ST. PETER AND THE RESURRECTION

BY WILLIAM WEBER.

(Concluded).

1 Cor. xiv. contains a very explicit description of the glossolalia of the early Christians. It was an ecstatic act during which the intellect was overpowered by emotions. It was not speaking in the proper sense. Only sounds, unintelligible to others except to those who possessed the gift of interpreting tongues, were brought forth. The movements of the body conformed to the inarticulate sounds of the entranced person. A stranger and unbeliever coming upon Christians engaged in speaking with tongues would call them mad people. That is a parallel to Act. ii. 13 where they are charged with being drunk.

Christian glossolalia reminds us of the Mohammedan whirling and howling dervishes. Both go back to similar religious exercises of the ancient Semites. At the time of Samuel, the prophets prophesied to the music of a psaltery, timbrel, pipe, and harp; and even Saul was seized by the spirit and found among the prophets. Prophecy in Israel was always closely connected with manticism. The latter is a trance in which consciousness is overpowered and lost altogether for the time being, while in prophecy of the highest type the mind is exalted but retains control over the intellect. After the Babylonian captivity, prophecy ceased among the Jews because the scribes usurped the place of the prophets. But the pious remembered what it was and hoped for its revival, expecting a baptism in the Spirit at the coming of the Messiah for all who would be accepted by him.

Thus the beginning of St. Peter’s speech fits perfectly into the situation as outlined Act. ii. 1, 4, 12-13. The apostle rejects indignantly the slur of those who had accused him and his friends to be
under the influence of liquor. What they see and hear is the fulfilment of a prophecy of Joel (ii. 28 f.), the pouring out of the spirit of prophecy upon God's servants and handmaidens, which was to usher in the kingdom of God. The language of verse 14-16 is clear and precise; the sentences are short and may readily be retranslated into Hebrew. Only one fault could be found with the quotation. Verse 19-20 is not called for by what had happened. The wonders and signs in the sky and on earth, the baptism of fire, or the destruction of the present world with all evil-doers had not realized as yet. The main and alone convincing argument, whose force could not be denied, was the baptism in the spirit which St. Peter and his companions had received. That showed all who had eyes to see and ears to hear that God recognized them as his beloved children in whom he was well pleased. It also announced the nearness of the kingdom of God. Thus I am inclined to consider only verse 17-18 as quoted by the apostle. Verse 19-21 may have been added later on because they belong to the old prophecy.

The main argument must have explained the intimate relations which existed between the inspired men and women and Jesus of Nazareth who had been crucified fifty days before. The apostle was bound to confess that he and his companions believed Jesus was the Messiah despite his ignominious death and to point to their gift of prophecy as confirming their belief in Jesus. That thought is expressed indeed in verse 36: “Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified!” In closing, the speech had to appeal to the people to accept Jesus as their Christ. That also is contained in our account as answer to the question: “Brethren, what shall we do?” For Peter told them: “Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For to you is the promise and to your children and to all that are afar off, as many as the Lord our God shall call unto Him.”

There may be later additions in that statement. As such I am inclined to consider the reference to Gentile Christians. Also the phrases “repent ye” and “unto the remission of your sins” may belong to an age when they formed an integral part of any appeal to would-be believers.

Nevertheless, Act. ii. 14-18 and 36-39 are only fragments because the most important part, the application of Joel's prophecy to the Pentecost event, is lost and the conclusion based thereon as to the standing of the disciples and their crucified master in the
kingdom of God is missing. The compiler of Acts either has filled the lacuna by inserting verse 22-35, or he has created the gap himself in order to make room for his argument for the resurrection and ascension. That this argument does not fit into the given situation cannot be overlooked. It was the very first time that the testimony of the resurrection of Jesus was given in public. Therefore we ought to expect the speaker to simply tell what had happened on and since Easter morning. In such cases, it is alone the sincerity of the witness that carries conviction. Instead of following this natural course, our passage undertakes to prove from the Old Testament that the Messiah after his death must have risen and ascended into heaven. In other words, the apostle is represented as arguing with people who had heard the Easter message before but were in doubt about it. Our passage thus is an apology whereas a polemic is required.

The introduction (verse 22-24) confirms that the passage under discussion does not belong to the original Pentecost address. For it differs too much from verse 14-16. There we have short and simple sentences as we should expect from a Hebrew and a man who is talking to plain people. Here three verses form one long compound sentence the author of which had to remind his readers of what he had written in the beginning before he was half through. The principal statement is "ye did slay," which is accompanied in Greek by a participle "having crucified." The direct object is "Jesus of Nazareth," which stands without any apparent reason at the head of the sentence. It is modified by the participial construction "a man approved of God unto you by mighty words and wonders and signs." This is taken up by the relative clause "which God did by him in the midst of you." Then the whole is modified by a second relative clause: "as ye yourselves know." The following demonstrative pronoun, rendered "him" in English, refers to the direct object and introduces the participial phrase "being delivered-up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." The prepositional phrase "by the hand of lawless men" belongs to the main verb. Verse 24 contains another relative and causal clause which modify the direct object.

Only a Greek can have composed such a sentence in which is found not the least suggestion of Hebrew-Aramaic. But even as an originally Greek statement, it invites criticism. The writer wanted to discuss the resurrection of Jesus. Therefore he ought to have announced his subject in a principal statement, not a dependent clause.
That Jesus was approved of God unto the Jews "by mighty works and wonders and signs" cannot be accepted as true. The Gospels, especially the fourth, tell of many miracles which Jesus performed; but they also record the express and general refusal of Jesus to do any miracles. It is impossible to harmonize these two traditions. They contradict and exclude each other. Jesus was evidently a great healer. But curing diseases, especially those of the nervous system, was considered in antiquity as one of the legitimate tasks of prophets, even among the Greeks. Such cures, however, no matter how astonishing they might be, were not regarded as miracles. Not only Jesus, but also the sons of the Pharisees cast out devils. If thus one tradition represents Jesus as refusing to perform miracles, while another has him do the most wonderful and impossible things, we may safely consider only the former as genuine. The latter must belong to a later age when an avalanche of superstition had buried the old and simple truth about Jesus. For all these reasons, verse 22-24 cannot have been pronounced by the apostle Peter.

The same fact is demonstrated by the words "ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay him." The speaker apparently holds the entire Jewish nation responsible for the death of Jesus. But that nation as such had no part in the crucifixion. They were not given a chance either of protesting against or approving of the execution of Jesus. The chief priests, seconded by the scribes, had plotted in secret to have Jesus killed. A combination of circumstances convinced Pontius Pilate of the dangerous character of Jesus even before his enemies could denounce him as a pretender to the throne of David. There was no public trial neither at the temple nor at the praetorium, and the execution was rather a secret affair. The Roman governor imagined he had to suppress a threatening insurrection by killing its leader before his followers could rise in arms. All information to the contrary contained in the Gospels is of late and legendary origin.

The main stumbling block is the message of the resurrection itself. St. Peter could not use it for convincing Jews of the divine mission of Jesus. They had never heard of an individual rising from the dead in order to enter heaven. Men like Enoch, Moses, and Elijah had been taken up into heaven before their death. The Pharisees and all the pious Jews of the New Testament age believed in a general resurrection of the dead. But that was a resurrection by which the just did not ascend into heaven but returned
to the renewed earth. Consequently, if the first disciples had preached the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, they would have called forth immediate and violent contradiction.

It looks as if the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus has been added to the Christian faith by the Greeks. The message of the crucified Christ was “unto Jews a stumbling block and unto Gentiles foolishness.” Greek mythology saves as a rule favorites of the gods from Hades in the same manner as the mythology of the Jews. They are carried up to Olympus just before they die as for instance Hercules. The story of Orpheus and Eurydice shows that they also believed in a possible return from the dead to life on earth. But the case of Castor, the brother of Pollux, is a direct parallel to the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. Christians of Greek descent, anxious to remove the foolishness of the message of the crucified Christ, could do nothing with the old Greek and Jewish ascension. The real death of Jesus had been emphasized too strongly by the first apostles. In looking for something else, they happened to think of Castor and Pollux. How un-Jewish that solution of the problem was and is may be learned from the unconditional rejection of the new doctrine by the Jews.

The scriptural proof for the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, attempted in vers. 25-28 and 35, confirms what we have learned so far. The first quotation (Ps. xvi)

“Thou wilt not leave me to Sheol;
Thou wilt not suffer the pious one to see the Pit.”

was not understood by the Jews to refer to the Messiah. Wellhausen (Book of Psalms, p. 169) says: “The speaker is not a mere individual. Pious Israel will not succumb to the danger with which it is threatened by heathenism. When fighting for JHVH’S cause, it will not be destroyed.” Briggs (Psalms i, p. 122) states: “The psalmist will see Sheol, but he will not be abandoned there; he will not see the Pit, the dungeon of Sheol, the place of the wicked. The pious could hardly go there.” The same scholar explains the verse

“Thou wilt make known to me the path of life.”

“This might imply resurrection if the psalm were late enough, a path leading up out of Sheol to eternal life. But the context does not suggest this; the path rather leads to the presence of God in the abode of the dead.”

The other quotation is from Psalm cx. Briggs (Psalms ii, p. 373) translates it:
"Utterance of Yahweh to my lord:
Sit enthroned at my right hand,
Till I make thine enemies a stool for thy feet."

According to Wellhausen, the poem is addressed to one of the kings of the Hasmonean priestly dynasty.

The Palestinian Jews of the apostolic age understood, of course, what those psalms meant. Even if they believed the second of the two psalms to be a prophecy of king David, they would locate the throne of the Messiah, not in heaven, but at Jerusalem. Under these circumstances, no Palestinian Jew like St. Peter could think of using the two psalms for the purpose of proving the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. The Jews have always despised the childish endeavors of ignorant Gentile Christians to discover for each and every Christian doctrine Old Testament authority.

The Pentecost address, ascribed to the apostle Peter in Acts, consists of two heterogeneous fragments which were welded together by the compiler of that book. The older belongs evidently to a trustworthy source, and it must reach back to the day of Pentecost. The other is a product of the second century and may be a hundred years younger than its yoke-mate. It illustrates what Gentile Christians about A. D. 150 regarded as the most effective Pentecost sermon and therefore put it into the mouth of St. Peter.

THE REMAINING SPEECHES OF ST. PETER

The address of St. Peter in Solomon's porch, after curing the lame beggar (Act. iii. 12-26), is from a purely literary standpoint the best of all Petrine discourses in Acts. It is written in fluent Greek. The sentences, while not complicated, abound in participle constructions and dependent clauses. There is nothing to suggest a translation of a Hebrew original. Verse 24 offers the only difficulty. It reads according to the Greek text: "Yea and all the prophets from Samuel and them that followed after as many as have spoken and told of these days." The American Revised Version has: "Yea and all the prophets from Samuel and them that followed after as many as have spoken, they also told of these days." It is clear why the translators substituted also for and. The Greek sentence is incomplete because the principal statement lacks a predicate. But the "dependent clause "as many as have spoken" has no meaning in itself. There never lived a prophet who did not speak. Therefore, the prepositional phrase "of these days" modifies not only
"told," but also "have spoken." Verse 24 is simply a marginal note which has found its way into the text. It is entirely uncalled for. The prophecy of Deut. xviii. 15 and the warning of Deut. xviii. 19 in verse 22-23 require no corroboration by younger prophets. In matters of religion, the Jews recognized no authority as superior to that of Moses.

The short speech consists of two parts, verse 12-18 and 19-26. The former dwells upon the true import of the cure of the lame man both negatively and positively. It was not the personal power and piety of Peter and John that had made him to walk; but it was God who had glorified by that deed his servant Jesus, the same Jesus whom the hearers had killed. But God had raised him from the dead; and through faith in the name of the heavenly Jesus the beggar had received perfect health. The words: "Brethren, I know that in ignorance ye did it as also did your rulers" prepares the way for the appeal to repent and believe in Jesus. Their sin was not too great to be forgiven since the death of Jesus had been preordained by God himself, and the suffering of the Christ had been foretold by the prophets. The second part has three subdivisions. The Jews are urged to become followers of Jesus in order to inherit the kingdom of God. (Verse 19-22.) They are warned of the punishment, awaiting those who would not hearken to the prophet. (Verse 23.) Finally, the speaker explains why he delivers his message to them. As sons of Abraham, they were nearer to God and his Christ than the other nations.

The very language excludes the authorship of St. Peter. Whether or not he was able to exhort an audience in fluent, idiomatic Greek, he spoke at that occasion Hebrew, whereas our speech has been composed originally in Greek. Moreover, it was written after the third Gospel had been completed. For the words: "when he had determined to release him" can refer only to Lk. xxiii. 16, 22. Such an affinity between the Acts and Luke may seem to be only natural because both books were compiled by the same man. However, the remark in question does not belong to the oldest, apostolic source of the crucifixion but to a late Gentile Christian addition.

The execution of Jesus by order of a Roman governor troubled the Gentile Christians very much. Since Jesus was supposed to have undergone a regular trial, his condemnation proved him a criminal. In trying to solve that riddle, they never thought of Pilate having acted in good faith. He saw in Jesus a dangerous man who was organizing a rebellion. His ignorance of the Jewish language
and his fear of that stubborn race favored such a misunderstanding. But the Greeks rather argued; the absolute innocence of Jesus was quite obvious to Pilate. His moral cowardice caused him to give way before the fanaticism of the Jewish rabble and the insistence of the priests and scribes. This way of accounting for the death of an absolutely guiltless man by order of a Roman governor has been followed farthest in Luke. There even the tetrarch Herod confirms Pilate's favorable opinion of Jesus.

Such secondary and tertiary traditions in the Gospels belong, of course, to a late date. They arose in all likelihood during the first half of the second century if not later, in any case, after all attempts had been abandoned of understanding the death of Jesus as an event of human history in order to contemplate it exclusively as a mysterious decree of God which the enemies of Jesus were forced to put into effect nilly-willy.

The late date of our address is also indicated by the reiterated accusal of the Jewish people of having murdered Jesus. “Ye delivered and denied” his servant Jesus. “Ye denied the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer.” “Ye killed the Prince of life.”

Verse 25-26 contains another indication of the spuriousness of our speech. The first verse claims Christianity to be the universal religion, the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham: “In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” The second verse declares the Jews, provided they repented, were the first of all the nations to receive the blessing of Jesus. Such a thought, however, was at the time to which the speech is assigned utterly foreign to the mind of St. Peter. He always regarded himself exclusively as the apostle of the circumcision. While later another man did preach the gospel to the Gentiles, St. Peter “felt in duty bound to obey the precept of his master; “Go not in any way of the Gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans.” There was accordingly no first or second choice for him as to whom he should proclaim the message of Jesus. That idea is characteristic of St. Paul and his school. It was Paul and Barnabas who are reported to have spoken out boldly and said: “It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you. Seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.” (Act. xiii. 46, comp. Rom. i. 16, ii. 9f.)

All these observations point to the same fact. Act. iii. 12-26 was written by a Greek who was ignorant of the history of the apostolic age.
Act. iii. i, iv. 31 and v. 12-42 are duplicates. All essential statements are identical. In both instances, St. Peter performs wonderful cures. They attract public attention and offer the apostle an opportunity of explaining in public the secret of his healing-power, in other words, of bearing witness of Jesus Christ. That speech is delivered in Solomon’s porch and leads to his arrest by the temple-authorities. The next morning after due trial, he is discharged with the warning to speak no more in the name of Jesus.

There are indeed certain differences. According to the first account, St. Peter was accompanied only by St. John; according to the second, by the apostles. Act. iii. but a single man is cured; Act. v. a large number of people. The lame beggar is commanded to walk in the name of Jesus; while the mere shadow of the apostle restores numberless bed-ridden patients to health. Peter and John stay all night in prison; the apostles are set free by an angel so that they could return to the temple and teach. They are dismissed with a warning; they are dismissed with a warning after they had been scourged. But such differences are very far from constituting contradictions. The second account is only an exaggerated edition of the first. Neither the speech of Act. iii. nor the celebration of the disciples of Act. iv. 24-31 are found in the duplicate. They may be later additions even where they occur at present. Act. iv. 1, 5-6, and 23, the terms “the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees,” “the rulers and elders and scribes,” and “the chief priests and the scribes” point to several compilers.

The angel of the Lord and the miraculous cures, ascribed to St. Peter’s shadow, do not recommend the second story. Act. v. 12-16, if compared with iii. 1-26, is not a proper introduction of verse 17-42. Perhaps, the main part of the second account only was a parallel of Act. iv. 1-22, which the compiler enlarged into a new story. In any case, after having discussed at greater length Act. iii. 12-26, it is superfluous to study the other speeches of St. Peter in Act. iii-v. more closely.

The last address of St. Peter to be examined, is that which he delivered at the house of the centurion Cornelius at Caesarea. (Act. x. 34-43.) It forms a part of the section viii. 14-25, ix. 32, xi. 18 and relates how the first apostle superintended the work of Philip at Samaria and received in person the first fruits of the Gentile world into the Christian fold at Caesarea. It breaks up the report of the scattering of the Hellenistic Christians of Jerusalem after the murder of Stephan and tells of their converting in the
course of their wanderings Samaritans (Act. viii. 1-13) and Antiochian Greeks Act. xi. 19 ff.). The St. Peter episode has been forced into that account in order to credit the apostle of the Jews with the beginning of missionary work among the Gentiles. For that reason alone, it cannot be accepted as historical.

The story has nothing to do with the controversy between the Judaistic and Gentile Christians of the Pauline epistles. As soon as Gentile congregations became strong in members, they would no longer listen to Judaistic teachers. On the other hand, the Memoirs of the Apostles, on which the Gospels are based, compelled the later Gentile Christians to honor St. Peter as the first of all apostles. That left even to St. Paul only second honors in the eyes of his own spiritual descendants. That St. Peter's work had been confined to Jews exclusively was forgotten. Therefore, the present section must be the product of a late age.

But what is much more significant, the first Gentile disciple of Jesus, won by St. Peter, is the centurion of the Italian cohort and bears the name of the most distinguished of all the Roman gentes. Cornelius is the nomen as apart from the praenomen and cognomen of a Roman name. The real question is not whether there was stationed at that time at Caesarea a cohort, called Italian, or whether the cohorts of a Roman legions had individual names, or whether a member of the gens Cornelii commanded that cohort. All that is probably mere fiction. The main fact is: The first Gentile Christian was a true Roman and was gathered into the flock by St. Peter. Cornelius was bound to receive by and by an honorable discharge and to return to his native city. There he would undoubtedly impart his new religion to his friends and neighbors and organize with them the first church at Rome. Thus St. Peter was the founder of the Roman Church, even though he never set his foot into the eternal city.

The story of Cornelius, the centurion, is highly interesting because it is the oldest attempt of formulating the legend of St. Peter and Rome that has been handed down to us. It originated without question after the true facts of the history of the apostles had been forgotten, but before the date when the official legend of St. Peter's work and death at Rome was published.

Turning after these preliminary remarks to the speech of Act. x. 34-43, we find a literal translation of the Greek text, adhering as closely as possible to the American Revised Version, to run as follows:
“Of a truth I perceive God is no respecter of persons: but in
every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is
acceptable to him. God sent the word to the children of Israel,
presaging good tidings of peace by Jesus Christ. He is Lord of
all. Ye know the thing that happened throughout all Judaea. He
having begun from Galilee after the baptism which John preached.
How God anointed him, Jesus of Nazareth, with the Holy Spirit
and with power, who went about doing good and healing all that
were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are
witnesses of all he did both in the country of the Jews and in
Jerusalem; whom also they slew, hanging him on a tree. Him God
raised up the third day and gave him to be made manifest, not to
all the people but to the witnesses chosen before of God, to us, who
ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. And he
charged us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one
ordained of God as judge of the living and the dead. To him all
the prophets bear witness that through his name every one that
believeth on him shall receive remission of sins.”

The first statement (Verse 34 f.) fits into the situation. It
must have been a common saying among Gentile Christians as long
as Judaistic agitators wanted to persuade them to accept the Jewish
religion together with Christianity. But it sounds strange in the
mouth of St. Peter, who, at a much later date, was afraid to act
in accordance with that principle. (Gal. ii. 11 ff.) The subject of
the next sentence (Verse 36) is God. Since the participle “preaching
the good tidings” is in the nominative case, God did the preach-
ing. That is indeed modified by the prepositional phrase “by Jesus
Christ.” But that does not agree with the principal statement “He
sent the word unto the children of Israel.” If “word” is used here
in its ordinary sense, it means the message of God. It might signify,
however, the Logos, that is, the Messenger. We expect the sentence
to read simply: “He sent Jesus Christ to the children of Israel
to preach the good tidings of peace.” The latter phrase is based
upon Lk. ii. 10, 14. Since the Luke passage is post-apostolic, St.
Peter’s address must be still younger. The other sentence of verse
36 “He is Lord of all” stands in parentheses in the American Revised
Version. That means it considers the words as a gloss. That can
only be the case if the pronoun “he” refers to Jesus Christ. But
it may stand just as well for God, the subject of the preceding sen-
tences. In that case, it would remind the hearers of the Jewish
belief in one God, and that would not be out of place with an audi-
ence, representing a polytheistic nation.

The words “Ye know the thing which happened throughout all
Judaea” sound so strange that the American Revised Version has
changed the text altogether. But that does not remove the difficulty. We do not know what happened, or what was published throughout all Judaea. The activity of Jesus was confined according to our only sources of information to Galilee. He entered Judaea only to go to Jerusalem by way of Jericho. Judaea cannot denote here the country of the Jews as a whole. For immediately afterwards Galilee is mentioned and a little later the country of the Jews. Thus our author seems to have had a rather imperfect knowledge of the history of Jesus and the geography of Palestine. The participial clause “beginning from Galilee after the baptism which John preached” is connected grammatically neither with what goes before nor what follows after. The participle stands in Greek in the nominative singular masculine as I have indicated by the pronoun “he.” The preceding noun “thing” to which it might belong is in the accusative singular neuter. “Jesus of Nazareth” of verse 38 is in the accusative case. As a matter of fact the participial phrase has been borrowed from Act. i. 22.

“Jesus of Nazareth” of verse 38 can be only the direct object of the dependent clause “as God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power.” It may have been placed before that clause for the sake of emphasis. That is not rare in any language. The objectionable feature, however, is: Neither Greek nor any other language knows sentences, consisting of dependent clauses only. The rule: No principal statement, no sentence, has no exception.

Verse 39 offers no grammatical objections. Still the words “We are witnesses” have a queer sound. No other eye-witness except the speaker was present, and he refers to himself right at the beginning of the speech in the first person singular. His companions were brethren from Joppe. (Verse 23.)

The next important difficulty is the pronoun “us” in verse 41. The American Revised Version tries to hide it by translating the simple pronoun of the Greek text “even us.” It looks to me as if that pronoun were not so much an after-thought of the speaker as a later addition to the text together with the relative clause “who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.” That can refer only to John xxi. For Lk. xxiv. 41-43, Jesus does not eat with, but before, the disciples. A statement based on the last chapter of the fourth Gospel assigns our passage to a very late date.

The closing words “through his name every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins,” call for special attention.
The occasion does not demand such a promise. Remission of sins presupposes persons conscious of their transgressions and anxious to obtain forgiveness. The man whom St. Peter is addressing is represented, not as a sinner, but as “a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people and prayed to God always,” “a righteous man and one that feareth God and well reported of by all the nation of the Jews.” (Verse 2 and 23.) The apostle himself recognizes him as such. (Verse 35.) Cornelius was waiting to receive a higher revelation and the gift of the prophetic spirit. The idea of the remission of sins as the fundamental blessing of Christianity became current after St. Paul had begun to preach to the Greeks. Gentiles that had not been Jewish proselytes were bound to be in a peculiar state of mind when they turned to Christianity. As heathen they had done many things which, in the light of their new religious knowledge, were grievous sins. They needed therefore, before they could become cheerful followers of Jesus, assurance that their heathen sins were forgiven. In that way, the idea of the forgiveness of sins became the keystone of orthodox theology and the true significance of the life and work of Jesus was obliterated. He was believed to have entered the world for no other purpose than that of being crucified, and achieve atonement for all the sins of humanity. As a matter of fact, Jesus dared crucifixion because he was determined to complete his lifework. It was not enough for him to proclaim the principles of true religion, he also had to demonstrate by his own example how alone the power of selfishness and wickedness had to be broken.

Since St. Peter has not converted the centurion of Caesarea, he cannot have pronounced at that occasion the words of Act. x. 34-43. That is confirmed by the character of that address. It is a very poor makeshift, added to the legend of Cornelius by a man who was unable to write a plausible speech such as the apostle might have made. He pieced together statements and clauses, without even attempting to arrange them in sentences.

Thus the Acts, as far as St. Peter is concerned, agree with the Second Epistle of St. Peter. The apostle of the Jews, the leading personal disciple of Jesus, has not preached the resurrection. Every mention of that event, as far as he is concerned, belongs to the compiler of Acts. It represents, just as the accounts of the manifestations of the risen Jesus in the Gospels, not historical facts, but the
belief of later Christians as to what ought to have happened after the death of Jesus.

The Acts have preserved a few documents which throw some light upon our problem. Stephen's speech, before the members of the Hellenistic synagogue at Jerusalem, is one of them. The deacon defends the thesis: "Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place and shall change the customs which Moses delivered unto us." He is absolutely silent as to the resurrection. Even more important are the remarks concerning Philip. He convinced a Jewish eunuch of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, that the crucified Jesus was the promised Messiah. (viii. 27 ff.) The resurrection is not mentioned. Also Act. xi. 20 may be considered. Christians who had fled from Jerusalem preached at Antioch to both Jews and Gentiles. But "preaching the Lord Jesus" is by no means identical with being "a witness of the resurrection."
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