spoken of Paul.
15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there.
16 And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying:
17 The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God.

18 And this did she many days. But Paul said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.
19 And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas,
20 And brought them to the magistrates, saying, these men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city.
21 And the multitude rose up against them; and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them.
22 And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely.

Lydia, a native Thyatirian, who at this time resided at Philippi, was a merchant who trafficked in purple clothes, which were held in great estimation. She was a Gentile, but was proselyted to the Jewish religion, believed in the teachings of Paul and was baptized with her household. She was a person in affluent circumstances; and being of a generous disposition, was very hospitable. As the Apostles were poorly accommodated elsewhere, she entertained them in her own house.

The Apostles and their friends on their way to the oratory, where they went to worship, were met by a female slave who was possessed with a spirit of divination and uttered ambiguous predictions. She had acquired great reputation as an oracle or fortune-teller and for making wonderful discoveries. By this practice she brought her masters considerable gain and was very valuable to them. When Paul cast out the evil spirit and restored the maiden to her normal condition of body and mind, her master was full of wrath, as she was no longer of any value to him; and he accused Paul before the magistrates. The people were all stirred with indignation; so they stripped Paul and Silas, scourged them severely; and, without trial, the magistrates threw them into prison.
Acts xvi.

After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth;
2 And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla, (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome,)
3 And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: (for by their occupation they were tentmakers).
18 And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila;

24 And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus.
25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.
26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him and expounded the way of God more perfectly.

It was an excellent custom of those days for educated people to be also instructed in some mechanical trade. This served them as an amusement in prosperity, and was a certain resource in case other prospects failed. Thus Paul was now prepared to support himself in an emergency. He was frequently compelled to work with his hands to provide for his own necessities.

Apollos was a native of Alexandria, in Egypt, a ready and graceful speaker, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. Coming to Ephesus, he boldly preached in the synagogue in the presence of Aquila and of Priscilla; and they seeing his ability, zeal and piety, said nothing to his disadvantage, though they perceived that his views of the Christian doctrines were very imperfect. So they sought his acquaintance and instructed him more fully in the gospel of Jesus. He, with great humility, received their instructions, for he had never been much among Christians; and no one knew when or by whom he was baptized.

Acts xxi.

8 And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Cesarea, and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him.

9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.

Philip, one of the seven deacons in Cesarea, was also an Evangelist, and had the peculiar honor of having four daughters, all endowed with the gift of prophecy; and perhaps they gave intimations to Paul of his approaching trials. With Philip's four daughters, all endowed
with the spirit of prophecy, and Priscilla as a teacher of great principles to the orators of her time, and one of Paul’s chosen travelling companions, women are quite highly honored in the Book of Acts, if we except the tragedy of the unfortunate wife who obeyed her husband.

Acts xxiv.
24 And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.
25 And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

Drusilla was a daughter of that Herod who beheaded James, the brother of John, and sister to King Agrippa. She was married to the king of the Emerines, Azizas; but she left her husband and went to live with Felix. He and Drusilla were curious to hear more authentic accounts of Jesus and his doctrines. They do not seem to have been much impressed with the purity of his teachings. Their curiosity did not arise from a love of the truth, nor from a desire for a higher, better life, but was a mere curiosity, for which it is probable that Felix was responsible, as Drusilla doubtless asked her husband at home all she desired to know.

E. C. S.

The Rev. Dr. Edwin Hatch expresses the latest decision of historical theology concerning Paul, in frankly confessing: “His life at Rome and all the rest of his history are enveloped in mists from which no single gleam of certain light emerges. . . . The place and occasion of his death are not less uncertain than are the facts of his later life. . . . The chronology of the rest of his life is as uncertain as the date of his death. We have no means of knowing when he was born, or how long he lived, or at what date the several events of his life took place.” Exactly the same may be said of Peter. The strongest probability is that Paul and Peter were two obscure men who lived in the latter part of the first, or beginning of the second century, neither of whom could have seen the first century Jesus. It can easily be shown that the Christian Church admit-
ted women into her regularly ordained ministry during the first two hundred years of Christianity. Whether Bishop Doane is ignorant of this fact, or whether he is merely presuming upon women's ignorance thereof, it is impossible to say. But one thing is clear, and that is, that the time has arrived when all women should be informed of the true status of their sex in the ministry of the primitive Church.

The first important truth for them to learn concerning the question is that there is a missing link of some five hundred years between the close of that body of literature known to us as the "Old Testament" and the compilation of that collection of letters, narratives, etc., now presented to us as the "New Testament." Girls of Christian families are commonly inoculated in their ignorant, and therefore helplessly credulous youth, with unquestioning belief that the New Testament was written in the first century of our era, by disciples who were contemporary with Jesus, and that Peter and Paul were first century Christians, the former of whom had personally known and followed Jesus, while the latter was a convert from Judaism after Jesus' death, never having seen the teacher himself.

Yet he is, indeed, a very ignorant ecclesiastic who to-day is not perfectly well aware that the above belief is pure theory, resting on nothing more stable than vague conjecture, irresponsible tradition, and slowly evolving fable. Among scholarly Christian theologians no questions are now more unsettled than are the queries: Who wrote the Gospels? In which of the first three centuries did they assume their present shape? And at what time did Peter and Paul live and quarrel with each other concerning Christian polity?

As for the passages now found in the New Testament epistles of Paul, concerning women's non-equality with men and duty of subjection, there is no room to doubt that they are bare-faced forgeries, interpolated by unscrupulous bishops, during the early period in which a combined and determined effort was made to reduce women to silent submission, not only in the Church, but also in the home and in the State. A most laudably intended attempt to excuse Paul for the inexcusable passages attributed to his authorship has been made by a clergyman, who, accepting them as genuine Pauline utterances, endeavors to show that they were meant to apply
only to Greek female converts, natives of Corinth, and that the command to cover the head and to keep silent in public was warranted, both because veiling the head and face was a Grecian custom, and because the women of Corinth were of notoriously bad character. In support of this theory our modern apologist quotes the testimony of numerous writers of antiquity who denounced Corinthian profligacy. But, setting aside the fact that the men of Corinth must always have been, at least, as bad as the women, and that a sorry case would be made out for Paul, if it were on the score of morals that he ordered Greek women to subject themselves to such men, there are yet two serious impediments in the way of this theory. In the first place, that wealthy and luxurious Corinth to which the writers quoted refer, was no longer in existence in Paul’s time; 146 B. C. it was conquered by the Romans, who killed the men, carried the women and children into slavery, and levelled the dwellings to the ground. For a whole century the site of the once famous city remained a desolate waste, but about 46 B. C. it was colonized by some Roman immigrants, and a Romanized city, with Roman customs, it was when Paul knew it. Now, not only did the Roman women go unveiled, mingling freely in all public places with men (a fact which Paul, as citizen of a Roman province must have known), but Paul specially commends the Greek woman, Phebe, whom he endorses as minister of the Church in the Greek city, Cenchrea (a seaport within a few miles of Corinth), and in Acts, chapter 17, we are explicitly told that the Greek converts made by Paul, in Greece, were “chief women,” “honorable women.”

This is sufficient refutation of the argument of the clergyman who strives to clear the character of Paul at the expense of the character of the women of Corinth.       E. B. D.