

PHASES OF FAITH

THE synoptical gospels display marked literary differences, but all three are simple narratives by writers who tell of events as they believed them to have occurred. They indulge in no mental or emotional discussion, or philosophical explanations, but tell a story in plain language of a wonderful leader drawing irresistibly to himself a group of humble men and women, who by speech and action stand out distinctly one from the other.

In the gospel of St. John we are presented with another phase of the Master's personality, and of his teaching. It presents us with the intimate conversations which took place between himself and his disciples. In them his teaching is conveyed, not by such parables as he addressed to the multitude, but by mystical allusions and illustrations, which may have conveyed intelligible impressions to their minds but would have been entirely incomprehensible to the uninitiated.

Owing to the allegorical character and preponderance of dialogue in John's gospel, we gather from it fewer and less vivid impressions of the apostolic actors than from the three preceding histories. But the Book of the Acts of the Apostles supplements the synoptical gospels and presents some of the personages moving and speaking under the impression of the Master's teaching, but no longer under the influence of the Master's presence. And it brings upon the scene the deepest thinker of the early Church, one of the greatest philosophers of any age, yet an active propagator of the Christian cause—Saul of Tarsus. The Acts confirms the impression of Christ's personality, as drawn in the Gospels by contemporary disciples, and not only adds details to the biographies of his immediate followers,