

THE FIRST ACT OF THE APOSTLES—THE ELECTION OF MATTHIAS.

THE election of St. Matthias, recorded in Acts i. 16–25, has at least three points of definite and unique interest. (1) It is the first act of the apostles after their separation from the visible presence of their Master. (2) It is the one act recorded as having taken place during the interval between the Ascension and the Day of Pentecost. These two points of themselves give a certain prominence to the act, and in a way force upon us the question of its significance. (3) Again, it is unique in the history of the Church as the one instance of election into the apostolate. The act was never to be repeated; it was unprecedented, and created no precedent.

The place of Judas was supplied by the election of Matthias; but when St. James was slain by the sword of Herod, he had no successor among the Twelve. St. Paul alone of men after the Day of Pentecost took the rank and position of an apostle of the Lord in the confined and higher sense in which we are now using the word. But St. Paul was chosen to be an apostle by the immediate act of Jesus Christ and of God the Father, not desiring his authority, as he is careful to state, either from a human source or through the channel of a human ministry: *οὐκ ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων οὐδὲ δι' ἀνθρώπου* (Gal. i. 1).

But though isolated and distinct in one aspect, this act has nevertheless a close and important relation to the history of the Christian ministry.

This we will consider further on.

1. To return to our points. Considered as the first independent act of the Christian brotherhood: it is important to note that it bears the impress of the presence and controlling influence of Christ Himself. The key to

the interpretation of this incident is to regard it as the act of Jesus wrought by the ministration of the apostles. With St. Luke, indeed, each and all of the acts of the apostles are the acts of Jesus,¹ and in this initiative of Christian action there are clear traces of the Master's will and guidance. We see this (1) in the position naturally as it seems accorded to St. Peter and taken by him; (2) in the exceptional character of the event, both as to the time of its occurrence—an unlikely one to have been chosen by the unassisted judgment of the apostles; and (3) in the order of procedure, exceptional in its character, and yet unhesitatingly followed; (4) in the preservation of the incident by St. Luke, which proves its acceptance as an inspired act by the post-Pentecostal Church; and (5) above all in the direct appeal to Jesus Christ in St. Peter's prayer.

2. The next point is the occurrence of the act in those ten days of waiting for the promise of the Father. Although *a priori* human conjecture might have assigned an act of this importance to the direct and personal ministration of the risen Lord, or else to the Church after the fuller inspiration of Pentecost, it is possible to see a fitness and educative helpfulness in the particular moment and method of his choice.

(1) It was an act of hopefulness. Nothing could have better served to inspire confidence in those days of anxious expectation than an act like this, which gave assurance of the presence of Christ, and which indicated preparation for the opening of a new experience in the realized kingdom of God.

¹ In i. 1 the first book, or the Gospel narrative, is explained as containing a record of all that Jesus *began* to do and teach; in ii. 38 baptism is in the name of Jesus Christ; in ii. 47 the Lord (Jesus) added to the Church those who were being saved; in xvi. 9 it is the Spirit of Jesus which directs the apostolic journey; in xviii. 9 and xxiii. 11 St. Paul is encouraged by a vision of "the Lord," who was indeed the immediate instrument of his conversion, ix. 5; comp. 1 Cor. i. 1, Gal. i. 1.

(2) It was an act of high responsibility, which would nerve the apostles for the exercise of authority.

(3) It seemed divinely fitting that when the Church began her history the number of the apostolate should be complete; that the Church should actually be built on the foundation of the twelve apostles; that not one should be lacking from among the number of the judges of the twelve tribes of Israel.

When the day of election arrived, the disciples were gathered together (*ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό*, v. 15, must be regarded as a Hebraism). It is extremely unlikely that the place of meeting was in the temple, as some have conjectured from a too literal interpretation of Luke xxiv. 53. The upper room (v. 13), as Lightfoot remarks (*Hor. Hebr.*, vol. viii. p. 363), came to be used technically of a Rabbi's lecture-room, or *beth midrash*, in which religious discussion took place, so that his disciples were called "sons of the upper room." The upper chamber at Troas (Acts xx. 8) was a room of this kind, and in such upper room we may perhaps see the origin of Christian Churches. The number of those present is stated to have been "about (ὡς) one hundred and twenty." It is not probable that this number included all the adherents of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem at the time. The precision of the stated number, one hundred and twenty, combined with the indefiniteness produced by ὡς is remarkable. Possibly a sense of congruity and fitness in the number as ten times that of the apostolic twelve struck the narrator, who noted it, but as a point of accuracy added the qualifying particle.

St. Peter approaches the election without hesitation—the result, probably, as we have indicated before, of the Lord's direction. He puts the election before the brethren as a Divine necessity for the fulfilment of Holy Scripture (*ἔδει πληρωθῆναι τὴν γραφὴν κ.τ.λ.*, v. 16; *δεῖ εἶναι*, v. 21; with this compare Luke ii. 49, xxiv. 26).

In defining the aim and work of an apostle as *μάρτυρα τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ σὺν ἡμῖν γενέσθαι*, St. Peter recalls the Lord's words (chap. i. 8), *ἔσεσθέ μου μάρτυρες*. Henceforth the characteristic note of apostolic preaching was to be their testimony to the truth of the resurrection, as it was the crucial test and saving hope of the Christian disciple (1 Cor. xv. 13-17). "Qui resurrectionem Christi credit omnia credit quæ progressa et secuta sunt" (Bengel).

(1) The first step in the procedure of election was to limit the choice to the number of those who had been closely associated with the apostles in the companionship of Jesus from the beginning of His ministry. These "original" disciples naturally enjoyed a pre-eminence in the Church. They were the eyewitnesses from the beginning (*οἱ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς αὐτόπται*, Luke i. 2). It is the condition which Jesus Himself names as required of His witnesses: "Ye also bear witness *because* ye have been with me from the beginning" (*καὶ ὑμεῖς δὲ μαρτυρεῖτε ὅτι ἀπ' ἀρχῆς μετ' ἐμοῦ ἐστε*, John xv. 27), words which authorize, and indeed necessitate, the limitation of choice here prescribed. It is an interesting question whether the term *ἀρχαῖος μαθητῆς* applied to Mnason of Cyprus (Acts xxi. 16) was used generally of those who accompanied the Lord from the first, or whether it points only to a discipleship dating from the Day of Pentecost.

(2) The next stage in the procedure, the "appointment" of two of the *ἀρχαῖοι μαθηταί*, probably belongs to the whole assembly of one hundred and twenty. They appointed (*ἔστησαν*) two. The same word, *ἔστησαν*, is used of the appointment of the seven (deacons) (Acts vi. 6), and is classical in this sense. Comp. Soph., *Œd. Tyr.*, 940, *τύραννον αὐτὸν οὐπιχώριοι χθονὸς | τῆς Ἰσθμίας στήσουσιν, ὡς ἠὺδᾶτ' ἐκεῖ*. The method of choice is not described, but it is interesting to note in this act the germ of the "cleri et plebis suffragium," or even the "plebis suffragium"

alone, which Cyprian names as one of the conditions in episcopal election (see Ep. lxvii. 3 and 5).

Neither of the two appointed for election is named in the subsequent history of the Church. Nor are the qualities mentioned which commended them to their brethren. But it is possible that the surname of Justus—the Latin equivalent of ὁ δίκαιος—may have been assigned to Joseph Barsabbas for the same reason for which the title was given to James, the Lord's brother.

3. In the words which follow (v. 24), a grammatical point may be noticed, namely, that the aorist participle *προσευξάμενοι* indicates an action identical with, and not antecedent to, the action expressed by *εἶπαν*, "they prayed saying." See Blass, *Gram. of New Testament Greek*, Eng. Trans., p. 197.

The prayer itself we regard as an appeal to the Lord Jesus Christ to appoint His apostle, as he had appointed the Twelve during His ministry on earth. We infer this: (1) from the loss which would result from any other interpretation to the significance of the act; (2) from the juxtaposition of ὁ Κύριος Ἰησοῦς (v. 22); (3) from the frequency of this form of address to Jesus, both before the Resurrection (Matt. xiv. 30, xvii. 4; Luke x. 17; John xiv. 5), and after the Resurrection (John xxi. 15; Acts i. 6, vii. 60, ix. 5, 13, xi. 8; to which may be added Matt. vii. 21); (4) from the fact that, except in the song of Simeon (Luke ii. 29) and in the prayer of the apostles (Acts iv. 24 foll.), no instance occurs in the New Testament where God the Father is addressed in prayer as Κύριε.

The rare word *καρδιογνώστα* indicates the true criterion of choice, inner motive and character known to God only. It is also beautifully expressive in the present connexion, as in chapter xv. 8. Occurring in these two passages only, and in both in the mouth of St. Peter, this word may be considered as pre-eminently characteristic of the apostle,

who had in a special sense experienced the heart-searching glance of Christ.

The following clause is rendered in the R.V., "Shew of these two the one whom thou hast chosen." But *ἀνάδειξον* may also mean "appoint," "declare elected." It is quite classical in this sense, as: *βασιλέα προσφάτως αὐτὸν ἀναδειχώς*, Polyb. iv. 48, 3; and in Luke x. 1, where the word occurs in reference to a like occasion, the Revisers rightly render "appointed seventy others" (*ἀνέδειξεν ὁ Κύριος ἑτέρους ἑβδομήκοντα*). It seems, therefore, preferable to give a signification to the word here which exactly expresses the direct action of Christ.¹ *Ἐξελέξω* is the aorist of an eternal fact, and so independent of time notion; compare *ἔδόθη*, Matthew xxviii. 18; *ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα*, Matthew iii. 17; *ὑπερφύωσεν* . . .; *ἐχαρίσατο*, Philippians ii. 8.

(4) We now come to the most interesting and distinctive part of this act of election. However strange and unfitting a recourse to the lot in a solemn moment like this may appear to the western mind, to the Jew it was a natural and reverential expedient. It was an appeal to God for decision. The element of chance so closely identified with the lot to the Greek mind (compare *διὰ τὴν τοῦ κλήρου τύχην*, Plat. *Rep.* 619D) would not present itself at all to Hebrew thought. The decision to be obtained by this process was the very reverse of a decision by chance. The result expressed a Divine purpose and verdict. It was by this method that every day in the temple the most sacred functions of divine service were apportioned to the ministering priests. Thus it was that Zacharias, father of John the Baptist, on the most critical day of his life, obtained by lot the privilege of burning incense in the Holy Place: *ἔλαχεν τοῦ θυμιάσαι εἰσελθὼν εἰς τὸν ναὸν τοῦ κυρίου* (Luke i. 9). The "white stone" (Rev. ii. 17) is referred by Schöttgen (*Hor. Hebr. et Talmud. ad loc.*) to the same

¹ Mr. Rendall in his recent scholarly edition of the Acts takes the same view.

custom. *Κλήρους διδόναι* does not appear to be a classical phrase for “casting lots,” nor is it the phrase used elsewhere in the New Testament (cp. Matt. xxvii. 35), and some have interpreted it in the sense of giving votes. But it is a literal rendering of the Hebrew expression, *nathan goral* (Lev. xvi. 8), for casting lots on the two goats, and there can be little doubt that this should be the rendering in this passage.

The fact that decision by lot was so familiar to the Jew, and so bound up with the customs and ritual of his race and religion, lends another aspect to this incident. It presents the election of Matthias as the last scene in Jewish religious history before the kingdom of Christ came with power. It is a link between the Jewish and the Christian Churches, a thought of the temple ministry carried to the threshold of the new dispensation.

4. The last step in the procedure of election is the formal admission of Matthias into the number of the Twelve, *συγκαταψηφίσθη μετὰ τῶν ἑνδεκα ἀποστόλων*. This was probably the act of the eleven apostles, and one which, like the other acts in this procedure, finds its counterpart, as we shall see, in the election to the episcopate of the Christian Church.

The admission or reception of Matthias into the College of the Apostles, as distinct from his election, has its parallel in the ordinary forms of election to lay or ecclesiastical office in the present day; as, for instance, the admission of a Scholar or Fellow to membership of his college after election.

The word by which the process is expressed deserves a note. The verb *συγκαταψηφίζω* is a *ἄπαξ λεγόμενον*, and neither *καταψηφίζω* nor *ψηφίζω* occurs in the LXX.; in the New Testament *ψηφίζω* is twice used, meaning to count or reckon (Luke xiv. 28; Rev. xiii. 18). In classical Greek *καταψηφίζεσθαι* means to “condemn by vote.” Here the

force of *κατά* must be that of thoroughness, and *σύν* implies the unanimity of the vote. It was a *συνψηφός*, a combined vote of all the eleven.

It has been already remarked that although this was a unique act it is not without its relation to the history and organization of the Church. Cyprian names three conditions as essential for the valid election of a bishop—the suffrage of the laity (“*suffragium plebis*” or “*universæ fraternitatis suffragium*,” Ep. lxvii. 5), the judgment of God, and the election by the bishops of the province. In earlier times the bishop was “elected by his flock and accepted by the neighbouring bishops” (Archbishop Benson’s *Cyprian*, p. 27, N.S.).

Each of these essential points may be traced in the election of Matthias. The suffrage of the laity, or the whole brotherhood, which bore testimony to character and fitness of the candidates (“*plebe præsentem quæ singulorum vitam plenissime novit*,” Cyprian, Ep. lxvii. 5) and elected or gave their consent to the election of the bishop, is implied by *ἔστησαν δύο*, v. 23. The judgment of God was appealed to, and felt to be given in the decision by lot following upon the prayer of the Church. The consent or election by fellow-bishops is traced in the vote of reception, which closes the procedure.

And in every subsequent call and election to the ministry in every branch of the Church of Christ it is not difficult to discern in some form or procedure the requirements and method foreshewn in the election of Matthias: (1) Companionship of Jesus; (2) Testimony of those who have known the life and character of the candidate; (3) Choice by the brotherhood; (4) The appeal to God in prayer; (5) The Divine judgment; (6) The formal admission to the ministry.

But it is interesting to look back as well as forward. And if this procedure which we have been endeavouring to trace is to be attributed (as we believe it is) to the direction of

Jesus Christ Himself, we might expect to find features of resemblance or identity in the choice of the original Twelve.

In giving the list of the twelve apostles St. Matthew names no preceding steps. St. Luke's account is, "And it came to pass in those days that He went out into the mountain to pray; and He continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called His disciples, and He chose (*ἐκλεξάμενος*) from them twelve, whom also He named apostles" (vi. 13, 14). In St. Mark's account we read, "And He goeth up into the mountain, and calleth unto Him whom He Himself would; and they went unto Him. And He appointed (*ἐποίησεν*) twelve, that they might be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach, and to have authority to cast out devils" (iii. 13, 14). And in St. Luke's account of the mission of the Seventy the words are, "Now after these things the Lord appointed (*ἀνέδειξεν*) seventy others, and sent them two and two before His face into every city and place, whither He Himself was about to come" (x. 1). Here Bengel remarks on "after these things," referring to the preceding context: "post probationem eorum qui idonei essent ad legationem vel secus." Comparing those passages, we note: the prayer of Jesus, answering to the invocation for the Divine decision in the choice of Matthias; the summoning of His disciples, agreeing with the election in the presence of the hundred and twenty and out of the number of those who had been with Jesus; then the choice by Jesus (note the use of the words *ἀνέδειξεν* and *ἐκλεξάμενος* as in Acts v. 24), which includes the decision of God as well as the election by the eleven apostles, or, in later times, by fellow-bishops. In the Ignatian Epistles the bishop is regarded as the representative of Christ: "we ought to regard the bishop as the Lord Himself" (*Ephese*, § 6). The point added by St. Mark, "He calleth unto Him whom He would, and

they came unto Him," represents the response in Christ's servant to the voice of God summoning him to the ministry.

One point more deserves attention, namely, the group of suggestive words, full of meaning for the future, which are met with in this short narrative: *μάρτυρα γενέσθαι*,—the thought of testimony and martyrdom linked inseparably in the annals of the Church,—*διακονία*, *ἐπισκοπή*, *ἀποστολή*, and *κλήρος*¹—words which not only recall the whole organization of the Christian ministry, but which go deeply into the theory of the Christian life.

Of Matthias himself nothing further is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. This however is not surprising, for, with the exception of one or two incidents recorded of St. John, and the fact of St. James' martyrdom, the only acts of the Twelve commemorated are those of St. Peter. Clement of Alexandria quotes from the traditions of Matthias (*Strom.* ii. 163), and Eusebius (*H.E.* 25) mentions apocryphal gospels ascribed to Peter, Thomas and Matthias, which implies that his name carried apostolical authority. It is remarkable, however, that in the earliest named groups of the apostles the twelfth place is taken by St. Paul. Mrs. Jameson says (*Sacred and Legendary Art*, p. 254), "that St. Matthias is seldom included in sets of the

¹ The meaning of *κλήρος* in the sense of "the clergy" is variously explained. According to Skeat (*Concise Etym. Dict.*) the clergy are so designated because "their portion is the Lord," reference being made to Deut. xviii. 2, 1 Pet. v. 8. The latter passage, however, cannot be in point, for the *κλήροι* here referred to are the churches or congregations over which the presbyters are placed. Nor could the Jewish priests or Christian clergy be so called because the Lord was their *κλήρος*. Rather it must be because the clergy are the *κλήρος* or choice of the Lord, an explanation which would fall in with the meaning of this passage. Suicer, *sub voc.*, quotes from Isidorus to the effect that the clergy were so called because Matthias, the first person ordained to the Christian ministry, was chosen by lot (*κλήρω*). Dean Plumtre, on 1 Peter v. 3, says that the term *κλήρος* was transferred from the congregation to the "presbyters," as being in a special sense the "portion" or "heritage" of God. Webster *Eng. Dict.*) derives the name from the lands originally allotted to the clergy.

Apostles." The traditions concerning the scenes of St. Matthias' missionary labours and his martyrdom are diverse and untrustworthy.

ARTHUR CARR.

"THE NATURE OF CHRIST."

I HAVE lately received the second edition of a valuable little book with the above title, by the Rev. William Marshall, the author of a larger work published some time ago, and entitled the *Visible Son*.¹ The appearance of the *Nature of Christ* is, I think, opportune, as the attention of most thoughtful Christians is at present very properly much directed to the important question—perhaps most important of all—"What think ye of Christ?"

It has become very evident to most thinkers that it is useless to invite the deeply-laden sinners of these last years of the "times of the Gentiles" to a merely human Saviour. We need nothing less than Divine power to raise us from the depth of lost opportunity and actual evil into which we have fallen as the heirs of all the sins of the great apostasy and of unbelief into which we have fallen since our Lord returned to heaven.

It seems equally plain that a Divine Saviour must be an eternal Being, whose existence is not to be dated from the nativity at Bethlehem, some 1,900 years ago, but who was "at the beginning," and is, the same Lord who appeared to Adam, to Abraham, and to other Old Testament saints, whether as Jehovah, or as the "Angel of the Covenant," whose acting in relation to man thus extends all the way from the creation of Adam, and who is the Alpha and the Omega of the whole scheme of redemption. It thus appears that our complete Christology must include

¹ Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1896.