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a ***Grace Notes*** course

## **The Acts of the Apostles**

an expositional study  
by Warren Doud

Lesson 312: **Acts 19:1-14**

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## ACTS, Lesson 312, Acts 19:1-14

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**Acts 19:1-14****Acts 19:1**

**And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper coasts to Ephesus: and found certain disciples,**

Apollos had left Ephesus by the time Paul arrived. There's no record that they ever met. Of course, Paul knew of his activities. Aquila and Priscilla would have told him all about Apollos' progress in Christian doctrine, and Paul would have received reports on Apollos from time to time.

Ephesus was a major crossroad for the coastal north-south highway and the highway east that went to Laodicea and Antioch of Pisidia. Ephesus had been a leading port city in earlier centuries, but the harbor was so clogged with silt in Paul's day that ships had trouble docking there.

Nevertheless, Ephesus was still a major city, and the Romans made it the provincial capital of Asia (western Turkey). In New Testament times the city may have had as many as 200,000 inhabitants. There was an amphitheater there which seated 24,000 people. The temple of Artemis (Diana), the largest known building of that time and ranked among the seven wonders of the ancient world, drew worshipers from all over the Mediterranean world.

Paul found quite a number of followers of Christ in Ephesus, who had been won to Christ by Aquila, Priscilla, and Apollos.

TOPIC: PAUL IN EPHEBUS

**Acts 19:2**

**He said unto them, Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Spirit.**

There is no explanation of why these believers had not heard of the Holy Spirit and His work. Aquila and Priscilla certainly knew of these

things, and they had taught Apollos, bringing him up to date on the new doctrines. Paul thought of these disciples as believers, so there's no question that they were saved. Perhaps Paul was led to ask this question because he had not seen some distinguishing characteristic of the spiritual life.

The new believers in Samaria had not received the Holy Spirit until the apostles laid hands on them (Acts 8:14-17). Yet Cornelius and his family receive the Holy Spirit even while Peter was talking to them (Acts 10:44-46). Here, as we see, baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus, and laying on of hands, brought about the filling of the Holy Spirit.

**Acts 19:3,4**

**And he said unto them, Unto what then were you baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.**

**Then said Paul, John baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.**

By the time John the Baptist began to preach, the Jews were requiring proselytes from the Gentile world not only to be circumcised but also to be baptized. This proselyte baptism was regarded as a cleansing from the ceremonial defilement that in Jewish eyes affected every Gentile.

The Jewish community at Qumrân (where John lived) probably was an Essene or Essene-type community, but it is doubtful that there was repeated ritual washing in such rather small reservoirs. In any case, a single initiatory baptism or bath is not attested at Qumrân, though no doubt some ritual washings were carried out there by this Jewish sect.

None of these ancient practices really explains the origins of John's baptism. They show only that such a baptism would not have seemed strange in the ancient Near Eastern world, and

they give clues to what John's baptism meant to the Jews; but his baptism was something new.

John's baptism was administered but once to a person, and thus differed from the repeated washings so widely practiced. It was administered to Jews and so differed from proselyte baptism of Gentiles. It was not accompanied or immediately followed by the gift of the Holy Spirit, and so was not a full parallel to Christian baptism; John only promised the gift of the Spirit at some future time.

John's baptism also had an eschatological focus. God's decisive action was imminent; judgment would strike all sinners, including unprepared Jews. Earnest repentance, divine forgiveness, and complete change of life were urgently necessary to escape judgment and enter the coming kingdom (Mt. 3:10; Luke 3:9). Baptism was for penitent Jews, who thereby confessed their sins, renounced their old way of life, received forgiveness, dedicated themselves to a loyal and upright life, and looked expectantly for the coming of God's Mightier One to establish the divine kingdom.

TOPIC: JOHN THE BAPTIST, OUTLINE

### Acts 19:5-7

**When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.**

**And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spoke with tongues, and prophesied.**

**And all the men were about twelve.**

The twelve men here had been baptized with the baptism of John; now they were baptized in water in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul laid his hands on them, they received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which placed them in the body of Christ, in union with Christ. Then, they spoke in tongues and prophesied.

The families of some of these men may also have accepted Christ and been baptized. That was often the case, as we saw with the family

and household of the Philippian jailer, his family and household. Of course, whether others received Christ would have depended on their own positive volition.

### Acts 19:8

**And he went into the synagogue, and spoke boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.**

During this three-month period, Paul lectured on the kingdom of God. In Acts, to preach the kingdom of God means to proclaim the Word of the Lord, that is, the gospel. For instance, in verse 10 Luke writes that the Jews and the Greeks heard "the word of the Lord"; in Acts 20:24-25, he uses the terms *the gospel of grace* and *the kingdom* as synonyms; and in Acts 28:30-31, he writes that Paul, a prisoner under house arrest in Rome, proclaimed both the kingdom of God and Jesus to all who visited him.

In Ephesus, the clash between the kingdom of God and Satan's idolatrous rule became evident when the craftsmen of shrines and images instigated a riot (verses 23-41). Even some of the Jews who had listened to Paul slandered the Christian faith (verse 9).

TOPIC: SYNAGOGUES

### Acts 19:9,10

**But when various ones were hardened, and believed not, but spoke evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.**

**And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.**

After three months of teaching in the synagogue, Paul realized that opposition from some of the Jews was impeding the preaching of

the gospel. These people hardened their hearts and began to demonstrate their disobedience to the Word of God, and they made their hatred public by maligning the teachings of the Christian faith.

The Jews spoke against "The Way". This term was used by the Church during the first few decades of the church age. It's interesting that Paul, before his own conversion, wanted to imprison people who followed "the way".

**Acts 9:1,2.** Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to **the Way** he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

### **disputing daily in the school of Tyrannus, and this continued by the space of two years**

There is no record of who Tyrannus was or what his school was like. Paul learned that in that school was a place where people could meet for teaching. Paul taught there every day for two years. In effect, he had opened a school of theology to training future leaders for the churches which were being formed in Asia.

### **so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.**

From Ephesus, the word of the Lord went forth to all the Jews and the Greeks who lived in the province of Asia. We assume that the students trained by Paul became pastors in developing congregations in western Asia Minor, e.g., the reference to the seven churches (Rev. 1:11).

These disciples were instrumental in preaching Christ's gospel, that is, the word of the Lord, to both the Jews and the Greeks. For example, Epaphras was a faithful minister of the gospel in Colossae (Col. 1:7), Laodicea, and Hierapolis (Col. 4:12-13). He was with Paul in Rome during Paul's first imprisonment and became his fellow prisoner.

Likewise Tychicus, a native of the province of Asia (Acts 20:4), was a close associate; Paul

calls him a fellow servant (Col. 4:7) and a faithful minister (Eph. 6:21).

Then there was Trophimus, who also was from Asia (Acts 20:4). Finally, Philemon and Archippus were fellow workers and fellow soldiers with Paul in Colossae (Philem. 1-2).

### **Acts 19:11,12**

#### **And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul:**

**So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.**

God is the miracle worker, not Paul. Admittedly, the people in Ephesus regarded Paul as having superhuman power to heal the sick; but Luke clearly writes that God performed miracles through Paul.

Luke, who by profession is a physician, calls these miracles extraordinary ("special"). Whatever the wonders may have been, they were astonishing in the eyes of the people. Countless sick were healed, became recipients of God's grace, and heard the gospel of salvation proclaimed publicly by Paul.

Besides teaching the gospel openly and performing healing miracles, Paul also taught the Good News from house to house (Acts 20:20). Addressing both Jews and Greeks, he admonished them to repent, to turn to God, and to have faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21).

Recall the case of the woman who was healed when she touched the hem of the Savior's garment (Matt 9:20-22). There was no particular healing power in the handkerchiefs or aprons which Paul sent around. Just as there was nothing special about the clay which Jesus used when He opened the eyes of the blind man (John 8:6). It is the Lord that did the healing!

### **Acts 19:13**

**Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord**

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**Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches.**

Some of the Jews were would-be exorcists who went around like Gypsy fortune-tellers (the “vagabond”, or wandering Jews) trying to use the name of Jesus on people who were demon-possessed. They may have thought that Christianity was only a new form of magic. Maybe they had seen Paul’s miracles and were trying to duplicate them. They thought that success depended on using a kind of prescribed formula, or incantation, “We adjure you [the demons] by Jesus whom Paul preaches.”

The word “exorcist” is from the Greek (**exorkisteis**) “to adjure; to expel demons”, in this case by using Jesus’ name. Such exorcists were very common all everywhere in the days of the apostles. The Lord speaks about them in Matt. 12:27, “If I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out?”

Josephus (Antiquities 8.2.5) also spoke of this then he wrote “God enabled Solomon to learn the art of expelling demons. He left behind him the manner of using exorcisms by which demons are driven away, so that they never return; and this manner of cure is of great force unto this day.”

TOPIC: DEMONS

**Acts 19:14**

**And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so.**

Nothing is known about Sceva except what is written here. The Greek for “chief of the priests” is (**ioudaiou archiereos**), which is used for a high priest. However, he is not on any list of high priests, and if he were high priest he would have been living in Jerusalem. He may have been a Jewish chief priest, however, or some other kind of ruler. That he had seven sons in this spurious activity does not speak well for the father, and is evidence of the corrupt state among the Jews of Ephesus.

**Demons**

Demons are fallen angels under the command of Satan, those who are still free after the Genesis 6 affair. Satan is called the prince, or ruler, of all demons in Matthew 9:34; 12:24; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15. Demons are also called the ministers or ambassadors of Satan, Luke 4:35; 9:1, 42; John 10:21. Satan is brilliant, an administrative genius. He has an excellent organization, mentioned in Eph. 6:10-12 (Please read) The Bible also makes a distinction between demon possession and demon influence.

Demon possession occurs when an actual fallen angel, a demon, enters and occupies the body of an unbeliever. Demons cannot enter the bodies of Christian believers because the Christian’s body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Inviting demons can be accomplished in a number of ways.

- Through idolatry of Satan's communion table, 1 COR. 10:19-21.
- Through drug addiction, called in Greek, φαρμακεια (farmakeia), the use of drugs, potions, or spells; poisoning, witchcraft, sorcery. GAL. 5:20 "witch-craft, sorcery", cf. also REV. 9:21; 18:23.
- Through religious backsliding, religious sensitivity activities such as dabbling in the occult, consulting mediums and necromancy. cf. ISA. 8:19.

Demon influence is the residence of evil in the soul; which can be an unbeliever (ROM. 1:23) or a believer. This is the method that Satan uses to trap and neutralize the believer, by introducing, if allowed, the doctrine of evil inside the soul of the born again believer. Demon influence in the believer comes about in the later stages of negativity or backsliding.

The first stage of backsliding is some kind of reaction to life whether discouragement, disillusion, disenchantment, boredom, self pity, loneliness, frustration, instability, pride complex and various sins of arrogance, revenge tactics, reaction to contemporary events or

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social pressures, etc. Whatever causes it, the reaction stage makes one very vulnerable to the attacks of Satan. This is not the entrance into demon influence, at this point, but merely vulnerability to it.

The second stage of backsliding is the frantic search for happiness following the trends of the sin nature towards asceticism or lasciviousness. This also increases vulnerability, especially as one moves away from the protection of doctrine and grace provision.

The third stage intensifies the reaction stage, but still has only the potentiality, not the actuality, of demon influence. It is at the fourth stage of backsliding, in which the soul is in revolt emotionally, where the possibility of demon influence enters. Doctrinal content is located in the mentality of the soul including standards, conscience, frame of reference, memory center, vocabulary, doctrinal storage under edification, and the area of applied doctrine resulting in production of divine good. It is the lack of doctrinal content which is the primary factor in vulnerability to demon influence.

The soul also has its area of response to outside influences, centered in the emotions of the soul. Emotion has no doctrinal content, no character of its own, no spiritual content, no ability to think or rationalize, or even to use common sense. It is designed to respond; it is not designed to lead or initiate anything. The tongues movement is an illustration of the soul's emotions being led about by falsehood. Sometimes believers in the tongues movement are under demon influence. Sometimes unbelievers are actually demon possessed.

The thing that opens the door for demon influence in the life of the believer is negative volition toward the word of God. The believer says no to doctrine and opens up a vacuum in his soul. Whatever evil is in the neighborhood will be picked up as false teaching, TV, newspaper, etc.

Regardless of what causes the negative attitude, the effect is the same. It may be antagonism or

a negative attitude or personality conflict with the pastor, or with other members of the congregation. It may be apathy or indifference to teaching. It may be failure to use a grace provision, faith rest, or inability to handle prosperity, slavery to the details of life. Whatever it is, negative volition opens up the emptiness of the soul.

As a result of evil in the soul, there is demon influence. There is the infiltration of the doctrines of Satan into the soul of the backslidden person (believer or unbeliever). Here, the believer is worshipping and serving the creature rather than the creator.

There are two systems for demon possession of the unbeliever. The first is the unlawful isolation of dormant facilities. The body is brought under the control of the soul and the soul has been given to Satan. It is like a conversion in reverse. Séances, or the ceremony called the Satanic mass, are means by which this is accomplished. This person becomes a disembodied spirit. All activities of supernaturalism may be attributed to this; mental telepathy, spiritism and out of body experiences.

The second system is passive submission to demons. This can be accomplished through idolatry, through drugs or other means. In the ancient world, the various oracles used this means in attempting to predict the outcome of events. The mephitic vapors of the oracle of Delphi, which was some form of narcotic gas. Another example is the Hindu soma mysteries and the various sutras of Indian religions. There are also various systems of mesmerism or hypnotism, whether induced by one's self or another person, such as whirling dervishes, or unbelievers involved in the tongues movement.

Demonism is directly related to idolatry and thus to human sacrifice. Sacrifices to demons were prohibited by law in Lev. 17:7, "And they shall no longer sacrifice to the goat demon or satyr with which they shall play the harlot. This will be a permanent law in every generation." Or in Deut. 32:17, "They sacrifice to demons,

not gods, new things which came lately which your ancestors did not fear." Heathen nations worship demons, according to Ps. 96:5, "For all the gods of the peoples are idols . . . (daimonia in LXX)." It was thoroughly understood that idolatry meant demons. Capital punishment by stoning was the penalty for witchcraft, demonism, etc.

The judgment against Egypt concerning the death of the first born was also a judgment against the demons in Egypt. Ex. 12:12, "For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the demons of Egypt I will execute judgment; I am Jehovah." Num. 33:4, "While the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn whom the Lord had struck down among them, the Lord had also executed judgment against their demons."

Demons are powerless to change the course of history. Isa. 19:3, "Then the spirit of the Egyptians will become demoralized within them; also, I will frustrate their strategy, so that they will resort to idle demons and to the ghosts of the dead and to mediums and to spiritists." Demonism is always subject to the justice of God and is always judged in its various forms.

The reason why the Canaanites were removed from the land is that they practiced demonism. Deut. 18:9-12 (Read). In the reign of King Manasseh, evil is associated with demonism, 2 Kings 21:2-16. Demonism brings the discipline of total destruction to a nation, Isa. 47; Jer. 27:6-10; Isa. 29:4.

Satan and demons are often used by God in the administration of the sin unto death to backslidden believers. One example is Hymenaeus and Alexander, I Tim. 1:19, 20. The believer committing incest in 1 Cor. 5:5 was turned over to Satan, but it was so painful that he repented.

Satan's power of death is mentioned in four categories. He has the power of death, Heb. 2:14, 15; 1 John 3:8. He killed Job's children,

Job 1:12, 18, 19. He motivated Cain to murder Abel, 1 John 3:12.

Satan is a source of disease. Satan produced the illness in Job, Job 2:6, 7. Satan uses demons to produce disease in human beings. There is therefore the principle of demon induced illness, Matt. 12:22; Luke 13:16; Acts 10:38. Certain mental diseases, and illness which are related to abnormal behavior, may be demon induced. Dumbness and deafness, Mark 9:17; Luke 11:14. Certain forms of epilepsy, Mark 1:26; 9:20; Luke 4:35. Satan is the source of at least ten different types of abnormal behavior which are mentioned in the Bible.

Convulsions, Mark 1:26

Violence, Matt. 8:28

Abnormal strength, Mark 5:4

Raving and self mutilation, Mark 5:5

Foaming at the mouth, Mark 9:20

Public nakedness, Luke 8:27

Living among corpses, Mark 5:3

A type of grinding of the teeth, Mark 9:18

Falling into fires and throwing oneself into dangerous things, Matt. 17:15

Satan also heals. He heals by the withdrawal of demons and establishes the credentials for some of his evangelists. In Acts 19:11, 12 legitimate healing by God was used to establish apostolic authority. On the other hand, healing was used by Satan in a similar way, 2 Thess. 2:9; Rev. 16:14.

Satan wanted to punish Peter by using demons. Luke 22:31, 32 (Read). Peter had denied Christ, and Satan had the audacity to suggest how the justice of God should function toward Peter. Of course the Lord refused this.

I Tim. 3:6, 7 (Read)-- Satan is used as a warning for discipline.

The verses in Psalm 109 talk about David asking for God's judgment on one of his enemies who David strongly curses. This wording should be deleted.



## Paul in Ephesus

### Arrival of St. Paul at Ephesus <sup>1</sup>

But now the Apostle himself is about to arrive in Ephesus. His residence in this place, like his residence in Antioch and Corinth, is a subject to which our attention is particularly called.

Therefore, all the features of the city its appearance, its history, the character of its population, its political and mercantile relations possess the utmost interest for us. We shall defer such description to a future chapter, and limit ourselves here to what may set before the reader the geographical position of Ephesus, as the point in which St. Paul's journey from Antioch terminated for the present.

We imagined him about the frontier of Asia and Phrygia, on his approach from the interior to the sea. From this region of volcanic mountains, a tract of country extends to the Aegean, which is watered by two of the long western rivers, the Hermus and the Meander, and which is celebrated through an extended period of classical history, and is sacred to us as the scene of the Churches of the Apocalypse. <sup>2</sup> Near the mouth of one of these rivers is Smyrna; near that of the other is Miletus.

The islands of Chios and Samos are respectively opposite the projecting portions of coast, where the rivers flow by these cities to the sea. <sup>3</sup> Between the Hermus and the Meander is a smaller river, named the Cayster, separated

<sup>1</sup> This article is from Conybeare and Howson, *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, Chapter 14.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. 1, 2, 3. Laodicea is in the basin of the Meander. Smyrna, Thyatira, Sardis and Philadelphia are in that of the Hermus; Pergamus is further to the north on the Caicus. For a description of this district, see Arundell's *Visit to the Seven Churches*, and Fellows' *Asia Minor*.

<sup>3</sup> In the account of St. Paul's return we shall have to take particular notice of this coast. He sailed between these islands and the mainland, touching at Miletus (Acts 20).

from the latter by the ridge of Messogis, and from the former by Mount Tmolus. Here, in the level valley of the Cayster, is the early cradle of the Asiatic name, the district of primeval "Asia," not as understood in its political or ecclesiastical sense, but the Asia of old poetic legend.

And here, in a situation pre eminent among the excellent positions which the Ionians chose for their cities, Ephesus was built, on some hills near the sea. For some time after its foundation by Androclus the Athenian, it was inferior to Miletus ; but with the decay of the latter city, in the Macedonian and Roman periods, it rose to greater eminence, and in the time of St. Paul it was the greatest city of Asia Minor, as well as the metropolis of the province of Asia.

Though Greek in its origin, it was half oriental in the prevalent worship, and in the character of its inhabitants; and being constantly visited by ships from all parts of the Mediterranean, and united by great roads with the markets of the interior, it was the common meeting place of various characters and classes of men.

Among those whom St. Paul met on his arrival, was the small company of Jews above alluded to, (see Acts 19:1 7) who professed the imperfect Christianity of John the Baptist. By this time Apollos had departed to Corinth. Those "disciples" who were now at Ephesus were in the same religious condition in which he had been, when Aquila and Priscilla first spoke to him, though doubtless they were inferior to him both in learning and in zeal. <sup>4</sup> St. Paul found on inquiry, that they had only received John's baptism, and that they were ignorant of the great outpouring of the Holy Ghost, in which the life and energy of the Church consisted. They were even perplexed by his question. He then pointed out, in conformity with what had been said by John the Baptist

<sup>4</sup> It is impossible to know whether these men were connected with Apollos. The whole narrative seems to imply that they were in a lower state of religious knowledge that he was.

himself, that that prophet only preached repentance to prepare men's minds for Christ, who is the true object of faith. On this they received Christian baptism; and after they were baptized, the laying on of the Apostle's hands resulted, as in all other Churches, in the miraculous gifts of Tongues and of Prophecy.

After this occurrence has been mentioned as an isolated fact, our attention is called to the great teacher's labors in the synagogue. Doubtless, Aquila and Priscilla were there. Though they are not mentioned here in connection with St. Paul, we have seen them so lately instructing Apollos (Acts 18), and we shall find them so soon again sending salutations to Corinth in the Apostle's letter from Ephesus (1 Cor. 16), that we cannot but believe he met his old associates, and again experienced the benefit of their aid. It is even probable that he again worked with them at the same trade: for in the address to the Ephesian elders at Miletus (Acts 20:34) he stated that "his own hands had ministered to his necessities, and to those who were with him;" and in writing to the Corinthians he says (1 Cor. 4:11, 12), that such toil had continued "even to that hour."

There is no doubt that he "reasoned" in the synagogue at Ephesus with the same zeal and energy with which his spiritual labors had been begun at Corinth. (Acts 18:4) He had been anxiously expected, and at first he was heartily welcomed. A preparation for his teaching had been made by Apollos and those who instructed him. "For three months" Paul continued to speak boldly in the synagogue, "arguing and endeavoring to convince his hearers of all that related to the kingdom of God." (Acts 19:8) The hearts of some were hardened, while others repented and believed; and in the end the Apostle's doctrine was publicly calumniated by the Jews before the people.<sup>5</sup> On this he openly separated himself, and withdrew the disciples from the synagogue; and the Christian Church

<sup>5</sup> "Before the multitude," verse 9.

at Ephesus became a distinct body, separated both from the Jews and the Gentiles.

### The School of Tyrannus

As the house of Justus at Corinth (Acts 18:7) had afforded St. Paul a refuge from calumny, and an opportunity of continuing his public instruction, so here he had recourse to "the school of Tyrannus," who was probably a teacher of philosophy or rhetoric, converted by the Apostle to Christianity.<sup>6</sup> His labors in spreading the Gospel were here continued for two whole years. For the incidents which occurred during this residence, for the persons with whom the Apostle became acquainted, and for the precise subjects of his teaching, we have no letters to give us information supplementary to the Acts, as in the cases of Thessalonica and Corinth:<sup>7</sup> inasmuch as that which is called the "Epistle to the Ephesians," enters into no personal or incidental details.

But we have, in the address to the Ephesian elders at Miletus, an affecting picture of an Apostle's labors for the salvation of those whom his Master came to redeem. From that address we learn, that his voice had not been heard within the school of Tyrannus alone, but that he had gone about among his converts, instructing them "from house to house," and warning "each one" of them affectionately "with tears!" (Acts 20:20,31) The subject of his teaching was ever the same, both for Jews and Greeks, "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts 20:21) Labors so incessant, so disinterested, and continued through so long a time, could not fail to produce a great result at Ephesus. A large Church was formed over which many presbyters were

<sup>6</sup> Those who are apt to see a Jewish or Talmudical reference almost everywhere, think that Tyrannus may have been a Jew, and his "school" a place for theological teaching.

<sup>7</sup> See the chapters containing the two Epistles to the Thessalonians and the two Epistles to the Corinthians.

called to preside. (Acts 20:17) Nor were the results confined to the city. Throughout the province of "Asia" the name of Christ became generally known, both to the Jews and the Gentiles;<sup>8</sup> and doubtless, many daughter churches were founded," whether in the course of journeys undertaken by the Apostle himself,<sup>9</sup> or by means of those with whom he became acquainted, as for instance by Epaphras, Archippus, and Philemon, in connection with Colossae, and its neighbor cities Hierapolis and Laodicea.<sup>10</sup>

### Ephesian Magic

It is during this interval, that one of the two characteristics of the people of Ephesus comes prominently into view. This city was renowned throughout the world for the worship of Diana, and the practice of magic. Though it was a Greek city, like Athens or Corinth, the manners of its inhabitants were half Oriental. The image of the tutelary goddess resembled an Indian idol rather than the beautiful forms which crowded the Acropolis of Athens: and the enemy which St. Paul had to oppose was not a vaunting philosophy, as at Corinth; but a dark and Asiatic superstition.

The worship of Diana and the practice of magic were closely connected together. Eustathius says that the mysterious symbols, called "Ephesian Letters," were engraved on the crown, the girdle, and the feet of the goddess. These Ephesian letters or monograms have been compared by a Swedish writer to the

<sup>8</sup> "So that all they which dwelt in Asia ...", Acts 19:10. There must have been many Jews in various parts of the province.

<sup>9</sup> What is said of his continued residence at Ephesus by no means implies that he did not make journeys in the province.

<sup>10</sup> It is thought by many that Epaphras was converted by St. Paul at Ephesus and founded the church at Colossae. See Col. 1:7; 4:12-17; Philemon 23.

Runic characters of the North. When pronounced, they were regarded as a charm; and were directed to be used, especially by those who were in the power of evil spirits. When written, they were carried about as amulets. Curious stories are told of their influence. Croesus is related to have repeated the mystic syllables when on his funeral pile; and an Ephesian wrestler is said to have always struggled successfully against an antagonist from Miletus until he lost the scroll, which before had been like a talisman. The study of these symbols was an elaborate science: and books, both numerous and costly, were compiled by its professors.<sup>11</sup>

### Miracles

This statement throws some light on the peculiar character of the miracles wrought by St. Paul at Ephesus. We are not to suppose that the Apostles were always able to work miracles at will. An influx of supernatural power was given to them, at the time, and according to the circumstances, that required it. And the character of the miracles was not always the same. They were accommodated to the peculiar forms of sin, superstition, and ignorance they were required to oppose.<sup>12</sup> Here, at Ephesus, St. Paul was in the face of magicians, like Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh; and it is distinctly said that his miracles were "not ordinary wonders;" (Acts 19:11) from which we may infer that they were different from those which he usually performed. We know, in the case of

<sup>11</sup> The lives of Alexander of Tralles in Smith's *Dictionary of Biography* and in the biography of the U. K. Society, contain some important illustrations of Ephesians magic.

<sup>12</sup> The narrative of what was done by St. Paul at Ephesus should be compared with St. Peter's miracles at Jerusalem, when "many signs and wonders were wrought among the people ... insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them." Acts 5:12-16.

our Blessed Lord's miracles, that though the change was usually accomplished on the speaking of a word, intermediate agency was sometimes employed; as when the blind man was healed at the pool of Siloam. (John 9:6,7)

A miracle which has a closer reference to our present subject, is that in which the hem of Christ's garment was made effectual to the healing of a poor sufferer, and the conviction of the bystanders. (Matt. 9:20) So on this occasion garments <sup>13</sup> were made the means of communicating a healing power to those who were at a distance, whether they were possessed with evil spirits, or afflicted with ordinary diseases. (Acts 19:12) Such effects, thus publicly manifested, were a signal refutation of the charms and amulets and mystic letters of Ephesus. Yet was this no encouragement to blind superstition. When the suffering woman was healed by touching the hem of the garment, the Savior turned round and said, "Virtue is gone out of me." (Luke 8:46) And here at Ephesus we are reminded that it was God who, wrought miracles by the hands of Paul" (verse 11), and that "the name," not of Paul, but "of the Lord Jesus, was magnified" (verse 17).

These miracles must have produced" a great effect upon the minds of those who practiced curious arts in Ephesus. Among the magicians who were then in this city, in the course of their wanderings through the East, were several Jewish exorcists. (Acts 19:13) This is a circumstance which need not surprise us. The stern severity with which sorcery was

<sup>13</sup> Both the words used here are Latin. The former, *sudarium*, is that which occurs in Luke 19:20; John 11:44; 20:7, and is translated "napkin." The latter, *semicinctium*, denotes some article of dress – shawl, handkerchief, or apron – as is easily laid aside. Baumgarten's remarks on the significance of these miracles are well worthy of consideration. He connects the *sudaria* and the *semicinctia* with St. Paul's daily labor in his own support.

forbidden in the Old Testament <sup>14</sup> attests the early tendency of the Israelites to such practices: the Talmud bears witness to the continuance of these practices at a later period; <sup>15</sup> and we have already had occasion, in the course of this history, to notice the spread of Jewish magicians through various parts of the Roman Empire.

It was an age of superstition and imposture an age also in which the powers of evil manifested themselves with peculiar force. Hence we find St. Paul classing witchcraft among the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:20), and solemnly warning the Galatians both in words <sup>16</sup> and by his letters, that they who practice it cannot inherit the kingdom of God; and it is of such that he writes to Timothy (2 Tim. 3:13), that "evil men and seducers <sup>17</sup> shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." This passage in St. Paul's latest letter had probably reference to that very city in which we see him now brought into opposition with Jewish sorcerers. These men, believing that the name of Jesus acted as a charm, and recognizing the Apostle as a Jew like themselves, attempted his method of casting out evil spirits. But He to whom the demons were subject, and who had given to His servant

<sup>14</sup> See Exod. 22:18; Lev. 20:27; Deut. 18:10,11; 1 Sam. 28:8,9.

<sup>15</sup> A knowledge of magic was a requisite qualification of a member of the Sanhedrin, that he might be able to try those who were accused of such practices. Josephus (Ant. xx. 7, 2) speaks of a Cyprian Jew, a sorcerer, who was a friend and companion of Felix, and who is identified by some with Simon Magus. Again (Ant. viii. 2, 5), he mentions certain forms of incantation used by Jewish magicians which they attributed to King Solomon.

<sup>16</sup> Observe the phrase in verse 21, "as I told you in time past," perhaps on the very journey through Galatia which we have just had occasion to mention.

<sup>17</sup> The word here used is the customary term for these wandering magicians.



power and authority over them (Luke 9:1), had shame and terror in store for those who presumed thus to take His Holy Name in vain.

### The Exorcists

One specific instance is recorded, which produced disastrous consequences to those who made the attempt, and led to wide results among the general population. In the number of those who attempted to cast out evil spirits by the "name of Jesus," were seven brothers, sons of Sceva, who is called a high priest, either because he had really held this office at Jerusalem, or because he was chief of one of the twenty four courses of priests. But the demons, who were subject to Jesus, and by His will subject to those who preached His Gospel, treated with scorn those who used His Name without being converted to His truth. "Jesus I recognize, and Paul I know; but who are ye?" was the answer of the evil spirit. And straightway the man who was possessed sprang upon them, with frantic violence, so that they were utterly discomfited, and "fled out of the house naked and wounded."

This fearful result of the profane use of that Holy Name which was proclaimed by the Apostles for the salvation of all men, soon became notorious, both among the Greeks and the Jews. Consternation and alarm took possession of the minds of many; and in proportion to this alarm the name of the Lord Jesus began to be revered and honored. Even among those who had given their faith to St. Paul's preaching, some appear to have retained their attachment to the practice of magical arts. Their conscience was moved by what had recently occurred, and they came and made a full confession to the Apostle, and publicly acknowledged and forsook their deeds of darkness.

### Burning of the Books

The fear and conviction seem to have extended beyond those who made a profession of Christianity. A large number of the sorcerers themselves openly renounced the practice

which had been so signally condemned by a higher power; and they brought together the books that contained the mystic formularies, and burnt them before all the people. When the volumes were consumed, they proceeded to reckon up the price at which these manuals of enchantment would be valued. Such books, from their very nature, would be costly; and all books in that age bore a value which is far above any standard with which we are familiar. Hence we need not be surprised that the whole cost thus sacrificed and surrendered amounted to as much as two thousand pounds of English money.<sup>18</sup> This scene must have been long remembered at Ephesus. It was a strong proof of honest conviction on the part of the sorcerers, and a striking attestation of the triumph of Jesus Christ over the powers of darkness. The workers of evil were put to scorn, like the priests of Baal by Elijah on Mount Carmel; (1 Kings 18) and the teaching of the doctrine of Christ" increased mightily and grew strong."

With this narrative of the burning of the books, we have nearly reached the term of St. Paul's three years" residence at Ephesus. Before his departure, however, two important subjects demand our attention, each of which may be treated in a separate chapter: the First Epistle to the Corinthians, with the circumstances in Achaia which led to the writing of it, and the uproar in the Ephesian Theatre, which will be considered in connection with a description of the city, and some notice of the worship of Diana.

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<sup>18</sup> The "piece of silver" mentioned here was doubtless the *drachma*, the current Greek coin of the Levant: the value was about ten pence. There can be no reason to suppose with Grotius that the shekel is meant.