

Testament, one whom a particular and temporary inspiration leads to address an assembly without any previous preparation. The prediction of future events must not be regarded as a peculiar and essential function of the prophetic office, for this was often quite distinct and unusual, and therefore cannot be regarded as an indispensable element in their discourses. Members of the body of believers at Jerusalem are mentioned as going to Antioch from Jerusalem, doubtless for the purpose of assisting in instructing and edifying them, after the favorable account had been received from Barnabas. Agabus, in an exceptional and miraculous way, predicts an event wholly exterior and accidental to the work of preaching, but which was to be related very soon to the development of a law of charity and benevolence which has a most beautiful history in the Church down to the present time. The famine predicted by Agabus came to pass in the year 44 A. D., and this date serves as a link in the chronology of this period. This calamity is the occasion for the Syrian Church to carry the idea of the community of believers a step farther. They give distinctness to the notion of their oneness in Christ by contributing of their means, "everyone according to his ability." Fraternal affection is one of the fruits of the Spirit whatever may be the circumstances under which men are brought to feel the power of the Gospel. In this instance the idea of a Christian community is brought to the light, in which the bond and obligation of brotherhood in Christ was for the first time, in a practical way, elevated above the narrowness and exclusiveness of inherited dislikes and prejudices. This sentiment of unity, of fellowship, lies nearer to the heart of the whole plan of redemption than we are apt to think at times. The charities—whether they take the form of thought, word, or deed—which spring out of this sentiment are not only good in themselves, but they hasten on the day when all men shall perceive that it is the love of Christ which inspires the human heart to its most generous deeds, and which gives to human life the disposition to be kind and helpful; the day when men shall take this spirit of brotherhood as the watchword of all real advance toward universal peace.

### Thoughts for Young People.

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHURCH AT ANTIOCH.

1. *It was founded by laymen.* Nothing is made more plain in the New Testament than that God sets some men apart, and expects his Church to do so, for exclusive service in sacred

things; and no successful development of Christianity that we can foresee can do without an ordained ministry. But this does not preclude or excuse ordinary men from "preaching the Gospel." Their duties do not take them to the pulpit, but they take them close to the hearts and interests of their fellows, and often opportunities are given to laymen (and women and youths, too) that ministers can never enjoy. Let us follow the example of those "which were scattered abroad" and, each in his own quiet, personal way, "preach the word."

2. *It was founded as an incident to secular life; not as an accident,* because these men went "everywhere preaching the Lord Jesus," but as an incident to their travel. Forces over which they had no control brought them to Antioch; being there, they testified for Christ. Many of us pine because of "lack of opportunity" for Christian service but we need not. The most unpromising conditions frequently give the best opportunities, as in this case—the brethren retreating from persecution multiplying converts.

3. *It was established among the Gentiles.* On the surface this does not mean as much to us as it meant when the book of Acts was written, because we are all Gentiles. But even we can see that "the text marks a new epoch in the history of the kingdom of God." "The Jewish Church was like a chrysalis containing life in an undeveloped state. The Christian Church is a chrysalis emerging into a winged butterfly; it looks disdainfully upon boundaries and soars high over barriers." But even to-day there are "sorts and conditions of men," other races, other classes, which are apparently shut out from what might be called average Christianity as absolutely as Gentiles were shut out from Judaism. What is our duty to the wretched masses? Have you ever read of Jacob Riis's "square mile?"—a section in New York city which is said authoritatively to be the most densely populated section in the world. And have you read how little is being done spiritually for its congested population? And do you know that its rapid growth during the last thirty years is only a larger specimen of what may be found in every growing city in Christendom? Do you recognize that even to-day the majority of the world is heathen? O, that we could break the barriers of comfortable, conventional Christianity, and proclaim the love of Christ to the modern Gentile!

4. *It was flourishing in grace.* "Every true minister will, like Barnabas, strive to promote the growth of grace and knowledge in the Church; and if he cannot accomplish the two—