WRITINGS OF ALEXANDER B BRUCE

by Alexander B. Bruce

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by Alexander B. Bruce, compiled for study and devotional reading.

68 Chapters

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01.0.1. The Parabolic Teaching of Christ

The

Parabolic Teaching

of Christ A Systematic and Critical Study OF THE PARABLES OF OUR LORD BY

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01.0.2. Prefatory Note

Prefatory Note This Third Edition of "The Parabolic Teaching of Christ" has been carefully revised by me. For the benefit of those who possess the earlier editions, it may be stated that no material change has been made in the text. The changes consist chiefly in the correction of errors. I take this opportunity of returning thanks for the very appreciative manner in which this book has been received in this country by clergymen and other friends connected with all denominations. I feel as if I must, in some measure, have succeeded in reflecting the spirit of Christ our Master and Lord in these studies of His incomparable sayings. May He continue to bless them in spite of all their imperfections.

New York, 1886

A. B. Bruce.

01.0.3. Preface

Preface No apology is deemed necessary for the publication of a new work on the Parables contained in the Gospels. Books of a devotional or homiletical character on some or all of these abound; but of works of a more elaborate and critical description on the subject, the number in the English tongue is small. Without disparagement to such as exist, it is believed that a fresh attempt to unfold in a scholarly yet genial manner the didactic significance of these beautiful sayings of our Lord will not be unwelcome. How far the present publication supplies what is wanted it is for others to judge. A feature of the work is the classification of the parables under general heads, making available thought-affinities for the elucidation of their meaning. Another feature is strict adherence to the historical method of exegesis as distinct from the allegorising method pursued by the Fathers, and largely favoured by the chief English writer on the subject, whose strength and weakness both lie in the extent to which he has laid patristic literature under contribution for the interpretation of the parables and the literary enrichment of his pages. The author of this work has sought help from the moderns more than from the ancients. He has kept recent commentators steadily in view, while avoiding the dryness of the commentaries, and abstaining from a parade of authorities. In appreciating the theological import of the parables he has had regard to the comparative method of New Testament theology, recognising distinct doctrinal types, and noting the resemblances and differences between these. In the ascertainment of the correct text, advantage has been taken of the latest labours of scholars, including, of course, the Revised Version, and the learned and most valuable edition of the Greek Testament edited by Drs. Westcott and Hort. The introduction is confined to a brief explanation of the method adopted for the distribution of the materials which form the subject of study. Occasional observations on topics usually included in general dissertations on the parables will be found scattered throughout the book. The Author.

Glasgow, September, 1883.

01.0.4. Introductory

Introductory The Parables of our Lord were of an incidental character; and perhaps the best way of studying them is not to isolate them from the general history of His ministry for separate consideration, but rather to look at them as parts of a larger whole in connection with the particular occasions which called them forth. And yet it is, to say the least, a very natural and legitimate procedure to take these parables, which form so large, so peculiar, and so precious a portion of Christ's teaching, apart by themselves, and make them the subject of a special study. This, accordingly, has often been done already, and doubtless it will often be done again while the world lasts. We propose to add one more to the number of the attempts which have been made to ascertain the meaning of the parabolic utterances of Incarnate Wisdom. We enter on the task with much diffidence, yet not without the humble hope of being useful. Our one desire is to get at the kernel of spiritual truth enclosed within the parabolic shell: to get at it for ourselves, and to communicate it at the same time to others The beauty of the parables we, in common with all readers 01 the Gospels, greatly admire; their fidelity to nature, and to the customs of the time in which they were spoken, we fully appreciate; but we should not think of undertaking an exposition of them if we had nothing more important to do than to play the part of an art-critic showing how skilfully the parabolic picture is painted in all its details, or of an antiquarian showing how conformable is the parabolic representation to all customs of the time and place. In entering on an exposition of the parables, we are confronted at once with the question of method. In what order shall we consider the subjects of our study? Shall we take them up as they occur in the several Gospels, beginning with Matthew, then going on through Mark and Luke, as has been done by some writers? or shall we attempt a classification on a principle?—and if so, on what principle is the classification to be made? A merely casual method of arrangement is certainly not desirable, if there be any thought-affinities between the parables, any recognisable characteristics common to several of them, according to which they can be arranged in groups; for disregard of such affinities means loss of the light which related parables are fitted to throw upon each other. Now, several writers have thought they could discover certain resemblances between certain parables, and on the basis of such real or supposed resemblances have built schemes of classification by which they have been guided in their exposition. One writer, for example, the author of an elaborate and voluminous work on the parables, takes note of the fact that some of the parables have explanations attached to them, while others remain unexplained; and, asking himself the question what may be the reason of the difference, comes to the conclusion that the unexplained parables are allegories and prophecies meant to hide the truth,—the truth hid being not so much a doctrine as a future event, which before the time is a mystery, arcanum, or secret,—while the explained parables teach a doctrine or moral lesson having a bearing on present practice. In this way the writer referred to arrives at a distribution of the parables into two great classes—the prophetic and the moral,—the former containing an esoteric and the latter an exoteric system of doctrine. This classification has met with very little approval, and perhaps its failure has had a considerable effect in deterring other writers from all attempts at methodical arrangement as futile. It does not follow, however, that because one attempt has proved a signal failure, all others. must be equally

abortive. We believe, for our part, that a grouping of the parables based on real and important resemblances, and at least approximately correct and complete, is possible; and without staying to enumerate all the methods of grouping which we have met with in books, we shall proceed at once to indicate the principle of distribution on which we ourselves mean to proceed.

We observe, then, that the teaching ministry of our Lord falls naturally asunder into three divisions. Christ was a Master or Rabbi, with disciples whom He made it His business to instruct; He was an Evangelist, going about doing good among the common people, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom to the poor; and He was a Prophet, not merely or chiefly in the predictive sense of the word, but specially in the sense that He was one who proclaimed in the hearing of His contemporaries the great truth of the moral government of God over the world at large, and over Israel in particular, and the sure doom of the impenitent under that righteous government. Now, the parables may be conveniently, and as we believe usefully, distributed into three groups, corresponding to these three departments of Christ's ministry. Indeed, we might go further, and say that the whole public life of Jesus, as related in the Gospels, might without forcing be ranged under the three heads: the Master, the Evangelist, the Prophet. Under the first head comes all that relates to the training of the twelve for the apostolate; under the second Christ's miscellaneous activity as a Teacher and Healer among the general population, as the Good Shepherd seeking to save the lost sheep of the house of Israel; under the third, the extensive materials relating to His bitter conflict as the witness for truth and righteousness with the unbelieving political and religious leaders of Jewish society. When all that belongs naturally to these three divisions has been taken up, not much of the Evangelic narrative remains. But our business at present is with the parables only, not with the whole public ministry of Jesus; and we repeat the statement already made, that the parables may be distributed into three groups answering to the three titles, the Master, the Evangelist, the Prophet. First there is a class of parables which may be distinguished as the theoretic, containing the general truth, or what has been called the 'metaphysic' of the Divine kingdom. Then there is a large group which may legitimately claim to be called distinctively the evangelic—their burden being grace, the mercy and the love of God to the sinful and the miserable—in some more obviously and directly, in others by implication rather than by express statement, but none the less really and effectively. Then, lastly, there is a group which may be characterised as the prophetic; using the term, let it be once more explained, not in the predictive so much as in the ethical sense, to convey the idea that in this class of parables Jesus, as the messenger of God, spoke words of rebuke and warning to an evil time. Proceeding upon this classification, we in effect adopt as our motto the words of the Apostle Paul: "The fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth," —the last word, 'truth,' answering to the first group; the second, 'righteousness,' answering to the last group; and the first, 'goodness,' answering to the middle group. Christ was the Light of the world; and in His parabolic teaching He let His light shine upon men in beautiful prismatic rays, and the precious fruit is preserved for our use in three groups of parables: first, the theoretic parables, containing the general truth concerning the kingdom of God; second, the evangelic parables, setting forth the Divine goodness and grace as the source of salvation and the law of Christian life; third, the prophetic parables, proclaiming the righteousness of God as the Supreme Ruler, rewarding men according to their works. The foregoing classification has not been got up for the occasion, but has insinuated itself into our mind without any seeking on our part, in connection with our studies on the Gospels. Nor do we lay claim to any originality in connection therewith, except such as consists in independently arriving

at a conclusion which has commended itself to other minds. We are happy to find that we do not stand alone in recognising the distinctions indicated, and that there is an increasing consensus of opinion in favour of a classification based thereon. Differences of opinion, of course, may obtain as to the precise terms by which the different classes are to be described, or even as to the number of separate classes to be recognised, as also in regard to the class under which this or that parable is to be ranged; but there is a general concurrence among recent writers as to the reality and the importance of the threefold distinction above indicated. Not only so; another interesting fact has attracted the attention of many: viz. that the Evangelists—more definitely Matthew and Luke, for Mark has very few parables in his Gospel—stand in distinct relations to the several groups of parables. Most of Matthew's parables belong to the first and third groups; most of Luke's to the second. This fact was signalised long ago by one whose name will ever be held in honour in connection with the literature of our subject; and it has recently been proclaimed with remarkable emphasis and felicity of language by Renan, in his charming chapter on the Gospel of Luke, in the fifth volume of his work on the 'Origins of Christianity.' "There is hardly," he remarks, "an anecdote, a parable peculiar to Luke, which breathes not the spirit of mercy and of appeal to sinners. The only word of Jesus a little hard which has been preserved, becomes with him an apologue full of indulgence and patience. The unfruitful tree must not be cut down too quickly. The good gardener opposes himself to the anger of the proprietor, and demands that the tree be manured before it be finally condemned. The Gospel of Luke is by excellence the gospel of pardon, and of pardon obtained by faith." The fact is unquestionable, though the use made of it by the Tubingen school of critics, and partly by M. Renan himself, may be very questionable indeed. We cannot approve of the opinion which regards the third Evangelist as a theological partisan, who not only selected, but manufactured or modified, facts to serve the cause he had espoused—that of Pauline universalism as against Judaistic exclusivism. But we do most cordially recognise Luke as an earnest believer in the gospel Paul preached—a gospel of pure grace, and therefore a gospel for all the world on equal terms; and we perceive clearly traces of his Paulinism, using the word not in a controversial but in a descriptive sense, throughout his Gospel. In searching among the literary materials out of which he constructed his story, he manifestly had a quick eye for everything that tended to show that the gospel preached by Christ was really and emphatically good news from God, a manifestation of Divine philanthropy and grace, and a manifestation in which the whole world was interested. Hence the prominence given to such narratives as exhibited Jesus as the Friend of the poor; hence the introduction of incidents in which Samaritans appear to advantage in comparison with Jews, or as attracting Christ's compassion while objects of Jewish prejudice and hatred; hence the preservation in the third Gospel of such parables as those which together constitute Christ's apology for loving the sinful: the Two Debtors, the Straying Sheep, the Lost Piece of Money, and the Prodigal Son; and such others as the Good Samaritan, the Supper, the Pharisee and Publican, and even, we will venture to add, the Unjust Steward, and the Rich Man and Lazarus. It is of the utmost importance to recognise this peculiarity of Luke's Gospel in all its breadth, not merely as a fact of literary or critical interest, but as one having a direct practical bearing on interpretation. One who leaves this fact out of view runs great risk of frequently missing the right track as an interpreter, while one who ever keeps it in his eye will often be guided at once to the true meaning of a narrative. We must, of course, be on our guard against giving a one-sided predominance to the characteristic in question, as if Luke had only one idea in his mind in writing his Gospel; and generally in our interpretation of the different Gospels we must beware of

imagining the writers to have been so much under the influence of a particular purpose as to have excluded everything that did not directly or indirectly bear thereon. It is characteristic of the negative school of criticism thus to treat the Gospels as exclusively writings of tendency, to the great impoverishment of their value; even as it has more or less been characteristic of believing interpreters to ignore too much the distinctive features of the Gospels, and to treat them all as colourless chronicles of the life of Jesus. The truth lies between the two extremes. The Gospels have their distinctive features, and yet they have much in common: they have all the great essentials of Christ's teaching in common. Matthew's Gospel is theocratic; Luke's is Pauline, humanistic, universalistic. But the theocratic aspect of the Divine kingdom is not wanting in Luke, neither is the universal aspect thereof wanting in Matthew. Bearing this in mind, we shall not expect to find only evangelic parables in the third Gospel, but shall be prepared to meet with others of a different description; neither shall we be surprised if we find in Matthew not only parables didactic and prophetic, but also such as speak to us not of judgment but of mercy. This caveat against too rigorous definition of the different Gospels in relation to the parables requires to be repeated in connection with the heads under which we propose to classify the latter. It must not be imagined that every parable so decidedly comes under one head that it could not with propriety be ranged under any other. This holds good probably of most, but not of all. Some parables are, if we may so express it, of an amphibious character, and might be ranged under either of two categories, because partaking of the nature of both. Such, for example, is the parable of the Great Supper, which, while full of mercy towards the homeless, hungry wanderers on the highway, presents an aspect of stern judicial severity towards those who accepted not the invitations sent to them; and might be classed either as an evangelic or as a prophetic parable, according as we took for its key-note the word of mercy, "Compel them to come in," or the word of judgment, "None of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper." As another instance, we may refer to the parable of the "Unprofitable Servants," as it is commonly called, or, as we prefer to call it, the parable of "Extra Service." If we start in our interpretation from the words "We are unprofitable servants," we shall regard the parable as intended to teach that there is no room for merit in the kingdom of God, that all is of grace,—and so relegate it to the evangelic category. If, on the other hand, we regard it as the purpose of the parable to impress on the servants of the kingdom the exacting nature of the service to which they are called, and that no man is fit for that service who is disposed to murmur, or who ever thinks he has done enough, then we may not improperly range the parable under the first of the three categories, and treat it as one setting forth one of the properties of the kingdom of heaven.

After these explanations we now propose the following distribution of the parables, to be justified by the exposition.

I. Theoretic or Didactic Parables.—Under this head we include the group of seven parables in Mat 13:1-58 : The Sower, the Tares and the Drag-net, the Hid Treasure and the Precious Pearl, the Mustard Seed and the Leaven, with the parable in Mark 4:26-29, the Blade, the Ear, and the Full Corn—in all forming a group of eight relating to the general nature of the kingdom of God. And besides these, the parables of the Selfish Neighbour and the Unjust Judge relating to the delays of Providence in fulfilling spiritual desires, or to perseverance in prayer (Luk 11:5; Luk 18:1); the parable of Extra Service (Luk 17:7); and finally the three parables which relate to the subject of work and wages in the kingdom: viz. the Hours of Labour (Mat 20:1), the Talents (Mat 25:14), and

the Pounds (Luk 19:12). In all, fourteen.

II. Evangelic Parables.—To this class belong the four parables in Luke’s Gospel which together constitute Christ’s apology for loving the sinful: the Two Debtors (Luk 7:40), the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Lost Son (Luk 15:1-32); the Children of the BrideChamber (Mat 9:14-17 et parall.), being an apology for the joy of the children of the kingdom. Under the same category fall the Lowest Seats at Feasts (Luk 14:7-11), and the Pharisee and the Publican (Luk 18:9-14), teaching that the kingdom of God is for the humble; the Great Supper (Luk 14:16), teaching that the kingdom is for the hungry; the Good Samaritan (Luk 10:30); the Unrighteous Steward (Luk 16:1); the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luk 16:19), and the Unmerciful Servant, the two last together teaching which are the unpardonable sins. In all, twelve.

III. Prophetic or Judicial Parables.—This class includes the following: The Children in the MarketPlace (Mat 11:16), containing Christ’s moral estimate of the generation amidst which He lived; the Barren Fig-tree (Luk 13:6), the two Sons and the Wicked Husbandmen (Mat 21:28-44), and the Marriage of the King’s Son (Mat 22:1), exhibiting more or less clearly the action of Divine judgment upon the nation of Israel; the Unfaithful Servant (Mat 24:45), and the Ten Virgins (Mat 25:1). exhibiting similar judicial action within the kingdom of God. In all, seven.

It will be observed that the foregoing groups do not include all the parabolic utterances of our Lord recorded in the Gospels. To those omitted belong the parabolic conclusion to the Sermon on the Mount, consisting of the metaphors of the wise and foolish builders, the similitudes of the inconsiderate builder of a tower, and the king who would wage war (Luk 14:28-35), and the Rich Fool (Luk 12:16), which appears in most treatises as one of the regular parables. These and the like are excluded, not chiefly because they cannot easily be brought within our scheme of distribution, but more especially because they are of no independent didactic importance. The parables we propose to consider have all this in common, that they embody truths deep, unfamiliar or unwelcome—"mysteries of the kingdom." Such a parable as that of the Rich Fool, on the other hand, conveys no new or abstruse lesson, but simply teaches in concrete lively form a moral commonplace. Parabolic utterances of that description were not distinctive of Christ as a Teacher: they were common to Him with the Jewish Rabbis. He spake these merely as a Jewish moralist; but the parables now to be studied were uttered by Him as the Herald of the kingdom of heaven.

01.0.5. Prepared by BibleSupport.com

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Chapter 6

01.01. Book 1. Theoretic Parables

Book 1.

Theoretic Parables

01.02. Chapter 1. The Sower

Chapter 1.

The Sower Or, the Word of the Kingdom to be Diversely Received According to the Moral Condition of Hearers.

Sitting in a boat on the Sea of Galilee near the shore, on which a great multitude was assembled to hear Him, Jesus said[1]: —

Behold! the sower[2] went forth to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls came and devoured them. And other seeds fell upon the rocky places,[3] where they had not much earth, and forthwith they sprang up, because they had no deepness of earth; and when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had not root they withered away. And other fell upon the thorns;[4] and the thorns sprang up and choked them. And other fell upon the good ground, and brought forth fruity some[5] an hundredfold, some[6] sixty fold, and some[7] thirtyfold. Who hath ears, let him hear.—Mat 13:3-9.

[1] We give the parable and its interpretation as contained in Matthew; all points of importance in the other Gospels will be noticed as we proceed.

[2] ■ σπε■ρων—the man whose function it was to sow, or the sower of my parable.

[3] ■π■ τ■ πετρ■δη—not soil mixed with loose stones (which might be good), but soil resting on a rocky substratum a little below the surface.

[4] Upon a soil with thorn or thistle seed in it, which afterwards sprang up

[5] δ μ■ν, δ δ■, δ δ■—in this case, in that, and in a third case.

[6] δ μ■ν, δ δ■, δ δ■—in this case, in that, and in a third case.

[7] δ μ■ν, δ δ■, δ δ■—in this case, in that, and in a third case.

Christ’s hearers would have no difficulty in understanding the letter of this parable. At their side, as modern travellers who have been on the spot tell us,[6] they might see an agricultural scene which would enable them to comprehend all the details of the picture at a glance. They would know perfectly what was literally intended by the four kinds of ground distinguished in the parable: that the way-side signified the hard-trodden path running through the cornfield; that the rocky places signified that part of the field where the soil was shallow, and the rocky stratum below came near the surface; that the thorns denoted, not thorn bushes actually growing in the field at the time of sowing, but soil with thorn seeds latent in it, which in due course sprang up, disputing possession with the grain; and that the good ground meant that portion of the field which was free from all the faults of the other parts, and was at once soft, deep, and clean. They would know also that the fate of seed falling upon these different places respectively would be just such as described in the parable: that the seed falling on the hard path would never even so much as germinate, but either

be picked up by the birds or trodden under foot; that the seed falling on shallow soil, with rock immediately beneath, might germinate, and even spring up rapidly for a short while, but for want of sap and depth of earth must inevitably wither under the heat of the sun, and so come to nothing; that the seed which fell on soil full of thorn or thistle seeds might not only germinate and spring up, but continue to grow with vigour till it reached the green ear—the fault of the ground not being poverty, but foulness—but would never ripen, being choked, smothered, and shaded by the overgrowing thorns; and finally, that seed which fell on good, generous soil, soft, deep, and clean, could not fail, under the genial influences of fostering sap beneath and of a bright sun above, to yield a bountiful harvest, richly rewarding the husbandman's pains.

[6] Vide Stanley, 'Sinai and Palestine,' p. 425, in a chapter on the local connections and allusions of Christ's teaching. But what might the spiritual meaning of the parable be? Why did Jesus speak this parable? What did He mean to teach? These questions His hearers were not able to answer. That the parable was designed to teach something, that it meant more than met the ear, they would of course understand; for common sense would teach them that Christ was not likely to describe a sowing scene for its own sake, and the closing words, "Who hath ears, let him hear," was a hint at a hidden meaning that could not fail to be understood even by the most obtuse. It is even possible that the people standing on the shore had a shrewd suspicion that the preacher was speaking about themselves, and describing the various sorts of hearers of the word of the kingdom who were mingled together in that great crowd, and the correspondingly diverse issues of the preaching of the word. But beyond that point we may be sure their comprehension did not go. They might have a dim impression that the various sorts of soil signified spiritual states; but they could not discriminate the spiritual soils on which the word of the kingdom fell, as they could at once and with ease apprehend the literal points of the parable. How should the multitude at large understand what even the disciples, the twelve, and others who had been constantly in Christ's company, failed to understand? That even they were puzzled, the record informs us. When they were alone, we are told, the disciples asked their. Master what might this parable be.[1] One of the Evangelists gives the question thus: "Why speakest Thou unto them in parables?"[2]—meaning, in such a parable as this of the Sower. The two forms of the question convey a pretty definite idea of the state of mind of those who put it. It was a state intermediate between perfect knowledge and total ignorance. They did not know clearly the meaning of the parable, else they would not have asked for an interpretation; they were not totally ignorant of its meaning, else they would not have asked, "Why speakest Thou unto them in parables?" They knew enough to be surprised that their Master addressed such a parable to the eagerly-listening multitude—a parable not setting forth any truth concerning the kingdom, like that of the Precious Pearl, which teaches the incomparable value of the kingdom—but animadverting on the various classes of hearers. That, as we believe, was the cause of surprise: not the general fact of teaching in a new way (viz. in parables) taken abstractly and by itself, but that fact taken in conjunction with the peculiar character of the parable by which the new method was inaugurated.

[1] Luk 8:9.

[2] Mat 13:10.

If such was indeed the feeling in the minds of the disciples, we cannot wonder at their question. For even now we who understand the parable, as they could not before it was explained to them,

are constrained to ask ourselves the question, Why spake Jesus such a parable as that of the Sower to the crowd of people assembled on the shore of the Sea of Galilee—a parable in which the Speaker preached not to the people, but at them, or over their heads; not about any important truth of the kingdom, but about the reception truth was likely to meet with; not glad tidings to men, but very sombre, depressing tidings concerning men in their relation to the gospel? One could at once understand how such a parable as this might at any time have been spoken to the disciples; because to them it was given "to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven," and specially because it was desirable that they, as the future apostles of the kingdom, should know what reception they were to meet with, to prevent disappointment when they learned by experience, as their Master had already learned, that the effect of the word was conditioned variously by the moral state of the hearer. Antecedently to experience, men of sanguine temper, ardently devoted to the kingdom, might anticipate a very different result, and expect the intrinsic excellence of the doctrine to insure in all cases a harvest of beneficent effects. A warning to the contrary was therefore by no means superfluous. But was it not wasting a precious opportunity thus to speak to the common people? and if the Preacher must speak in parabolic form, why not utter an "evangelic" parable, reserving didactic parables for the twelve, and prophetic parables for unbelieving hostile Pharisees and Sadducees? We put the question strongly, because we wish to force ourselves and our readers to reflect and go in quest of an answer; believing that the answer, when found, will lend greatly enhanced interest to the parable, and help us to understand its import, and may even lead to discoveries as to the design and what we may call the psychological genesis of the whole parabolic teaching of our Lord.

Without doubt, then, to answer our question at once, the reason why Jesus spoke such a parable as that of the Sower, and such other parables as these of the Tares and the Net, in the hearing of the multitude is to be sought in the moral situation of the hour.[1] Travellers and interpreters have been at great pains to explain the physical situation—the natural surroundings of the Speaker that day when He began to open His mouth in parables. And this is well, though it is possible to have too much of it, leading to a sentimental style of treating the parables which is rather tiresome and unprofit able. The moral situation is undoubtedly the principal thing to be determined; for we cannot believe that Christ was led to speak as He did by merely picturesque influences, any more than we can believe that He then and there opened His mouth in parables from a merely intellectual liking for that symbolic manner of expressing thought. The motive must have come from the spiritual composition and condition of the crowd. Jesus must have lifted up the eye of His mind, and seen, not a literal field, with the characteristics described in course of being sown with grain, but a spiritual field with analogous characteristics, which had been sown with the seeds of Divine truth by Himself,—even that very crowd which was assembled before Him. But have we any evidence that the spiritual condition of that crowd was such as this hypothesis requires? We have. First there is the statement made by Jesus Himself, in reply to the question of His disciples, which presents a very gloomy picture of the spiritual condition of the people: "For this people’s heart is waxed gross," etc.[2] When Jesus said that, He did not merely quote a prophetic commonplace in a haphazard, pointless way, without meaning to imply that it had any very definite applicability to the multitude before Him. He believed, and He said, that in the case of that very multitude the spiritual state described by the prophet Isaiah was very exactly fulfilled or realized.[3] Then, secondly, there is the great historical melancholy fact of the Capernaum crisis recorded in John vi., in which the Galilean revival came to a deplorable end: "From that time many of His disciples went

back and walked no more with Him."[4] And, finally, the minute particulars of information supplied by the Evangelists as to the circumstances amid which Jesus spake our parable, show that the Galilean enthusiasm is at its height, and therefore that the crisis, the time of reaction, must be near. Matthew tells us that so great were the multitudes who gathered together unto Jesus that He was obliged to go into a ship in order to escape pressure, and have a position from which He could be seen and heard of all.[5] Mark says: "And He began again to teach by the seaside,"—implying eagerness in the people thereabouts to hear; and he characterises the audiences not merely as great, but as very great.[6] Luke informs us that the congregation assembled was composed of people coming "out of every city,"[7]—that is, from all the towns and villages by the shores of the lake.

[1] Farrar, in his 'Life of Christ,' takes this view; "The great mass of hearers," he remarks, "must now have been aware of the general features in the new gospel which Jesus preached. Some self-examination, some earnest, careful thought of their own, was now requisite, if they were indeed sincere in their desire to profit by His words" (vol. i. p. 322)

[2] Mat 13:15.

[3] Mat 13:14. Κα■ ■ναπληρο■ται. The ■ν■ is intensive.

[4] John 6:66.

[5] Mat 13:2.

[6] ■χλος πλε■στος (Mat 4:1).

[7] Mat 8:4. τ■ν κατ■ π■λιν ■πιπορευομ■νων πρ■ς α■τ■ν The crisis, then, is approaching, and it is in view of that crisis Jesus speaks the parable of the Sower. He sees it coming, and is sad, and He speaks as He feels. The present enthusiasm, because He knows how it is likely to end, gives Him no pleasure,—it rather causes Him trouble. He wishes to be rid of it. We might almost say He speaks the parable for that end; using it, as He used the mystic sermon on the Bread of Life, in the synagogue at Capernaum, as a fan to separate wheat from chaff.[1] At the least, we may say He speaks the parable to foreshadow the end. The parable is a prelude to the sermon, uttered to satisfy the Speaker's sense of truth; to throw hearers back on themselves in self-examination; to warn disciples against being imposed on by fair appearances, and cherishing romantic expectations doomed to bitter disappointment; and to insure in all ages, for an 'enthusiasm of humanity' not blind to the weakness of human nature, a respect which it is impossible to accord to a shallow philanthropy without moral insight.[2] [1] For our view of the effect of that sermon see 'The Training of the Twelve,' cap. ix., section 4.

[2] Godet says: "The end of Jesus is first to show that He Is under no Illusion in view of that multitude in appearance so attentive; next to put His disciples on their guard against the hopes which the present enthusiasm might inspire; lastly, and above all, to fortify His hearers against the perils to which their present religious impressions were exposed" ('Comm. sur l'Evangile de St. Luc,' i. 396). The last remark in the sentence in the text to which this note refers may be illustrated by an anecdote told of Frederick the Great. When one of the apostles of eighteenth-century Illuminism spoke to him with enthusiasm of the results to be expected from an education based on the assumption of the goodness of human nature, his reply was, "You don't know the race." Christ

did know the race, and yet loved man with an ardour and steadfastness to which no philanthropy, deistic or other, can be compared.—Vide Kahnis' 'History of German Protestantism,' p. 49. So we account for the utterance of the parable of the Sower, and of at least some others of the group contained in Mat 13:1-58.[1] But can the same or a similar account be given of the parabolic teaching of Christ in general? A remark of Jesus to His disciples reported by Mark seems to imply that it can: "Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all the parables?"[2] The remark, taken by itself, might be understood to mean that men who could not comprehend so simple a parable would be still more at a loss with other parables, spoken or to be spoken, more difficult of comprehension. But, taken along with the reference going before to the words of Isaiah, it seems rather to signify that the parables in general are to be regarded as associated more or less with the mood of mind which these prophetic words express. And close observation of the parables recorded in the Gospels shows that this is really to a large extent the case. It will be found, on inspection, that very many of the parables are of an apologetic or defensive character. The position of Christ when He uttered them was that of one found fault with, misunderstood, or despairing of being understood; conscious of isolation, and saddened by the lack of intelligence, sympathy, and faith on the part of those among whom He exercised His ministry. Such seem to have been the psychological conditions under which the mind of the Saviour betook itself to parable-making. The question why He spoke in parables as a public teacher is a wide one, to which a full answer is not given in the Gospels. Doubtless temperament and the genius of race had something to do with it; and a certain class of writers would emphasise such causes. But while they may be admitted to have been joint causes, we do not believe they were sole causes. There is not only a parabolic temperament and a parabolic genius that delights to wrap thoughts up in symbolic envelopes; but there is, moreover, a parabolic mood, which leads a man now, rather than then, to present his thoughts in this form. It is the mood of one whose heart is chilled and whose spirit is saddened by a sense of loneliness, and who, retiring within himself, by a process of reflection frames for his thoughts forms which half conceal, half reveal them,—reveal them more perfectly to those who understand, hide them from those who do not: forms beautiful, but also melancholy, as the hues of the forest in late autumn. If this view be correct, we should expect that speaking in parables would not form a feature of the initial stage of Christ's ministry. And such, accordingly, was the fact. Jesus opened His mouth first, not in parables, but in plain speeches; or if He used parables previously, it was only such as were common among Jewish teachers: figures meant to enliven moral commonplaces, like that of the wise and foolish builders at the close of the Sermon on the Mount. He uttered beatitudes before He uttered similitudes, and He uttered similitudes because the beatitudes had not been understood or appreciated.[3] In His own words, as reported by the first Evangelist, Jesus began to speak in parables because His hearers, seeing, saw not, and hearing, heard not, neither did they understand. They had seen His miracles, and had been led by them to form false conceptions of His mission; they had heard His teaching on the mount and elsewhere, and had formed erroneous ideas of the kingdom; and therefore now He wraps His thoughts in forms by which those who do see shall be enabled to see more clearly, and to him who hath light shall come a still higher measure of illumination, and those, on the other hand, who see not shall be made still more blind,[4] simply mystified and perplexed as to what the strange Speaker might mean.

[1] The question whether all the parables in Matt. xiii. were spoken at one time will be noticed in a future chapter.

[2] Mark 4:13.

[3] Ebrard maintains that the parables in Mat 13:1-58 were spoken before the Sermon on the Mount; but this view has met with little or no approval. See his 'Gospel History.'

[4] Mat 13:12; Mark 4:25.

Such, doubtless, were the results in many instances of Christ's parabolic teaching: some who so far already understood Him were led into a clearer comprehension of His mind; others who understood Him not were conducted into deeper darkness. Take, e.g., the parables which contain the apology for loving sinners. One who understood the motive of Jesus in frequenting the company of sinners would get a most instructive glimpse into the heart of the Son of Man on hearing those charming, pathetic parables of the Lost Sheep the Lost Coin, and the Lost Son. But what effect would these beautiful poetic parables have on the mind of unsympathetic, hostile Pharisees? Not to make them comprehend at last the true spirit of a much misunderstood and calumniated man, but to harden them into more intense antipathy,—the very beauty and poetry and pathos of the sayings making them hate more bitterly one with whom they were determined not to be pleased. Such were the results in that case, and doubtless in many others. But were these results—was the latter result, that is to say—intended? Did Jesus Christ, the Saviour of men, speak parables that blind men might be made blinder, and deaf men deafer, and hard hearts harder? According to the report of what He said to the disciples in answer to their question "Why speakest Thou in parables?" given by two of the Evangelists, we may seem forced to the conclusion that He did. For while Matthew makes Him say, "Therefore speak I to them in parables, because they seeing, see not"[1]—suggesting the thought that the parabolic mode of instruction was adopted that men who saw not might see at least a little, since they had failed to see on any other method, Mark and Luke ascribe to Him the sentiment, "To others (I speak) in parables, in order that seeing, they might not see, and nearing, they might not understand."[2] Some critics, deeming the two accounts irreconcilable, prefer Matthew's as the more correct, and regard the aim ascribed to Christ by the other two Evangelists simply as "the hypochondriac construction put upon His words in Gospels written in a pessimistic spirit by men despairing of the Jewish people."[3] But that the two points of view are not mutually exclusive may be inferred from the fact that even Mark, who puts the darker view most strongly, winds up his record of Christ's parabolic teaching by the lake-side with a reflection which plainly implies that the design of that teaching was not to produce blindness, but, if possible, vision. "And with many such parables spake He the word unto them, as they were able to hear it."[4] And we may lay it down as a fixed principle that what is implied in Mark's reflection is the truth. The direct primary aim of all Christ's teaching was to illuminate human minds and to soften human hearts. Such was both the aim and the tendency of His parabolic teaching in particular. The parable of the Prodigal Son, e.g., was surely both fitted and intended to enlighten the minds of even scribes and Pharisees as to the motive of the Speaker in associating with the sinful, and to soften their hearts into a more kindly tone of feeling towards Himself! But, on the other hand, that very parable might have just the opposite effects on minds full of prejudice and on hearts full of bitterness, and produce a more complete misunderstanding and a more inhuman and pitiless antipathy. And in uttering the parable Jesus could not but be aware of the possibility of such a result, and yet might utter it with that possible result consciously in view. Nay, we can conceive Him erecting the possible and undesirable result into the position of an end, and saying, "I speak such and such parables in order that they who see not may become more

utterly blind." Only we must be careful not to misunderstand the temper in which such words might be spoken by Jesus, or by any true servant of God. No true prophet could utter such words in cold blood as the expression of a deliberate purpose. All prophets desire to illumine, soften, and save, not to darken, harden, and destroy; and without entering into the mystery of Divine decrees, we may add, God sends His prophets for no other purpose, whatever the foreseen effects of their labour may be. But a prophet like Isaiah may nevertheless feel as if he were sent, and represent himself as sent, for the opposite purpose. And when he does so it is not in the way of expressing direct aim or deliberate intention, but in irony, and in the bitterness of frustrated, despairing love. Baffled love in bitter irony announces as its aim the very opposite of what it works for, and it does so in the hope of provoking its infatuated objects to jealousy, and so defeating its own prophecy. "I go," says Isaiah in effect, "to prophesy to this people, that hearing they may understand not, and seeing may perceive not, that I may make their hearts fat, and their ears heavy, and their eyes dim, lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their hearts, and convert and be healed;"[5] and he goes forth to fulfil these strange ends by using means fitted and designed to produce just the opposite effects, warning them of the consequences of persisting in evil ways, and preaching unto them a gospel of rest for the weary with such plainness, emphasis, and iteration, as to expose himself to the mockery of drunkards, who said: "With this prophet it is 'precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little,'—wearisome iteration of lessons fit only for children."[6] In the light of these observations we can understand in what spirit Jesus appropriated to Himself the harsh terms in which the prophet expressed his Divine mission, and how we are to view His parabolic teachings. He served Himself heir to Isaiah's commission in the ironic humour of a love that yearned to save, and was faithful to its purpose even to death. He spoke parables,—one now, another then; here a little, there a little,—if by any means He might teach men the truth in which they might find rest to their souls. The parables were neither deliberate mystifications, nor idle intellectual conceits, nor mere literary products of aesthetic taste: they were the utterances of a sorrowful heart. And herein lies their chief charm: not in the doctrine they teach, though that is both interesting and important; not in their literary beauty, though that is great; but in the sweet delicate odour of human pathos that breathes from them as from Alpine wild flowers. That He had to speak in parables was one of the burdens of the Son of Man, to be placed side by side with the fact that He had not where to lay His head.

[1] Mat 13:13.

[2] Mark 4:12; Luk 8:10.

[3] So Keim, after Strauss, in 'Jesu von Nazara,' ii. 439.

[4] Mark 4:33.

[5] Isa 6:9-10.

[6] Isa 28:9-12. The words in the original are at once a clever caricature of elementary teaching for children, and an imitation of the thick, indistinct speech of an intoxicated person: Ki tsav-la-tsav, tsav-la-tsav; kav-la-kav, kav-la-kav; ze■r-shàm, ze■r-shàm.

We proceed now to the interpretation of our parable. Christ's own interpretation was as follows:

Hear ye then the parable of the sower. In the case of every one hearing the word of the kingdom and not understanding it, cometh the wicked one and catcheth away that which has been sown in his heart. This is the one sown by the wayside.[1] But the one sown upon the rocky places is he who heareth the word and anon with joy receiveth it. But he hath not root in himself but is only temporary,[2] and when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, straightway he is made to stumble. And the one sown among the thorns is he who heareth the word, and the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. And the one sown upon the good ground is he who heareth the word and understandeth it, who accordingly[3]

[1] Elliptical for "he who is meant in the part of the parable which speaks of seed sown by the way." Similarly in all the other cases.

[2] πρ■σκαιρος.

[3] δ■, expressive of self-evident result. See p. 36. bringeth forth fruit and produces now an hundredfold, now sixty, now thirty.—Mat 13:18-23. The parable, according to this authoritative interpretation, Is meant to teach that among those to whom the word of the kingdom is spoken are diverse classes of hearers—four at least[1]—corresponding to the four sorts of ground on which the seed falls. A record of observation in the first place, it is, moreover, a prophetic picture of the future fortunes of the kingdom. In relating under a parabolic veil His own sad experience, Jesus forewarned His disciples what they had to expect when they were called on as apostles to sow the word of the kingdom. They should find among their hearers classes of persons of which these sorts of ground were the types. Now, the matter of chief importance here is, to form just conceptions of these classes, that the moral lesson may come home to all. Many interpreters grievously offend here. Greswell, e.g., makes the wayside hearer one characterised by an absolute hardness, whose state of mind "may be the most deplorable to which human frailty is exposed and the most horrible to which human wickedness is liable to be reduced,— the last stage in a long career of depravity, and the judicial result of perseverance in obstinate wickedness with impunity and impenitence."[2] This is surely to confound weakness and wickedness, and so to render the parable useless for the purpose of warning to a very common class of hearers. We must remember, in the quaint words of a wiser expositor, that "the trodden path is after all not a rock,"[3] and generally give heed to the remark of a greater than either: "In order that the admonitions of the parable may benefit us the more, it must be kept steadily in view that no mention is made therein of despisers of the word, but only of those in whom appears a certain measure of docility."[4] Doubtless there were 'wayside' hearers in the crowd to whom the parable was addressed; yet all present had come with more or less desire to hear Christ preach, and learn at His lips the doctrine of the kingdom.

[1] Greswell labours to prove that there can be no more than four classes. Such discussions are not in the spirit of the parable, which expresses facts that had come under the Speaker's observation, not necessary psychological truth.

[2] 'Parables,' vol. ii. 37.

[3] Stier, 'Reden Jesus,' ii. 83.

[4] Calvin, 'Comment. in Quatuor Evangelistas,' in loc.

We shall best learn to discriminate accurately the different classes of hearers by giving close attention to the manner in which they are respectively characterised by our Lord.

I. The wayside hearer hears the word, but does not understand it,—or, to use a phrase which expresses at once the literal and the figurative truth, does not take it in.[1] Thoughtlessness, spiritual stupidity, arising not so much from want of intellectual capacity as from preoccupation of mind, is the characteristic of the first class. Their mind is like a footpath beaten hard by the constant passage through it of "the wishes of the flesh and the current thoughts"[2] concerning common earthly things. For a type of the class we may take the man who interrupted Christ while preaching on one occasion, and said: "Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me."[3] He had just heard Christ utter the words, "And when they bring you into the synagogues, and unto magistrates and powers,"[4] and these suggested to him the topic on which his thoughts were habitually fixed—his dispute with his brother about their patrimony. And so it happened to him according to the parable. The truth he had heard did not get into his mind, hardened as it was like a beaten path by the constant passage through it of current thoughts about money; it was very soon forgotten altogether, caught away by the god of this world, who ruled over him through his covetous disposition. It may be regarded as certain that there were many such hearers in the crowd by the lake,—men in whose minds the doctrine of the kingdom merely awakened hopes of worldly prosperity,—who, as Jesus afterwards told them, laboured for the meat that perisheth, not for the meat that endureth unto everlasting life.[5] Such were they who "received seed by the wayside."

[1] "Our language is capable in this instance, like the Greek, of expressing by one phrase equally the moral and the material failure: 'Every one that hears the word of the kingdom and does not take it in (μ■ συνι■ντος).'" Arnot, 'The Parables of our Lord,' p. 52.

[2] So Mr. M. Arnold renders the Apostle Paul's phrase τ■ θελ■ματα τ■ζ σαρκ■ς κα■ τ■ν διανοι■ν (Eph 2:3). Vide 'Literature and Dogma,' p. 202

[3] Luk 12:13.

[4] Luk 12:11.

[5] John 6:27.

2. He that received seed into stony places, on the other hand, is he that heareth the word and anon with joy receiveth it. The characteristic of this class is emotional excitability, inconsiderate impulsiveness. They receive the word readily with joy; but without thought. The latter trait is not indeed specified, but it is clearly implied in the remark concerning the effect of tribulation, persecution, or temptation on this class of hearers. They had not anticipated such experiences, they did not count the cost, there was a want of deliberation at the commencement of their religious life, and by implication a want of that mental constitution which ensures that there shall be deliberation at all critical periods of life. It is this want of deliberation that is the fault of the class now under consideration, not the mere fact of their receiving the word with joy. Joy by itself does not define the class; for joy is characteristic of deep as well as of shallow natures. Absence of joy in religious life is a sign, not of depth, but of dulness. The noble, devoted heart that attains to high measures of faithfulness has great rapturous passionate joy in connection with its spiritual experiences. But the joy of the good and honest heart is a thoughtful joy, associated with and

springing out of the exercise of the intellectual and the moral powers upon the truth believed. The joy of the stony ground hearer, on the contrary, is a thoughtless joy coming to him through the effects of what he hears upon the imagination and the feelings. Joy without thought is his definition. Of course a religious experience of this character cannot last: it is doomed to prove abortive. For tribulation, persecution, temptation in some form, will come, not to be withstood except by those whose whole spiritual being—mind, heart, conscience—is influenced by the truth; and even by them only by the most strenuous exertion of their moral energies. A man who has been touched only on the surface of his soul by a religious movement, who has been impressed on the sympathetic side of his nature by a prevalent enthusiasm, and has yielded to the current without understanding what it means, whither it tends, and what it involves,—such a man has no chance of persevering under the conditions of trial amidst which the divine life has to be lived in this world. He is doomed to be πρ■σκαιρος, a temporary Christian, to be scandalised by tribulation, to apostatise in the season of temptation. For he hath not root in himself, in his moral personality, in the faculties constituting personality—the reason, conscience, and will—which remain hard, untouched, unpenetrated by the fibres of his faith; his root is in others, in a prevalent popular enthusiasm; his religion is a thing of sympathetic imitation. He is not only πρ■σκαιρος in the sense of being temporary, but likewise in the sense of being a creation of the time, a child of the Zeitgeist.[1] He comes forth as a professor of religion "at the call of a shallow enthusiasm, and through the epidemic influence of a popular cause."[2] And this fact largely explains his temporariness. When the tide of enthusiasm subsides, and he is left to himself to carry on single-handed the struggle with temptation, he has no heart for the work, and his religion withers away, like the corn growing on rocky places under the scorching heat of the summer sun.

[1] So Lange, ’Bibelwerk’; and also Volkmar, ’Die Evangelien,’ p. 284.

[2] Edward Irving, ’Sermons on the Parable of the Sower.’ Collected writings, vol. i. p. 169.

If a type of this class is sought for in the Gospel records, it may be found in the man who said unto Jesus, "Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest," and to whom Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have roosts, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head."[1] The reply clearly implies that this would-be disciple was under some sudden impulse proposing to follow Christ, without considering what the step involved. He had received the word of the kingdom with joy, and came to offer himself as a disciple in a spirit of romantic enthusiasm, without the smallest idea what he was undertaking, utterly unaware of the hardships of disciple life. But what need to point to the scribe as if he were a solitary instance of inconsiderate profession! Was not the crowd by the lake to which the Parable of the Sower was spoken full of such professors? There was a great religious enthusiasm—what in these days might be called a ’great revival’—in Galilee, and there were many in that crowd who had come under its influence. Infected by the spirit of the time, they followed Jesus, by whose preaching of the kingdom the movement had been created, whithersoever He went; delighted to hear Him speak, feeling as if they could never hear enough of the precious words which fell from His lips. But alas! their religion consisted largely in sympathy with their fellows, and in vague romantic dreams concerning the kingdom that was coming; and so when the time of disenchantment came, and they learnt that their dreams were not likely to be realised, they "went back and walked no more with Him."[2] How often has the same tragedy been repeated in the history of religious movements of a popular character! It is persons whose spiritual natures resemble the rocky ground who are chiefly influenced by such movements.

Others of deeper character and more promise may be touched in small numbers, but these are sure to be touched in large numbers.[3] And so it comes to pass that the melancholy history of many hopeful religious movements is this: many converts, few stable Christians; many blossoms, little fruit coming to maturity.

[1] Luk 9:57; cf. Mat 8:19.

[2] John 6:66.

[3] "Such men," says Godet, "form in almost every awakening a considerable portion of the new converts."—'Comment. sur Luc,' i. 399. Deeper natures are less influenced by sympathy, and their religious decisions are come to for the most part in solitude and after earnest consideration of the subject on all sides.

3. He that received seed among the thorns is so described as to suggest the idea of a double-minded man—the ■ν■ρ δ■ψυχος of St. James.[1] This man is neither stupid, like his brother nearer of the first class, nor a mere man of feeling, like those of the second class. He hears in the emphatic sense of the word, hears both with thought and with feeling, understanding what he hears and realising its solemn importance. The soil in his case is neither hard on the surface nor shallow; it is good soil so far as softness and depth are concerned. Its one fault (but it is a very serious one) is that it is impure: there are other seeds in it besides those being sown on it, and the result will be two crops struggling for the mastery, with the inevitable result that the better crop will have to succumb. This man has two minds, so to speak,—we might almost say he is two men. His will is divided—not decided for good and against evil, but now on one side, now on the other; serving God to-day, serving mammon to-morrow; very religious, and also very worldly. Such he is at the beginning, though not very obviously; such he will be more manifestly in the after course of his religious career; such he will be to the end. To the end, we say; for it is not this man's nature to begin with enthusiasm and by and by to leave off. He is too grave, too serious, too strong-natured a man, to be guilty of such levity. What he begins he will go through with. He will not apostatise, as a rule (for there may be exceptions); he will keep up a profession of religion till he dies. His leaf will not wither,—it will continue growing till it reach the ear; but the ear will be green when it should be ripe. Only in this sense is it said of him that "he becometh unfruitful."[2] He bringeth forth fruit, but he bringeth "no fruit to perfection."[3] He never attains to ripeness in his personal character. Any one can see that he is a misthriven Christian, a man not victorious over the world, but defeated by the world in one form or another,—by carking care, by the vanity and pride of wealth, by some form of selfish or sensual indulgence, such as inordinate affection for things lawful, sloth, or excessive use of stimulants.[4] You may hope for his salvation notwithstanding; nevertheless you pronounce him a spiritual failure. He is unfruitful also in his Christian activity, unfruitful in the sense of bringing no fruit to perfection. He busies himself, probably, in good works; perhaps takes a prominent part in devotional meetings, and appears duly on philanthropic and religious platforms. But his influence is zero, or worse—mischievous; for honest men know him, and it gives them a disgust to see such as he figuring as promoters of any good work or as patrons of any worthy cause.

[1] Jas 1:8. Double-mindedness in this text is not to be confounded with hypocrisy.

[2] Mat 13:22. Mark 4:19.

[3] Luk 8:14. Κα■ ο■ τελεσφορο■σιν. Vide Robertson of Brighton on this point: 'Sermons,' first series, on the Parable of the Sower. The whole sermon is instructive.

[4] All these forms of worldliness are referred to in the records: Matthew specifies the care of the world (μ■ριμνα το■ α■■νος) and the deceit of riches (■ ■π■τ■ το■ πλο■του); Mark to these adds the desires concerning other things (α■ περ■ τ■ λοιπ■ ■πιθυμ■αι). Luke also gives these categories: cares, riches, and pleasures of life (■π■ μεριμν■ν κα■ πλο■το κα■ ■δον■ν το■ β■ου).

It may be asked, Who has a chance of bringing forth fruit unto perfection, for what character is free from thorns?[1] But the question is not, who is free from evil desires, or from temptation to inordinate affection? but what attitude you assume towards these. There are roots of bitterness in every man, which, if allowed to grow up, will trouble and defile him. But the attitude of the double-minded man towards these roots is very different from that of the single-minded man. The former never makes up his mind to be resolutely against evil, and to bring to bear all his moral energy to put it down; the latter, on the contrary, does make up his mind to this, and abides habitually of this mind. The singleminded man adopts as his principle the motto, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and food and raiment shall be added unto you;" and in adopting and acting on this principle he becomes a perfect man, and brings forth fruit unto perfection. For the perfect man in Scripture does not mean the faultless man, but the man of single mind, who loves God above all else; and the fruit of such a man's life, though not absolutely corresponding to the ideal, will be acknowledged by all competent judges to be good, his character noble, his work such as shall stand. Of the thorny ground hearer, the man of divided mind and double heart, we have an example in him who came to Jesus and said, "Lord, I will follow Thee; but first let me go bid them farewell which are at home at my house." Apparently a most reasonable request; but Jesus discerned in it the sign of a divided heart, and therefore replied: "No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."[2] The example is all the more instructive that the man's temptation arose, not from lust after forbidden pleasure, but from inordinate affection for things lawful. How natural, how excusable that hankering after home and household! Yet just such hankerings, and nothing worse, are in many instances the thorns which, springing up, choke the word and render it unfruitful. How many men are wasting their lives at home, who might go forth to a life of abundant fruitfulness in mission fields, were it not for an attachment like that of John Mark[3] for fathers or mothers, or native land!

[1] Lisco starts this difficulty: vide 'The Parables of Jesus,' p. 61.

[2] Luk 9:61-62.

[3] Acts 12:25; Acts 13:13; Acts 15:37-39. John Mark was one who looked back, and therefore was deemed by Paul not fit for the work of the kingdom in which he was engaged. Mark appears afterwards to have regained Paul's confidence—a fact which reminds us that a thorny ground hearer is under no fatal necessity of continuing such.

4. He that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word and understandeth it. The description is intended to express the idea of a perfect hearer, and for that purpose seems inadequate. For the perfect hearer ought to have all the good characteristics of a hearer of the previous class, and over and above, that which he lacks—a pure will, a single mind. Now, even the

thorny ground hearer understands the word, and is impressed by it, and only comes short by not giving to that to which the word relates, the kingdom of God, its proper place of supremacy. It does not therefore sufficiently distinguish a hearer of the last class to say of him that he hears and understands, or even that he hears with understanding and feeling. The authors of the Authorized version betray a certain consciousness of this fact in their rendering of the clause relating to the fruitfulness of the fourth class—"which also beareth fruit"—as if the words were meant to express an additional characteristic of the class; while in truth they express the sure, necessary result of the characteristics already specified. We naturally turn to the other Evangelists, to see whether the apparent defect is supplied in their accounts. For the 'understandeth' of Matthew, Mark gives 'receive,'[1] and Luke, 'keep';[2] and these are important words, but neither do they bring out fully the characteristic distinction of the perfect hearer. For the thorny ground hearer also receives the truth, takes it into his mind and heart; and he not only receives it, but retains it; his only fault is that he does not receive and retain it alone, but allows the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things to enter into and abide in his heart alongside of the truth. The precise distinction of the perfect hearer, on the other hand, is this,—that he does receive and retain the word alone in his mind. He is characteristically single-minded and whole-hearted in religion. The kingdom of God has the first place in his thoughts, and everything else only the second. His motto is taken from the words of the Psalmist: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me." He loves God, and seeks the kingdom of God in accordance with the high requirement, "with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."[3] He is wholly given up, devoted, to the kingdom; for him, as for the Preacher, to "fear God and keep His commandments" is "the whole of man."[4] That the perfect hearer must be a man of this sort, we know from the nature of the case; for nothing short of this will yield the result desired; and we further know from the whole teaching of our Lord, which throughout sets forth single-minded, whole-hearted devotion to the kingdom as the cardinal virtue of all genuine citizens. The only question is whether we can by fair exegesis bring the idea of such a man out of the interpretation of the parable given by Christ, or whether we do not rather bring the idea with us and put it into His words. Now, we admit that, so far as the words to which we have as yet adverted are concerned, such an allegation might plausibly be made. The idea of single-minded devotion cannot be taken out of the words 'understand,' 'receive,' 'retain.' At most we can only justify ourselves for putting that idea into them by the consideration that they are meant to discriminate the perfect hearer from the one going before, and can do so only when they are so emphasised as to imply that nothing but the seed of truth is received and retained. But what is lacking in these words is supplied in a phrase given by the third Evangelist, to which we have not yet adverted. In the case of the perfect hearer the word is received and retained in a noble and good heart.[5] Here is what we have been in quest of—a perfectly definite and adequate characteristic of the class of hearers who attain unto real and abundant fruitfulness. It is worthy of notice that the remarkable expression occurs in the Gospel of Luke, the Evangelist of the Gentiles, to whom it would be no objection that the phrase was one in familiar use among the Greeks to denote the beau-ideal of manhood,—the man in all respects as he ought to be. It is not assuming too much to suppose that Luke was acquainted with the Attic sense of the phrase, and that he attached to it, as used by himself in this place, a meaning akin to the idea of καλοκαγαθ■α as understood by the Greeks. In any case we are justified, even by New Testament usage, in taking out of the expression the idea of a man whose aim is noble and who is generously devoted to his aim. The epithet καλ■ς has reference to aims

or chief ends, and describes one whose mind is raised above moral vulgarity, and is bent, not on money-making and such low pursuits, but on the attainment of wisdom, holiness, righteousness. The epithet ■γαθ■ς denotes generous self-abandonment in the prosecution of such lofty ends—large-heartedness, magnanimous, overflowing devotion. Of the use of the former epithet in the sense explained we have an instance in the eulogium pronounced by Jesus on the act of anointing performed by Mary of Bethany. "She hath wrought," He said, "a noble work (■ργον καλ■ν) upon me."[6] Mary's act had been blamed as wasteful, and such it was when tested by vulgar utility. Jesus defended it by calling it noble as distinct from useful in the obvious vulgar sense, and holding it up as worthy to receive throughout the whole world an admiration to which only noble things are entitled. Of the use of the latter epithet in the sense explained we have an instance which possesses peculiar weight, as occurring in the Acts of the Apostles. We refer to the character given to Barnabas in connection with the part he took in the new movement which had commenced at Antioch. Barnabas had been sent by the Church at Jerusalem to see, and, if he approved, to assist in the work; and it is reported of him that when he came and had seen the grace of God he was glad, and exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. Then to explain his conduct, the author, Luke, our Evangelist, adds: "For he was a good man (■ν■ρ ■γαθ■ς), and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith."[7] His goodness manifestly consisted in a generous sympathy, free from all mean narrow suspicion, with the cause of Gentile evangelisation. He believed the work to be of God, though it was a strange, startling, unlooked-for phenomenon; and he entered into it with his whole heart. If we desire still further light as to the idea attached by Luke to the epithet 'good,' we have but to recall to our recollection two other facts recorded by him concerning Barnabas: the sale of his estate for the benefit of the Church,[8] and his generous recognition of Paul—first as a convert, when he was still an object of suspicion and fear, and then as the fit man to carry on the work at Antioch when he abode in his native city, inactive and eager for an opportunity of service.[9] A good man, in Luke's vocabulary, meant a man capable of self-sacrifice for the kingdom of God—a man of large, expansive sympathies, and magnanimously trustful and generous in his relations to his brethren—one who could forget himself and his personal interest to serve God, or to help a new struggling cause, or a friend in time of need. And the man who in a noble and good heart hears and retains the word is just such an one as Barnabas. He is a man devoted to the kingdom of God with his whole heart and soul and mind, who could part with all for its sake, who could even at Christ's bidding, though with a keen pang, leave the dead to bury the dead, even were the dead his own father.[10] [1] Mark 4:20 : παραδ■χονται.

[2] Luk 8:15 : κατ■χουσιν.

[3] St Bernard has some excellent remarks on this requirement in his 'Sermons on Canticles.' Discoursing on the duty of loving Christ "dulciter, prudenter, fortiter," he goes on to say: "Zelum tuum inflammet charitas, informet scientia, firmet constantia. Sit fervidus, sit circumspectus, sit invictus. Nec teporem habeat, nec careat discretione, nec timidus sit. Et vide ne forte tria ista tibi et in lege tradita fuerint, dicente Deo: Dilige Dominum Deum tuum ex toto carde tuo, et ex tota anima tua, et ex tota virtute tua, Mihi videtur amor quidem cordis ad zelum quemdam pertinere affectionis, animæ vero amor ad industriam seu judicium rationis; virtutis autem dilectio ad animi posse referri constantiam vel vigorem. Dilige ergo Dominum Deum tuum toto et pleno cordis affectu; dilige tota rationis vigilantia et circumspectione; dilige et tota virtute, ut nec mori pro ejus

amore pertimescas."—Sermo xx. 4.

[4] Ecc 12:13, literally translated. St. Bernard says: "Propter temetipsum, Deus, fecisti omnia, et qui esse vult sibi et non tibi, nihil esse incipit inter omnia. Deum time, et mandata ejus observa: hoc est omnis homo. Ergo si hoc est omnis homo, absque hoc nihil omnis homo."—Sermo xx. 1.

[5] Luk 8:15.

[6] Mat 26:10.

[7] Acts 11:24.

[8] Acts 4:37.

[9] Acts 9:26-27; Acts 11:25.

[10] That ■γαθ■ς bears the meaning assigned to it in the text in the New Testament appears from Luk 23:50, where Joseph of Arimathea is called ■ν■ρ ■γαθ■ς κα■ δ■καιος. The latter epithet is explained by the clause following: "he had not consented to their counsel and deed;" the former was shown to belong to him by his generous act in burying Jesus. A similar distinction between these words is taken in Rom 5:7, though Jowett denies it The same distinction is made in the ' Clementine Homilies,' xviii. 1-3. Both Simon Magus and Peter agree that the words denote different attributes, only Simon maintains they are incompatible. Peter defines ■γαθ■ς thus: ■γ■ φημ■ ■γαθ■ν ε■ναι τ■ν παρεκτικ■ν = largitor, giver. Eusebius, 'Theophania,' Book iv. cap. 33, referring to this parable, and to the souls that bring forth fruit, describes the latter as men whose heart is pure and whose mind is devoted, which is just our idea of the two epithets κ■λος and ■γαθ■ς. The words of Eusebius are: ο■ δ■ ■ναντ■ως ■κε■νοις διακε■μενοι, καθαρ■ ψυχ■ κα■ προαιρ■σει γνησ■■ τ■ν σωτ■ριον ■ποδεξ■μενοι σπ■ρον, κ. τ. λ. The demand that the kingdom be put first could not be stated in stronger terms than it was in the reply of Jesus to the disciple who asked permission to discharge the last office to a deceased parent. And the man who can comply with the hard requirement therein expressed may be taken as the type of the fruitful hearer, as the man who volunteered to become a disciple may be taken as the type of the stony ground hearer, and the man who desired leave to go and bid farewell to his friends as the type of the thorny ground hearer.[1]

[1] Luk 9:59-60 That such a man should be fruitful is not to be wondered at; any amount of fruitfulness may be expected of him—thirty, sixty, even an hundred fold. The fruitfulness of such a hearer Jesus regarded and represented as a matter of course. Such is the force of the words rendered so feebly in the Authorized version, "which also beareth fruit." The words mean "who of course, certainly, without fail, heareth fruit."[1] The Greek particle δ■ conveys the idea that the result is one which hardly needs to be specified, and which any one might anticipate. We have a similar use of the word by Paul in the well-known text "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price, therefore (δ■) glorify God in your body."[2] To glorify God the apostle considered the self-evident duty of men who have been redeemed by Christ; and he was impatient at the very thought of any Christian needing to be told what was his duty.

[1] Mat 13:23 : ὃς δ■ καρποφορε■. The rendering of the R. V., "who verily," is better, but not satisfactory. Passow finds the key to all the meanings of δ■ in δ■λος, regarding the two words as derived from the same root. Hartung ('Partikel-lehre') derives δ■ from ■δη, whom Meyer and

Morrison follow, the former rendering δς δ■ "and this was the one who," the latter "who at length." Besides this place in Matthew and thai in 1Co 6:1-20 referred to above, the particle occurs in three other places in the New Testament—in Luk 2:15, Acts 13:2, Acts 15:36. In the first of these the A. V. and the R. V. both render δ■ now. The shepherds say one to another," Let us now go even unto Bethlehem." In the second they both leave it untranslated; in the third the A. V. reads 'again,' the R. V. now. The best rendering in all three cases, that which brings out the emotional colouring, is come,—"come, let us go to Bethlehem;" "come, separate for me Barnabas and Saul;" "come, let us visit the brethren in every city where we preached." The particle also occurs combined with πο■ in Heb 2:16, when both in A. V. and R. V. it is rendered 'verily'; not happily, for verily conveys the idea of a very solemn assertion, whereas what is said is of the nature of a truism thrown in to relieve the argument. The meaning is: "For, you see, it is not of angels he taketh hold."

[2] 1Co 6:19-20.

Such, then, are the four classes of hearers pointed at in the parable of the Sower: the spiritually stupid, without thought or feeling in relation to the kingdom, in whom the seed of truth does not even germinate; the inconsiderately impulsive, whose feelings are easily moved, in whom the truth germinates and springs up, but quickly withers away; those who receive the truth into both mind and heart, but not as the one supremely important thing to which everything else must be subordinated, in whom the seed germinates, springs up, and continues to grow even to the green ear, but never ripens; and lastly, those who receive the doctrine of the kingdom with their whole heart, soul, and mind, in whom the truth takes root, grows, and in due season produces an abundant harvest of ripe fruit.

Whence these differences between hearers? and how far is it possible that one may pass from one class of hearers to another? Such questions Christ does not answer. He would teach one thing at a time: the fact of the difference in hearers, and the corresponding difference in the result of hearing. It is no part of an expositor's duty to discuss these questions, though in omitting to do so he is not to be regarded as denying their importance. Specially interesting is the question, whence the noble and good heart,—a topic on which some have expatiated at great length, though in some instances proceeding on a mistaken understanding of what is signified thereby.[1] There can be little doubt what answer the Evangelist, to whom we owe the preservation of the striking phrase, would have given to the question. We may learn this from the manner in which he relates the history of Lydia, who may be associated with Barnabas as a good sample of the fourth class of hearers. Luke describes Lydia as one "whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul."[2] The fact about Lydia was, not that up till then she had been peculiarly unsusceptible; the contrary is implied in the very fact of her, a Gentile by birth, being present at the meeting, worshipping God as a proselyte. The fact rather was that she was distinguished by a peculiar openness and receptivity of mind. She brought that openness with her to the meeting,—it was manifest in her very countenance while Paul spoke,—and the historian tells us where she got it. It was from the Lord.

[1] We refer specially to Edward Irving, who, in his 'Sermons on the Parable of the Sower,' already alluded to, goes at great length into the question of the preparation of the soil by a slow secular process in nations and in individuals for the reception of the truth. He takes the phrase "good and honest heart" as denoting a sort of natural goodness before faith, evading the charge of

Pelagianism by maintaining that such goodness is the product of God's working. The discussion is very interesting, and the truth taught,—viz. that there is a Providential preparation without which Christianity is not likely to come to much, either in individuals or in nations,—in its own place very important. On this subject there are some suggestive remarks in Martensen's 'Dogmatics.' The Providential preparation this author calls the drawing of the Father, and his doctrine is that it profits a people little that the gospel is preached to it, that the Son draws it to the Father, unless it has come to such a point in Its development that the Father in turn can draw it to the Son (p. 347).

[2] Acts 16:14.

01.03. Chapter 2. The Tares and the Drag-Net

Chapter 2.

The Tares and the Drag-Net Or, a Mixture of Good and Evil to be in the Kingdom Till the End. The question whether the seven parables contained in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew were all spoken at one time is one on which opinion has been much divided. If the existence of a connection more or less intimate between these parables could settle the question there would be no room for dispute. For, while setting aside as a mere exegetical extravagance the view of those who find in this group of parables, in prophetic form, an epitome of the Church's history from the time of our Lord till the end of the world,[1] we must admit the existence of a connection between them to this extent at least, that they exhibit mutually complementary aspects of the kingdom of heaven in its general nature, and in its progress and fortunes on this earth. The first, second, and seventh of the group—the parables of the Sower, the Tares, and the Net—teach us that the kingdom of God, as a phenomenon taking its place in the world's history, is destined to be in various respects and for various reasons an imperfect and disappointing thing, coming far short of the ideal. In the first parable the shortcoming takes the form of an unsatisfactory abortive reception of the Word of the kingdom by many individual hearers, due to the moral condition of the recipients; while in the second and the seventh it takes the form of a mixture of good and evil not in the hearts of individuals, but in the society composed of the collective body of professed believers, some being genuine citizens of the holy commonwealth, and others counterfeit The third and fourth parables of the series—those of the Mustard-seed and the Leaven—exhibit the history of the kingdom on its bright side as a spiritual movement destined to advance, by a steady onward course of development, from a small beginning to a great ending, worldwide in its extent, and thoroughgoing in its intensive pervasive effect. The remaining two parables—those of the Hid Treasure and the Precious Pearl—exhibit the kingdom in its own ideal nature as a thing of absolute, incomparable worth, the highest good, worthy to be received, loved, and served with the whole heart as the summum bonum, whatever reception it may in fact meet with at the hands of men.

[1] Bengel, Greswell, etc. The fact of a connection is thus apparent, but it does not settle the disputed question alluded to. Two alternatives are possible. The connection between the parables might have led Christ to speak them all at one time, but it may also merely have led Matthew to relate them all in one place, though not all spoken at the same time; in accordance with his habit of grouping together materials connected by affinity of thought. That we are not shut up to the former of these alternatives, is sufficiently evinced by the fact that other parables can be pointed to which are undoubtedly closely connected in their subject-matter, and which nevertheless we have no reason to regard as uttered together; as for example, those relating to the subject of work and wages in the kingdom, the parables of the Talents, the Pounds, and the Hours.[1] These together constitute a complete doctrine on the subject to which they relate,—and a teacher of methodic habit would probably have spoken them all at once; but Christ uttered them as occasion required. And that they fit into each other is due to their truth, not to their being parts of one lesson given in a

single didactic effort.

[1] Mat 25:14; Luk 19:12; Mat 20:1.

While thus content to leave the question undecided as regards the whole group of seven taken collectively, we are strongly of opinion that at least three of the seven were spoken at one time; even on the day when Jesus opened His mouth in parables sitting in a boat on the Galilean Lake. The three are—the parable of the Sower and the two to be considered in the present chapter. These three are connected not merely in a general way, as relating to the chequered fortunes of the kingdom in this world, but specially, as all illustrating the aspect of the kingdom then present to the Saviour's thoughts,—the dark, melancholy side of things; and as suitable alike to the moral and the physical situation: to the moral, as addressed to a multitude comprising examples of all the various classes of hearers described in the parable of the Sower, and exhibiting the mixture of good and evil, of genuine and counterfeit discipleship, typified by the wheat and tares in the same field, and the good and bad fish in one net; to the physical, as spoken amid scenes where agricultural and piscatorial operations were daily carried on.[1]

[1] Keim takes the same view. He thinks that parables 3 and 4 (Mustard-seed and Leaven) went originally together; also 5 and 6 (Treasure and Pearl); likewise 1 and 2; perhaps also 7 (Sower, Tares, and Net),—thus forming one group visibly related closely in fundamental view and expression. He thinks it not improbable that the Treasure and the Pearl went along with the last group of three, because it was not Christ's way in a popular discourse to give merely the facts or the metaphysics of the kingdom, but to aim at calling forth a movement of the human will, which would be done by the parables of the Treasure and the Pearl. On the other hand, he thinks the parable of the Mustard-seed and the Leaven were certainly spoken at another time; founding not only on the fact that they occur in different historical connections in Luke's Gospel, but also on their hopeful, triumphant character, so different from those of the Sower, the Tares, and the Net (Vide 'Jesu von Nazara,' ii. 446-9). Farrar thinks that along with the Sower went no other parables, "except perhaps the simple and closely analogous ones of the Grain of Mustardseed, and of the Blade, the Ear, and the Full Corn in the Ear,... perhaps with these the similitude of the Candle" ('Life of Christ,' i. 324-5).

Tolerably sure as to the historical connection of these three parables, we are still more confident as to the propriety of grouping together for joint consideration the latter two of the three—those of the Tares and the Net. They are so like that on a superficial view one might be inclined to pronounce their didactic import identical. They do certainly teach the same general truth, viz. that a mixture of good and evil will prevail in the kingdom of God on this earth while the world lasts; and that this mixture, while in itself to be deplored, is nevertheless a thing which for wise reasons is to be patiently borne with in view of the great final separation. This being the leading lesson of both, the two parables really constitute but one theme; and to treat them in separate chapters were simply to repeat thoughts that can be most effectively uttered once for all. These parables, however, are not without their distinctive features, which forbid us to regard the one as a mere repetition of the other. A minor point of difference is that in the parable of the Tares the presence of evil in the kingdom is regarded as due to the deliberate action of an evil-minded agent, while in the parable of the Net it appears due rather to accident. A more important distinction is that while in the former parable the separation of the evil from the good is represented as for certain reasons

not desirable, in the latter it is tacitly treated as impossible. The good and the bad fish must remain together in the net till they have been dragged to land. This difference if pressed would lead to another, viz. as to the character of the evil element. The tares might be held to represent manifested recognisable evil, the bad fish unmanifested hidden evil—a distinction answering to that taken by the Apostle Paul in the words: "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment, and some men they follow after."[1] Another point of distinction has been indicated, viz. that while both parables teach a present mixture of evil and good, and an eventual separation, they differ as to the truth emphasised in each respectively, the foreground of the one picture showing the temporary mixture, that of the other the ultimate separation. It is, however, possible to exaggerate this distinction; for in the parable of the Tares the future judgment is very distinctly described, and in the parable of the Net the idea that the mixture must last till the process of development is completed is not without recognition. The net is not drawn to the shore till it is full. The filling of the net answers to the ripening of the grain as the sign that the crisis has come. It is, doubtless, a far less apt sign; still the thing to be noted is that it is intended to serve that purpose. The net is not to be pulled prematurely to shore; it must be let fully out and allowed to have its full sweep, that it may catch as many as possible.

[1] 1Ti 5:25 We now proceed to the interpretation of the two parables. Our attention shall be first and principally occupied by the Parable of the Tares The place and the time being probably the same as in the case of the parable of the Sower, Jesus put before His hearers another parable, saying: The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed 'tares'[1] among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade sprang up and brought forth fruit, then appeared also the tares. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? Whence, then, hath it tares? And he said unto them, An enemy[2] did this. And the servants say unto him, Wilt thou, then, that we go and gather them up? But he saith, No; lest while ye gather the tares, ye root up the wheat along with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and in the season of harvest I will say to the reapers, Collect first the tares, and bind them into bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn.—Mat 13:24-30.

[1] The word tares is a most misleading rendering of τ■ ζιζ■νια, and we have printed it within inverted commas to indicate the fact. The R. V. retains the rendering of the A. V., probably from the difficulty of finding another word that exactly conveys the meaning. For remarks on the nature of the plant intended see further on.

[2] ■χθρ■ς ■νθρωπος, a hostile man. This is one of the most difficult in the whole series of our Lord's parables. As Luther remarks, it appears very simple and easy to understand, especially as the Lord Himself has explained it and told us what the field and the good seed and the tares are; but there is such diversity of opinion among interpreters that much attention is needed to hit the right meaning.[1] The expositor's task is none the less arduous that the parable has been mixed up with great controversies on such momentous topics as Church discipline and religious toleration, and the duty of civil and ecclesiastical rulers in reference to heresy and heretics. On such questions a man's opinions are very apt to be influenced by the time in which he lives and the community to which he belongs, and his interpretation of any portion of Scripture that has been made to do service on either side is only too likely to exhibit manifest traces of the bias thence received. With reference to the parable before us it may be said that no one has any chance of

understanding it who is not prepared to admit that the Christian Church in general is in many respects very different from what her Head desired, and that the particular branch of the Church to which he himself belongs—nay, that he himself as an individual office-bearer therein—may have sinned grievously against the spirit of wise patience which the parable inculcates.

[1] Hauspostillen, 'Predigt über das Evangelium Mat 13:24-30.'

Trying to bear these things duly in mind, let us inquire what is the primâ facie impression produced by the parable. Is it not this? That a mixture of good and evil men—of genuine and counterfeit disciples—is to be expected in the kingdom of God on earth, and to be regarded, as inevitable, with patience, though not with complacency; and that as this mixture is in itself, if not in all respects, yet at least in the main, an evil, the children of the kingdom are to comfort themselves under it with the expectation of an eventual separation, which they are assured will certainly come to pass in due season. Thus far the parable seems plain enough, but there are points on which one would gladly receive explanations. The tares, who precisely are they? Then, as to the toleration of the tares, is there to be no limit thereto? and if there is, where is the line to be drawn? Then what does the toleration amount to? Does it exclude Church discipline for errors in opinion and faults in conduct? or is Church discipline to take its course even to the extent of thrusting offenders out of the Church, the toleration prescribed consisting simply in permitting the excommunicated to remain in the world? We eagerly turn to Christ's own explanations for a solution of our doubts, but only to be disappointed. These explanations are too elementary to meet the wants of those who, like ourselves, look back over a long course of historical development, and wish to know how far that course is in accordance with Christ's mind as expressed in the parable. They were meant for those who had no idea of the import of the parable, and therefore contain little more than the mere alphabet of interpretation. A slight inspection will suffice to convince us of this. After dismissing the multitude, Jesus, in answer to a request from His disciples, gave the following interpretation of 'The Parable of the Tares of the Field.'

He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; and the field is the world; and the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; but the tares are the sons of the wicked one,[1] and the enemy that sowed them is the devil; and the harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are angels. As then the tares are collected and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of the world. The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who do iniquity, and they shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.[2] Then shall the righteous shine out as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears, let him hear.—Mat 13:37-43.

[1] Or of wickedness. The R. V. here, as in the Lord's Prayer, renders το■ πονηρο■ "the evil one." Goebel ('Die Parabeln Jesu,' p. 80) adduces in favour of its being neuter, that ο■ υ■ο■ τ. π. is parallel to ο■ υ■ο■ τ■ς βασιλε■ας; also that a special clause is introduced to indicate the devil as the source of the wild growth.

[2] The articles indicate that these were familiar features in the picture of Gehenna. From this explanation, we learn that in the present parable the wheat and the tares are persons, while in the last parable—that of the Sower—the wheat is the word of the kingdom; and that the soil is the world in which such persons live, while in the Sower, the soil is the mind of those who hear the word. We learn, further, that the tares are the children of the wicked one, the good seed being the

children of the kingdom. Now this is a very general, and indefinite statement, which leaves us free to regard the tares either as spurious Christians, or as evil men, whether professing Christianity or not. If the more general meaning be taken, then the juxtaposition of wheat and tares is in the world, as the common abode of all sorts of men, not in the Church; and the lesson to Christians is the very general one of patience under the trials inseparable from life on earth. Yet, again, we learn from this explanation of the parable given by Christ, that the reapers who make the final separation are the angels; but we are not told who the servants were who inquired Whence these tares? Are the angels the servants also? If so, then the parable contains no direct instruction as to the duty of the Church, but simply an intimation of God's purpose in providence to permit a mixture of good and evil men in the world until the end of this dispensation. The only lesson for the Church is the implied one of acquiescence in God's will. The only thing in the explanation which turns the scale in favour of a more specific conception of the drift of the parable is the expression, "gather out of His kingdom?[1] If the things that offend, and they who do iniquity, are to be gathered out of the kingdom, it is a natural inference that they were previously in it; in other words, that the tares are Christians at least in profession.

[1] Mat 13:41. συλλ■ξουσιν ■κ τ■ς βασιλε■ας.

We are thus thrown back on the parable itself to see whether we cannot find more precise indications of the character of the evil element. And on looking narrowly, we do find certain particulars which tend to prove that the evil element consists not of bad men in general co-existing with Christians in the same world till the state of probation closes, but of counterfeit Christians. First and chief, there is the name of the noxious plant which spoils the crop—ζιζ■νια; than which none better could be found, if the intention were to describe counterfeit sons of the kingdom, and none less felicitous, if the design were merely to denote bad men in general. The word is one for which it is difficult to find an English equivalent—the nearest approach to it is darnel;[1] but there can be no doubt as to the kind of plant it is employed to designate. It is a plant so like wheat, that in the early stages of its growth the two can scarcely be distinguished; so like that it could even be imagined that the stalks of it, which appeared in fields sown with wheat, sprang not from separate seed, but from wheat grains that had suffered degeneracy through untoward influences of soil or season. This opinion actually was entertained by the inhabitants of Palestine in our Lord's day, as it is still; and it is reflected in the Hebrew name for the plant in question, from which the Greek word is formed. The Talmudic equivalent for ζιζ■νια is ■■■■■■■■ signifying the Dastard plant, from ■■■■■■■, to commit adultery; the idea underlying the word being that the earth, in producing from good seed such a degenerate crop, played the harlot, so to speak. Those who have the best means of knowing, say that this idea is a mistaken one;[2] but it is at least of value as a testimony to the close resemblance between the wheat and the 'tares' implying, as it does, that the plants are so like, that the theory that tares are simply wheat in a degenerate form, sprung from good wheat seed, might be plausibly entertained.

[1] Greswell thinks we have no equivalent, and simply transfers the Greek word, putting it into English form—zizan. Scripture botanists identify ζιζ■νια with lolium temulentum, so called because it produces vertigo.

[2] Thomson, 'The Land and the Book,' p. 421, argues against the notion as incredible. This theory is certainly not proceeded upon in the parable, which represents the tares as springing from

separate seed sown after the wheat seed had been cast into the ground. But a resemblance is implied in the description of the tares not less close than if the theory were true; and this is the second point to which we ask attention. "When the blade," we read, "was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also."[1] In other words, when the wheat and the tares had got the length of being in ear, then, and not till then, did the tares appear as tares, and were clearly seen to be tares. This description, which well-informed travellers declare to be very exactly in accordance with fact,[2] surely suggests a closer connection between the two classes of men, represented by the two crops respectively, than subsists between good and bad men living together in the same world. If by the bad crop had been meant merely bad men in general, why emphasise so pointedly the non-distinguishableness of the two crops till the time of the earing? and we may add, why select a plant to represent the evil element so like wheat in the early stage of growth? why not be content with the thorns, which in the parable of the Sower choked the good seed, and prevented it from bringing forth fruit unto perfection? It is impossible for any unbiassed mind to refuse acquiescence in the opinion so well expressed by Lightfoot,[3] that the wheat and the tares signify not simply good and bad men, but good and bad Christians—both distinct from other men as wheat grain is distinct from all other seeds, but distinct from each other as genuine is distinct from bastard wheat.

[1] Mat 13:26. τ■τε ■φ■νη κα■ τ■ ζιζανια. They then appeared as tares.

[2] Thomson, 'The Land and the Book,' p. 420, says: "In those parts, where the grain has headed out, they have done the same, and there a child cannot mistake them for wheat or barley; but where both are less developed, the closest scrutiny will often fail to detect them. I cannot do it at all with any confidence."

[3] Horæ Hebraicæ, in Evangelium Matthæi. The subsequent sowing of the field with tares,[1] and the ascription of this act to an enemy, are two additional features of the parable which point towards the same conclusion. What need of an additional sowing in order to get a crop of bad men in the world, living side by side with the children of the kingdom? Bad men abounded before the kingdom of God, which Christ came to found, appeared; and they were certain to abound after its appearance, without one taking pains for that purpose. But if what was meant by Jesus, when He spoke of tares as likely to arise when His kingdom was planted, was counterfeit forms of Christianity—forms of evil which would not have appeared had not Christianity appeared, and manifesting themselves as perversions of Christian truth—then we can understand why He spoke of an after-sowing of the field. Then, too, we can understand why He said with such emphasis "an enemy"—or still more strongly in the interpretation, "the devil"—"hath done this." For it is characteristic of an enemy animated by diabolical malice, not only to do mischief, but to do it in the most vexatious possible manner. But what more vexatious than to have one's crop of wheat spoiled, not merely by a crop of noxious plants growing up in the midst of it, but by a crop which mocks the husbandman's hope by its specious resemblance to the crop of genuine grain he has taken all needful pains to raise? To do this is a feat worthy of him who for wicked ends transforms himself into an angel of light, and who, in the quaint words of Luther, cares not to dwell in waste dry places, but prefers to sit in heaven.[2]

[1] That the tares were sown after the wheat is evident even from the T. R., which represents the enemy as sowing them among the wheat; but it is made specially prominent when, in place of the

■σπειρε of the T. R. in Mat 13:25, we substitute the reading ■π■σπειρεν approved by critics, rendered in the Vulgate superseminavit—sowed upon the wheat previously sown.

[2] Hauspostillen, 'Predigt über Mat 13:24-30.'

Taking these features of the parable, then, along with the statement in the interpretation that the scandals are to be gathered out of the kingdom, we cannot doubt that the mixture of good and evil elements spoken of is a mixture to be exhibited, not in the world merely, but in the kingdom itself as it appears on this earth; and that the evil element is not bad men in general, but counterfeit Christians; or, if you please, anti-Christian tendencies, perversions of Christian truth into forms of error kindred in appearance, utterly diverse in spirit; as, for example, of spiritual authority into priestcraft, of salvation by grace into Antinomian licence, or of self-denying devotion into a gloomy asceticism. We do not, of course, mean that the tares are to be restricted to corruptions in doctrine. It is more probable that Christ had in view chiefly, not to say exclusively, men of evil life, by their conduct an offence and stumbling-block to faith. It is indeed a natural enough suggestion that the two expressions, "the scandals," and "those that do iniquity," refer to two classes of evil; the former to heresies, the latter to all forms of un-Christian practice: possibly united in the same persons, men at once errorists and evil livers.[1] But we admit that we learn to put this double construction on the words from history rather than from the words themselves. The dogmatic idea of heresy is a creation of a later age; the word in the New Testament denotes a moral offence. At the same time it has to be remembered that there are some opinions which have their root in a corrupt moral condition, which may therefore be included under the scandals alluded to.

[1] So Grotius. He remarks that after the first pure stage of the Church's existence there began to mix themselves with Christians: "Duo hominum vitiosorum genera, alii prava docentes, alii puram professionem vita turpi dehonestantes. Prioris generis homines σκ■νδαλα hic vocantur."—Annotationes in Novum Testamentum. Goebel finds in the text a reference only to evil life. The scandals are the deeds of wicked men. The tares then are in the kingdom. But if so, how is the direction to let the tares alone until the harvest to be construed? absolutely or relatively, to the exclusion of Church censures, or, these being assumed as in their own sphere valid, at once lawful, beneficial, and obligatory? This is the quaestio vexata—a question all the harder to answer that the conflicting interests of purity and patience are both worthy of all respect, so that no solution of the difficulty which sacrifices either interest to the other can satisfy any earnest mind. Various attempts, at once historically and exegetically interesting, have been made to solve the problem. We may note some of the more outstanding.

I. First comes the Donatist solution. The Donatists, whose aim was to make the Church as pure in reality as it is in idea, got over the difficulty very simply, by denying the view of the tares which creates it, viz. that they signify spurious Christians known to be such, yet for certain reasons to be tolerated. The point in the parable and its interpretation on which they laid chief stress, was the statement, "the field is the world," and the lesson they drew from the parable was, Bear patiently the evil that is in the world,—a duty involving no obligation to tolerate evil in the Church. When their opponents pointed to the parable of the Net in proof that Christ contemplated a mixture of good and evil in the Church as a characteristic of its state antecedent to the end, they admitted that such a mixture was implied in that parable, but they evaded the force of the fact as an argument against their position by saying that it was only such a mixture as was due to ignorance

on the part of the Church authorities. No one can tell what sort of fish are in a net while it is under the water, and in like manner there may be men in the Church of unholy character not known to be unholy, and their presence argues nothing in favour of tolerating within the Church men known to be unholy.[1] For the reasons already given we cannot acquiesce in this solution. The tares, we have seen, are counterfeit Christians subsisting side by side with genuine Christians within the kingdom. Nor does the statement "the field is the world" in the least invalidate the argument in support of that position. The field indeed is the world, and the statement is one of the numerous passages in the teaching of Christ which show that in His conception the kingdom of God, whose advent He announced, was designed to cover the whole earth, and the gospel He preached good news for all mankind. But while the field to be sown is the whole world, the field actually sown is the kingdom of God, as it exists in the earth at any given time, and the tares are within it; not of the kingdom as it is in God's sight, but in the kingdom as a visible society.

[1] Augustine gives an account of this controversy as to the interpretation of the parable between the Catholics and the Donatists in the tract 'Ad Donatistas post Collationem.'

2. We notice next the Catholic solution of later times. This view, while admitting that the mixture spoken of in the parable exists in the kingdom and not merely in the world, and yet contending that heretics might not merely be excommunicated but be put to death, sought to reconcile existing practice with the prohibition against pulling up the tares by laying chief stress on the reason assigned for the prohibition—"lest while ye gather the tares ye root up also the wheat with them;" which was interpreted to mean, Then and then only must the tares be left alone when there is a risk of the wheat being uprooted; in other circumstances the tares may be gathered up at once. Aquinas, in stating this view, adopts the language of Augustine to the following effect: "Where that fear (of uprooting the wheat) has no place, but there is perfect security for the certain stability of the wheat, that is, when the offence of every one is so known, and appears execrable to all, that it either has no defenders, or none such as might cause a schism, let not the severity of discipline slumber."[1] Whether this conversion of an apparently absolute into a conditional prohibition be legitimate or not is a question for serious consideration, but there can be no doubt that the words quoted from Augustine by the great mediæval doctor point out a real and most important limitation of Church discipline. Where there is a risk of a schism being caused by severe dealing with offenders, whether in matters of faith or in matters of conduct, the Church is not only entitled but bound to consider the question—Which of the two evils is most to be feared, the toleration of reputed corruption in doctrine or practice, or a rupture in the body ecclesiastical? It is not difficult to imagine other instances in which a prudent regard to the Church's highest interests might dictate the policy of letting the exercise of ecclesiastical censures fall into abeyance. Jerome points out one, when, commenting on the prohibition against uprooting the tares, and on the reason annexed, he says: "We are exhorted not quickly to cut off a brother, because it can happen that he who to-day is depraved by noxious doctrine may to-morrow repent and begin to defend the truth."[2] It is well for the Church when its office-bearers are able to apply wisely these two principles enunciated by two of the most esteemed among the ancient Fathers.

[1] "Cum metus iste non subest, sed omnino de frumentorum certa stabilitate certa securitas manet, id est, quando ita cujusque crimen notum est, et omnibus execrabile apparet, ut vel nullos prorsus vel non tales habeat defensores, per quos possit schisma contingere, non dormiat severitas disciplinæ." 'August, contra Epistolam Parmeniani,' lib. iii., cap. ii., 13. The words are

quoted by Aquinas in the ’Summa’ 2a 2as Ques. x., Art. viii.

[2] Comment in Matthæum.

3. Coming down to the time of the Reformation, we may select for notice the interpretations given respectively by Luther and Beza. Luther, in a sermon on the parable, asks two questions—whether the Church may use her authority and excommunicate those who create scandal, and whether the civil magistrate may use the sword against heretics. The former question he answers in the affirmative; and he reconciles his view with the prohibition in the parable by remarking that what is prohibited is the destruction of the tares. Those who exercise authority in the Church may excommunicate but not kill heretics. His second question Luther also answers in the affirmative, reconciling his answer with the parable by remarking that the Lord, speaks of the kingdom of God, and of what those who exercise authority there may do; so that the prohibition does not mean heretics shall not be slain, but merely they shall not be slain by the ministers of the Gospel.[1] This interpretation of the great German reformer needs no elaborate refutation. It may be answered in a single sentence. What the Master in the parable prohibits is not, as Luther alleges, the destruction of the tares, but their removal from the field, their separation from the wheat.

[1] Hauspostillen, Predigt über das Evang. Mat 13:24-30.

4. Beza, while acquiescing in Luther’s doctrine that heretics may be proceeded against by the censures of the Church and the sword of the civil magistrate, adopted an entirely different method of harmonising that doctrine with the teaching of the parable. He expounded his views of the parable in a tract in defence of the use of the sword against heresy by the civil magistrate, in connection with the burning of Servetus; his purpose being to reply to an argument drawn from the parable by his opponents in favour of religious toleration. These were, in brief, as follows:—The tares are not heretics merely, but all sorts of offenders, and therefore if the parable contains a prohibition against the killing of heretics by the civil magistrate, it equally contains a prohibition against the execution of all sorts of evil-doers,—which is absurd. But the parable in reality contains no prohibition, at least none directed either to ecclesiastical authorities or to the civil magistrate: the servants are the angels, and the parable represents God as telling them on what method He is to conduct His ordinary providential government. "As in the beginning of the history of Job, so here, the Lord is shown conversing with His angels concerning the future state of His Church in this world." That state in general is to be one of tribulation, the children of the kingdom mingling in the intercourse of life with unbelieving and ungodly men, and enduring much at their hands. The only lesson for Christians to be inferred from the parable is the duty of bearing patiently with this general condition of things. Against the appropriate punishment of individual evil-doers, whether in Church or in State, it says not a word. It is assumed that such punishment is to be inflicted as far as possible; only we are given to understand that when ecclesiastical and civil officers have done their utmost, the world will after all be a most ungenial home for the children of the kingdom. After the remarks already made in discussing the question who are the tares, we deem it quite unnecessary to enter into detailed criticism of this interpretation. We only observe how unlikely it is that Christ should utter a parable teaching so very general and commonplace a truth at the time and in the circumstances in which there is reason to believe the parable was spoken; and how unlikely, if He desired to convey such a lesson, that He would put the truth in so unsuitable a form.

Why call wicked men in general tares?—why not rather, as on other occasions, speak of them as wolves, to whose violence His sheep are to be exposed in this world? If we desire to know how our Lord spoke to His disciples of the tribulations they should encounter in the world, we must turn not to this parable, but to His discourse to the twelve in connection with the Galilean mission,[1] or to His farewell address to them on the eve of His Passion.[2]

[1] Mat 10:16.

[2] John 16:1-33.

5. Only one other solution of the problem now under consideration calls for mention, viz. that hinted at by Jerome and favoured by many modern theologians of high reputation. This view finds the key to the interpretation of the parable in the likeness of the tares to the wheat and the risk thence arising of pulling up wheat by mistake.[1] The words, "lest while ye gather up the tares ye root up also the wheat with them," it takes to mean, not "lest ye pull up that which though tares to-day may be wheat to-morrow," but "lest in pulling up that which ye fancy to be tares ye uproot that which in reality is wheat." The reason for the prohibition being thus understood, it is of course assumed that when there is no room for doubt as to the noxious character of the plants mixed with the wheat, they may at once be removed. Now it is undoubtedly true that there is a close resemblance between the tares and the wheat, and that there is an intention in the parable to emphasise the fact. It is meant that we should note that tares, as Bengel remarks, have a much better appearance than thorns and thistles.[2] It may also be admitted, as the same writer observes, that from the toleration of tares we may not argue for the toleration of thorns[3] and thistles, which, as we are told by another patron of this view, only a wretched farmer would suffer in his fields.[4] Nor is it difficult to imagine forms of spiritual evil answering to the tares which have to be tolerated, as distinct from forms answering to thorns and thistles which may not be tolerated. We are quite willing to accept the description of the spiritual tares given by the author last referred to: "They are the false brethren," the "dogs," the "concision," the "lying apostles who, like the devil himself, transform themselves into angels of light—men, in short, whose corrupt conduct is not altogether hidden from the true servants of the Lord, but who yet, with all their badness, show a certain skill and moderation, so that no truly Christian society has the courage to subject them to Church censures."[5] But the difficulty which stands in the way of our accepting this interpretation is that in the parable it seems plainly implied that at the stage of growth at which the crop had arrived, the difference between wheat and tares could be plainly recognised, so that if it had been desirable the servants could have taken out each individual stalk of tares without mistake, at least without mistake arising from ignorance, for of course mistakes through carelessness would be very likely to happen. And further, the evil apprehended does not appear to be that wheat may be pulled up by mistake, but that wheat may be pulled up along with the tares, owing to the intertwining of their roots in the soil. It is not said, Lest ye root up wheat instead of tares, but, Lest ye uproot the wheat along with them.[6] We cannot avoid the conclusion, therefore, that whatever lesson our Lord desired to teach, He meant to apply not merely to forms of evil of doubtful tendency, but to forms of evil whose character and tendency can no longer be doubted.[7]

[1] Jerome says: "Inter triticum et zizania, quod nos appellamus lolium, quamdiu herba est, et nondum culmus venit ad spicam, grandis similitudo est, et in discernendo aut nulla aut perdifficilis distantia."—'Comment. in Matthæum.'

[2] "Zizania majorem speciem habent quam cardui et spinae."—Gnomon.

[3] "A tolerantia illorum ad horum non valet consequential—Gnomon.

[4] De Valenti, 'Die Parabeln des Herrn.'

[5] De Valenti, i., p. 163.

[6] ■μα α■το■ς: ■μα is not a preposition but an adverb. Meyer translates the words "at the same time by them" (zugleich durch sie),—taking α■το■ς as an instrumental dative. The idea is that the uprooted tares carry along with them the wheat, owing to the solidarity of the two in the soil.

[7] Besides Bengel and De Valenti, may be mentioned as supporting the foregoing interpretation, Tholuck, who in an interesting discussion of the parable in the 'Literarischer Anzeiger' for 1847, in a review of Trench's work on the Parables, goes very fully into the history of opinion. Trench himself favours this interpretation, though not adopting it exclusively. But how, then, are we to get over the difficulty with which all the foregoing interpretations unsuccessfully grapple? Simply by bearing duly in mind this very elementary consideration, that Christ is not here laying down a rule for the regulation of ecclesiastical practice, but inculcating the cultivation of a certain spirit—the spirit of wise patience; a spirit to be cherished by all men in all spheres, civil and ecclesiastical, but especially by Christians, the children of the kingdom. What has been well said concerning the Sermon on the Mount applies to this parable: everything in this discourse refers us to the world of temper and disposition.[1] Beza was not wrong in saying that the lesson of the parable is a lesson of patience; his error lay in restricting the scope of the lesson to the tribulations Christians encounter in the world. The lesson applies not only to the evils in the world, but also, and more particularly, and chiefly, to the evils in the Church; it applies to the bearing and behaviour of Christians towards these evils, however exhibited, whether in formal Church discipline, or in private and social intercourse. The parable neither prohibits nor fixes limits to ecclesiastical discipline, but teaches a spirit which will affect that part, as well as all other parts, of religious conduct; and which, had it prevailed in the Church more than it ever has prevailed, would have made the Church's history very different from what it is. A recent writer on the parables, who interprets this parable as Beza did, while of course having no sympathy with the persecuting principles advocated by the sixteenth century divine, tries to shut into a corner those who hold that the parable inculcates a tolerant attitude towards evil in the Church by a peremptory logic of alternatives, thus: the prohibition against pulling up the tares is absolute; therefore either Church discipline is absolutely prohibited, or it does not bear upon discipline at all.[2] The futility of this Either-or logic may be very easily shown by a parallel case. In the Sermon on the Mount the Preacher says, "Swear not at all." Are we to say, This is either an absolute prohibition of oath-taking, or it has no bearing on the subject of oaths? Certainly not. The precept does not absolutely prohibit oaths, and yet it does bear most closely on the subject of oaths. It means, let there be no occasion, so far as you are concerned, for swearing oaths; let your utterances be absolutely truthful, your yea, yea, and your nay, nay. It is a precept whose importance every Christian acknowledges, yet few dream of its being incompatible with the actual swearing of oaths on proper occasions for confirmation of one's word, and to put an end to doubt and strife. For however truthful I may be, I know that there are many false men in the world, and that therefore distrust is excusable—distrust even towards myself, seeing it is hard to know true men from knaves. Even so, while the world lasts, there will be need and room in the Church for the exercise

of discipline, that the reality of Christian life in the holy commonwealth may come as near as possible to its high ideal; and yet the lesson of our parable will always be valid as a protest against all Church censures springing out of an impatient view of the evils inseparable from the kingdom of God in its present earthly state, and as an admonition to those who have authority in the kingdom to exercise their authority in accordance with the rule so well expressed by Augustine: "Let discipline preserve patience, and let patience temper discipline, and let both be referred to charity, so that on the one hand an undisciplined patience may not foster iniquity, and on the other hand an impatient discipline may not dissipate unity."[3] [1] Martensen, 'Christian Ethics,' p. 382.

[2] Arnot on the 'Parables of our Lord,' p. 95. This respected author accuses Dr. Trench of an Erastian bias in his way of applying the parable to the subject of discipline. But bias in an opposite direction is very manifest in his own case. He assumes that the ecclesiastical practice of his own Church in such matters is unquestionably right: the possibility of the contrary does not seem to have entered into his mind. This is the secret of his partiality for the Donatist interpretation of the words, "the field is the world." This example may illustrate what we said at the commencement, that a man has no chance of understanding this parable who is not prepared to admit the possibility of his own Church, yea, of himself, sinning against the Lord's mind as set forth therein. There are certainly two sides to the question how far a jealous exercise of discipline is wise or unwise.

[3] 'Ad Donatistas post Collationem,' iv. 6. The philosophy of this patience with evil prevalent in the visible Church is not fully given in the parable; at most we have but a hint of the rationale, though it is a hint which suggests much more than it says to those who understand. Before remarking on this pregnant hint we cannot but advert in passing to the marked contrast between the implied teaching of the parable of the Sower and that of this parable, as to the mode of dealing with evil appearing in connection with the work of the kingdom. The implied teaching of the former parable, in reference to the thorns, is: Get rid of them, else there will be no crop of good grain. The expressed teaching of the present parable with reference to the tares is: Let them alone till the good grain is ripe. Whence this difference? Hence: the evil in the one case is within ourselves, in the other case it is without us, in other men. The doctrine of the one parable is, Tolerating evil in ourselves is deadly to our spiritual interest; that of the other, Tolerating evil in others is not necessarily so—may even be profitable as an exercise promoting the growth of the graces of patience and charity. Thus viewed, the lessons of the two parables are not only mutually compatible, but in harmony with the whole tenour of our Lord's ethical teaching. On the one hand, He ever inculcated inexorable severity in self-judgment, saying, e.g. in the Sermon on the Mount, "If thy right eye or thy right hand offend thee, pluck it out, or cut it off and cast it from thee;"[1] on the other, with reference to our fellow-men, He gave this counsel in the very same discourse, "Judge not, that ye be not judged."[2] Many are slow to understand the grounds of these diverse counsels, and appear to think themselves as responsible for the sins of their brethren as for their own; not to say more, for there are some of whom more could be said, viz. that they behold a mote in their brother's eye, and consider not the beam that is in their own eye.[3] It is, indeed, a question deserving serious consideration on the part of all Christians, what are the limits of responsibility in connection with the sins of fellow-members of the same religious communion? That there is a certain amount of responsibility cannot be denied, for the Church is not an hotel in which men may sit side by side at table, without knowing, or caring to know, anything about the character of a

fellow-guest. But, on the other hand, the responsibility is a strictly limited one, coming far short of the responsibility lying on each man for his own conduct; for if the Christian Church is not an hotel, as little is it a club whose members may claim and use the right of excluding from membership every one who is not in all respects a person according to their taste and fancy. This club theory of Church fellowship, however, is much to the liking of many. It was the theory in favour with the Donatists, who held that mixed communions were infectious, and that the pious were polluted by fellowship with the profane. Against this ultra-puritanic theory the quaint observations of Fuller may aptly be cited: "St. Paul saith, 'But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread,' but enjoins not men to examine others, which was necessary if bad communicants do defile. It neither makes the cheer or welcome the worse to sit next to him at God's table who wants a wedding garment; for he that touches his person, but disclaims his practices, is as far from him as the east from the west, yea, as heaven from hell. In bodily diseases one may be infected without his knowledge, against his will: not so in spiritual contagions, where acceditur ad vitium corruptionis vitio consensionis, and none can be infected against their consent."[4] [1] Mat 5:29-30. See also Mat 18:8-9, where the counsel is repeated in the sermon on Humility.

[2] Mat 7:1.

[3] Mat 7:13.

[4] Thomas Fuller: 'The Profane State,' bk. v. chap ii., on The Rigid Donatists. The Latin quotation in the above extract is from Augustine 'Contra Donatistas post Collationem.' In the same tract Augustine expresses the principle of limited responsibility in terms first used by the Donatists in self-defence, and then turned against them by the Catholics: "Nec causæ causa, nec personæ persona præjudicat."

Let us now look at the hints contained in the parable at a philosophy of the patience it inculcates towards the evil existing in the visible Church. "Nay," said the householder to the servants who proposed that the tares should at once be gathered out; "lest while ye gather up the tares ye root up also the wheat with them." Then, to explain wherein the harm of such a result lay, he added: "Let both grow together until the harvest." That is, the uprooting of the wheat is an evil when it happens during the process of growth. When that process is complete no harm can be done, the time for uprooting or cutting down having arrived. The doctrine of the parable therefore is: The matter of prime importance is not that the tares be got rid of, but that the wheat pass through the natural course of development till the process of growth reach its consummation. If both ends cannot be accomplished together, beware of sacrificing the more important to the less important.[1]

[1] Keim says, "The parable shows the deep wisdom of Jesus forbidding all violent attacks against evil as an interference not only with the Divine order of judgment, but with the order of the earthly development in good and evil; the fine thought being quietly insinuated that the undeveloped good can easily appear to the human eye as bad, and the bad as good, so that both can assume a fixed definite character only through the tolerating of the process of development." 'Jesu von Nazara,' ii. 450. But headlong zeal for purity is ready to ask, Why cannot the two ends be accomplished together? how should the growth of the wheat be imperilled by the uprooting of the tares? Thoughtful minds have suggested various answers to these questions. Perhaps the case in which the risk is most obvious is that in which the tares are represented not by a few individual instances

of men holding unwholesome opinions, and indulging in unchristian practices, but by an evil tendency, widespread in society, such as the rationalism which prevailed so extensively in the churches in the eighteenth century. It is such a case that is contemplated in the parable. The wild crop is so abundant as to make the question of the servants "Didst thou not sow wheat?", implying a shade of doubt, not an impertinence. The corresponding state of things in the kingdom indicated thereby is such as to be a stumbling-block to faith, and to give rise to doubt whether it be the kingdom of God at all, and not rather the kingdom of darkness and evil;[1] such as to demand Satanic influence for its explanation, This must be borne in mind in connection with the prohibition to uproot the tares, which has reference to the special case supposed, that of a crop of tares growing from seed sown over the whole field, and is compatible with a contrary practice when the tares are merely stray stalks growing accidentally in the field. In such a case they are actually gathered out of a growing crop at the present hour,[2] and probably were also in our Lord's time, as the proposal of the servants to uproot them implies. If so, then we must conclude that an exceptional case is supposed in the parable, to convey an adequate idea of the extent to which corruption would prevail in the Church, and also the special need for care in the spiritual sphere not to uproot anything good.

[1] This is implied by the expression τ■ σκ■νδαλα, v. 41. So Goebel. No stress is to be laid on the etymological meaning of the word—trapstick, as if the evil men in the kingdom were deceivers.

[2] So Stanley reports, 'Sinai and Palestine,' p. 426. My esteemed friend, Dr. Robertson Smith, late Professor of Hebrew in the Free Church College, Aberdeen, now Lord Almoner's Professor of Arabic in the University of Cambridge, and Librarian of that University, informs me that during a recent visit to the East he ascertained the present practice to be as stated above. I cannot refer to his name without expressing my deep regret that his great talents have been lost to the Scottish Church. For such a state of things as that implied in the parable the only remedy is patience—a patience inspired and sustained by the hope that a new time will come, bringing a new spirit, a new faith, and a new life; a hope that maketh not ashamed, and which has never been disappointed from the beginning of the Christian era till now. In such a state of things impatience, prompting to stamping-out measures, is folly, and has been condemned as such by the wisest in the Church from the time of Augustine downwards. Such a policy of impatience forgets the solidarity of men living together in the same religious community: the many ties, spiritual and social, by which they are knit together; and the penalty of its heedlessness is dismemberment, schism,—the extensive uprooting of wheat and tares together. Far better tolerate the evil, even if it were in your power to get rid of it, than uproot it at such a cost. And if the evil should be so prevalent as to outnumber and overpower the good—and this is quite a possible case—equally to be condemned is the form which the policy of impatience is then apt to assume; that, viz. of the wheat pulling up, not the tares, but itself, even when the tares are quite willing to live side by side with it. In such a case the wheat should remain among the tares, and grow there as long as the tares will permit it. The Donatistic spirit dictates another course. It says, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate." Alas that it should have found so many at all times ready to obey its summons, and forsake the Church in disgust because all goes not according to their wish, and because nowhere appears absolute purity;[1] heedless of the warning that "they may fly so far from mystical Babylon as to run to literal Babel, bring all to confusion, and founder the commonwealth!"[2]

[1] Calvin says: "Plerique zeli praetextu, plus aequo morosi, nisi omnia ad eorum votum composita sint, quia nusquam apparet absoluta puritas, tumultuose ab ecclesia discedunt vel importuno rigore eam evertunt ac perdunt."—'Comment. in Harmoniam Evang.'

[2] Thomas Fuller; 'Profane State,' bk. v. chap. ii. In pursuing this policy of impatience, whether in the way of pulling up the tares or in the way of pulling up itself, the wheat does itself much spiritual harm, quite distinct from the external evil of separation into sects. The policy tends to foster pride and uncharitableness, and so prevents the wheat from ripening, or causes it to degenerate into something not better than tares, whose fruit is poisonous. The children cf the kingdom become too conscious of being the wheat, boast of their purity, thank God they are better than others, and by doing so make themselves worse, banish from their hearts the spirit of Christ, and bring on their souls the curse of impoverishment and barrenness. How small the harm done by the mere juxtaposition of the tares to that which self-righteous zealots thus inflict upon themselves! For such reasons as these ought the tares to be borne with even when there is no room for doubt as to their being tares,—which is the case supposed in the parable. It is evident that from the injunction to practise tolerance even in such a case an argument à fortiori may be drawn in favour of the toleration of plants whose character is doubtful. There is an additional reason for tolerance in such a case—viz. that the wheat may be pulled up not along with but instead of the tares; that being mistaken for a noxious plant which is in reality a stalk of genuine grain. This danger is not imaginary; the mistake has often happened, and it may often happen again. There is a constant risk of committing the mistake arising out of this circumstance, that every new visitation of God in His grace to His Church is apt, when new, to appear anything but a good gift to those familiar with the grace of the kingdom under its old forms. "Every new thing," it has been well said, "which appears in the life of the Spirit, every thought which moves the world for the first time, looks dangerous; one knows not what to make of it, and is troubled. Even Christ with His apostles appeared to the Jews and heathens as an impious rebel against Divine and human right."[1] For this reason we should be slow to suspect new things and in no haste to judge them. "Judge nothing before the time,"—allow it to develop itself, and to reveal its character; and if it turn out to be tares, it will be time enough then to consider what is to be done with it. This seems so obvious a dictate of reason, that those who act otherwise may be suspected of being actuated by by-ends, or even of being themselves tares; for there is truth in the shrewd observation of Bengel, "Often tares pass themselves off as wheat, and endeavour to eradicate wheat as if they were tares."[2] At the least they are chargeable with great folly; for who that is wise would act like those empirics "that would cut off a man's head if they see but a wart upon his cheek, or a dimple upon his chin, or any line in his face to distinguish him from another man."[3] [1] Arndt, 'Die Gleichnissreden Jesu Christi.' ii. 204.

[2] "Saepe et pro tritico se venditant, et triticum tanquam zizania eradicare conantur."—Gnomon, in loc.

[3] Jeremy Taylor, 'Epistle Dedicatory to the Liberty of Prophesying.' To these arguments in favour of a policy of patience towards evils prevalent in the visible Church on earth, must be added one that will carry more weight with all true Christians than all the rest, viz. the example of Christ. He who spake this parable, Himself complied with its teaching, and took patiently the marring of His work as the Founder of the kingdom by Satanic influences; of which we have a witness in His behaviour towards the counterfeit disciple Judas, whom He bore with meekly till the hour came

when He was ready as a grain of wheat to fall into the ground and die. How significant in connection with this patient bearing of our Lord the name which He gives Himself in the interpretation of our parable. "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man."[1] It is the name we all know and value so much as the symbol and pledge of Christ's meekness and of His sympathy with men, the name appropriate to His state of humiliation and to His work as the Saviour of the lost. The use of the name here suggests an argument in support of the doctrine of the parable to this effect: "I, the Son of man, find an enemy busy sowing bad seed in the field where I have sown the good seed. It is saddening and disappointing, but I know it will be, and I am content that it should be, till the end. When the end comes, then the Son of man, who is now humbled by the counterworking of the evil one, will be glorified by being placed at the head of a kingdom wherein shall be none that offend or that commit iniquity. Be ye like Me in this: beat patiently the mixture of evil with the good in the kingdom, and the obscuration thence arising to the children of the kingdom from the difficulty of knowing who are such indeed. The time will come when ye shall at length along with Me shine out as the sun shines out from behind a cloud[2] in the kingdom of your Father." How happy for the Church if all the children of the kingdom felt the power of this appeal! But, alas! it is hard to imitate the patience of Christ I Need we wonder at the impatience of many young Christians, who are naturally prone to severity, and even of not a few old ones, in whom patience might have been expected to have had its perfect work, when we think of the immense contrast between Jesus and His contemporary and forerunner John in this respect? Jesus is content that good and evil should grow together during the long course of development through which He knows His kingdom has to pass. John demands an instant severance of good from evil, of wheat from chaff, and conceives of Messiah as coming with a fan in His hand for this judicial purpose, and on finding that He has come without the fan, sends to Him to ask the doubting question, "Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?"[3]

[1] Mat 13:37

[2] ■κλ■μψουσιν (Mat 13:43). Calvin has a fine thought here: "Nec dubium est quin ad locum Danielis respexerit quo magis ad vivum afficeret auditores: acsi dixisset, Prophetam ubi de futuro splendore concionatur, simul notare temporalem caliginem; ideoque ut locus detur vaticinio patienter ferendam esse mixturam quæ electos Dei reprobis ad tempus involvit."—'Comment. in Harmoniam Evang.' The Jews had a doctrine concerning the shining bodies of the righteous in the life to come. Vide on this Langen, 'Judenthum in Palästina zur Zeit Christi,' p. 507, where reference is made to our parable, as also to Paul's doctrine in 1Co 15:1-58 But in the parable the glory is ethical, being the shining forth of the true character of the righteous, obscured in this world by their being mixed with counterfeits.

[3] Mat 11:3. The Drag-Net

Having discussed at such length the parable of the Tares, a very few sentences will suffice to complete the exposition of the kindred parable of the Net, which is as follows:

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind; which, when it was filled, they drew upon the beach; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad[1] away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.—Mat 13:47-50.

[1] τ■ σαπρ■: literally, putrid; more generally, worthless, useless for food: "σαπρ■ sunt nugamenta et quisquiliæ piscium, quod genus ut servatu indignum videmus a piscatoribus abjici."—Grotius, 'Annotationes in Nov. Test.'

After what has been said it is unnecessary to discuss the debated question whether the mixture of good and evil spoken of in this parable be within or without the kingdom. No one convinced by the reasoning whereby we have attempted to show that the mixture is within in the case of the parable of the Tares, will think it worth while to contend for the thesis that it is without in the case of the parable of the Net. To show how pointless and inapposite to the affairs of the kingdom the parable becomes in the hands of those who maintain that position, nothing more is needed than to allow one of its most strenuous recent advocates to state it in his own words. "The net is not the visible Church in the world, and the fishes good and bad within it do not represent the true and false members of the Church. The sea is the world. The net, almost or altogether invisible at first to those whom it surrounds, is that unseen bond which by an invisible ministry is stretched over the living, drawing them gradually, secretly, surely, towards the boundary of this life, and over it into another. As each portion or generation of the human race are drawn from their element in this world, ministering spirits, on the lip of Eternity that lies nearest Time, receive them, and separate the good from the evil."[1] A very graphic and solemn representation, but what has it to do specially with the kingdom of God? The process described, the drawing of human beings out of the sea of Time to the shore of Eternity, goes on all the world over, in pagan as well as in Christian lands. Doubtless the parable contains the important doctrine of an Eternal Judgment,—the only doctrine which on this view it teaches. But that doctrine is not a specific truth of the kingdom of God; it is a doctrine of natural religion, and as such was taught in the religions of Egypt, Persia, and Greece. To make it a specific doctrine of the kingdom it would be necessary to point out the principle on which the final separation takes place,—as is done, for example, in the parabolic representation of the last judgment in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, where men's eternal destiny is made to turn on the way in which they treat Christ, in the person of His representatives, the poor and needy. But the parable now under consideration enunciates no specifically Christian principle of judgment,—no principle of judgment at all, indeed, beyond the very general one that men shall be disposed of according to their moral characters. The parable, therefore, becomes one relating to the kingdom only when it is assumed that the casting of the net has reference to the work of the kingdom, and the goodness and badness of the fish to the moral qualities of those who are the subjects of that work.

[1] Arnot, 'The Parables of our Lord,' p. 170. This parable asserts even more emphatically than that of the tares that not now but at the end of the world is the time for separation of the good and evil mixed together in the kingdom. It so puts the matter that separation is seen to be not merely undesirable but impossible; for till the fish are landed it cannot be known which are good and which are worthless. The graphic representation has a manifest tendency to act as a wholesome sedative on impatience and anxiety. Why fret over a mixture of the evil with the good, which is pronounced on authority to be in present circumstances inevitable in some form, if not in the form of open scandal, at least in the form of hypocritical religious profession on the part of men who have a form of godliness without the power? We might be better employed than in fretting over what cannot be helped—viz. in casting a net and in striving to bring as many as possible within the kingdom. That is the business of the present hour; not to judge or sift, but to catch fish, using a

large net and giving it as wide a sweep as possible. The proportion of good fish to bad may be very small,—it was so in Christ's own experience; for of that crowd on the shore which listened to His parables, and which represented the result of His past labours, all but a few, when the day of crisis and sifting came, "went back, and walked no more with Him." It is a sad spectacle, and all the more that it may be taken not as an isolated but almost as a typical case; nevertheless, the duty of Christians is plain. It is not to ask wistfully shall many or few be saved, but to strive with might and main to bring into the Church as many as possible of such as are at least in the way of being saved.[1] In this connection it is important to note the kind of net referred to in the parable. It is a seine-net[2] of vast length, such as men use in the sea where there is ample scope for a wide sweep with a view to a great haul. The word is aptly chosen so as to be in congruity with the Catholic aim and hopeful spirit of Christianity, which is a religion for the world, and the Author of which gave it as His last injunction to those whom He had chosen to be fishers of men: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."[3] Of the final separation so solemnly asserted and described in those two parables we do not here speak. We close with a single word concerning a notion of sceptical critics as to the alleged ecclesiastical party tendencies of the parables, which scarce deserves notice save for the great names with which it is associated. The Tubingen school, who find tendency everywhere in the New Testament, will have it that traces of the great struggle between Pauline and Antipauline views of Christianity are clearly discernible here. The parable of the Tares is directed against Paul, who is the enemy that came by night and sowed bad seed in the field.[4] On the other hand, the parable of the Net is Propauline; the capacious net taking in all sorts of fish being intended as a justification for Paul's two-leaved door of universalism thrown wide open to admit all comers.[5] Surely this is criticism gone mad. The two parables are in perfect accord, and they both bear the stamp of one mind,—the mind of Him who soared above petty party strifes and dwelt habitually in the serene region of Divine wisdom and charity. The spirit of the two parables is the same,—it is the spirit of universalism, not in the controversial sense, but in the sense in which we ascribe that attribute to all Christ's teaching. The Kingdom of God as Jesus preached it was a kingdom whose blessings were designed for the whole human race. In perfect accord with the whole drift of His teaching is the doctrine contained in these parables. The field is the world, the net is cast into the sea, and the net itself is the largest possible, to be employed for the purposes of a gracious economy by men animated by Christ's own catholic spirit.

[1] Acts 2:47. The Lord added daily to the community of Christians (■π■ τ■ α■τ■) such as were being saved (το■ς σωζομ■νους).

[2] Σαγ■νη (Acts 2:47). Vide Trench's note on this word in his work on the Parables, p. 140.

[3] Mark 16:15.

[4] So Volkmar and Hilgenfeld, also Renan (in 'Les Evangiles,' p. 273). Keim refers to this opinion with disapproval, vide 'Jesu von Nazara,' ii. 449.

[5] Renan, 'Les Evangiles,' p. 201.

01.04. Chapter 3. The Treasure and the Pearl

Chapter 3.

The Treasure and the Pearl Or, The Kingdom of God the Summum Bonum.

These two parables constitute together but one text, and teach the same general lesson, namely, the incomparable worth of the kingdom of God. They show us how the kingdom ought to be esteemed, in whatever esteem it may in fact be held. They are thus an important supplement to the parable of the Sower. That parable teaches that the kingdom of heaven is far enough from being the chief good to many. To some it is simply nothing at all, the word of the kingdom awakening no interest whatever in their minds; to others it is but the occasion of a short-lived excitement; to a third class it is only one of many objects of desire; only to a chosen few is it the first thing worthy to be loved above all things, with pure, undivided, devoted heart. The two parables now to be considered teach us that the kingdom deserves to be so loved by all. It is a treasure of such value that all other possessions may reasonably be given in exchange for it; a pearl of such excellence that he who sells all his property in order to obtain it may not justly be accounted a fool. How quietly and simply is this momentous truth insinuated in those two little similitudes! One is tempted to say that so important a doctrine should have been taught with more emphasis and at greater length. We might have said this with some show of reason had these two sayings been the only texts in the recorded teaching of Christ containing the doctrine in question. But they are not; they are simply the only recorded instances in which the Great Teacher set forth that doctrine in parabolic form. The truth that the kingdom of heaven is the summum bonum to which everything else must be subordinated, and if necessary sacrificed, occupied the foremost place in His doctrinal system. He taught that truth on many occasions, to many persons, to individual followers, to the collective body of disciples, to the multitude at large, and often in most startling terms. "Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God."[1] "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow Me."[2] "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."[3] "If any man come to Me, and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple."[4] What are these, and many other kindred sayings, but an emphatic proclamation of the truth taught in our parables that the Kingdom of heaven or its King (the two are practically one) is entitled to the first place in our regard, as at once man’s chief good and chief end?

[1] Luk 9:60.

[2] Mat 19:21.

[3] Mat 16:24.

[4] Luk 14:26. When and to whom these parables were spoken cannot with perfect certainty be decided. From the manner in which they are recorded by the Evangelist, there is, of course, a presumption in favour of the view that they were uttered at the same time as the preceding four,

but to the disciples, after the multitude to which the parable of the Sower was addressed had been dismissed. But it is quite possible that they belonged originally to another connection, and formed part of a discourse having for its aim to enforce the precept, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." The abrupt and disconnected way in which, according to the reading approved by critics, the former of the two is introduced, seems to favour this view. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hid in a field;" so, without any mediating word like the πλιν in the received text, does the narrative pass from the interpretation of the parable of the Tares to the wholly dissimilar parable of the Hidden Treasure, suggesting the idea of a water-worn pebble which has been rolled away by the stream from its original bed. And as the parable might have been uttered on a different occasion, so it might have been addressed to a different audience than Matthew's narrative seems to imply; not to the disciples, but to a miscellaneous group of hearers like that which listened to the parable of the Sower. Such a view, indeed, would be inadmissible if we could attach as much importance as Origen did to the circumstance that the last three parables in the group of seven are not called parables.[1] That Father, in his commentary on the passage, suggests as the reason of the fact stated that the last three were spoken to the disciples, not to the multitude; proceeding on the assumption that parables were meant exclusively for those without, and therefore holding that we ought not to call the three last figurative representatives of the Divine kingdom parables, but similitudes.[2] If this opinion were correct, we might infer, from the simple fact that the name parable is not applied to these similitudes, that they were spoken not to a miscellaneous audience, but to a closer circle of the disciples. But it is not true that parables were spoken to the multitude alone, and therefore the non-use of the name in the case of the last three parables can have no such significance as Origen alleges. It is indeed incredible that the Evangelist can have seriously meant to withhold the name from these parables as inapplicable, when he had previously applied it to the equally brief similitudes of the Mustard Seed and the Leaven. The omission of the name must be regarded as purely accidental.

[1] They are introduced with μοα στν.

[2] μοισεις from μοα.

We proceed to the consideration of our two parables—those of the Treasure and the Pearl, placing them as of kindred significance side by side, and treating them in the first place as one text in the exposition of the great truth which they teach in common, reserving for the close observations on the points in which they differ.[1] The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hid in the yield,[2] which a man having found hid, and in his joy[3] he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman[4] seeking goodly pearls, who when he had found one pearl of great price went and sold all that he had, and bought it.—Mat 13:44-46.

[1] The same method of treatment is adopted by Greswell and Arndt.

[2] ν τ γρ; "in the field in which it lies" (Meyer). "The field in which the finder was working" (Greswell). "The article implies that in the mind of hearers the idea of a hidden treasure would be associated with that of a field as the usual hiding-place" (Goebel).

[3] The ατο is genit subj., not obj. So Meyer. Vide also Trench.

[4] ■νθρ■π■ ■μπορ■. The idea of travelling is involved in the term ■μπορος. Bengel defines ■μπορος as one "qui mercaturæ causâ peregrinatur et navigat." Greswell says, "His proper character is that of a collector of pearls, and probably of a trader in them, though this is no necessary supposition" (vol. ii. p. 226). For additional remarks see p. 88. The two emblems here employed by Jesus were fitly chosen to impress an ancient Eastern audience, and to serve in their case the purpose intended—that of representing the kingdom of heaven as the Absolute Good, and as such worthy that all should be given in exchange for it. In our day and land such emblems would be less appropriate. The finding of a treasure hid in a field is so rare an occurrence in modern European experience that to employ it as a parabolic representation of the finding of the Divine kingdom would be to commit the mistake of making that which ought to be an object of desire and hope to all appear so improbable as to be practically unattainable. It was otherwise in the age. and country when and where the parable was spoken. Then to hide treasure in the earth, in sepulchres, or any other place where the owners deemed their property would be secure, was a not uncommon practice; and to find such a hidden treasure was by no means an unexampled felicity.[1] Equally apt to the circumstances of the time is the emblem employed in the second parable. In our day a pearl could not properly be selected as the fittest representative of the highest good. The diamond is our most precious stone. But in ancient times the diamond, though not unknown, and though highly valued, was too rare to be a suitable emblem of the kingdom of heaven in a popular discourse. The pearl was the more appropriate object for such a purpose, because it was to the ancients what the diamond is to us—well known, highly prized, and, when of large size and pure quality, exceeding costly. The romantic theory current in ancient times respecting the origin of pearls served to enhance their fitness to body forth the things of the kingdom. It was believed that the pearl was formed by the dew of heaven entering into the shell wherein it was found, the quality and form of the pearl depending on the purity of the dew, the state of the atmosphere, and even the hour of the day at the time of its conception.[2] There is reason to think that the true cause of pearl formation is of a much more prosaic character; the probable account offered by modern science being that pearls are the result of a process of animal secretion provoked by the intrusion of a foreign substance, such as a grain of sand, within the shell, the fish covering the alien particle with pearly matter to protect itself from irritation. But the ancient theory, however baseless, is still full of interest as serving to show the esteem in which pearls were held. Worthless as science, it is valuable as poetry, as a standing evidence that the pearl was to the ancients an object of admiration, wonder, almost of worship; for it is only noble, precious, worshipful things that the human mind seeks to glorify by bringing into play the resources of its imagination.

[1] On this view that the treasure was hidden needs no special explanation. A hid treasure was simply in those days a natural emblem of a thing of great value. Goebel thinks the kingdom is compared to a hid treasure, to describe its character in opposition to the outward and sensuous ideas of the kingdom current among the Jews.

[2] For an account of the opinions of the ancients on the origin of pearls, vide Origen’s commentary on the parable.

Here then were two emblems fitly chosen to set before an ancient Jewish audience the absolute worth of the Divine kingdom,—a hidden treasure, and a very precious pearl, the best of a precious kind. The former of the two is indeed not so apparently apt to the purpose, as a treasure may be

great or small, and it is not said that the treasure was a great one. But that is only not said because it is taken for granted. The presumption is that a hidden treasure will be of great value—something worth hiding, and also worth finding. That the treasure in the parable was of great value is further implied in the joy of the finder. He sees at a glance the vast extent of his treasure-trove, and his cunning in hiding it, and his joy in going to take steps towards securing it for himself, unerringly reveal the estimate he has formed. The second of the two emblems is self-evidently fitly chosen. The best and Most precious of all existing pearls signified an immense, almost fabulous sum of money. The two famous pearls possessed by Cleopatra, according to Pliny the largest known, were valued each at about ■80,000 in our money. Surely a, sum fit to represent infinite wealth to the popular mind, though the profligate Queen of Egypt could afford to drink one of the pearls dissolved in a menstruum at a supper given to her lover![1]

[1] For numerous particulars respecting the value of pearls in ancient times, consult Greswell's note in his work on the Parables, vol. ii. p. 220. The comparisons of our parables, while naturally suggesting the thought that the kingdom of heaven is the summum bonum, at the same time felicitously demonstrate the reasonableness of the demand that all be sacrificed for the kingdom. The conduct of the actors in the two parables was thoroughly reasonable. Both were gainers by the transaction of selling their all for the sake of obtaining the precious object. The buyer of the field containing the hid treasure was manifestly a gainer; for the field itself, apart from the treasure, assuming that the bargain between him and the seller was a fair one, was a full equivalent for the whole of his property which he realised in order to purchase it. The hidden treasure, whose existence was unknown to the seller, and therefore not taken into account, he had into the bargain. Provided the purchase of the field made his right to the treasure-trove secure,[1] loss in that transaction was impossible. The buyer of the high-priced pearl was likewise a gainer from a mercantile point of view. It might indeed seem a precarious proceeding to put all one's property (not merely all his other jewels, but all he had[2]) into one single article, however precious. But the very preciousness of that one article implies that pearls of excellent quality were much in demand, so that a purchaser might safely be counted on. The merchantman was sure of his money whenever he wished to realise, and in all probability would receive for the pearl a sum far exceeding what he had paid for it; for he had gone to a far-off land to buy it from the pearl-fisher, at a moderate though great cost, and had brought it, let us say, from India[3] to the Western centres of wealth, where rich men abounded and luxury prevailed. In saying this we go upon the assumption that the purchaser of the pearl in the parable was really a merchant. If he was no merchant, but only a pearl-fancier and collector, who went to the ends of the earth in quest of the rarest samples, and having found one of incomparable excellence, hesitated not, in his passion for such valuables, to give all that he had that he might become its possessor, the case is altogether different He was then a fool from the mercantile point of view; if he was a gainer at all, it was certainly not in money, but in the. gratification of æsthetic taste and romantic desire. We shall not now decide peremptorily between these two views of the pearl-collector's conduct, for in either aspect it might serve as a parable of the kingdom. He who gives all for the kingdom of God is truly wise, but in the world's view he is a fool; and of his folly a man with a craze for collecting pearls for the bare pleasure of possessing them were no unapt emblem.

[1] That it did so seems implied in the incident recorded of R. Emi, referred to by Meyer in his commentary, that he bought a rented field in which he had found a treasure, "ut pleno jure

thesaurum possideret omnemque litium occasionem præcideret." Of the treasure-finder, Alford remarks, "he goes, and selling all he has, buys the field, thus (by the Jewish law) becoming the possessor also of the treasure."

[2] Ο■κ ε■πεν ■τι π■πρακε π■ντας ο■ς ε■χεν ο■ γ■ς μ■νους, ο■ς ■ ζητ■ν καλους ραργαρ■τας ■■νηται, π■πρακεν, ■λλ■ κα■ π■ντα ■σα ε■χεν. Origen, 'Comment. in Evangelium Matthew'

[3] The best pearls were found there or in the Red Sea. On the localities where pearls were found, see Origen, as above; also Greswell's note, already referred to. Among the localities is our own land or its environing sea. Origen says the second best were found here. Δευτερε■ουσι δ■ ■ς ■ν μαργαρ■ταις ο■ ■κ το■ κατ■ βρεττανι■αν ■κεανο■ λαμβα■μενοι.

If now men could only be convinced that the kingdom of heaven is like the treasure hid in the field and the precious pearl, and that in giving up all for its sake they were only acting as the buyers of the field and the pearl acted, all would be well. They would then go and do likewise. For men never hesitate to sacrifice all for what they believe to be the chief good. Devotion all the world over is reckless of expense, and acts as if it reckoned the demand of the loved object, that it be first and all else second, no grievous commandment, but a perfectly reasonable requirement. No matter what the object of devotion may be, whether earthly or heavenly, material or mental, its language is that of the impassioned lover:

"By night, by day, afield, at hame, The thoughts of thee my breast inflame, And aye I muse and sing thy name:

I only live to love thee." The devoted disciples of the Rabbis so loved the law which they studied, because they reckoned knowledge of it the chief good. Their masters expressed the sovereign claims of the law in terms not less severe than the severest ever employed by Jesus to assert the claims of the kingdom. In addressing to a certain disciple the apparently harsh injunction, "Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God," our Lord did, in truth, but report a saying current in Rabbinical circles.[1] And how faithfully did some disciples of the Rabbis comply with such hard requirements in their pursuit of legal lore! Think of the famous Hillel, come all the way from Babylon to Jerusalem to learn wisdom; of whom it is recorded that he was so poor he could not pay the porter's fee to gain admission into the school, and so was obliged to listen at the window, till on a severe winter night he was almost frozen to death, and had certainly lost his life had. not the darkening of the window by his body, heaped over with falling snow, attracted the attention of those within.[2] Here was one willing to part even with life itself in his devotion to the study of the law. And was not Socrates another of kindred spirit, seeking wisdom with pure elevated heart, and cheerfully subordinating all to the knowledge of the true, the good, and the fair! Listen to his prayer, pagan in form, but thoroughly Christian in import: "O dear Pan and all ye other Gods here! grant me to be beautiful within; and may my external possessions not be hurtful to those which are internal; and may I esteem him rich who is wise; and may my treasure be such as none can carry away save one who is of sober mind."[3] But we are under no necessity to seek illustrations among celebrities. Multitudes of instances of self-sacrificing devotion to wisdom as the chief good might be found among the ranks of poor obscure students attending our schools of learning, whose motto is "To scorn delights and live laborious days," and who would gladly part with their last ten shillings to procure some favourite book, with whose contents they had long

desired to become acquainted.

[1] See Cunningham Geikie's 'Life of Christ,' vol. ii. p. 160.

[2] See Barclay, 'The Talmud,' p. 15; also Jost, 'Judenthum,'

[3] Plato, Phaedrus, at the close. The difficulty is to get men to see that the kingdom of God is indeed the summum bonum, and therefore worthy to be loved as Hillel loved the law, and as Socrates loved wisdom, and as every true student loves knowledge. They are prone to ask in sceptical mood, What is this kingdom of heaven that we should seek it as men seek hidden treasure, or buy it at any price as merchantmen buy costly jewels? And we might here attempt a detailed answer to their question; but we shall not. We are not required to do so as expositors of the parables; for the two parables under consideration do not explain to us the nature of the kingdom of heaven, or tell us why it is entitled to be regarded as the chief good; they simply teach that it is entitled, as a matter of fact, to be so regarded. And moreover the attempt were vain; if at least its object were not merely to state truth already well enough known to an ordinarily instructed Christian, but to produce conviction. For it is not man but the Spirit of God that can make any one see the kingdom of heaven and its King in their peerless beauty and worth, so that he shall be willing to part with all for their sake. Christ Himself as a human teacher could not achieve such a result. The very parables before us are possibly a result of his consciousness of inability to do so. For why did He speak to the people in parables but because they seeing saw not; because the things of the kingdom were hidden from their view, and because He all but despaired of opening their eyes?

Instead therefore of repeating common-places of Christian knowledge in the vain hope of communicating spiritual vision, we prefer to confine attention to one point in which the doctrine of these parables seems inconsistent with one of the best ascertained attributes of the kingdom whose advent Jesus announced. We refer to the attribute implied in the title—the kingdom of grace. That the kingdom of heaven, as Christ preached it, was emphatically a kingdom of grace is abundantly evident from the Gospels. It is implied in the fact that Christ called the announcement of the kingdom good tidings. The proclamation of its advent was in His view the Gospel. Hence the burthen of His preaching from the beginning of His ministry was: "The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye and believe the good news."[1] The same truth, that the kingdom announced was a kingdom of grace, is implied in the fact that those who received Christ's message were a glad company, resembling a wedding-party, while John's followers resembled a band of pilgrims wending their weary way with sad looks toward some shrine doing penance for their sins. The cause of this difference was this: The kingdom, as John preached it, was awful news, a kingdom of law and retribution; while the kingdom as Jesus preached it was good news, a kingdom of grace and of pardon. The same truth is further implied in the familiar facts that the kingdom, as Jesus preached it, was emphatically a kingdom for the poor, the outcast, the morally degraded, the humble, the child-like: which is only to say in other words that it was a free gift of God's grace to those who had no wealth, no merit, no consciousness of desert, no pride of virtue.

[1] Mark 1:15. But how then are we to reconcile with this outstanding attribute of the kingdom the representations of the parables, in both of which the material goods, which are emblems of the kingdom, are represented as obtained by purchase? The point is one which forces itself on our attention, for the buying is not a minor, accidental, or insignificant trait, but a leading feature in the

parables.[1] It is especially noticeable in the former of the two, where it almost seems as if the speaker gave an artificial turn to the story with express intent to introduce the act of buying. One is inclined to ask, Why not at once appropriate the treasure found; why that roundabout process of buying the field in order to get possession of the hidden store of gold? Would not the direct appropriation of the treasure have been far more in harmony with the genius of the kingdom as a kingdom of grace? Of course the reply which will be given to our query is: The buying of the field was necessary to set the finder right with the law.[2] That may be so, but we question if the answer goes to the root of the matter. For in the first place the process of buying, if it set the finder right with the law, certainly did not set him right with equity: and therefore it was not worth while to ascribe to the actor a conscientiousness which after all was formal not real. Then if, as we admit, it was not necessary for the purpose of the parable to represent the man as having a regard to equity, but simply as determined by all means to obtain the desired boon, there could be no more harm in making him reach his object by a direct breach of equity than by an indirect one. Why could he not carry away his treasure-trove and say nothing about it, but quietly spend it for his own comfort? Undoubtedly the speaker wished to make the treasure-finder a buyer, even when buying was not indispensable in order to possession as it was in the case of the pearl-seeker; as if with express intent to teach that in all cases there must be a buying in order to possession of the kingdom of heaven.

[1] Goebel thinks the didactic drift of the parables is to teach the way in which men must make the kingdom their own. It is rather that they must make it their own at any price. It is worthy of this. But that it has to be bought is also taught by implication.

[2] Vide on this point note on p. 73. But how, we again ask, reconcile this doctrine with the nature of the kingdom as a kingdom of grace, and with its catholicity as a kingdom offered to all? If the kingdom is of grace why buy, and if it is for all what of those who have not wherewith to purchase the field in which the treasure is hid, of whom the number is at all times great? The solution of the puzzle is simple. Buying, translated into other language, means showing by action that we really do esteem the kingdom of God to be the chief good; and that all who are to receive the kingdom must do, and that moreover all, however beggared in purse or character, have it in their power to do. The kingdom must be subjectively as well as objectively the summum bonum, and wherever it is so, means will be found to make the fact evident. That such subjective appreciation manifested in action is quite compatible with the nature of the kingdom may be proved by a reference to the parable of the Supper.[1] There the highest good is represented as eating bread in the kingdom of God, as the result of accepting an invitation to a feast. That the kingdom is a gift of grace could not be more clearly taught than by such a form of representation. Yet even here there must needs be a buying; the prophetic paradox finds its fulfilment, for even he that hath no money, the outcast of the highway and hedges, buys and eats; buys wine and milk without money and without price.[2] The men who were first bidden did not partake of the feast because they did not buy; that is to say, because they were unwilling for a season to leave off farming operations and forego connubial bliss to enjoy the hospitality of the neighbour who issued the invitations. They did not value the feast enough to be willing to make such a sacrifice for it. And the men who were last bidden and who came, with what did they buy? With a victory over the temptation to think that so great a bliss could not possibly be meant for such wretches as they were. They had to be compelled, not because they were indifferent, but because the invitation seemed too good news to be true. And

the price they paid was the renunciation of their doubts, and the exchange of the humility of unbelief for the deeper, truer humility of faith, which could dare to believe that God’s grace could reach even unto such as they. And as none can be poorer than they, it thus appears that it is always possible for one who is in earnest to buy the kingdom. In the spiritual world there is no risk of a man, who greatly values the hidden treasure, finding himself so poor that he cannot purchase the field in which it lies. Though the parable seems to have no consideration for the poor, it is only on the surface. Rightly understood, it is quite in harmony with the spirit of Him who declared it to be His mission to preach the Gospel to the poor. All may have wherewithal to buy the field. For all men have hearts, and he who loves the hidden treasure with all his heart can show his love, and that is all the price that is needed. The presence of the love in the heart shows itself very variously in different men; the All which is sacrificed is very diverse in degree and in kind for one from what it is for another. The price which the fishermen of Galilee paid for the kingdom of God was their fishing boats and nets; a very humble all, but quite sufficient to buy the field and the precious pearl. The price which the young man, who came peeking eternal life, was asked to pay, was his large fortune, a much larger all, yet not more than sufficient. The price paid by Saul of Tarsus was his carefully elaborated system of legal righteousness. Augustine, on the other hand, bought the kingdom by a price different from all these, viz. by parting with the darling object of a guilty passion. The price, we repeat, is various in degree and in kind. But the poorest in purse or reputation can find a price of some sort wherewith to buy the kingdom. For the kingdom, when it comes to men, finds every one of them either loving something that ought not to be loved at all, or loving some legitimate object of affection too well; and its demand is that such sinful or inordinate attachment should cease in its own favour, and when the demand is complied with, the price which buys the chief good is paid.

[1] Luk 14:15.

[2] Isa 55:1. From the foregoing explanation of the buying of the kingdom it will be seen that it is quite compatible not only with the nature of the latter as a kingdom of grace, but with the joyous spirit which ought to characterise the citizens of such a kingdom. The sacrifice by which the kingdom is bought is made not by constraint but willingly: not in forced obedience to an outward commandment, but in free obedience to the inward constraint of love. The sacrifice is made cheerfully, gaily, whenever the kingdom is seen to be the summum bonum—when we know in their priceless worth the things that are freely given to us of God. The genuine citizens of the kingdom all say of it "all my springs are in Thee," not lugubriously but with singing and dancing;[1] albeit one has come from Egypt, another from Babylon, and a third, a fourth, and a fifth from Philistia, Tyre, and Ethiopia; cheerfully forgetting their old country for the sake of the newfound fatherland. It will be observed how carefully the parable is constructed so as to exclude a legal cheerless view of the sacrifice as something arbitrarily exacted. The sacrifice is made to appear the natural outcome of the joy over the discovery just made of the treasure. "In his joy he goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field." This is an important touch in the picture, and it is all the more worthy of notice that it serves to correct a false impression that might easily be made by the description of the stony ground hearer in the parable of the Sower, as one who receives the word with joy, but when tribulation arises is offended. This may very readily be mistaken for a disparagement of joy as the mark of a superficial nature, and as seldom accompanied or followed by heroic fidelity. That no such insinuation was meant is manifest from this parable, which not only

represents intense joy as characteristic of the treasure-finder, but further represents that joy as the direct source of self-sacrifice. From this instance we may learn to be on our guard against hasty inferences from isolated or accidental features in parabolic embodiments of spiritual truth. And the caution may be applied not only to the joy ascribed to the stony ground hearer, but to the secrecy or cunning ascribed to the treasure-finder. Some interpreters of the parables have taken this as a feature to be emphasised, drawing from it the doctrine that silence or secrecy at the commencement of the Christian life is necessary in order to make conversion thorough and stable, and pointing to Christ's withdrawal into the wilderness after His baptism, or to Paul's three years' seclusion in Arabia by way of illustration.[2]. Now it is true that secrecy and silence are sometimes advantageous, and also that they often characterise men of earnest thoughtful temper at the commencement of their religious life. But In the first place it cannot be laid down as a universal rule, that wherever there is religious genuineness and thoroughness there will be such secrecy and silence; and in the second place, when these characteristics appear they have a different source from that implied in the parable. The treasure-finder hid the treasure in fear lest he should lose it. But the man who has begun to think seriously on religion hides his thoughts deep in his heart, not from fear of losing them, but from delicacy and shyness. Newborn religion, like youthful love, is a shy, retiring thing, which shamefacedly withdraws from observation. The shyness is in some respects beneficial, and in some respects it is the reverse. It is not a thing to be prescribed as part of a necessary method for insuring salvation.

[1] Psa 87:7. This verse of the Psalm is rendered by Delitzsch, "and singing and dancing" (they say) "all my springs are in thee," that is, in Zion, viewed as the metropolis of the Divine kingdom. The new-born citizens go about in the streets of the mother-city of the Divine kingdom expressing in dance and song their joy, the burthen of their song being, "all my springs in thee." What a graphic picture!

[2] So Arndt and De Valenti. Conf. Trench on the same point

We pass now from the common to the distinctive lessons of the two parables. And here it may be well to begin with a caveat against the assumption that these parables must necessarily be intended to teach distinct doctrines concerning the things of the kingdom. The assumption is one which we are naturally inclined to make from the mere fact of there being two parables and not one; especially when it is taken for granted that the two parables were originally spoken at the same time. Why speak two parables on the same theme at one time unless because, while both set forth the same general truth, each exhibits that truth under a different phase? The question is a very natural one, and yet for our part we do not deem it prudent to lay too much stress on the argument it contains, or even to be sure that the premises on which the inference rests are well-founded. We would bear in mind the possibility that these two parables which come together in Matthew's narrative were spoken on different occasions, and that therefore the difference between them may be picturesque rather than doctrinal, due to the changing forms under which a creative mind, able to bring forth out of its treasure things new and old, contemplated the same truth at different times. While we say this, however, we are not only willing but anxious to recognise whatever distinctive lessons may seem fairly deducible from the twin parables; and, though averse from over-confident dogmatism, we think that on two points their peculiarities have didactic significance.

First, it seems legitimate to emphasise, as all expositors have done, the fact that in the one parable the material good which is the emblem of the summum bonum, is found by accident, while in the other it is obtained as the result of a methodic persistent search. The spiritual import of this distinction has been diversely apprehended. A recent writer expresses the opinion that both traits point to the difficulty of recognising in the kingdom offered to men the highest good, the difference being that in the one case the difficulty arises from the inherent nature of the kingdom as a hidden thing; in the other from the exacting demands which the quest of the chief good involves.[1] On this view there is no reference to a distinction between diverse classes of recipients. Most interpreters, however, have regarded the fact in question as intended to point at such a distinction, and to divide the recipients of the blessings of the kingdom into two classes: those to whom the kingdom comes without any previous thought on their part, and those to whom it is given as the reward of an earnest foregoing search. Nathaniel and the woman of Samaria have been referred to as examples of the one class, and Augustine in his intensely interesting and eventful religious history, as described by himself in his famous 'Confessions,' as an outstanding example of the other.[2] Now that there is such a distinction between Christians as to the manner of their coming into the kingdom of God is certain—there are finders and there are seekers in the kingdom of heaven. Both are finders of God and the chief good,[3] or rather are found of them, for in all cases there is something in religious experience which does not depend on man's will; but the one class find without much or any previous quest, while the other class first seek earnestly, and it may belong, and then eventually find. And the emblems of the chief good in the two parables answer very well to this distinction between the two classes of finders. A hidden treasure is not a thing that one can well set himself to seek for, though men have given themselves occasionally to such an apparently hopeless quest. But goodly pearls are things to be sought after and obtained as the result of a continued search; and one may reasonably hope at length to find the best after having previously found many good. Such finding of the best is not only probable but certain in the spiritual world, though it is not more than a probability in the natural. A literal pearl-seeker may never find the one best pearl in all the world. But in the kingdom of heaven they that seek shall find. Their quest may be long, painful, wearisome, and they may experience many disappointments; meeting now here, now there, what seems on first view a very precious pearl, but on closer inspection is found to have flaws which depreciate its value. But one day they shall find Him whom unconsciously they seek, and in Him get rest to their souls. So found the Pearl of Price Justin Martyr, so found Him Augustine, so find Him shall every faithful soul who hungers after righteousness and passionately longs for the knowledge of God and of truth.

[1] Goebel.

[2] So Trench, pp. 125-6.

[3] The actors in both parables are described as finding: ■ν ε■ρ■ν ■νθρωπος, Mat 13:44, ε■ρ■ν δ■. Mat 13:46. But to return to the distinction between finders and seekers. We recognise the reality of the distinction, but we doubt whether it is intended in the parables to teach the existence of such a distinction; at least in so far as it is understood to imply a moral difference between the two classes. For, let it be observed, the treasure-finder is not represented as indifferent to the discovery he has made. He rejoices over the happy discovery. He at once recognises its value as one who does not now for the first time learn the use of money. He would have been a seeker for such a treasure, not less earnest and persistent than the pearl merchant, had there been any

reasonable hope of finding one. It seems therefore quite beside the mark, as some have done, to make this man represent the spiritually careless, who are suddenly arrested on their godless career—of those who go to church to laugh and remain to pray, of youths who leave their country homes for great cities there to make their fortune, and find what they had not sought, conversion and salvation.[1] In point of fact, the actors in the two parables seem to differ not so much in spirit as in circumstances; and the question forces itself upon the mind whether after all the design be not to make an objective distinction between men as to their respective positions, rather than a subjective distinction between them as to their respective dispositions. Does not the one parable show us the kingdom of God as a good beyond human hope and expectation, coming as a surprise to men who are not looking for it, but who gladly welcome it—all the more gladly because it was unexpected; and does not the other parable show us the kingdom, not as something unique, unexampled, and unlooked for, but as the best of its kind, the like of which in kind already exists and is known, so as to raise an expectation that something better of the same kind than has ever yet been seen may yet be found? In the two representations there is no apparent difference between the parties concerned except in position. They act differently because they are differently situated; either would act like the other if he were in his circumstances.

[1] So Arnot, p. 137. On this ground we incline to think that the parables point to a distinction between men as to position, not as to disposition, and show us how men of the same spirit will behave towards the kingdom of heaven in their respective situations. They will both make it welcome when found,—the one as a good he had not looked for, the other as a good after which he had long been in quest. And it is not difficult to illustrate the difference in situation implied in the parables. Who were the men in our Lord’s day (for it is thence we must in the first place seek our illustrations) to whom the kingdom of heaven was as a treasure hid in a field? They were such as Zacchæus the publican,—men who had not been seeking the kingdom simply because they had been accustomed to be treated by those who deemed themselves the children of the kingdom, as persons who had no concern or interest therein, until they had come themselves to believe this. What a surprise it was to the pariahs of Jewish society to find, that Jesus took an interest in them, and to hear Him speak to them of the kingdom as if it were specially their affair! Here indeed was a treasure these poor despised ones had not been looking for! not because they set no value on it, but because they had not ventured to hope, had not been able even to entertain the thought, that God loved them. And who were they to whom the kingdom of heaven was as the precious pearl found after lengthened quest? They were those who waited, as they who wait for the dawn, for the consolation of Israel; devout men who diligently read the ancient Scriptures in search of the pearls of wisdom, and who had learned from the words of the prophets to look for one Pearl more precious than all—Messiah, the incarnate Wisdom of God,—and who recognised Him in Jesus of Nazareth. Equally easy is it to illustrate the distinction in question from the apostolic age. The men to whom the kingdom of heaven was as a treasure hid in a field were the Gentiles who had been aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world, up to the time the Gospel was preached to them, and who yet at once welcomed that Gospel as good tidings when it was proclaimed to them; their hearts having been prepared for its reception by the very misery inseparable from a life without hope. The appropriateness of a hidden treasure as an emblem of the kingdom of heaven in their case is evinced by the fact that the Apostle Paul, whether with conscious reference to our parable we cannot tell, represents the admission of the Gentiles to participation in the blessings of salvation as

a mystery hid in God.[1] And of the pearl-seekers of that time we may find good samples in such as the Eunuch of Ethiopia and Lydia: Gentiles by birth, but proselytes to the Jewish religion, who in that religion and its sacred literature had already found many goodly pearls, but yet felt that there must be better still to be found, and who did at length find the best possible in Jesus the crucified.

[1] Eph 3:9.

These illustrations from the beginning of the Gospel suffice to show the reality of the distinction implied in the two comparisons of the kingdom of heaven to a hidden treasure whose existence was unsuspected, and to a pearl which was an object of persistent quest. But we are not shut up to draw our illustrations from the distant past. We may find parallels to the two classes, diversely situated, as described, in every age and in our own time. The Gospel comes as a hidden treasure to all converts from heathenism who had previously been yearning in dull despair for the good they comprehended not and never hoped to see; and to all among our own 'lapsed masses,' as we somewhat heartlessly call them, who, having spent years in ignorance and wretchedness, have at length, in some happy hour, come to learn that in Jesus they have a friend, in God a father, and in heaven a home. And the Gospel is the pearl of great price to those who, having received a Christian nurture, which has fostered in them all noble affections, on reaching young manhood devote themselves to the pursuit of truth, wisdom, and righteousness, not immediately convinced that all these are to be found by retaining the faith in which they have been reared, perhaps for a time rejecting that faith, and going to other masters than Christ in quest of the true, the good, and the fair; but at length, after much wandering and earnest search, always well intended, however fruitless in result, find rest to their souls in accepting Christ as Master, Lord, and Saviour, in whom are stored all the treasures of wisdom, knowledge, and grace.[1]

[1] The above view is in principle identical with that advocated by Greswell. He says: "To the first of these descriptions, that is, to the idea of the kingdom of heaven as represented by the treasure, I think it may be shown will correspond the privilege of becoming a Christian; and to the second, in which the kingdom of heaven is adumbrated by the pearl, the profession of Christianity, or the continuing a Christian on principle." He adds: "By the privilege of becoming a Christian, I understand the acceptance of the first offer of Christianity, the option of the Gospel terms of salvation; an offer and an option which would consequently be inseparable from the being and promulgation of Christianity, but could have no existence until it began to be preached."—Vol. ii. p. 234. In all the instances alluded to we have felt justified in assuming that the difference is one of situation rather than disposition. All alike welcome and love the good when it is presented to their view. We must not leave this topic, however, without remarking that welcoming the highest good in either class of cases is by no means a matter of course. In both parables the actors are represented as rejoicing in the discovery of the chief good, but it is not intended thereby to teach that there was no temptation to act otherwise. In both situations indicated by the two parables, there is temptation so to act as to lose the good that is attainable. In the case of the treasure-finder there is the danger of being prevented by abject fear from appropriating the good within reach; in the case of the pearl-seeker, of being too easily satisfied with what has already been obtained, and giving up the quest. How ready is one in the position of the class called 'publicans and sinners' to regard the Gospel of the kingdom as too good news to be true, to treat the invitation to the feast as a jest, and not seriously meant; not because he would not gladly go, but because he cannot believe he is wanted. And how ready is one who is already in possession of goodly pearls

of wisdom and virtue—admired and envied by others—to congratulate himself on his treasures, and to stop short prematurely in his quest; a philosopher, a man of science, a man of culture, but not a Christian. How many among the diverse classes of our society—the cultured and the uncultured—may be committing these sad mistakes even now! Happy is the man who avoids both, and is able to say amen to the sentiment of the Apostle Paul: "This is a credible saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,"—credible not too good news to be true, though certainly very surprising; worthy of all acceptation more to be valued than all other knowledge or wisdom. The other distinction between the two parables as to didactic import, we shall do little more than hint at, because we are by no means sure that it is not a fancy. It is this, that in the former of the two parables the summum bonum seems to be exhibited under the aspect of the useful, and in the latter under the aspect of the ornamental. A treasure is valuable as supplying the means of purchasing commodities; a pearl is valuable as an ornament. That the kingdom of heaven should be presented under such various aspects is not incredible, for as the summum bonum it must satisfy all man's legitimate wants; and man is not only a being who craves happiness, but also a being who has a sense of the beautiful. The beau ideal must embrace at once the true, the good, and the fair. And the kingdom of heaven does meet these various wants of human nature. It not only aims at putting man in a happy, saved condition, but at beautifying and ennobling him as the possessor of wisdom and righteousness. But it may be said there is no foundation for such a distinction in the parables, because the pearl-collector is a merchant, and is interested in his acquisitions not as ornaments, but out of regard to the price he will get for them. That, however, is a point open to question. The word ■μπορος does not necessarily, though it may usually, denote a merchant; and even though it were conceded that a merchant is intended, merchants have been known who were more than merchants, and were so enamoured of some article they had purchased as to be unwilling to sell it again. In favour of the view that the collector in the parable is a pearl-fancier rather than a mere trader is the statement that he is seeking goodly pearls. Of course a trader, as well as an amateur collector, would seek only goodly pearls; for to what end buy small, unshapely, discoloured specimens, which could not be expected to attract purchasers? But why expressly mention what might be taken for granted, unless to indicate that the man had a peculiar exceptional love for rare and excellent specimens,—a love due to personal tastes, not to trading propensities? But it may be objected, How absurd to suppose that a man would give all he had for a single pearl he did not mean to sell again, and make a profit by! "If, after giving all that he had for the pearl, he had hung it on his neck, where could the poor man have found food and clothing?"[1]. A very plausible, if somewhat vulgar question; yet it is but the question which the world asks in reference to the demand made to leave all for the kingdom: "What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed?" Ask no such questions, replies Christ. Seek first, and at all hazards, the kingdom of God, and these things shall be provided for you. And this is the law by which the true citizen of the kingdom is guided. It is not a rule to be mechanically acted on, but it is nevertheless the law of the spirit of a Christian life. In acting on such a law a Christian exposes himself to a charge of folly. What a fool was the man who parted with all to obtain a single pearl, which he meant to keep in his possession! It was the act of one who had a craze, who had gone mad in the pursuit of a hobby! True, yet such folly is characteristic of the seekers after God. It is the folly of the wise [1] Arnot, p. 156

01.05. Chapter 4. The Mustard Seed and the Leaven

Chapter 4.

The Mustard Seed and the Leaven Or, the Kingdom of God Destined to Grow to Greatness in Numbers and in Influence. In three of our Lord's parables the kingdom of heaven is represented as the subject of growth. These parables are the two above-named, and the parable of the Blade, the Ear, and the Full Corn, preserved in Mark's Gospel. The first of the three teaches that the kingdom is destined to increase in outward bulk as a visible society; the second, that it will manifest itself as a spiritual power exercising a progressive moral influence, and gradually transforming the character of the individual or the community by whom or which it has been received; the third, that in its growth the kingdom will resemble corn which groweth secretly, spontaneously, gradually, passing in the course of its growth through various stages in accordance with a fixed law which cannot be set aside, and yielding fruit only in the proper season, which cannot be hurried on, but must be patiently waited for. The three parables might very legitimately be considered in one chapter, as together exhibiting Christ's teachings on one important theme. That the Evangelists regarded them as of kindred import appears from the manner in which they connect them in their narratives, the first and third Evangelist joining together the parables of the Mustard Seed and the Leaven, and the second connecting the former of these with the parable of the seed growing gradually, which he alone has recorded. And a hasty glance suffices to show that as the three parables have a common didactic purpose, so they serve one practical aim. They are designed to inspire hope and patience amid circumstances fitted to breed despondency and discouragement. In presence of the small and insignificant beginnings of the kingdom, Jesus says to His disciples: Fear not, that which now appears so small and weak will one day be a great fact and a mighty power.[1] And lest disciples should despair of that day ever appearing because it tarried longer than they expected, or should seek to hurry it on by impatient earnestness, their Master speaks to them the third parable to teach them what to expect in regard to the kingdom of heaven from the analogy of growth in the kingdom of nature.

[1] His parabolis (Mustard Seed and Leaven) discipulos suos animat Christus, ne humilibus evangelii exordiis offensi, resiliant—Calvin, Comment.'

It will be convenient to confine our attention for the present to the first two of the three parables concerning the growth of the kingdom, reserving the third for a future chapter. The two parables of the Mustard Seed and the Leaven form a pair which have for their common object to exhibit the prospects of the kingdom on the hopeful side, in contrast to the parables of the Sower and the Tares, which present the dark side of the picture. Both proclaim the important truth that the kingdom of heaven is destined to advance from a small beginning to a great end. But the two parables present this common truth under diverse aspects. The one predicts the extensive, the other the intensive growth of the kingdom. Each parable, also, has Its own way of conceiving the kingdom answering to its peculiar mode of viewing the growth. In the one parable, that of the Mustard Seed, the kingdom is conceived of as a visible society, which is susceptible of increase in

its bulk by addition to the number of its membership. In the other parable, that of the Leaven, the kingdom is conceived of as a moral or spiritual power, which is susceptible of increase in the transforming influence which it exerts on those who are subject to its operation. From the point of view of the one parable, the disciples of Jesus, few in number, a "little flock," are the kingdom in its initial stage, destined to grow from that nucleus, small as a grain of mustard seed, into the dimensions of the Christian Church. From the point of view of the other parable, not the disciples themselves, at least in the first place, but rather that which makes them disciples, the faith in their hearts, is the kingdom, they being in the first instance at least the mass to be leavened by its renewing influence. For the parable of the Leaven admits of two applications, a narrow and a wide, an individual and a social. The mass to be leavened may be a single Christian or a whole community, just as we have occasion to regard it; because what is intended to be taught in the parable is the transforming power of Christianity, and that may be illustrated either in the individual man or in society at large. The parable of the Mustard Seed, on the other hand, admits properly only of the wider application, for the point of the parable is, that the kingdom of heaven as a phenomenon taking its place in the world is destined to increase in outward bulk, which can take place only by addition to the numbers of a society already existing, though small and insignificant to the world’s eye as a grain of mustard seed. We may, of course, easily make this parable also susceptible of application to the individual, if with some we make the mustard seed represent the same thing as the leaven, that is, not the insignificant company of Christ’s disciples, but the faith through which they became disciples. For such a view plausible ground may be found in those gospel texts in which faith is compared to a grain of mustard seed. We are persuaded, however, that the best way to understand these two parables and to extract the greatest amount of instruction from them is not to run them into each other, but to keep their points of view as distinct as possible; understanding the one to represent the kingdom as a society destined to extend itself more and more over the earth, and the other to represent the same kingdom as a spiritual influence destined to pervade, with ever-increasing completeness, the whole of human life whether individual or social. Thus viewed, these parables teach not only distinct, but mutually supplementary lessons, which must be taken together in order to yield a view of the Divine kingdom and its prospects which can satisfy intelligent and earnest minds. For neither an extensive society of imperfectly sanctified men, nor a small society of men completely sanctified, answers to our ideal of what the kingdom should be. What we desiderate is a commonwealth, at once vast in extent and holy in its character. Such a society it is which is offered to our hope in these two parables. The one predicts that the kingdom of heaven will eventually be a society of great dimensions, taking rank in this respect with the kingdoms of this world; the other that it will be a society animated in all its parts by the Holy Spirit, and in this respect not of this world. The Mustard Seed The parable as it stands in Matthew is as follows: The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seedy which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds, but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.—Mat 13:31-32; parall.: Mark 4:30-32, Luk 13:18-19. The variations in the other Gospels are of no great importance. In Mark’s version we observe a tone of exaggeration in reference both to the smallness of the seed and to the greatness of the plant which springs from it. The seed is said to be the least of all the seeds that are upon the earth,[1] and the tree is represented as shooting out great branches,[2] so that the fowls of the air can lodge under its shadow. These peculiarities may be set down to account of the

pictorial graphic style, characteristic of the second Evangelist. Luke on the other hand, makes no mention of the smallness of the seed, but adverts only to the growth of the plant into a tree large enough to be a lodging-place for the birds. This may be due in part to the connection in which he introduces the parable. Immediately before stands a narrative which exhibits Jesus triumphing over Pharisaic censors of one of His Sabbatic miracles, and winning by His reply to their objections the hearty applause of an ingenuous multitude. In the honest joy of the people over the marvellous works wrought by Jesus, and the unanswerable words of wisdom spoken by Him in self-defence, the Evangelist sees a good omen of the future, and he is reminded thereby of the parable in which Jesus had foreshadowed the growth of His kingdom from its small beginnings to a great magnitude; only, as there was nothing in the circumstances which recalled the parable to his recollection leading him to emphasise the smallness of the beginning, he gives exclusive prominence to that side of the parable which predicts the greatness of the end. But, indeed, in the case of the third Evangelist, the one-sided prominence given to the ultimate greatness of Christianity scarce needs so minute explanation. It is sufficiently accounted for by the one consideration that he is the Evangelist of the Gentiles, and that he magnifies his office. His specialty is to note carefully all that points towards the grand consummation of Christianity becoming the religion of the world. In view of this familiar fact one is strongly tempted to accept as genuine the reading δ■νδρον μ■γα found in some codices,[3] as well as in the textus receptus, though rejected by critical editors. It would certainly come very natural to Luke, if at all admissible, to say "it grew, and waxed a great tree." It is true that that would be an exaggeration, but so also is the phrase in Mark's Gospel," and shooteth out great branches," about the genuineness of which there is no room for doubt. The much more probable supposition, however, is that the μ■γα is a marginal gloss introduced into the text by some copyist who, failing to catch the precise drift of the parable, thought it required the tree to be great Whatever may be the truth as to the correct text of Luke's version of the parable, there can be no question that in Matthew's version, as compared with that of either Luke or Mark, we have the most exact account of what our Lord actually said, so that we may with all confidence make it the basis of our observations. Turning then to the parable as we find it there recorded, we remark first, that therein the declaration that the kingdom is destined to advance from a small beginning to a great end is made by Jesus in a characteristically meek and sober manner. The smallness of the beginning is much more emphatically asserted than the greatness of the end; characteristically we say, for in this parabolic utterance Jesus but repeats what we find Him elsewhere saying in other terms. In comparing the kingdom of heaven in its present initial stage to a grain of mustard seed, He says in effect the same thing as when He called the humble band of men who followed Him a "little flock,"[4] and spoke of them as, in comparison with the wise and prudent, "babes."[5] All the three sayings were the utterances of a lowly mind that shrank not from the frankest and fullest acknowledgment of all circumstances pertaining to His present state of humiliation. Of the three, that contained in our parable presents the most intense expression of the mean condition of the kingdom in its initial phase. For no apter emblem of insignificance could possibly be found than a grain of mustard seed, it being, as is declared in the parable, "the least of all seeds." In order to justify our assertion it is not necessary to take this statement in the text strictly, as if it meant that it is not possible to find anywhere upon the earth a smaller seed than that of mustard. Smaller seeds do exist, such as those of the poppy and the rye. It is not even necessary to maintain that the mustard seed is, or was at the time when and in the country where the parable was spoken, the smallest of all seeds in proportion to the

size of the plant which springs from it.[6] Even this proposition may be doubtful; it may fairly be questioned, for example, whether the disproportion between the mustard seed and the mustard tree be greater than that between the acorn and the oak. It is enough to say that the mustard seed passed in our Lord's day, and among the Jews, for an emblem of the superlatively little.[7] "As small as a grain of mustard seed" was a proverbial phrase current at that time, of which we have evidence in the teaching of our Lord Himself, in the reproachful word which He spake to His disciples on descending from the Mount of Transfiguration: "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove."[8] Whatever answer, therefore, natural history may have to give to the question which is the smallest of all seeds, or which is the smallest in proportion to the size of the plant which springs from it, it is certain that Jesus could not more frankly have admitted the utter insignificance of the Divine kingdom in its initial state, as it appeared in Himself or in His disciples, than by comparing it to a seed which in common speech passed for the smallest of all.

[1] μικρ■τερον ■ν πμντων τ■ν σπερμ■των ■π■ τ■ς γ■ς (Mat 13:31).

[2] ποιε■ κλ■δους μεγ■λους.

[3] Of the great uncials the Codex Alexandrinus has this reading.

[4] Luk 12:32.

[5] Mat 11:25.

[6] So Bengel, his comment onμικρ■τερον being "Non absoluta, sed spectata proportione seminis ad germen."

[7] In Adagium vulgare abiit ■■■■■ ■■■■■ = Pro quantitate grani sinapis.. frequentissime apud Rabbinos, rem vel quantitatem minutissimam innuentes.—Lightfoot, 'Horæ Hebraicæ.'

[8] Mat 17:20. When we turn from the beginning to the end, and ask ourselves how far the mustard plant after it has reached its full growth is a fit emblem of the kingdom grown to greatness, we are constrained to acknowledge that the aptness of the parable at this point to express the truth intended to be taught is by no means so manifest. For the plant at its best is only a great herb; and it can be called a tree only by a latitude in the use of words. If it be a tree at all, it is certainly not a great tree as the cedar is great, neither are its branches great as are the wide-spreading branches of the oak. In the East, where it attains monstrous proportions, it may be the greatest of all herbs, and create surprise by reaching such a size as to entitle it almost to rank among the trees of the forest. But even there it is after all a thing of puny proportions compared with the cedars of Lebanon or the oaks of Bashan. Stories are told of mustard trees so tall that a man could climb up into their branches[1] or ride beneath them on horseback, and modern travellers, to give us an idea of their height, tell that they have seen samples of the tree "as tall as the horse and his rider."[2] Accepting these stories as free from exaggeration, what do they amount to? Simply to this, that the mustard plant in Palestine attains to a remarkable height for a garden herb, and especially for an herb springing from so small a seed. If they were offered as proof that the plant in question was worthy to be regarded as the equal of forest trees, they would simply remind us of the fable of the frog striving to inflate itself into the dimensions of an ox.

[1] R. Simeon ben Chalaphta dixit, Caulis sinapis erat mihi in agro meo, in quam ego scandere solitus sum, ita ut scandere solent in ficum.—Lightfoot, 'Horæ Hebraicæ.'

[2] Thomson, 'The Land and the Book,' p. 414. He makes the statement with reference to the plain of Akkar, where the soil is rich.

Must we then say that the mustard plant is wholly unfit to be an emblem of the kingdom in its advanced stage when it has attained to greatness? Not so; we must tear in mind the difficulty of finding one thing which would serve both purposes, and be content if, while a specially fit emblem of the early stage of the kingdom's history, the object selected be a sufficiently apt emblem of the later stage. It would have been very easy to do justice both to the beginning and to the end by making use of two emblems, the one to represent the beginning, the other the end; likening, e.g., the kingdom in its beginning to a grain of mustard seed, and in its end to a cedar of Lebanon. But the truth to be taught would be far more felicitously and impressively set forth if one natural object could be found which might serve as an emblem of the kingdom in both stages; and even if the emblem should not serve both purposes equally well, it were enough if it served them both sufficiently well. Now this is the actual state of the case as regards the mustard seed. It emblems the initial stage of the Divine kingdom excellently well, and it emblems the final stage sufficiently well. It would not have been difficult to find a natural object whose emblematic capabilities would have been the inverse of the one actually adopted. An acorn, for example, would have been better fitted to convey an idea of the vast magnitude of the Christian Church in its advanced stage of growth; for out of the acorn comes the oak. But an acorn would not have served so well to convey an idea of the utter insignificance of the beginnings of the Church. It is a greater marvel that out of a mustard seed should come a mustard tree, than that out of an acorn should come an oak. Possibly the relative proportions between seed and tree may not be very unequal, but the outgrowth excites more surprise in the one case than in the other. We do not wonder much that the acorn grows into an oak; we do wonder when we are told that a seed so tiny as that of the mustard plant, which in its own nature is only an herb, grows to something like the dimensions of a tree. Probably such wonder helped to give currency to the proverb, "Small as a grain of mustard seed." Men were surprised that a thing so small should grow to be anything so considerable, and by the contrast between seed and plant were led to emphasise, and evert to exaggerate, the smallness of the former. And this wonder was just the cause why our Lord selected the mustard seed as the emblem of the kingdom, in preference to an acorn or any other seed from which large trees grew.[1] He preferred an emblem whose defect, if defect there must be, should lie rather in the direction of inadequate representation of the end, than in the direction of inadequate representation of the beginning. He did so partly because it was congenial to His meek and lowly spirit, but specially because it suited the mental condition of His hearers. Adapting His lesson to the spiritual capacity of His pupils, He is careful to select an emblem which shall fully recognise the mean aspect of the kingdom He has come to found in its present state, and at the same time show by a natural analogy that even a movement so contemptible in appearance might yet come to be a considerable phenomenon, commanding general attention and respect. He is not so anxious to convey an exact or adequate idea of the ultimate greatness of the kingdom. He is content with indicating that it will not always be so insignificant, that it will one day be an institution which the world can no longer treat with disdain, that it will grow till it be not only a very large herb, but even not unworthy to be classified as a tree. That it will be the greatest of trees He does not assert. He

does not even say that it will rival other trees in respect of size; He deems it enough to tell disciples unable to entertain large hopes that it will outgrow the dimensions of a garden plant and attain to something like the dimensions of a tree. Even that was an unlikely event then, and quite hard enough for weak faith to believe, without making any further demand on it. To the eye of sense, judging from present appearances, it seemed impossible that the movement to which Christ gave the name of the Kingdom of heaven could ever become a considerable phenomenon in the history of the world. The statement that it nevertheless would become such was likely to provoke, even in believing minds, incredulous surprise. How could such a state of mind be better met than by pointing out that the wonder in the spiritual world which awakened incredulity had its parallel in the natural world? This accordingly is precisely what Jesus did in uttering this parable: pointing out in the case of the mustard seed a natural object proverbially small, which grows into a plant of astonishing dimensions No happier selection could have been made for the purpose. The mustard seed, viewed as the parent of the mustard tree, is "the most characteristic emblem, among natural objects, especially of its own class, to mark the disproportion between the first beginning and the final result of any process,"[2] and in particular of that which it was Christ's aim to illustrate, the growth of the kingdom of God. In making this selection for the purpose of parabolic instruction on this topic, the great Teacher showed not only humility and sobriety of mind, but conspicuous wisdom and considerate sympathy with those whom He would instruct.

[1] "The rule ex minimo maximum, which is the rule of all growth in nature, is here signalised in the growth of the mustard seed; specially in it, because in virtue of its proverbial peculiarity, the rule is illustrated in its case with striking effect."—Goebel.

[2] Greswell 'on the Parables,' vol. ii. p. 166. When we look at the parable in the light of the use it was probably intended to serve in the personal ministry of Christ, we are delivered from all temptation to catch at any means of making the emblem of the kingdom grown to greatness a greater thing than it really is, if the common mustard plant be what is intended. Attempts of this kind have been made in recent years by travellers and men of science. It has been contended that not the mustard plant, which is properly not a tree, but only a garden herb and an annual, but a real tree of considerably larger dimensions, found in some parts of Palestine, and widely diffused in the East, is the object pointed at in the parable. The tree referred to is that which in Syria goes by the name of the khardal (the Arabic for mustard), and in botanical language is called the Salvadora Persica The first to suggest the hypothesis were the travellers Irby and Mangles, who found the khardal growing in the neighbourhood of the Dead Sea.[1] The conjecture was ingenious, and not without plausibility, for in its favour could be alleged not only the name of the tree, but the facts that the seed from which it springs is comparatively small, possesses pungent qualities like those of mustard, and is used for the same purposes. It is therefore not surprising that the opinion hazarded by the two travellers was afterwards espoused and strenuously advocated by scientific writers,[2] and regarded with favour by biblical scholars such as Meyer and Stanley.[3] It is now, however, generally set aside on sufficient grounds; of which the chief are, that there is grave reason to doubt whether the khardal ever existed or even could exist in the neighbourhood of the Sea of Galilee, the leading scene of our Lord's ministry,[4] and that the plant of the parable is expressly represented as being in its nature a garden herb, the very point of the parable being that what is in its nature an herb, becomes in dimensions something approaching a tree. We do not pretend to be able to speak with authority on the point, nor do we entertain any

feelings but those of sincere respect for efforts to ascertain precisely what natural objects are pointed at in Scripture allusions; but we may be permitted to express the doubt whether the opinion in question would ever have been seriously entertained had men been as alive to the moral as to the scientific conditions of correct interpretation. Doubtless the khardal answers better to the designation 'tree,' for it really is a tree in nature, and it attains a height of some twenty-five feet, while the mustard plant does not reach more than half that elevation. But realise the moral situation, and you see at once that the khardal, though twice as tall, is not half so appropriate as the mustard plant to be an emblem of the kingdom of God in its developed state. It is no marvel that a plant of the tree species should grow to the height of twenty-five feet, it is rather remarkable that it should grow no taller; but it is a marvel that a plant, which is by nature an herb, should in its growth even so much as approximate the dimensions and aspect of a tree. And what is required by the moral situation is just such a marvel in physical nature to inspire faith in the possibility of a like marvel in the spiritual world—a religious movement in its present aspect despicably mean, becoming one day a great fact of such proportions that men could no longer despise it.

[1] 'Travels in Egypt and Nubia, Syria and Asia Minor, during the years 1817 and 1818.' The passage relating to the subject is as follows: "There was one curious tree which we observed in great plenty, and which bore a fruit in bunches, resembling in appearance the currant, with the colour of the plum: it has a pleasant though strong aromatic taste, exactly resembling mustard, and if taken in any quantity, produces a similar irritability in the nose and eyes to that which is caused by taking mustard. The leaves of this tree have the same pungent flavour as the fruit, though not so strong. We think it probable that this is the tree our Saviour alluded to in the parable of the Mustard Seed, and not the mustard plant which we have in the north—for although in our journey from Bysan to Adjeloun we met with the mustard plant growing wild, as high as our horses' heads, still being an annual it did not deserve the appellation of a tree; whereas the other is really such, and birds might easily, and actually do, take shelter under its shadow" (p. 255).

[2] Prominent among these is Dr. Royle, who first set forth his views on the subject in a paper read before the Royal Asiatic Society in 1844, and published in vol. viii. of their Transactions.

[3] Vide Meyer's Commentary, and Stanley's 'Sinai and Palestine.'

[4] Tristram says: "There is no reason to believe that at any time it grew by the Sea of Galilee, and very strong grounds for doubting that it could flourish there at all. It is in fact one of the many tropical plants whose northern limit is in these sultry nooks by the Dead Sea, and which spread no farther north."—'Natural History of the Bible,' p. 473. The parable then, viewed as having reference to the common mustard plant, is altogether worthy of our Lord's wisdom, whether we consider its bearing on the beginning or on the end of the kingdom. Christ showed His wisdom in selecting a grain of mustard seed to be an emblem of the kingdom in its obscure beginnings, because the emblem was not only true to fact, but to the law or principle of the case. Worldly-minded Jews could not believe that so mean a thing. as the movement with which Jesus and His disciples were identified could possibly be the kingdom of God come. But the meanness and the smallness of the movement were no argument against its Divinity, but rather a presumption in favour of its being Divine. It is the way of Divine movements in the world's history to begin obscurely and end gloriously; and it not unfrequently happens that there is more Divinity in the obscure beginning than in the glorious ending. For while the movement is obscure men are not likely to join it, except

as moved by the spirit of truth and goodness; but when it has become famous, worldly men may join it from by-ends, and so make what at first was a Divine, heavenly thing, undivine and earthly enough. Therefore we may say that Jesus showed His wisdom also in making the mustard plant at its full height an emblem of the kingdom in its advanced stage, not merely in so far as He thereby accommodated His teaching to the spiritual wants and capacities of His hearers, but more especially because He thereby presented to view a kingdom large enough to satisfy the hope of devout souls, but not so large as to awaken ambitious desires and worldly expectations, and so attract unclean ravenous birds to take up their abode among the branches of the tree of life. The allusion in the closing words of the foregoing paragraph reminds us that we have not yet noticed that part of our parable in which our Lord speaks of the birds of the air as coming to lodge in the branches of the mustard tree. The question at once arises, what amount of significance are we to attach to this feature? In answering the question it is possible to err both by excess and by defect. The least that can be said is that the fact of the birds frequenting the branches of the mustard plant is mentioned as a mark that the plant has become a tree. The construction of the sentence makes this manifest: "It becometh a tree, so that[1] the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof." The size of the plant, so to speak, deceives the winged creatures, and makes them mistake a garden herb for a forest tree. The feature is not introduced merely for the sake of picturesque effect, but to define the character of the plant. There may possibly be a latent allusion to Old Testament texts, in which birds and trees are associated together, as, e.g., those in that beautiful psalm of nature, the 106th, which speak of the birds singing among the branches and making their nests among the cedars of Lebanon; or the well-known passage in Daniel which describes the tree of Nebuchadnezzar’s vision in these poetic terms: "The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth: the leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed upon it."[2] It would, however, be going beyond the sober truth to lay much stress on these texts, as if Christ meant to suggest that the tree of His parable resembled in size the cedars of the Psalmist, or the mystic tree of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, or that the birds resorted thereto for precisely the same reason. The tree of the parable is not large enough to harbour birds of all sizes, but only small birds like linnets and goldfinches; and what they seek therein is not a place to build their nests, but the food it supplies in its seed, which they devour with avidity. The Greek word translated in the English version "lodge," does not signify "to make nests in," but simply "to settle upon."[3] We must, therefore, as strict expositors, deny ourselves the pleasure of finding in this parable a prophecy of a time when the kingdom of heaven, now so insignificant, should become a vast empire rivalling that of Nebuchadnezzar’s vision, when the tiny seed of the kingdom should develop into a great forest tree, overshadowing the whole earth, and affording harbourage for all the nations. At most it contains a slight hint at the possibility of such a consummation, suggesting by the words employed more than it says, or than the parabolic envelope of the thought admits of being said: by the word "tree" suggesting a forest tree, though the tree actually spoken of is little more than a large bush, and by the reference to the birds of the air suggesting the idea of men coming from every quarter of the heavens and taking up their abode in the Divine commonwealth. So far as this parabolic utterance strictly interpreted is concerned, the prophetic eye of Jesus cannot be said to look beyond the time when the company of His disciples should have received large accessions within the limits of Judaea, the garden in

which the grain of mustard seed was originally planted. We may not stretch our horizon much beyond Pentecost, when the number of disciples was increased by thousands; scarcely, though we gladly would, as far as to the later movement in Antioch, when the kingdom of Christ became so considerable a phenomenon as to require a new name, so that the disciples were there for the first time called Christians. It is quite legitimate within these limits to give to the birds of the air a symbolic significance and make them represent converts to the new religion. It is not absolutely certain that the birds were intended to have such symbolic significance assigned to them, but it seems probable that the third Evangelist at least regarded them in that light. When we read in his narrative how the people rejoiced in the wondrous works of Jesus, and then observe how he takes occasion therefrom to record the parable of the Mustard Tree, in whose branches the fowls of heaven lodged, we cannot help feeling that in his mind the fowls are identified with the well-affected multitude. He seems to say to himself: "Behold the Lord's parable fulfilling itself: see how the birds fly to the branches of the mustard tree."

[1] ■στς, with the infinitive.

[2] Dan 4:11.

[3] This disposes of one objection to the mustard plant being the object intended in the parable, viz. that at the time when birds build their nests it is too small to be used for such a purpose.

We have now noticed all the points apparent on the surface of the parable. Other points not apparent derived from the known properties of the mustard seed—its heat, its pungency, the fact that it must be bruised ere it yield its best virtues, etc.—we do not feel called to remark on, agreeing as we do with those who think that analogies based on these properties are foreign to the purpose for which the parable was spoken. We may, however, briefly advert to an opinion strenuously maintained by Greswell, that it is intended in the parable to represent the spread of Christianity as of a miraculous character. To make this out stress is laid on the contrast between the smallness of the mustard seed, and its vegetative vigour as manifested in the size to which the plant attains; and the right to do this is proved by a reference to the other passages in our Lord's teaching in which the seed of mustard is spoken of. The author's contention is, that the expression "faith as a grain of mustard seed," twice employed by Christ, does not mean faith as small as a grain of mustard, but faith as vigorous in its vital power. Our Lord, it is held did not mean to say that any degree of faith would suffice to do the wonderful things of which the removal of a mountain into the sea is an emblem, as that would involve that the disciples had no faith at all—seeing they were unable to do the things referred to—which, however, was not the fact. The faith that can remove mountains is a special kind of faith, viz. that which can produce miracles. It is the sort of faith which Jesus had in view when He said to His disciples: "Verily if ye have faith, and do not hesitate, not only shall ye do the miracle of the fig tree, but should you even say unto this mountain, Be thou lifted up, and be thou cast into the sea, it shall come to pass."[1] It is the faith which, the following morning, Jesus called faith of God,[2] a Divine faith, describing its character and power in similar terms. If then the mustard seed in Christ's teaching elsewhere be an emblem of a faith whose specific characteristic it is to possess Divine miraculous power, we are entitled to assume that it retains that significance in the parable, though it is there used not as an emblem of faith, but of the kingdom of God in its obscure beginnings. In comparing the kingdom to a grain of mustard seed, Jesus meant to say: The kingdom of heaven is now in appearance insignificant and

impotent, but it has within it a Divine power, which will enable it to triumph over all hindrances, and make it ere long great and mighty. Such is the argument. It is plausible, and of course the doctrine which it seeks to establish is true, but whether the parable be intended to teach it or not is another question. On that point we will not dogmatise; only we must remark that in our judgment the exegesis of the other texts, on which the argument is based, is very doubtful. Faith, small as a grain of mustard seed, is the interpretation which would naturally be put upon Christ's words by hearers living in a land where the smallness of the mustard seed was proverbial. The objection that this interpretation implies that the disciples had no faith at all, is of no weight. It is simply a prosaic inference, from a poetic impassioned utterance. There is more force in the consideration that the statement concerning faith, even thus interpreted, implies that faith is a thing of such inherent vitality and power, that even a little of it can do great things; and as the same thing is true of the mustard seed, it is not unnatural to suppose that Christ's full thought was this: If ye had but faith even of the dimensions of a grain of mustard, ye could work wonders, such is its power, even as the tiny seed has vital force sufficient to produce a plant reaching to the size of a tree. That the paraphrase contains a just and valuable thought we admit, only we cannot pretend to be quite sure that all this was suggested, or was meant to be suggested, by the words of our Lord to those to whom they were addressed.

[1] Mat 21:21, as rendered by Greswell, vide his work on the Parables, p. 162.

[2] Mark 11:22. π■στιν θεο■ is the expression in the Greek, rendered in our version "faith in God," which the R. V. retains. The Leaven The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.—Mat 13:33; cf. Luk 13:20-21. This parable relates not to the outward, visible increase which the kingdom is destined to undergo, but to the inward transformation which it will effect, which is not discernible by the physical organ of vision, but by the moral sense. The action of leaven on the dough in which it is deposited is not so much to change its bulk as its condition, and the change is perceived, not by the eye, but by taste. The kingdom of heaven in this connection signifies the doctrine of the kingdom which exercises a moral influence on the heart and life of those who receive it. It is quite compatible with this view that the recipients of the doctrine should themselves be regarded as a leaven. Christians are a leaven in the world, as they are the light of the world. But they are a leaven in virtue of the truth which they believe, and the spirit which animates them; and they act on the world through these in precisely the same way as these act on themselves. In likening the kingdom of heaven to leaven, Jesus in effect proclaimed a great truth, which pervades all His teaching, viz. that that kingdom is in its nature spiritual. Leaven works from the centre to the circumference, and it works by the method of contagion, and the comparison may be held to imply an analogy in these respects between the emblem and the thing emblemed; that is to say, the parable teaches that the kingdom of heaven first takes possession of the heart, the seat of life, and thence proceeds outwards, to exercise sway over conduct, and communicates itself from mind to mind by the contagious power of sympathy. In these respects the Divine kingdom differs from the kingdoms of this world, which concern themselves chiefly with the outward life, and employ force, or laws with penalties annexed, to establish their authority. But it is not peculiar to the Divine kingdom to work in this way; all spiritual influence, whether good or evil, acts in the same manner. The mere fact of a religious movement resembling leaven in its mode of spreading itself settles nothing as to its truth or moral tendency. Leaven may fitly be used to denote an evil moral

influence as well as a good; and in fact, in the larger number of instances in which it is named in the New Testament, it is employed in a bad sense. Hence some have inferred that it must be so understood always, and therefore also in this parable. In that case the parable would contain a prophecy of a corruption of Christianity through the introduction into the Church of evil tendencies, doctrinal and practical. But this idea is precluded by the simple consideration that it is the kingdom itself that is compared to leaven. It is also entirely out of keeping with the familiar facts of domestic life on which the parable is based. Leaven, as used by the housewife, is not an evil thing, but a means by which palatable food is produced from insipid dough. If, indeed, we insist on introducing into the interpretation of the parable our knowledge of the chemical character of leaven, we may produce a plausible argument in favour of the opinion referred to. Leaven is simply a piece of sour dough in which putrefaction has begun, and which, on being introduced into fresh dough,[1] produces by contagion a similar condition in the whole mass. Now putrefaction is an offensive word, suggestive of a state not pleasant to think of, and we may hastily conclude that an object in which such a state is found is necessarily and essentially evil. But it is not only our privilege, but our duty, to consider this parable of our Lord, not from a chemical, but from a popular point of view. From that point of view we are entitled to regard everything as good which produces a good effect. In studying this comparison of the kingdom of heaven to leaven we must put the putrefaction out of sight, and think only of its action in causing the dough to swell, so as to be more accessible to the heat of the oven, and in imparting to it when ready to be eaten the palatable qualities of leavened bread. We may therefore dismiss the eccentric notion in question as unworthy of serious consideration.

[1] The relation between the dough and the leaven is well brought out in the German language, the names for the two objects respectively being Teig and Sauerteig. The hiding of the leaven in the mass of dough is a point deserving special notice. The woman took the leaven, and hid it[1] in three measures of meal. The insertion of the piece of sour dough called leaven into the mass of fresh dough is a matter of course in the physical process of baking, but we ought not on that account to treat the hiding of the leaven in the parable as a thing of no emblematic significance. The word employed seems chosen with a view to provoke thought. Does it not point to the silent, unobserved, stealthy manner in which the doctrine of the kingdom was introduced into the world by the Son of man? In another place the Evangelist quotes as descriptive of Christ’s manner of carrying on His ministry the prophetic words: "He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets."[2] The quotation is most apposite. Jesus, as the Founder of the kingdom of heaven, worked noiselessly, as the dew or the light. The kingdom, in His hands, came indeed not with observation, but in a quiet, inward manner. His doctrine dropped as the rain, and His speech distilled as the dew; as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass. As the result of His ministry of grace and truth the kingdom was there, hidden in the hearts of a few simple fishermen, tax-gatherers, and sinful women turned from their sins; and men did not know, but kept inquiring when the kingdom should come, not suspecting that it was come already, and was coming more and more by its secret but powerful influence on human spirits. It is not necessary in interpreting the parables to be always asking who is the actor—who is the Sower in the first parable, or who the Woman in this one. A woman is the actor in this case simply because the operation described is woman’s work. Yet one cannot help taking occasion from this parable to remark on the womanlike character of Christ’s ministry. No masculine ambitions or passions are noticeable there, but only the quiet, incessant, patient, retiring industry of one who is

never in a hurry and yet never idle; who is content with his limited, obscure sphere, and utterly indifferent to the stir and strife of the great world without. "My kingdom is not of this world,"[3] He says to Pilate, provoking from the worldly-minded governor a smile at His simplicity. His brethren, seeing His works in Galilee, say to Him: "Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that Thy disciples also may see the works that Thou doest. For there is no man that doeth anything in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If Thou do these things, show Thyself to the world."[4] But Jesus has no desire to advertise Himself into celebrity in Jerusalem, the seat of government and of religious ceremonial, but is content to remain in the northern province, busily occupied in that humble but congenial sphere in inserting the leaven of His doctrine into the susceptible minds which yield themselves to His influence. It is not that His doctrine is esoteric, or that any cunning or cowardice characterises his method of working. He could say with perfect truth, as He did say at His trial to the high priest: "I spake openly to. the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing."[5] But while His doctrine was open and not cryptic, His spirit was humble and wise. He loved quiet, unostentatious ways of working, and He believed that these would in the long run prove the most effective. The words of the kingdom, hid in the hearts of a few babes, would work there like a leaven, till it resulted in their illumination and sanctification; and from them it would be communicated by contagion to others, till the little leavened mass had leavened the whole lump of Jewish and even pagan humanity. In his intercessory prayer Jesus offered up for the eleven disciples this petition: "I have given them Thy word... Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth. As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world."[6] The words are a brief but luminous commentary on our parable, viewed as a figurative description of our Lord’s own ministry and its aim. He taught His disciples the doctrine of the kingdom; through that doctrine, by the blessing of the Divine Spirit, they were at length sanctified; and when their minds had been duly enlightened, and their hearts filled with the grace of the kingdom, they became through their words and their lives a leaven to the world.

[1] ■ν■κρυψεν, Mat 13:33, found only here in N. T. The corresponding word in Luke is ■κρυψεν.

[2] Mat 12:19.

[3] John 18:36.

[4] John 7:3-4.

[5] John 18:20.

[6] John 17:14; John 17:17-18.

Till the whole was leavened: That is another point in the parable demanding particular attention. The question naturally arises, what is the ’whole’ referred to? In the parable it is the three measures of meal, which seems from an induction of Scripture instances,[1] to have been the usual quantity prepared for use at one time, amounting to rather more than four English pecks. But is this all that is to be said? have the three measures no emblematic significance? is the number simply a part of the natural realism of the parable? It is hard to reconcile ourselves to such conclusions, especially considering the tempting analogies suggested by the three measures. If we think of the individual man as the subject of the leavening process, we have answering to the three measures, the three parts of human nature, body, soul, and spirit, as the subjects of

sanctification; the renewing process commencing at the centre, the spirit, passing through the soul with all its affections and faculties, and at length reaching the circumference of the man, the body with its appetites and habits. If we think of man collectively, the number three repeats itself under all the various aspects from which we regard the subject of the leavening process. Viewing man socially, there are the three forms of social existence, the family, the Church, the State; viewing him ethnographically, there are the three sons of Noah—Shem, Ham, and Japheth—from which all nations of the earth have descended. To some minds the main fact that the number three re-appears under so many diverse forms will seem conclusive evidence that it was designed to have emblematic significance, while to others the circumstance that the number admits of so many interpretations will go far to show that none of them was intended. In such questions men are very apt to be influenced by their temperament, and in absence of conclusive evidence either way it is becoming to abstain from over-confident dogmatism. A man of matter-of-fact juristic mind, like Grotius, will prefer the severely literal, prosaic interpretation,[2] while a dreamy, idealistic commentator, like Lange, will as certainly incline to the allegorical; and it would be presumptuous in us to decide authoritatively between them. We will not therefore say positively that the idealists are right, though our sympathies are with them, nor lay it down as a certain truth that the three measures represent the world, and that this parable is one of those utterances of Christ in which the universal destination of the Gospel is clearly taught. We may, however, without presumption say this much, that leaven is one of the three symbols employed by our Lord to represent the action of His kingdom in the world, and that in the other two instances that action is expressly represented as having relation to the whole world. The three symbols are leaven, salt, and light. We find the latter two employed in the Sermon on the Mount, both in a universalistic way. Of His disciples as the children of the kingdom, animated by its spirit, enlightened by its truth, Jesus there says, "Ye are the salt of the earth. Ye are the light of the world."[3] If, therefore, He had said, "Ye are the leaven of the world," it would only have been a statement of the same kind, in perfect sympathy with His teaching in the Sermon on the Mount; and it is at least probable that He meant to suggest such a thought by expressly naming three measures of meal as the amount to be leavened.[4] To this view it may appear an objection that the whole, whatever it is, is represented as being leavened, so that if the whole signify the whole world of mankind at large, the parable teaches not merely the universal destination of the Gospel as a message to every human creature, but the ultimate universal salvation of all men. Without entering here into that question, we simply observe that this is pressing the words beyond what they can bear. Assuming that our Lord has in view the world as the subject of the leavening process, we must take His words as a broad statement of tendency, not as an exact statement of the historical result. The three statements, Ye are the salt of the earth, Ye are the light of the world, and the one implied in this parable, Ye are the leaven of the world, must all be interpreted in one way, as indicating function and not effect. Doubtless we have in the case of the leaven what we have not in the case of the other two emblems, an express declaration as to the effect. The process goes on till the whole is leavened. But the purpose of the declaration is to indicate the nature of the leaven, which is to work on incessantly till it has more or less infected the whole mass in which it has been deposited;[5] and in this respect leaven is a very apt emblem of Christian truth, or indeed of any spiritual influence whatsoever. It is the tendency of all spiritual influence, good or evil, to diffuse itself more and more throughout society till its presence can be traced in a greater or less extent everywhere. And it may be granted that in some sense, and to some extent, it is the destination of Christianity to

pervade the whole of society, and to influence in some way, and to certain effects, the whole human race. But it does not follow that the leavening process must in all cases be complete and thorough. A given quantity of leaven will not leaven thoroughly any lump of dough however large, but only the mass which is in proportion to its amount.[6] It would influence a larger mass more or less, as a piece of sugar would tend to sweeten a whole river of water, or a candle tend to illuminate the whole world. We do not presume to prescribe limits to the influence of Christianity, we simply enter a caveat against too sweeping inferences from the words of our parable. The doctrine there taught is that it is the genius of the kingdom of God to work outwards from the centre, where it is first deposited, towards the circumference. It is a doctrine which justifies large hopes in reference to the elevation of the individual, and to the imbuing of society and the world at large with Christian principle. But these hopes must be qualified by the recollection that Christianity does not raise even all individuals who receive it to the same moral level, and that, as a matter of fact, it has not found all peoples equally amenable to its influence. On the other hand, the children of the kingdom ought not to allow such considerations to depress their spirits, or to make them settle down contentedly in the conviction that it is only a few that are to be saved, and that all attempts to save others are vain. They are the elect of God, it is true, called out of the world. But they must remember that they have not been called for their own sakes merely, but for the sake of others. They are called to be the salt of the earth, the light of the world, the leaven of humanity, and they should ever live under the inspiring influence of their high vocation, seeking earnestly and always two things, the perfect sanctification of their own characters that their influence on others for good may be as great as possible, and the conversion of the whole world to the Christian faith. It was, in all probability, to inspire this mind that Jesus spake this parable to His disciples. He desired the small band of followers who had received His doctrine, especially the twelve, to entertain large expectations as to what might be accomplished through their instrumentality. He said to them in effect: Ye are but a little leaven hid in the bosom of the world, so small in bulk that men are scarce aware of your existence. But, remember, a little leaven can leaven a large lump. See that you undervalue not your importance as the leavened portion of the lump of humanity, through which the rest is to be leavened. Fear not, the future is yours; it is your Father's pleasure to give you in ample measure the kingdom. I have chosen and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit. Aim at bringing forth much fruit, for that is not impossible. In the light of this paraphrase we can see that the parable of the Leaven is, equally with that of the Mustard Seed, admirably fitted to inspire hope even in the day of small things and obscure, uninfluential beginnings.

[1] Conf. Gen 18:6; Jdg 6:19; 1Sa 1:24. An ephah was equal to three seahs, so that the quantity in all three instances was the same.

[2] Σ■τα τρ■α: tantum enim simul misceri solebat.—Vide his 'Annotationes.

[3] Mat 5:13-14.

[4] This view commended itself to the sound exegetical judgment of Bengel. He says: Videtur hoc pertinere ad totum genus humanum, quod refert tria sata, ex tribus Noachi filiis propagatum in orbe terræ.

[5] Stier ('Reden Jesu') says that ■λον is equivalent to ■λως, and gives as alternative renderings of the words■ως ο■ ■ζυμ■θη ■λον, till the whole meal was leavened, or till the meal was wholly

leavened. But whether ■λον be taken adverbially or otherwise, the statement must be understood quantitatively, not qualitatively.

[6] The universalistic interpretation is objected to by Hofmann, 'Das Evangelium des Lukas.' The foregoing are the principal points in the parable which call for notice. The following thoughts, suggested rather than taught therein, we append to illustrate a feature of the Parables to which we will have frequent occasion to refer, and which we may call their felicity. When we recall the etymological meaning of the Greek word for leaven, and of its Latin and English equivalents, all three—ζ■μη, fermentum, leaven[1]—pointing to the effect of the substance denoted in causing upheaving and fermentation in the mass in which it is deposited, we are naturally led to reflect on the analogous action of the kingdom of heaven upon those with whom it comes into contact. For there is a real analogy at this point. Where the truth of the kingdom comes with power, whether in the individual or in society, it produces a moral fermentation, and the amount of fermentation it produces is the measure of its influence. The more stir it causes in the heart and mind and conscience, the more completely does it ultimately bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Christ Himself referred to the tendency of His teaching to act as a ferment in society when He said: "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, nay; but rather division: for from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."[2] Nor is the fermenting process, so graphically described in its social aspect, confined to the family or the community; it goes on in the bosom of every believing man. The new iife of the kingdom not only divides a country or a house against itself; it divides a man against himself, so that a man's foes shall be not only they of his own household, but even his very self—the old man fighting against the new man, the natural desires and affections resisting the claim of the kingdom to the place of sovereignty in the heart. Such fermenting processes in individual experience and in the history of nations are by no means pleasant to pass through, but they are the price that has to be paid for sanctified character, and for Christian civilisation. On no other terms can these precious blessings be obtained.

[1] ζ■μη, from ζ■ω, to boil; fermentum, contracted from fervimentum, from ferveo; leaven, from levare, to lift up.

[2] Luk 12:51; Luk 12:53. The comparison of the kingdom of heaven to leaven, duly reflected on, might serve to correct crude notions as to the effect of regeneration and sanctification on human nature. Judging from the artificial, unnatural character which the profession of religion sometimes engenders, it would almost seem as if, in the opinion of many, the new birth and the new life produced by Christian faith involved the extirpation at once of the common characteristics of human nature, and of the idiosyncrasies of the individual. But this ought not to be the case if the kingdom of heaven be indeed like leaven. For leaven does not destroy the characteristics of meal in general, or the peculiarities of particular kinds of meal. It leaves the leavened meal essentially as it found it, and there is no difficulty in distinguishing one sort of leavened meal from another, wheat from barley, and barley from rye.[1] Naturalness is a mark of Christian maturity, the sign of a completed sanctification. In saying this we do not mean to condemn everything savouring of artificiality in religion as spurious and hypocritical. Here again our parable is helpful in checking

onesidedness. There is a stage when the dough, in which leaven has been deposited, seems unlike itself, viz. when it is passing through the upheaving process of fermentation. In like manner we ought not to expect either naturalness or geniality in a Christian when he is in the fermenting stage of the spiritual life. His experiences then are not pleasant to himself; why should we be surprised if they be still more unpalatable to others? Wait till the fermenting process and the baking process are complete, and then see how the bread tastes. If the character of a Christian possesses the charm of sweetness when the process of sanctification is complete, we have no right to complain that it does not exhibit it sooner,—which, however, many do, for want of due consideration of such analogies as that suggested in this parable, and, we may add, in the parable next to be studied, that of the Blade, the Green Ear, and the Ripe Corn.

[1] "The meal, although leavened in all parts, retains after, as before, its own distinctive character (’Art und Gattung’), according as it is barley, rye, or wheat meal."—Arndt.

Finally, one in quest of arguments to prove the supernatural character of Christianity might easily found one upon our parable. The leaven is a thing extraneous to the meal. The woman took it from another place and put it into the dough, to produce effects which the dough itself could never bring about. In like manner, it might be argued, it has often been argued, the kingdom of heaven was brought down from above, from heaven, by the Son of God, and deposited in the lump of humanity, there to produce moral results, which human nature by itself unaided is utterly incompetent to achieve. That the doctrine is true needs no elaborate proof; its truth is attested by the experience of individual Christians, as well as by a comparative study of the effects produced in the world at large by Christianity on the one hand, and by all other religions on the other. That it was Christ’s purpose to teach this doctrine, or either of the two preceding, when He uttered this parable of the Leaven, we cannot positively affirm. But if these important lessons do not belong to the primary didactic drift of the parable, they do at least attest its felicity; for surely a parable must be admitted to be felicitously constructed which suggests so much beyond what it expressly teaches.

01.06. Chapter 5. The Blade, the Ear, and the Full Corn

Chapter 5.

The Blade, the Ear, and the Full Corn Or, Growth in the Kingdom Gradual and Slow. In the culture of grain there are two busy seasons, the seed time and the harvest. Between the sowing and the reaping intervenes a period of comparative inactivity, during which the husbandman is very much a mere spectator looking on while the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself, first the blade, then the ear, and finally the full ripe corn in the ear. Is there any analogy, one naturally asks, in this respect between the kingdom of nature and the kingdom of heaven? The Great Teacher gives us to understand that there is. Jesus said: So is the kingdom of God as if a man should cast the seed into the ground and should sleep and rise, night and day, and the seed should spring and grow, how knoweth not he.[1] Spontaneously the earth bringeth forth fruit, first blade, then ear, then is full corn in the ear[2] But when the fruit permits,[3] immediately he putteth forth[4] the sickle, because the harvest is at hand.—Mark 4:26-29.

[1] On this clause vide remarks at p. 124.

[2] The true reading seems to be πλ■ρης σ■τος, ■στι being understood. The reading in the T. R., πλ■ρη σ■τον, has all the appearance of a grammatical correction by scribes. The R. V., however, retains it, also Westcott and Hort, who think that all the variations would be accounted for if the original reading were πλ■ρης σ■τον, πλ■ρης being indeclinable in the accusative, as "in all good MSS. of Acts 6:5 except B." For the import of the change of construction vide the exposition.

[3] That is, by being ripe. This rendering of παραδο■ (or παραδ■) is suggested by Meyer and approved by Weiss (’Das Markus-Evangelium,’ p. 159), Bleek (’Synoptische Erklärung’), Bisping (’Exegetisches Handbuch’), and Volkmar (’Die Evangelien,’ p. 289). The rendering can be justified from classical usage. Meyer cites the expression τ■ς ■ρας παραδιδο■σης—the season of the year permitting, from Polybius, 22, 24, 9. The majority of commentators prefer the rendering, "when the fruit yields" (supple. ■αυτ■ν), a sense of the word for which no certain voucher can be cited from Greek authors, but to which a parallel can be cited from Latin, e. g. the line: Multa adeo gelidd melius se nocte dederunt, from Virgil’s Georgics, I. 287. Unger (’De Parabolarum Jesu natura, interpretatione, usu,’ p. 110) alludes to a similar usage in the German language. In a note he remarks: Verbum vexatum neque cum Fritsch. suppleverim voce ■αυτ■ν neque cum Winero, θερισμ■ν vel καιρ■ν, sed voce σ■τον vel grana, quam quidem nostrates etiam ita omittunt, ut tanquam verbum impersonale dicant: es giebt her.

[4] So in R. V., and approved by Dr. Field, (’Otium Norvicense,’ pars Tertia). He refers to Joe 3:13, where the verb occurs in the Sept. as = ■■■■■■■■, which means not only to send but to put forth, as the hand.

According to a recent writer, the didactic aim of this parable was to teach the disciples not to expect the complete development of the new life springing out of the word of the kingdom, as the result of the exercise of an external power on the part of the Messiah, but rather to regard it as a

problem for the spontaneous moral activity of the believing hearer.[1] This, however, is by no means the whole, or even the chief, doctrinal significance of the parable. It is meant to teach a doctrine of passivity not merely with reference to Christ, the First Sower of the word, but also with reference to those whose minds are the soil into which the seed of truth is cast; a doctrine to the effect that growth in the kingdom proceeds spontaneously by fixed laws, over which the subject of growth has little or no control. Of course, in uttering a parable of this import, Jesus did not mean to teach that men have nothing whatever to do in the way of promoting growth in themselves and others. In proof of this it is enough to refer to the parable of the Sower, in which total or partial failure of the spiritual crop in certain cases is attributed to preventible causes, such as the cares of life, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things. And even without the aid of that parable we might have been sure that it could not be the intention of Christ to teach a doctrine which would encourage men in vices to which they are only too prone, viz. indolence, indifference, and thoughtless security. But why then, it may be asked, speak a parable which even seems to look that way? To check vices of a different description to which men of earnest spirit are prone. Active devoted labourers in the kingdom are tempted to exaggerate their own importance as instruments; they are apt in a busybody spirit to interfere when it were wiser to stand still and see God work; they are prone to despondency if they see not immediate results, and to impatience when they discover how slowly growth in the kingdom proceeds onward towards its consummation. And Jesus desired by this parable to check such evil tendencies in His disciples, and to foster in them the virtues of humility, dependence, faith, and patience.

[1] Goebel. That this parabolic gem, so natural and so significant, should be found only in Mark, is one of the surprises of the Gospel history. But we are not therefore to doubt either its genuineness or its importance. It is evidently a genuine logion of Jesus, and one too at first hand, in its original form, not a modification of some other parable such as that of the Tares.[1] It is also a parable of great didactic value, indispensable to a full doctrine concerning the nature of the Divine kingdom, and of much practical utility to its citizens. How important to know what to expect in reference to the growth of the seed of the Word, whether in the individual or in the community, to prevent Christians being scandalised when things turn out altogether contrary to expectation! None the less important is the parable, that it proclaims a truth men are slow to understand or be reconciled to; a fact whereof we have sufficient evidence in the way in which this portion of Christ's parabolic teaching has often been handled. The law of growth in the spiritual world not being duly laid to heart, has therefore not been found here; and the parable consequently has been misinterpreted, or rather scarcely interpreted at all. Few of our Lord's parables have been more unsatisfactorily expounded, as there are few in which a right exposition is more to be desired for the good of believers. It may seem presumptuous to say this, by implication censuring our brethren and commending ourselves. But a man's capacity to expound particular portions of Scripture depends largely on the peculiarities of his religious experience; for here as in other spheres, it holds true that we find what we bring. Suppose, e.g., that the experience of a particular Christian has made him intimately acquainted with the momentous business of waiting on God for good earnestly desired and long withheld. The natural result will be an open eye for all Scripture texts, and they are many, which speak of that exercise, and a ready insight into their meaning. The case supposed is the writer's own, and therefore the parable now to be studied has been to him for many years a favourite subject of thought and fruitful source of comfort, viewed as a repetition in parabolic form of the Psalmist's counsel: Wait, I say, on the Lord.[2]

[1] So Hilgenfeld after Strauss; vide his 'Einleitung in Das neue Testament,' p. 516. Volkmar ('Die Evangelien,' p. 288), on the other hand, holds Mark's parable to be an original utterance of Jesus which Matthew could not accept without modification; the necessary transformation being supplied in the parable of the Tares. With him agrees Holtzman, 'Die Synoptische Evangelien,' p. 107. These differences of opinion are connected with the views entertained by the writers as to the order of time in which the Gospels were written; Hilgenfeld contending for the priority of Matthew, Volkmar and Holtzman for the priority of Mark. Volkmar represents the three parables of the Sower, the Mustard, and the Seed growing gradually, as an original group which together teach the spirituality of the kingdom. Neander remarks: "This parable wears the undeniable stamp of originality both in its matter and form; so that we cannot consider it as a variation of one of the other parables of the growing seed." 'Life of Christ,' Bonn's Edition, p. 346.

[2] Psa 27:14. In this light we have ever regarded this parable. That the progress of growth in the Divine kingdom, in all spheres, is such as to call for waiting, being gradual and slow, and fixed down to law, seems to us its scope and burden. Hence our title for the parable, the blade, the ear, and the full corn, which suggests progress according to natural law, and by stages which must be passed through in succession, none being over-leapt. And though it is often true that there is little in a name, in this case we deem it important to direct attention even to the title. For the title usually given to this parable in English books is unfortunate, as tending to set the mind off on a wrong tack. It is, The seed growing secretly, which emphasises a true but subordinate feature in the parable, with most pernicious effect upon the interpretation. In illustration of the mischief wrought by this falsely-placed emphasis, we may refer to the fact that Greswell treats the part of the parable which describes the spontaneous growth of grain[1] as a parenthesis,[2] though that it is in reality the very kernel is sufficiently shown by the deliberate and pointed enumeration of the stages through which the grain has to pass.[3] Equally instructive illustrations may be found in the pages of Trench and Arnot, whose exceptionally meagre discussions are mainly devoted to the question, Who is the person who sows the seed, Christ, or an ordinary minister of the word?—a question which the very opening of the parable shows to be altogether unimportant; the formula, "So is it with the kingdom of God," signalising the fact that the agent is not in this case the centre—that the stress lies not on the person, but on the objective facts of the case.[4] The former of these two writers finds himself in a dilemma on the point, from which he frankly confesses he "can see no perfectly satisfactory way of escape."[5] His perplexity is caused by the twofold statement concerning the husbandman, that he knoweth not how the grain grows, and that he putteth in the sickle when the grain is ripe, the former appearing to the writer not to suit Christ; and the latter to suit Him alone. The Scotch commentator, on the other hand, finds an escape from the dilemma by denying what the English commentator had assumed, viz. that the "reaping means the closing of all accounts in the Great Day," which makes it "the exclusive prerogative of the Lord;" and maintaining that it rather means the ingathering of souls in conversion, a function within the competency of ordinary ministers of the word.[6] If the harvest consist in conversions, one naturally wonders what is to be understood by the appearing of the blade! It is surprising that writers who are driven to such shifts, or who have to confess themselves shiftless, should not be led by their perplexities to suspect that they have missed their way altogether in the exposition of the parable.[7] Such unquestionably is the fact These idle, barren discussions as to the agent in the parable all arise from misapprehending the main point, which we repeat is not the secretness of the growth, but its gradualness in accordance with natural law. The key to the interpretation is to

be found, not in the expression "he knoweth not how," but in the statement that "the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." The truth of this assertion will appear from a cursory examination of the leading clauses of the parable.

[1] Mark 4:28.

[2] 'The Parables,' vol. ii. p. 125.

[3] So Weiss, 'Das Markus-Evangelium,' p. 159.

[4] So Nippold, 'Die Gleichnisse Jesu von der Wachsenden Saat, vom grossen Abendmahl, und vom Sterbenden Weitzenkorn,' p. 12.

[5] 'Notes on the Parables,' p. 290.

[6] 'The Parables of our Lord,' p. 316.

[7] Still another instance of the perplexity produced by the false point of view from which the parable has been contemplated, may be found in the suggestion of Grotius that ο■κ ο■δεν α■τ■ς should be rendered it, i. e. the grain, knoweth not how, to avoid the ascription of ignorance is Christ! The first point to be noticed is the description of the farmer's behaviour after he has finished the work of seed-sowing. And should sleep and rise, night and day. It is not to be supposed that these words serve no purpose except to give verisimilitude and picturesqueness to the parable; they are essential to its didactic drift. They happily describe a physical and mental habit in accordance with the situation, that of one who has to pass through a protracted period of comparative idleness. The farmer sleeps and rises, sleeps and rises, night and day, and day after day, for many days in succession. There is plenty of time for the monotonous repetition of these actions. And there is, comparatively speaking, little else to do but sleep and rise; time hangs heavy on the husbandman's hands. He rises in the morning because he has had as much sleep as he can take; otherwise he might as well lie in bed all the day long for all that he has to do. Having passed through the waking hours in a listless mood, he retires to rest in the evening again, glad to take refuge for a while from the ennui of an idle life in the unconsciousness of sleep. Then the mood of the man corresponds to his circumstances. He knows that his part is done, and that the rest must be left to the soil; therefore he resigns himself contentedly to an easy-minded passivity, leaving the earth to bring forth fruit of itself. He knows also that growth is a process that cannot be hastened; therefore he is patient, or, as St James expresses it, "hath long patience for it."[1] Finally, he believes that the harvest season will come eventually, having faith in the soil and the seasons; therefore he is free from feverish anxiety, and is in a state of happy, healthy security as to the result of his sowing, which allows him to sleep soundly by night. And it is this mood of mind, corresponding to the physical habit so felicitously described, which the parable is intended to inculcate. Christ would have His disciples understand that they must study to resemble the farmer in these respects, and that they will have need and opportunity to do so in connection with the progress of the kingdom in themselves and in the world; need and opportunity for passivity, patience, and faith. While the kingdom progresses they will find it takes its own time, and proceeds according to its own laws; and finding this it will be their wisdom, instead of fretting or trying to force on growth, to have an easy mind, and, like the husbandman, sleep and rise night and day. The mood recommended is not utter indifference or carelessness, but that which is natural to one who is interested in a process whose completion requires time. And in this mood Christ could be

and was an example to His disciples; so that this part of the parable at least imposes on us no need to inquire whether the Head of the Church, or one of His servants, be the agent referred to. Christ's behaviour as the founder of the kingdom, during His earthly ministry, was in the spirit of the farmer. He sowed the seed of the kingdom, and waited patiently for the result, not expecting it soon. No need, in order to make the parable applicable to Him, to interpret this part of it as signifying that between the sowing of the seed during His sojourn on earth and the reaping time at the end of the world, He should no longer be visibly present in the field.[2] During the earthly ministry itself we can see Jesus playing the part of the man who sowed the seed, then slept and rose, night and day. We can see Him playing that part in all departments of His ministry, and very especially in that most important department which consisted in the training of the twelve. How patient He was with those men! His manner towards them was that of one who did not expect the ripe fruit of enlightened and sanctified Christian character to appear in them forthwith, but was fully aware that between the ripe fruit and the beautiful blossom of enthusiastic devotion, under whose inspiration they left all and followed Him, must intervene a more or less protracted period during which they should be as green ears, or crude fruit, of no value except as a promise of something better to come.

[1] Jas 5:7.

[2] So Grotius: Sensus mihi videtur perspicuus, Christum a facta semente ad messis tempus agro adspectabiliter non adfuturum. The next important feature in the parable is the representation of the growth of grain as a thing of which the farmer has no cognizance. And the seed should spring, and grow up, he knoweth not how. The point intended to be emphasised here is not the mere fact of the farmer's ignorance, but his contentment therewith. This clause simply adds another trait in the description of the manner or mood of the man. Apart from any consideration of the terms employed this is antecedently probable. In a description of a farmer's way of life one hardly expects to find a grave statement to the effect that he is ignorant of the laws by which seed sown in the earth springs and grows. Of course he is, but why make so superfluous an observation? Scientific knowledge of the laws of growth is not in his line. Life and growth are to a large extent mysteries to all, learned or unlearned, but especially to the practical-minded agriculturist, to whom it probably never occurs once in his whole life-time to ask himself, How does the seed I have sowed germinate and braird?—what is the physical cause of growth? And when we come to consider closely the words of the parable, we find reason to conclude that it is no such grave statement concerning the scientific ignorance of the farmer that they are intended to convey. The words may be rendered either "when he knoweth not," or "how, knoweth not he."[1] In the former case they simply mean that the husbandman does not observe the growth. The seed springs and grows up, he taking little or no notice; which is just what we should expect of a man in the easy mood ascribed to the farmer in the previous clause. The words so taken simply repeat in a different form of language the statement that between the sowing and the reaping the farmer is in a listless frame of mind. Taken the other way, the words do seem at first to contain a grave statement to the effect that the farmer is ignorant as to the cause of growth; but on closer consideration one discovers that they more probably contain a reference to an ostentatious indifference on his part to all such questions. How knoweth not he, so run the words; the pronoun standing at the end and being emphatic there, "as much as to say, Whoever else may know it, it is all unknown to him by whom, and for whose benefit, the seed was sown."[2] The sower of the seed

is stolidly, we may- say ostentatiously, indifferent to the cause of growth; only that the ostentation is not conscious, but is betrayed unconsciously in his manner. And what is the cause of this indifference? It is the consciousness that the growth of the seed is not under his control. The farmer is a practical man, and the only consideration that would lead him to take an interest in the question as to the cause of growth would be the possibility of his influencing the process. If it could be shown that it was in his power to accelerate growth, the air of stolid indifference would speedily vanish; but as that is not possible, he takes no thought of the matter; and his carelessness is the sign that he is aware of the impossibility. And it is in this point of view that that carelessness is referred to in the parable. The statement, "the seed springeth and groweth up, how knoweth not he," really means, "the seed springeth and groweth up independently of him, and he being conscious of the fact taketh no heed."[3] The farmer's indifference is signalised as the visible index of habitual and unqualified recognition of the truth that growth is subject to a natural law entirely beyond his control.

[1] The ■ς may be taken in the sense either of quum or of quomodo. The former rendering is favoured by Kuinoel. ■ς, he says = cum, ut in Luc. iv. 25; and the phrase, per participium reddendum est, ipso nesciente, non animadvertente.

[2] 'The Gospel according to Mark Explained,' by Joseph Addison Alexander, D.D.

[3] Principal Campbell, 'The Four Gospels/ translates, without his minding it. The motive of the parabolic representation at this point is to inculcate the duty of practically recognising a similar truth in the spiritual sphere. Christ's purpose was not merely to proclaim the general truth that the beginnings and progress of life in the kingdom of God are mysterious. This, of course, is true, and in a purely homiletic treatment of this parable it would be quite legitimate to make that truth a topic of discourse. We do well at times to meditate on the mysterious miraculous character of all life, and especially of the Divine life in the soul of man, and more particularly of the beginning of that life in the new birth. Christ Himself invites us to such meditation in another of his sayings, that spoken to the Jewish ruler: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." And we should contemplate the mystery of a new Divine life in the soul of man with the feelings with which it becomes us to contemplate all miracles; with awe, yet not with incredulity, but rather with believing wonder. When a human being begins to seek after God, to concern himself about salvation, to hunger after righteousness and wisdom, let us behold with reverent, awestruck eye a spiritual miracle being wrought before our face. We may not look on the spectacle listlessly as if it were a thing of course, or of little significance. On the other hand, we are to beware of so magnifying the mystery as to become unbelievers in it; to take heed lest by allowing our minds to dwell unduly on the greatness of the change which takes place in regeneration we become at length unwilling to admit that in any particular case a regenerating work has been wrought, because what we observe seems small, insignificant, and far from overwhelmingly wonderful. In all probability what we observe is very small indeed, resembling the tiny blade which springs up through the earth from the seed buried beneath; but we must not forget that even the blade is in its way as wonderful as is the appearance at a later stage on the top of the stalk of a hundred grains in place of the one which has been thrown into the ground.

Such thoughts are very edifying, and practically very useful; but it was not, we imagine, such thoughts that Christ wished to suggest when He uttered this parable, and in particular that part of it now under consideration. His aim rather was to impress on his hearers that as in the kingdom of nature, so in the kingdom of God, there is a law of growth and a fixed order of development which must be recognised and respected by them, as it is by the farmer when he takes little notice of the growth of his grain, because he knows that it is entirely beyond his control. He himself habitually recognised and respected that law and order; so that the words "how knoweth not he," in the sense explained, may with perfect propriety and truth be applied to Him. He ever acted as one who knew that there was a fixed order, a course of nature, so to speak, in the Divine kingdom which could not be materially modified or set aside even by His will. He showed his respect for law and order on various occasions and in various ways. When the two sons of Zebedee desired the places of distinction in His kingdom He replied: "To sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give, except to those for whom it is prepared of my Father."[1] In this case He showed respect for the moral order of the kingdom. When asked to do works of mercy beyond the bounds of the chosen people, He declined, saying, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."[2] Here was respect for the political order of the kingdom. He was fully aware that His religion was destined to be the religion of humanity, but He knew also that in order to an eventual spiritual conquest of the world a firm footing must first be gained in Palestine; and He acted accordingly. Once more, Christ’s whole conduct and His whole teaching were influenced by the belief that the kingdom which He was engaged in founding was to have a lengthened history, and to pass through a gradual, secular process of development onwards, towards its final consummation; and here we see His respect for what we may call the physical order of the kingdom. He was not surprised, disappointed, or chagrined because the success attending His personal ministry was small; consisting in little more than the collection of "a little flock" of twelve men, in spiritual understanding and character "babes." He looked to the future for His reward, and saw there fields white to the harvest, the outgrowth of the seed which He had sown. It is unnecessary to prove that His teaching is pervaded by the idea that the kingdom of God should ’come’ only slowly, gradually, as the result of a development proceeding according to law. We find the thought in this parable, and in the two parables which inculcate perseverance in prayer, and in all the texts, and they are not few, which contain exhortations to watch.

[1] Mat 20:23.

[2] Mat 15:24. But what the Master ever bore in mind, the disciples were slow to understand and lay to heart, and hence the parable before us. They were ready to ask at all times the question. Why cannot the kingdom come at once, in ourselves, or in the world? They did ask at the close of their intercourse with their Lord: "Wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel?"[1]—as if feeling that after years of weary waiting, now at length the time for the fulfilment of their hope had arrived. The thought contained in our parable does not appear ever to have got a firm lodgment in their minds even in the period of their apostolic activity; and the same statement may be made with regard to the whole Christian Church during the first apostolic generation.[2] The lapse of ages has opened our minds to the truth which was hidden from the apostles, so far as the duration of the Christian dispensation at large is concerned. But there is reason to believe, that the bearing of the doctrine of the parable on the sanctification of the individual, is yet far from being generally understood. Recognition of, and respect for, the law of growth in this sphere, are

still desiderata of the average Christian intelligence. The thoughts of many in regard to this subject are like those of children who cannot grasp the idea of growth subject to law, and see no reason why out of an acorn should not at once, as if by magic, come a full-sized oak. They have yet to learn that sanctification is a work carried on after the analogy of the works of nature, in which the law of slow insensible growth, development, or evolution universally obtains.

[1] Acts 1:6.

[2] Greswell thinks the point of the parable is, that the Christian Church should continue to exist and thrive through its own vitality and the providence of God; but the aim of the parable is rather to remove a feeling of surprise that in its earthly state it should last so long. The next important part of our parable is that which enunciates the great law of growth with reference to the production of grain. "Spontaneously the earth produceth fruit, first blade, then ear, then is full corn in the ear." This is but the explicit statement of a truth which on a right view of the parable has already been implicitly taught in the previous clause. The sentence just quoted simply gives the formal explanation of that feature in the farmer’s behaviour vividly and quaintly expressed by the words "how knoweth not he." It answers the natural question, why is he so indifferent to the growth of his grain? He who spake the parable might have left his readers to divine the answer for themselves, as we have already done. But He knew how slow His hearers were to understand the analogous truth in the spiritual sphere; therefore He takes the trouble to state with the utmost deliberation the familiar fact with regard to the natural sphere, saying in effect: "The farmer is so indifferent to the growth of his grain because he knows, as you all know, that he has no control over, that he cannot accelerate, the growth, seeing that the earth of its own accord bringeth forth fruit, first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear. Understand ye that the same law holds in the kingdom of God, and cultivate the temper of the farmer, that naturally produced by a due recognition of and respect for the law of growth." When this, the true connection of thought, is pointed out, it becomes apparent how far this part of the parable is from being a mere parenthesis; how, on the contrary, it is the very kernel of the parable in reference to its didactic import. But in order to recognise the true connection of thought, men must be willing to receive the truth, which unfortunately many are not, with the inevitable result that the teaching of the parable is evaded rather than unfolded. A distinguished American theologian, who has done more than perhaps any other writer to throw light on "the true problem of Christian experience," remarks with reference to the text from which he discourses on that important theme: "There are some texts of Scripture that suffer a much harder lot than any of the martyrs, because their martyrdom is perpetual; and this, I think, is one of the number. Two classes appear to concur in destroying its dignity—viz. the class who deem it a matter of cant to make anything of conversion, and the class who make religion itself a matter of cant, by seeing nothing in it but conversion."[1] To the class of martyred texts belongs this verse of our parable, not to say the parable altogether. Men will persist in treating the verse as a parenthesis, or as an irrelevance, telling us that "in this respect there is not uniformity: the spiritual growth from spring to maturity sometimes requires more than one natural season, and sometimes is accomplished in less,"[2] all because they have not the courage to grasp and boldly proclaim the truth, that in the kingdom of God, as it reveals itself in the individual soul, growth is slow not less than in the sphere of nature; nay, not only not less, but, as another distinguished American theologian has pointed out, more; it being a law that the higher the thing which grows in the scale of being, the slower its growth.[3] We must insist, therefore, that in respect of the

slowness of growth there is an analogy between the kingdom of nature and the kingdom of God, and that it was our Lord's direct purpose to teach that there is. Not only so; we must further insist that there is an analogy not only in regard to the rate of growth, but also in regard to the stages through which the grain passes from its initial condition to maturity. This is implied by the very circumstance of the stages being so carefully enumerated, and also by the manner in which the last stage is referred to. Christ says, the earth produces, first blade, then ear; then, changing the construction, he adds, then is full corn in the ear: meaning evidently to say, then, and not till then, not till the blade and the green ear have been passed through, does the stage of the full ripe ear come. The full ripe ear is what the husbandman desires, it is the end of all his labours, of all that precedes—blade, and green ear, being merely means towards that end; and its importance as the end of all is fully recognised by the manner in which it is spoken of. But because it is the end, we are not to be impatient of the preliminary stages which lead up to it, but must be content to reach the end step by step, passing on from blade to green ear, and from green ear to ripe ear. That is what the Lord would teach us in this verse with reference to the things of the kingdom in general, and specially with reference to the sanctification of the individual.

[1] Bushnell, 'The New Life,' p. 161, cheap edition.

[2] Arnot, 'The Parables,' p. 321.

[3] H. W. Beecher, in a Sermon on Waiting on God. Our view, then, is that the analogy between growth in the natural world and growth in the spiritual world must be maintained in its integrity, with regard at once to spontaneity, slowness, and gradation. Growth in the spiritual world as in the natural is spontaneous, in the sense that it is subject to definite laws of the spirit over which man's will has small control. The fact is one to be recognized with humility and thankfulness. With humility, for it teaches dependence on God; a habit of mind which brings along with it prayerful-ness, and which, as honouring to God, is more likely to insure ultimate success than a self-reliant zeal. With thankfulness, for it relieves the heart of the too heavy burden of an undefined, unlimited responsibility, and makes it possible for the minister of the Word to do his work cheerfully, in the morning sowing his seed, in the evening withholding not his hand; then retiring to rest to enjoy the sound sleep of the labouring man, while the seed sown springs and grows apace, he knoweth not how. Growth in the spiritual world, as in the natural, is, further, a process which demands time and gives ample occasion for the exercise of patience. Time must elapse even between the sowing and the brairding; a fact to be laid to heart by parents and teachers, lest they commit the folly of insisting on seeing the blade at once, to the probable spiritual hurt of the young intrusted to their care. Much longer time must elapse between the brairding and the ripening. That a speedy sanctification is impossible we do not affirm; but it is, we believe, so exceptional that it may be left altogether out of account in discussing the theory of Christian experience. Once more, growth in the spiritual world, as in the natural, is graduated; in that region as in this there is a blade, a green ear, and a ripe ear. Those who demur to this view may ask us to specify the distinctive marks of the several stages, so that our hypothesis may be verified. We accept the challenge, and shall endeavour to discriminate the successive phases of experience which manifest themselves in the life of a Christian in the course of his growth in grace; though conscious that in the performance of the task we shall receive small help from the commentators. But before we proceed to this topic we must make a few observations on the last sentence of the parable. But when the fruit permits (being ripe), immediately he putteth forth the

sickle because the harvest is at hand. The point of importance here is not the question what or when is the harvest, but rather the marked change in the manner of the farmer from listlessness to energetic activity.[1] The man who erewhile slept and rose and walked about during waking hours, so to speak, with his hands in his pockets, is now all alive, moving about with nimble feet, giving his orders to his servants, saying, Go forth, with sickle in hand, for, lo, the harvest is upon us; see there the whitened fields ready to be reaped. In connection with this change of mood and manner the word παραδο■ taken in the sense of permits, is very significant. It implies that the advent of harvest removes a restraint from pent-up energy, and lets it at length escape in action; and thus it throws an interesting light on the nature of the antecedent indifference. It was, after all, not a real radical indifference or apathy. It was latent energy biding its time; it was fervent desire well controlled by the patience of hope. That seeming listlessness was but the sluggishness of dammed-up waters, which rush forth in an impetuous current when the temporary embankment is removed; or the languor of the race-horse, who flies like an arrow in the race when the signal to start is given.

[1] The verse, however, taken along with the preceding part of the parable, does point at a great truth concerning the moral order of the world. Growth slow, harvest sudden (ε■θ■ως), holds good of all Divine action in Providence. Historical movements are slow in progress but sudden in their crisis. On this truth we shall have occasion to speak in next chapter And such is the patience of Christians during that time in their spiritual history when they wait on God for the fulfilment of their desire in an enlightened and sanctified character. Their mood may seem to others, and even to themselves, apathy, indifference, death; but at worst it is but the mood of the man in whom hope deferred maketh the heart sick. They wait not in real indifference, but as they who in darkness wait for the dawn; as Paul and his shipwrecked companions waited in the Adriatic Sea that night when they cast out four anchors and wished for the day.[1] How much spiritual life and energy were latent in them all along becomes apparent when the spiritual harvest season arrives, the time of illumination and enlargement Then the apparently apathetic one becomes active in all good. Then the man who seemed to care for nothing but himself gives himself up in self-abandonment to a life of love. Then the Church, for the law applies on the great scale as well as on the small, awakes from seeming sleep, shakes herself from the dust which has gathered about her, looses herself from the bonds of human ordinances and traditions, puts on the beautiful garments of holiness, and clothes herself with the strength of a new creative time in which she reaps the results of forces which have been slowly and secretly working, and also sow the seeds of a future harvest. For it is in such great epochs that the harvest spoken of in our parable is to be sought, not merely at the end of the world. The harvest is the result of any historical development whether in the individual or in society; and there may be as many harvests in the history of the Church as there are definite spiritual movements in her career.

[1] Acts 27:29. And now we return to the topic of the Stages, that we may characterise them more definitely than we have yet done, though we have thrown out stray hints here and there. And here we shall confine ourselves to the experience of the individual, though sensible that the history of the kingdom of God at large is a far greater theme than that of any individual Christian, and ready to admit that it was probably the former which our Lord had chiefly in His thoughts when He uttered the parable. Our apology for restricting our inquiry to the minor subject is, first, that we understand it better; second, that while the larger subject is the more inviting theme to the

speculative mind, the lesser may prove the more useful to ordinary Christians; and third, that while the parable in its first intention may have the wider scope in view, it does not exclude the narrower. That Christ in uttering this parable had the spiritual growth of the individual in view, as well as the larger growth of the kingdom as a whole, will seem improbable to no one who considers these three things: first, the very general terms employed in the introduction of the parable, "So is the kingdom of God," without qualification or limitation; the implied doctrine being, that wherever the kingdom of God appears there growth is in accordance with the representation in this parable; second, the fact that in the first parable, that of the sower, the growth contemplated is exclusively that which takes place in the individual hearer of the word; third, that in the lesson on perseverance in prayer, recorded in the eleventh chapter of Luke's Gospel, reference is made to the Holy Spirit[1] as an object of desire to individual disciples; showing that the sanctification of His disciples individually was a topic which occupied Christ's thoughts.

[1] Vide on this next chapter.

First the blade—or, the blossom: for it is convenient in considering the stages of spiritual growth to employ both emblems, the second having its root in Scripture not less than the first, as e.g. in that suggestive expression in the first Psalm, fruit in his season. Blade, green ear, ripe ear; blossom, green fruit, ripe fruit: such are the alternative series of stages. What we have now to do is to determine the characteristics of the incipient stage, that of the blade or the blossom. The blade or the blossom signifies the conscious apparent beginning of the Divine life in the soul. We use the epithets conscious and apparent to qualify beginning, because we do not hold that Divine life necessarily dates from the moment when it becomes a matter of consciousness and observation. There may be grace in the heart before it is understood by the subject of its influence, or recognised by others as such. This is the case in most instances of sanctification from childhood, and the fact should be borne in mind by parents and teachers more than it is. For there is a very common and increasingly prevalent tendency to disbelieve in gracious influence unless when it is seen under its ordinary form as exhibited in adults; and those who have the charge of children, taking for granted the absence of grace from the absence of marked manifestation, set themselves with a kind of desperate earnestness to develop prematurely, by a system of forcing appliances, the usual symptoms of conversion as they exhibit themselves in persons of mature years. The result of this system in the after history of children so manipulated we believe to be calamitous, consisting in effect in the premature consumption of all the spiritual fuel in the soul of a child, leaving for manhood nothing but ashes. When the life that is in the soul begins to appear it does not manifest itself always in the same manner. It appears sometimes as a corn-blade, and sometimes as a fruit-blossom. In the former case it attracts less notice than in the latter. It may be observable to those who look attentively, but it does not arrest attention; it does not catch the eye of even the inobservant, as the blossom of an apple tree attracts the notice of even the most careless wayfarer. "The signs of new life are not obtrusive, consisting merely in a certain quiet thoughtfulness, a deepening seriousness, a tendency to shun society and court solitude congenial to meditation and prayer. There is a feeling of emptiness, a longing after the object of infinite love, a melancholy craving for love, a deep drawing of the spirit towards the unknown Divine which can satisfy the craving, an indifference towards the world, a delight in earnest. reading, instruction, and meditation, a liking for the company of pious men."[1] When the kingdom of God comes like the blossom on the fruit tree the signs of its coming are much more marked. There is in such cases

greater emotional excitement; great sorrow it may be first, then great joy, the joy of the soul's espousal to the mystic Bridegroom, accompanied with a love full of rapture. "The love is consciously first love, a new revelation of God in the soul, a restored consciousness of God, a birth of joy and glorified song in the horizon of the soul's life, like that which burst into our sky when Jesus was born into the world."[2] And as the blossom is beautiful, so this beginning of the new life is altogether lovely, and may easily create the impression of an already completed sanctification. Hence the notion that spiritual maturity may be attained per saltum, without any process of growth; hence the conceit of perfection in some who are merely beginning the Divine life. When one considers that the watchword of the mature and experienced Christian is aspiration, and his motto "I press on," it may seem strange and presumptuous in the beginner to be otherwise minded, and to think he has already attained. But, in truth, it is quite natural, that "in this flowering state of beauty" the soul should discover and even have "in its feeling the sense of perfection,"[3]. because the flower is perfect in its way, and the beginner has no means of knowing that this is not the kind of perfection which he is called to reach as his goal. Inexperienced, initial Christianity is but a blossom, and what it is to come to is ripe fruit, and it is to come to that through sourness and unripeness. But the blossom knows nothing of fruit either ripe or unripe; it is conscious only of itself. And ft is conscious of itself as something beautiful, really perfect in its kind, even fairer to look on than the ripe fruits which hang on the tree of life in the old age of Christian experience. How beautiful the first love of the heart for Christ, the newborn passion for Christian virtue, the devotional spirit which constantly dwells in the breast, sending the youthful disciple to solitary spots to pray, and setting him on efforts to think holy, heavenly thoughts all the day long I Who that has felt this, possibly at a very early period of life, does not look back en it as something hallowed, though, alas, he knows too well that it cannot be relied on as a guarantee against the commission of many faults, and the entrance into the mind of many unbelieving, bitter, bad thoughts. Across the interval of years, in spite of much that is humbling and disappointing, in spite of lapses, backslidings, heresies, scepticisms, blasphemies, he looks back on that time as an Eden in his spiritual history, as a soft balmy spring-tide when the soul blossomed into Christian faith and feeling, and the tongue was attuned to new songs. If then, even after the sobering influence of experience, a mature Christian thinks thus tenderly of his earlier state, what wonder if the inexperienced should mistake the beginning for the end, the blossom for the fruit, spring for harvest, holy feeling for holy living, ideals for performances, gushing first love for stern fidelity temptation-proof? It is a mistake, and a very great one, but do not laugh at it; do not be angry at it; do not waste time preaching against it. It is a mistake that will be soon enough corrected by experience.

[1] Arndt, 'Die Gleichnissreden.' In his treatment of this parable, this thoughtful and eloquent German author shows more insight than we have met with in any other writer on the parables.

[2] Bushnell, 'The New Life,' p. 162.

[3] Bushnell, 'The New Life,' p. 163 For the second stage, that of the green ear, or green fruit, will certainly come; whereof we must now speak, with no assistance from the commentators, for scarcely one of them gives a single hint as to what is meant by the green ear. All one can glean from their pages is a stray remark by one that the intermediate time between the brairding and the leaping is often a time of trial;[1] and by another, that the time when there is no apparent growth is a time of inward growth.[2] Now as to the characteristics of this second stage, it follows of course

from the simple fact of its being the time of waiting, of unfulfilled desire, of unrealised ideals, of green ears and crude, sour, unpalatable fruit, that it is a time which brings experiences more profitable than pleasant. The fruit of the Spirit tastes very acid at this stage. Its experiences are such as Bunyan's pilgrim had in his passage through the Valley of Humiliation and the Valley of the Shadow of Death; such as Bunyan himself had in the years of gloom before he attained to cleat light and settled peace, and abundant joyful Christian fruitfulness. It is a time of temptation and struggle, of doubts and fears, of sadness, depression, and gloom, of stagnation and torpor. It is that phase in the believer's history whereof Newton sings, when prayers for growth in faith, and love, and every grace are answered in such a way as almost to drive one to despair.[3] The author of the hymn represents the bitter experiences described in it as an answer to his prayer for growth. And so it really is. The green ear, the crude fruit, is really a stage in advance of the blossom, which looks so much better, as is confessed by all, in regard to natural growth. No one looking on an apple tree after the blossom is deadened and the fruit set, thinks of remarking, What a degeneracy! But men are very ready to commit such a mistake in regard to spiritual growth. The tendency is to regard transition from the blossom to the green fruit as a simple declension, or falling away from grace, and to characterise the antecedent experience as a merely temporary excitement; which in many cases is about as wise as if one were to say with regard to an apple tree when the flowering stage is past, it was only a little temporary blossom. From ignorance of the law of growth young Christians at this stage are apt to form very unfavourable judgments of themselves. As it is characteristic of the incipient and final stages to entertain hopeful views of one's condition, so it is equally characteristic of this stage to take desponding gloomy views. The fruit of the Spirit's work is so bitter and unpalatable that it is readily mistaken for poisonous fruit of the devil's growing. The mind clouded with sceptical and evil thoughts, the conscience afflicted with all manner of morbid scruples, the heart cold and self-centred, too engrossed with its own miseries to interest itself in anything beyond, how unlike these spiritual phenomena to the love, joy, and peace of which the apostle speaks!—how natural that one in whose soul they manifest themselves should think himself an unbeliever, an apostate, even a blasphemer guilty of sin utterly unpardonable! The subject of these experiences being so liable to mistake their true character, it is all the more to be desired that others should be able to judge them more correctly. Yet how often is it otherwise! Bunyan's history supplies an instructive illustration. When he was in that stage of his religious experience which answers to the green ear, he believed he had committed the unpardonable sin, and in his distress consulted a Christian friend who was thought to be endowed with superior spiritual insight, with what result may best be told in his own words. "About this time I took an opportunity to break my mind to an ancient Christian, and told him all my case. I told him also that I was afraid I had sinned a sin against the Holy Ghost; and he told me he thought so too. Here, therefore, I had but cold comfort; but talking a little more with him, I found him, though a good man, a stranger to much combat with the devil."[4] What an egregious blunder to mistake the painful discipline by which Bunyan was being prepared to write the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' for blasphemy against the Holy Ghost! How many mistakes of a similar kind may be committed in every generation by men of reputed wisdom and sanctity, but "strangers to much combat with the devil." In the light of Bunyan's story we can see the utility of more acquaintance with such warfare, were it only to fit Christians for speaking a word in season to him that is weary.

[1] Olshausen, 'Commentar.'

[2] Arndt, ’Die Gleichnissreden.’

[3] In the well-known hymn, "I asked the Lord that I might grow."

[4] Vide ’Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners.’

Yet there is some excuse for perplexity in judging of such experiences as are incident to the stage of the green ear. For while these experiences are not to be resolved into simple declension or apostasy, they are very apt to be accompanied by, and even to produce, moral retrogression. In a joyless state it is not easy to hold one’s ground. When doubts assail one either as to the fundamental truths of religion, or as to personal relations with God, it is not easy to hold fast a good conscience, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world. Hence, as a matter of fact, few do get into a dull, cheerless, doubting state of mind, without losing ground spiritually. And when the conscience is troubled the Christian can see nothing in his own case but sin. His doubts are sin; his dryness and deadness in religious duties, his joylessness, depression, and inactivity are all sin. And, on the whole, this is a safe view for one to take of himself, provided he do not so utterly misunderstand the course of religious experience as to be without hope concerning himself, like Bunyan. But, while a practically safe view, it is far from being a complete account of the matter. The word backsliding does not by any means sum up the experience of one who is passing through the Valley of the Shadow of Death; and to speak as if it did, as is too often done, is simply to break the bruised reed, and quench the smoking taper. It is quite possible that there may be very little sin in the whole experience, but only the morbidity inseparable from the stage of development in which it appears; as in the case of Bunyan, who was never more in earnest in the fear of God, and the love of Christ, than when he thought himself guilty of blasphemy. He thought there was no fruit of the Spirit in him then, because there was none yet ripe. But there was that in him, only in crude form, whose natural outcome in due course was to be a rich harvest of wisdom and love—the fruit of which still remains treasured up in his immortal volume.

Only one remark more need be added on this topic. It may be supposed that the experiences described as incidental to the second stage are exceptional. We believe the contrary to be the fact. The experiences peculiar to this phase are indeed by no means stereotyped in their form, but manifest themselves under very diverse aspects in different men. But something of the kind happens to all men of definite decided religious character. And let it not be supposed that the more piety the less of these experiences. This were in effect to say, that the cause of the green ear is the presence of thorns in the soil, so that if the soil were perfectly clean, the heart altogether good and noble, the seed would reach maturity without passing through the green stage. But the true distinction between the thorny soil and the good soil is not that in the one the green ear appears, while in the other it is never seen, but rather that in the one the grain never gets beyond the green ear, while in the other it passes on from greenness to maturity. It is no sin to be in the green ear: the sin is never to pass beyond it; and as it is no sin to be in the green ear, so neither is it any privilege to be conferred on faithful souls, to escape passing through it. No; it is not the privilege of faithful noble souls to overleap the green ear. Rather it is their lot to know more of its peculiar experiences than others, as all religious biography attests. They who reap in greatest joy sow most in tears. They who know best what it is to mount up on wings like eagles, to run and not weary, to walk and not faint, know also better than others what it is to have to wait on the Lord. For those who faithfully and patiently wait the full corn in the ear comes without fail. But how shall we

describe this last highest stage, so as at once to convey an adequate and yet a sober view of its peculiar characteristics? It is not easy; but in a few broken sentences let us try at least to suggest a rudimentary idea of what has been variously named Christian perfection, Christian maturity, the Higher Christian Life. Bunyan gives us his idea of the state in that part of his allegory where he represents the Pilgrim as arriving at the Land of Beulah, where the sun shines night and day, the land lying beyond the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and out of the reach of Giant Despair, and from which one cannot so much as see Doubting Castle; where Christians are within sight of the city they are going to—that is, have a lively hope of eternal life—where they renew their marriage contract with their God, where they have no want of corn and wine; but meet with abundance of what they have sought for in all their pilgrimage. In the day when a Christian arrives at this stage the promise of Jesus to His disciples is fulfilled: "Ye now, therefore, have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."[1] The early joy of a believer is passionate and transient, this final joy is tranquil, and abides. It is the joy of a conscience enlightened, and freed from bondage to scruples without loss of tenderness, of a mind established in religious conviction, and in which faith and knowledge are reconciled, and of a heart delivered from concern about self and its interests, whether temporal or eternal, to serve God and man with generous devotion, and taught by sorrow to sympathise. Now at length there does appear the ripe fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. A well-known writer on the religious affections says: "The Scripture knows no true Christians of a sordid, selfish, cross, and contentious spirit; nothing can be a greater absurdity than a morose, hard, close, high-spirited, spiteful true Christian."[2] The statement indicates a lack of due discrimination between sincerity and maturity. There are sincere Christians of the character described, but there are certainly no mature Christians of such a character. For the mature are loving, wise, benignant, humble, patient, rich in well-doing, willing to communicate, heartily and supremely interested in the progress of the Divine kingdom, and loyal subjects of its King. Yet, withal, the mature Christian is characteristically free from self-complacency. It is not possible for him, as it is possible for the immature disciple, to think that he hath attained the goal of perfection. His ideal of the Christian life is pitched too high to allow such a fancy to enter his mind. "I know not how to describe the grandeur and simplicity of the state that is no longer self-bounded, self-referring; how great a thing to such a freed rejoicing spirit the life in Christ Jesus seems!—a temple truly 'not of this building,' too great to be mapped out and measured; too great to be perfect here?"[3]

[1] John 16:22.

[2] Jonathan Edwards, 'Treatise on the Religious Affections,' Part iii. sect. 8.

[3] 'The Patience of Hope,' p. 102. This little work by the late Miss Greenwell is full of true insight into the law of growth in the spiritual world. From these brief hints it. will be seen that the last stage of Christian growth cannot be regarded as a mere repetition of or return to the first, as if the Divine life consisted in a perpetual see-saw between falls and conversions. There is an affinity but not an identity; for that which springs out of experience can never be identical with a state which precedes experience. A writer already referred to puts the relation between the two thus:—"The real object of the subsequent life as a struggle of experience is to produce in wisdom what is then begotten as a feeling, or a new love; and thus to make a fixed state of that which was initiated only as a love. It is to convert a heavenly impulse into a heavenly habit. It is to raise the Christian

childhood into a Christian manhood—to make the first love a second or completed love; or, what is the same, to fulfil the first love and give it a pervading fulness in the soul; such that the whole man, as a thinking, self-knowing, acting, choosing, tempted, and temptable creature, shall coalesce with it, and be for ever rested, immovably grounded in it."[1] But, perhaps, the relations between the initial and final stages by way both of resemblance and of contrast can be better understood by examples than by any abstract statement. We shall therefore conclude with a few extracts from the autobiography of one in whose religious history all the three phases of spiritual growth were well marked, and than whom no one was ever more competent to speak on the subject of Christian sanctification, or has ever spoken more wisely. In a section of that work, the author, Richard Baxter, draws a contrast between his earlier and his later views, which is altogether very instructive, and in which the following passages, taken at random, occur:—"In my younger years my trouble for sin was most about my actual failings in thought and deed, but now I am much more troubled for inward defects." "Heretofore I placed much of my religion in tenderness of heart, and grieving for sin, and penitential tears, and less of it in the love of God, and studying His love and goodness, and in His joyful praises, than now I do." "I was once wont to meditate most on my own heart, and to dwell all at home and look little higher. I was still poring either on my sins or my wants, or examining my sincerity; but now, though I am greatly convinced of the need of heart acquaintance, yet I see more of a higher work; that I should look oftener upon Christ, and God, and heaven, than upon my own heart. I would have one thought at home upon myself and sins, and many thoughts above upon the high, and amiable, and beatifying objects." "Heretofore I knew much less than now, and yet was not half so much acquainted with my own ignorance. I had a great delight in the daily new discoveries which I made, and of the light which shined in upon me (like a man that cometh into a country where he never was before). But I little knew either how imperfectly I understood these very points whose discovery so much delighted me, nor how much might be said against them, nor how many things I was yet a stranger to." "At first I was greatly inclined to go with the highest in controversies on one side or the other. But now I can so easily see what to say against both extremes, that I am much more inclinable to reconciling principles." "I am not so narrow in my special love as heretofore. Being less censorious I love more as saints than I did heretofore." "My soul is much more afflicted with the thoughts of the miserable world, and more drawn out in desire for their conversion, than heretofore. Yet am I not so much inclined to pass a peremptory sentence of damnation upon all that never heard of Christ." "I am deeper afflicted for the disagreements of Christians than I once was. Except the case of the infidel world nothing is so sad to my thoughts as the case of the divided churches." "I do not lay so great stress upon the external modes and forms of worship as many young professors do. I cannot be of their opinion that think God will not accept him that prayeth by the Common Prayer Book, and that such forms are a self-invented worship which God rejecteth. Nor yet can I be of their mind who say the like of extempore prayer." "I am much more sensible than heretofore of the breadth, length, and depth of the radical, universal, odious sin of selfishness, and of the excellency and necessity of self-denial and of a public mind, and of loving our neighbour as ourselves." "I am more solicitous about my duty to God, and less solicitous about His dealings with me."[2] In these precious fragments we recognise the marks of spiritual maturity: a conscience tender, yet free from superstition and legalism; a heart, which to brotherly kindness adds charity; an understanding enlightened with sober, well-balanced views of truth, refusing to call any human teacher master, yet in harmony in all essentials with the wise and good of all ages.

[1] Bushnell, 'The New Life,' p. 166.

[2] 'Reliquiæ Baxterianæ,' Part I.

01.07. Chapter 6. The Selfish Neighbour and the Unjust Judge

Chapter 6.

The Selfish Neighbour and the Unjust Judge Or, the Certainty of an Ultimate Answer to Persistent Prayer for the Coming of the Kingdom. At what precise periods in the ministry of our Lord these parables were delivered we have no means of determining. There is no ground for assuming that they were uttered at the same time, or that either of them was spoken in close proximity to the parable last considered. But the kindred character of the two parables obviously justifies us in studying them together, and their didactic import equally justifies us in taking them up at this point They form a most appropriate sequel to the parable of the blade, the ear, and the full corn, which teaches that growth in the kingdom of God, whether in the individual or in the community, is gradual and slow. For the progress of the kingdom in both spheres may be said to be the great subject of all Christian prayer, and thus retarded progress will mean delay in the answering of prayer. And it is the experience of such delay in the case of those who earnestly desire the progress of the kingdom, and the temptation thence arising to cease from praying, with which these two parables have to do. That experience is the occasion of their being uttered, and to meet the temptation springing therefrom is their common aim. Understanding this we have the key to the true interpretation of these parables; failing to understand it we shall miss the mark. The expositor must start with the assumption that an experience of delay in the answering of prayer is presupposed in both parables; that the men to whom they are spoken are men who have discovered that God has to be waited on for the fulfilment of spiritual desire. We state this categorically at the outset, because the fact may escape the notice of one who looks merely on the surface of the parables, and has regard only to their express statements. No mention is made of delay in the earlier parable; and while in the later words occur which imply the idea of delay when rightly interpreted,[1] they are words capable of a different interpretation, and likely to receive it from one who does not come to the parable with the conviction in his mind that what makes exhortations to perseverance in prayer needful is, and can be, nothing else than experience of Divine delay in granting the things sought after. Such a conviction, therefore, it must be the first business of the interpreter to furnish himself with. And surely this ought not to be very difficult! It requires little reflection to see that no devout man can be seriously tempted to cease from prayer merely because he does not obtain what he asks in a few minutes or hours or even days. The temptation can arise only after a sufficient time has elapsed to leave room for doubts as to the intention of the Being to whom prayer is addressed to grant the desires of supplicants. In the case of the man who knocked at the door of his neighbour seeking bread, a few minutes sufficed to produce such doubts. But in the spiritual sphere a much longer time must elapse; even years may be required to put a Christian in a state of mind analogous to that of the man who stood at his neighbour’s door—in the state of mind which makes such counsel as our Lord gives in these parables eminently seasonable. How long it will require Jesus does not state; we are supposed to learn that from experience; and in point of fact those who need the comfort of these parables do so learn, and have no need that any one should tell them.

[1] Luk 18:5; last clause, κα■ μακροθυμε■ (or ων) ■π α■το■ς—though ho delay in their cause: vide the exposition of the parable.

While both directed against temptations to cease from prayer arising out of the tardiness with which growth in the Divine kingdom proceeds, these two parables have nevertheless in view two distinct classes of experiences. The one contemplates experiences of delay in connection with individual sanctification, the other addresses itself to similar experiences in connection with the public fortunes of the kingdom. That the parable of the Selfish Neighbour has in view mainly and primarily the spiritual interest of the individual may be inferred from the closing words of the great lesson on prayer of which it forms a part: "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him."[1] The supposed object of desire is the Holy Spirit as the enlightener and sanctifier of individual disciples. Some critics indeed, having regard to the fact that in the parallel passage in Matthew the general expression "good things"[2] takes the place of the more definite phrase in the third Gospel, question the authenticity of the latter, and see in it only an instance of the colouring which Luke's report of our Lord's teaching received from his familiarity with and predilection for the Pauline system of doctrine.[3] And we admit that this reference to the Holy Spirit as the immanent ground of Christian sanctity, an almost solitary instance in the Synoptic Gospels, is fitted to arrest attention. This ethical conception of the Divine Spirit, as distinct from the Old Testament view of Him as the transcendent source of charismata, is, as Pfleiderer has pointed out, a characteristic feature in the Pauline system of thought. And probably it was due to Pauline influence that Luke recognised its importance by introducing it into his view of Christ's teaching. But we need not therefore doubt the originality of the saying as given in the text quoted. The representation of the Holy Spirit as the supreme object of desire is in keeping with the whole circumstances in which the lesson on prayer was given. The evangelist tells us that it was after hearing their Master pray that the disciples requested Him to instruct them in the holy art. The request implied a consciousness of spiritual defect; and Jesus, knowing the religious condition of His followers better than they did themselves, proceeded to make provision for their wants by suggesting subjects of prayer to meet the lack of thoughts, by putting into their mouths forms of words to meet the need of dumb souls, and finally by furnishing inducements to perseverance in prayer to meet the need of men tempted to cease praying by the discouraging consciousness that the kingdom of God was coming in their hearts at a very slow pace. We cannot doubt, therefore, that the earlier of the two parables on perseverance in prayer has in view chiefly, we say not exclusively, the disappointing spiritual experiences of individual disciples. That the later parable, on the other hand, has a wider scope, and contemplates the general interests of the kingdom, is evident from the application: "And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them?"[4] The situation supposed is evidently that of the elect Church of God as a collective body, in a condition of widowhood, harassed and evil entreated by an unbelieving world, and receiving no succour from Providence; to all appearance abandoned to her fate by a God who, far from behaving towards her as a husband, does not even maintain the character of a just judge in her behalf.

[1] Luk 11:13.

[2] ■γαθ■: Mat 7:11.

[3] So Hilgenfeld, who characterises the phrase πνε■μα ■γιον as Gut Paulinisch. 'Einleitung,' p. 503.

[4] Luk 18:7. The more exact rendering and interpretation of the words will be given in the sequel.

Wherever doubts concerning the utility of prayer engendered by delayed answers are felt, there painful misgivings regarding the reality of Divine love must force themselves on the mind. Hence these parables may be regarded as an attempt to reconcile with the facts of experience the doctrine of a paternal Providence. This doctrine, we know, Jesus taught with great emphasis and unwearying iteration, applying it both to ordinary life and to the higher sphere of the Divine life. As taught by Him the doctrine of a heavenly Father is very beautiful; but one conversant with the facts of life may be tempted to ask, Is it true? Beautiful words are those spoken by Jesus about a Father who will provide for those who devote themselves to His kingdom, and will give them all they need both for body and soul; words full of pathos and poetry, the bare reading of which exercises a soothing influence on our troubled spirits in this world of sorrow and care; yet are not these lyric utterances but a romantic idyll standing in no relation to real life? It may be right that we be thankful for them as springs in the desert. Nevertheless, the world is a desert all the same. Providence is anything but paternal; if there be, indeed, a Providence at all, which often seems more than doubtful. Jesus knew that such doubting thoughts would arise in good men's minds, and He spake not a few words designed to heal them, and among these a chief place must be assigned to our two parables. These parables are, in intent, a defence of a doctrine which Christians often find hard to believe—the doctrine of God's fatherly love; and as such they illustrate and vindicate the apologetic character which, in the commencement of these studies, we ascribed to the parables generally.

Much of the interest of the parables before us lies in their pathos as apologies for the doubted love of a heavenly Father, the deep sympathy with which the speaker enters into the moral situation supposed, and identifies Himself with and so mediates between both parties, the doubting and the doubted. Jesus, through the insight of love, knows perfectly the thoughts of His tried ones, and how God appears to them in the hour of trial; and He dares to describe the God of appearance as He seems in the midnight of temptation, taking the tempted up at the point where He finds them, and seeking to inspire hope even in desponding minds by suggesting a distinction between the God of appearance and the God of reality. And what Jesus has dared to do we must not hesitate to say that He has done. We must not shrink from saying that the selfish neighbour in bed and the unjust judge represent God as He appears to faith tried by delay. It is a great fault in an expositor to be over-anxious to say that God is not really selfish or unjust. Of course He is not, but only seems. But the point to be emphasised is that He does seem. The expositor who fails to emphasise this point is like Job's friends, who in their stupid, prosing, didactic way defended God, saying, "Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?"[1] And resembling them in their stupidity, he is apt also to resemble them in their injustice to the tried one. Too anxious to vindicate God, he does wrong to the tempted, instead of helping them with sympathy and counsel, by indulging in reflections to the effect, "Thus God appears to unbelief."[2] No, not to unbelief only, but to faith also in times of trial; to elect ones when deserted; to an elect Church widowed, helpless, desolate, her Maker for the time not her husband, or only a husband that is dead; to a Jeremiah asking leave to reason with God about His judgments;[3] to a Psalmist whose feet well nigh slipped when he saw the prosperity cf the wicked and the hard lot of

good men.[4] By all means let commentators have sympathy with God, but let it not be a one-sided sympathy; let them have sympathy with God's people also, as Jesus had when He uttered these parables; and let them not stand between His faithful ones and the comfort He designed for them in their hours of darkness and despondency.

[1] Job 4:7.

[2] So the learned but pedantic Stier ('Die Reden Jesu'). Very differently Olshausen remarks: The Saviour here places Himself on the standpoint of those who experience that God oft delays long with fulfilment of prayer, and describes Him as an unrighteous Being in accordance with the subjective feeling of the praying one, and gives his counsel in conformity therewith.

[3] Jer 12:1.

[4] Psa 73:1-28. With pathos often goes humour, and so it is in the parables before us. The spirit of Jesus was too earnest to indulge in idle mirth, but just because He was so earnest and so sympathetic He expressed Himself at times in a manner which provokes a smile; laughter and tears, as it were, mingling in His eyes as He spoke. It were a false propriety which took for granted that an expositor was necessarily off the track because in his interpretation of these parables an element of holy playfulness appears blended with the deep seriousness which pervades them throughout. With these preliminary observations we proceed to the exposition of the parables, spoken to teach that men ought always to pray, and not to faint. And first the parable of The Selfish Neighbour

Jesus said unto His disciples, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine is come to me from a journey, and I have nothing which I can set before him? And he from within shalt answer and say, Don't trouble me: the door is already shut, and my children are with me in bed; I can't rise and give thee. I say unto you, Even if he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet at least[1] because of his shamelessness he will rise and give him as many as he needs.—Luk 11:5-8.

[1] On the force of the particle γ■ see further on.

It has been remarked of this parable, as of the Unjust Judge and many others peculiar to Luke, that in it the parabolic character is not strictly maintained, the fable passing into an example of the doctrine taught.[1] It has also been pointed out that the grammatical structure of the parable undergoes a change as it proceeds. Commencing with the interrogative form, it passes into the form of a narrative. Had the initial form been maintained throughout, the parable would have run thus: Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go and say to him thus and thus, and (if) this one shall reply so and so, (will not persist knocking and demanding until) he shall be glad to give him what he asks to get rid of him.[2] These defects in literary form and grammatical structure do not in the smallest degree detract from the value of the parable for the purpose in hand. It admirably illustrates the power of importunity, by showing how it can gain its end even in the most unpromising situation. The curiosa felicitas of the parable will best be made apparent by entering into a little detail, first in reference to the situation, and next in reference to the means by which importunity makes itself master of it.

[1] Weizsäcker, 'Untersuchungen,' p. 209.

[2] So Godet, who further points out that if the narrative form be adopted throughout, the parable will run thus: If one of you has a friend, and say to him, &c., and this one reply, &c. (nevertheless), I tell you, &c. Unger (’De Parabolarum Natura,’ &c.) makes the Τ■ς ■ξ ■μ■ν the refuser and giver, not the asker; so that the parable runs: Who is there among you, who if a friend come and make such and such a demand, though at first annoyed, will not at length, on account of his importunity, give him what he asks? In order to show how extremely discouraging the situation is, it will not be necessary to lay stress on the hour of the night at which the petitioner for bread finds himself called on to provide for his unseasonable visitor. Travelling in the night is common in the East,[1] and it may be said to belong simply to the natural realism of the parable that the incident related is represented as happening at midnight. One cannot but remark, however, in passing, that it belongs to the felicity of the parable to suggest what it does not expressly teach, viz. that the comfort it is designed to convey to tried faith is available to those who find themselves in the very darkest hour of their spiritual perplexities.[2] But passing from this, we note the discouraging circumstances in which the man in need finds himself on arriving at his neighbour’s door. The difficulty which confronts him is not a physical one; that, viz., of finding his neighbour so profoundly asleep that it is impossible by any amount of knocking, however loud, to awaken him. His discouragement is, as the nature of the argument required it to be, a moral one; that, viz., of finding his neighbour, after he has succeeded in arousing him to consciousness, in a. state of mind the reverse of obliging, utterly unwilling to take the trouble necessary to comply with his request. The mood of the man in bed is most graphically depicted. It is the mood of a man made heartless and selfish by comfort. Comfortable people, we know, are apt to be hard-hearted, and comfortable circumstances make even kind people selfish for the moment. Jesus holds up to our view an illustrative example. And the picture is so sketched to the life that we cannot repress a smile at the humour of the scene, while fully alive to the deep pity and pathos out of which the whole representation springs. The man is made to describe himself, and to show out of his own mouth what an utterly selfish creature he is. First an ominous omission is observable in his reply. There is no response to the appeal to his generous feelings contained in the appellation ’Friend’ addressed to him by his neighbour. The man who needs his help calls him φ■λε, but he takes good care not to return the compliment. How true is this touch to human nature as it shows itself in every age! The rich, who need nothing, have many friends, but the poor is hated even of his own neighbour.[3] The first words uttered by the man in bed are a rude, abrupt, surly "Don’t bother me." For so undoubtedly ought they to be rendered. We find the phrase, or one very similar, occurring several times in the New Testament: as in the parable of the Unjust Judge; in Christ’s speech in defence of Mary of Bethany against the censure of the disciples, who blamed the extravagance of her noble work, the anointing of her Lord;[4] and in the closing words of Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians.[5] In the two last places the words must be rendered in a dignified way, in keeping with the solemn tone of the speaker and writer. Jesus says, Do not vex Mary by finding fault with what she has just done. Paul, utterly weary of the carnality of religious contention, closes his Epistle with the sentence, Henceforth let no man cause me annoyances: for I bear in my body the marks of Jesus. "I too am a crucified man; let me have a crucified man’s privilege, and be done for ever with the troublers of Israel, and enter into the rest of the weary." But it would be out of keeping with the whole situation to put a dignified speech into the mouth of a man irritated by unseasonable disturbance of his nightly repose. We must make him speak as men usually do when they are out of humour, employing a vocabulary redolent of slang, and spiced with words not worthy to find a

place in dictionaries. When he said μ■ μοι κ■πους π■ρεχε, he felt just as those do now who say in colloquial English, "Don’t bother me," or "Don’t fash me;"[6] and the same remark applies to the use of a similar phrase by the unjust judge.

[1] The journey homewards of the wise men of the East commenced during night, likewise the flight of Joseph (vide Mat 2:12-14). Kuinoel, in his commentary on this passage, refers to Hasselquist’s ’Reise nach Palästina’ in proof that the practice still prevails.

[2] On the spiritualising of μεσονυκτ■ου Olshausen remarks, that as Christ’s parables imply a fine intuition, it is a safe canon that no trait should be overlooked if it do not disturb the image of the whole. With this I concur; only we must always distinguish between the teaching of a parable and what I have called its felicity.

[3] Pro 14:20.

[4] Mat 26:10.

[5] Gal 6:17.

[6] So Farrar. His remarks on the parable are very racy. "He does not return the greeting φ■λε; the expression μ■ μοι κ■πους π■ρεχε, ’Don’t fash me,’ is an impatient one: the door κ■κλεισται, ’has been shut for the night;’ ο■ δ■ναμαι ’I can’t,’ meaning ’I won’t.’"—’Life of Christ,’ vol. i. p. 453, note.

Next comes a comically serious detailed description of the difficulties which stand in the way of complying with the needy neighbour’s request: "The door is already barred, and my children are with me in bed." Poor man, he is to be pitied! If it were only the mere matter of getting out of bed, it would be no great affair, now that he is awake.[1] But the unbarring of the door is a troublesome business, not so easily performed as the turning of a key handle, which is all we Europeans and moderns have to do in similar circumstances.[2] And then the dear children are in bed asleep: if one were to waken them, what a trouble to get them all hushed to rest again.[3] Really the thing is out of the question. And so he ends with a peevish, drawling "I can’t rise to give thee." His "I can’t" means "I won’t." The circumstances which hinder, after the most has been made of them, are utterly frivolous excuses, and it is simply contemptible to refer to them seriously as reasons for not helping a friend in need. But the very fact that he does this only shows how utterly unwilling he is, how completely comfort and sleep have deadened every generous feeling in his heart. And that he is capable of adducing such considerations as grounds of refusal is the most discouraging feature in the situation of the poor suppliant. It is a poor outlook for Need when Abundance so easily excuses herself for refusing succour. Alas, how sad to think that so much misery exists in the world unrelieved for no better reason! It is not that physical resources adequate to the purpose do not exist; it is that there is so much comfortable selfishness, which regards the smallest trouble or sacrifice as an insurmountable obstacle.

[1] And yet it is probably the rising out of bed that he really objects to. This crops out unconsciously in his concluding words: I am not able rising to give thee (ο■ δ■ναμαι ■ναστ■ς δο■να■ σοι). On ■γερθε■ς in Luk 11:5, Bengel remarks, Amicitia ad dandum impellere poterat: impudentia pulsare perseverans ad laborem surgendi impellit.

[2] On κ■κλεισται Bengel remarks, Vecte olim, qui majore labore removetur.

[3] The idea of some commentators, that τα παιδ■α refers to servants, is not in keeping with the simple, homely character of the parable. Grotius, while rendering παιδ■α children, thinks that the idea meant by the reference is that there is no one at home who can without inconvenience give bread to the man at the door. But the purpose seems rather to be to suggest the risk of disturbing the children. But in the case of the parable comfortable selfishness for once finds itself over-matched by importunate want. The situation is desperate indeed when the person solicited for aid finds it in his heart to refuse it on such paltry grounds, But the petitioner has the matter in his own hands; he can make the unwilling one fain to give him whatever he wishes, be it three loaves or thirty:[1] not for friendship's sake certainly, for of that there can be little hope after that contemptible "I can't rise and give thee;" but for very selfishness' sake to get rid of the annoyance and be free to relapse into slumber. How then? What are the means by which need is able to make itself master of the situation? One word answers the question. It is shamelessness, ■να■δεια. Shamelessness, not in knocking at the door of a neighbour at such an hour,[2] for that may be excused by necessity, and at all events it has failed. The shamelessness meant is that which consists in continuing to knock on after receiving a decided and apparently final refusal. Think of it! the petitioner pays no heed to the excuses advanced and to the denial given. He knocks on without mercy and without delicacy, continues to knock louder and louder, hoping to compel his neighbour to rise and give him what he wants even out of a regard to that very comfort which he loves so dearly. How indecent! But necessity knows no restraints of a merely conventional kind, and success covers a multitude of sins. And of course the shameless one succeeds. For comfort's sake his neighbour at first refused his request, and for comfort's sake at last he will be fain to grant it. For how can he sleep with such a noise going on without; and what chance is there even of the children, deep and sweet though their slumber be, sleeping on through it all? The best thing to be done is just to rise and do reluctantly and tardily what should have been done voluntarily and at once.[3]

[1] Bengel on ■σων remarks, Quotquot, vel si plures sint panes, quam quos summa necessitas postulat. Non incommodius est multos jam dare quam tres, unumve. There is a various reading here, some MSS. having ■σον. With δσον the proper rendering is "as much as he wishes," with ■σων "as many as he needs."

[2] So Bengel, noctu venientis.

[3] Christ's purpose is not to assert dogmatically that the neighbour will not help his friend for any other reason, but to assert that he will certainly do it for the reason specified. This is the force of the particle γ■ in the clause δι■ γε τ■ν ■να■δειαν α■το■. Klotz (in Devarium) derives γ■ from ΓΕΩ = low, or from ■γε, which renders the reader or hearer attentive, and so gives more importance to the word excepted. He says that wherever anything is affirmed by γ■ a certain opposition is implied; not such, however, that it opposes things contrary, inter se, but so that it distinguishes and makes one thing stand out more than another. Thus if we say of one of two ■κε■ν■ς γε ■κει, we do not mean the other does not come, but this one certainly comes. The use of the future tense in the previous clause, however (ε■ κα■ ο■ δ■σει), implies that relief on the score of friendship is very improbable. The particle γ■ has the same force in the other parable (Luk 18:5). The words of the unjust judge are to be paraphrased: Though I fear not God, nor regard man, and therefore little is to be expected from me on that score, yet at least on account, &c.

How expressive that one word shamelessness, and how instructive! It teaches us the nature of true prevailing prayer. The prayer which gains its end is prayer which knocks till the door is opened, regardless of so-called decencies and proprieties, which seeks till it obtains, at the risk of being reckoned impudent, which simply cannot understand and will not take a refusal, and asks till it receives. In the parable importunity is completely successful, and we see for ourselves that it cannot fail to be. The seeker has only to continue knocking to gain his point. That very love of comfort evinced by his neighbour, which constitutes the initial difficulty, supplies him with the sure means of achieving a triumph. But when we come to apply the parable to the case of prayer addressed to God, it appears to lack cogency as a persuasive to perseverance, for want of parallelism in the circumstances. The spirit of doubt will have no difficulty in evading the implied argument. It may say, "This parable certainly shows that importunity may prevail in very unlikely and discouraging circumstances. But the circumstances supposed cannot occur in the case of prayer addressed to the Divine Being. We can never have God in our power, as the petitioner in the parable had his neighbour; we cannot put God in a dilemma between granting our request and losing the thing which He values more than all else, viz. His own comfort or felicity. If God be really a Being who cares more for His own felicity than for man's good, One living high up in heaven a life of ease careless of mankind, it is not in my power to disturb His serene existence by any prayers of mine, however urgent. I may cry, but He does not hear, or hears as one who heareth not. He is too remote from this world to be disturbed by its noise, or to be interested in its concerns; He stands upon the vault of heaven and looks down calmly with His arm in His bosom, a passionless spectator of the tragedies and comedies of time. And my perplexity is to know whether this be indeed the character of Deity. To me it now seems as if it were; for I cry, and receive no answer: I knock, and no door of relief is open to me. And the parable does not solve my doubt, it simply leaves me where it found me." All this is perfectly true, and Jesus in effect admitted it to be so. For after uttering the parable He went on immediately to make a solemn declaration on His personal authority, on which, and not on the parable, He desired the tried soul to lay the stress of its faith: "And I say to you, Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Jesus pledges His word that those who act in accordance with this counsel shall find the event justify it. The καγ■ with which the sentence begins is all the more emphatic that the ■μ■ν λ■γω which follows occurs for the second time here, being found in the previous sentence which forms the concluding part of the parable. One might have expected the emphatic personal pronoun to be used in the first instance rather than in the second. There must be a reason why the reverse is the case, and it is not difficult to discover. The first I say to you is unemphatic because the statement which follows rests not on the Speaker's authority, but on the reason of things. Any intelligent person could say what Christ says there, for it is obvious to every one on reflection how the scene described must end. The man in bed must get up and serve his neighbour. But the second statement, to the effect that those who pray to God shall likewise be heard, rests absolutely on Christ's authority. It is not given as a fact which is self-evident, but as a fact which He, the Speaker, knows to be true. Therefore in this case He says, "And I say to you, Ask, and ye shall receive." But it may be asked, If we are to take this momentous matter on Christ's word, why speak the parable at all, why argue; why not simply assert? In reply we say, Because the parable is not good for everything, it is not therefore good for nothing. It serves at least to put doubting ones into better spirits, to cast a gleam of hope athwart the landscape, to induce them to pray on in spite of discouragements, until faith has surmounted her doubts, and

come to see that God is not the selfish, indifferent, heartless One He seems, but what Jesus called him in the end of this lesson on prayer—a heavenly Father. From the sentence in which that blessed name is used we have already learned that throughout this lesson on prayer Jesus supposes the Holy Spirit, or personal advancement in spiritual life, to be the chief object of desire. Hence it follows that even that best gift is not given forthwith, though certain to be given eventually; an inference in entire accordance, it will be observed, with the teaching of the parable considered in the last chapter. It will be found, that is to say, in experience, that God, the Father in heaven, seems for a time unwilling to grant to those who seek first the kingdom even the very thing they above all things desire, viz. righteousness. There will be phases of experience in which it shall seem to disciples that they ask for bread and get only a stone, or for fish and get a serpent, or for an egg and get a scorpion. The possibility or even probability of such experiences is implied in the simple fact that Jesus thought it necessary to refer to such hypothetical cases. It is because there are times when God seems to play the cruel part described that Jesus puts the questions: "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?" He knew that such dark thoughts concerning God lurked unavowed in even good men's hearts, and therefore He put them into words, in the hope that by bringing them into the full light of consciousness doubters might see it to be utterly incredible that God could do what even evil men are incapable of, and so be prepared for accepting with cordial faith the argument à fortiori with which the doctrine winds up: "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" The Unjust Judge And he spake to them a parable to the effect that it is necessary that they[1] should always pray, and not lose heart,[2] saying, There was in a certain city, a certain judge, who feared not God, nor regarded man: and there was a widow in that city; and she kept coming[3] to him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he was not willing for a time: but afterwards he said in himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet on account of this widow causing me trouble, I will avenge her, lest at last, coming, she strike me.[4] And the Lord said, Hear what the judge of unrighteousness saith. And shall not God avenge His elect, who cry unto Him day and night, and He delays (to interpose) in their cause?[5] I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?—Luk 18:1-8.

[1] Many MSS. have α■το■ς after προσε■χεσθαι. It is wanting in T. R.

[2] ■γκακε■ν, a Pauline word; vide Eph 3:13; 2Th 3:13; Gal 6:9, &c.

[3] ■ρχετο, imperfect.

[4] The words ε■ς τ■λος may be connected either with ■ρχομ■νη or with ■πωπι■ζ■. The construction depends on the sense assigned to the verb. Vide exposition.

[5] There are two readings here: κα■ πακροθυμ■ν, as in T. R., and και μακροθυμε■, generally preferred by critics on such good grounds that I feel justified in adopting it For further particulars vide exposition. In this parable the Hearer of prayer is appropriately represented by a judge, not as in last parable by a private individual, the prayers which He seems to disregard being ex hypothesi addressed to Him by the collective body of His people in His capacity of Divine Ruler, exercising a providence and government over all. The present parable shows not less felicitously than the preceding the power of importunity to prevail even in the most discouraging situation. No situation

could be conceived more unfavourable than the one depicted here, whether we regard the man who occupies the seat of justice or the individual who appears before him as a petitioner. The judge is described as one who neither fears God Almighty, nor regards men worthy of esteem,[1] terms proverbially current among Jews and Greeks alike to denote a person of utterly unprincipled character.[2] He is an unprincipled, lawless tyrant, devoid of the sense of responsibility and of every sentiment of humanity and justice. The picture is not an ideal one; there were such judges in those days; there are such judges in the same quarter of the world still, if we may trust a recent writer on Palestine, who, after describing the Pasha of Damascus as an obese, gluttonous, sensual, slothful, indifferent mortal, remarks, "It is the misfortune of Turkey that the majority of the governing class are men ignorant and fanatical, sensual and inert, notoriously corrupt and tyrannical, who have succeeded only in ruining and impoverishing the countries they were sent to govern."[3] The judge of our parable is certainly a bad sample of a low kind, for he not only is one who fears not God, nor regards man, but describes himself as such: "Though I fear not God, nor regard man."[4] It is true he says this not toothers, but to himself; but it is a sign of deep depravity that he can even go this length. Ordinary villains try to hide their character even from themselves, but this consummate villain with profligate frankness acknowledges to himself that he is quite as bad as other people think him. He does not heed the evil opinion entertained of him by other men and by his own conscience; he promulgates its truth and laughs at it as a good joke. There could not possibly be a worse character, or a more hopeless tribunal than that over which such a man presides. This judge you have no chance of influencing except through his self-love. If he can be made to feel that it will be more advantageous or less troublesome to do right than to do wrong, he will do right, but for no other reason.

[1] Bengel distinguishes the two verbs φοβο■μαι and ■ντρ■πομαι thus Solemus φοβε■σθαι potentiam, ■ντρ■πεσθαι existimationem.

[2] For examples in Greek authors vide Wetstein.

[3] Conder, 'Tent-work in Palestine,' i. p. 251.

[4] Weizsäcker in the place already referred to mentions soliloquising on the part of the actors in the parables as another characteristic of the later parables of Luke's Gospel. The petitioner who appears before this corrupt judge is, primâ facie, a very unlikely person to prevail with him. She is a friendless, destitute woman, too weak to compel, too poor to buy, justice; or to say all in a single word, a widow, who in the East was a synonym for helplessness, a prey to oppressors and knaves of every description, pious or impious, as many a pathetic text of Scripture proves. Witness that stern word of the prophet Isaiah against the degenerate rulers of Israel: "Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them;" and that bitter, indignant word of Christ concerning the Pharisees of His time: "Ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers."[1]. For some good remarks on the forlorn position of widows in the East, vide Trench, pp. 492-3. A widow was one who was pretty sure to have plenty of adversaries if she had anything to devour, and very unlikely to find any one on the seat of judgment willing to take the pains to look into her cause and to grant protection and redress. She is therefore most fitly selected to represent a petitioner for justice who has the worst possible prospect of success in his plea, most fitly chosen to represent the Church or people of God in their most forlorn plight,

overborne by an unbelieving, godless world, and apparently forgotten even of their God.

[1] Isa 1:23; Mat 23:14

Yet, as the parable goes on to show, there is hope even here. Desperate as the situation is, even a widow may find means of obtaining redress even from such a profligate administrator of injustice and perpetrator of iniquity under forms of law. Corrupt judges in the East, as elsewhere, may be influenced in three ways; by intimidation, by bribery, and by bothering. The poor, friendless widow could not wield the first two modes of influence, but the third was open to her. She had a tongue, and could persecute the judge with her clamour until he should be glad to be rid of her by letting her have what she wanted. And this judge, profligate though he was, feared a woman's tongue made eloquent by a sense of wrong and extreme misery. He has experienced it before, and he knows what is possible. Therefore he thinks it best not to drive the widow to extremities, and gives in in good time. He is deaf to her entreaties for a while, too indolent to listen, perhaps accustomed to treat all complaints at first with apathy, and to wait till he has roused the furies, as mules sometimes refuse to start on their journey till they have been sufficiently thrashed by the driver. He waited till he saw the storm beginning to rise, the subdued, respectful tone of supplication rising into the shriller key and more piercing notes of impatience and passion. Then he began to say to himself, "I care nothing for justice; I am neither pious, righteous, nor humane; I regard solely my own pleasure and comfort; but this widow threatens to be troublesome; her reiterated entreaties have already begun to bore and bother me; I will give a verdict in her favour, lest at last she, coming, strike me." And so the widow gains her cause, not through regard to justice, but through the very love of ease which at first stood in her way.

It will be observed that in our free version of the judge's soliloquy, in which he prudently made up his mind to surrender, we have put a strong sense on the words ■πωπι■ζ■ με, rendered in the English version "weary me." In doing so we are not guided simply by the dictionary sense of the verb, for it may be rendered either way, but by what seems required by the situation.[1] For we must hold that the word denotes something apprehended in the future worse than anything that has yet happened. Now the judge already feels bored. He assigns as a reason for granting the widow's request that she plagues or worries him with her demands. If, therefore, we render the term in question by some such mild word as 'weary' or tease, we get something like a tautology: She worries me; I will do her right, lest by her continual coming she annoy me. How much more expressive and characteristic to make the judge say, "She bothers me; I will do her right, lest at last she, coming, go the length of using her fist instead of her tongue." This rendering, therefore, we, with Bengel,[2] Meyer, and Godet, decidedly prefer, preferring also what goes along therewith, the construction of ε■ς τ■λος with the verb, not with the participle ■ρχομ■νη, and rendering it not 'continually,' as it requires to be in the latter case, but 'at length.' To this rendering it may be objected that it is not credible that the judge really feared physical violence on the part of the widow. This is a very prosaic objection. For, as Godet observes, there is pleasantry in the word.[3] The judge humorously affects to fear the exasperated widow's fists. There is also pictorial expressiveness in the word. Striking is the symbol of a passion that spurns all control, which, however it manifests itself, whether by words or by blows, is the thing the judge really fears. The whirlwind of a passion roused to its height by a keen sense of wrong is a thing no man cares to encounter. As for the question of fact, whether such a passion could even at last lead to physical violence, it is one we do not care to decide very confidently in the negative. It is hard to say what a

poor widow provoked beyond endurance by the unrighteous indifference of a judge, will do.

[1] It occurs again in 1Co 9:27, where it clearly should be rendered 'beat.' I beat my body as a boxer beats an antagonist.

[2] Bengel says ■πωπ■αζ■, suggilet. Hyperbole, judicis injusti et impatientis personæ conveniens. He adds: Huc refer, ε■ς τ■λος, nam ■ρχομ■νη est quasi παρ■λκον quo prætermisso sententia tamen quodammodo integra est, quod tamen, adhibitum, orationem facit suavem, moratam, &c. Field ('Otium Norv.') objects to this view that it demands the aorist of the verb instead of the present, because it points to a concluding act, while the present expresses continuous action.

[3] Il y a dans cette parole, une teinte de plaisanterie. In the case supposed in this parable then, not less than in that supposed in the other, it is evident to every one that importunity must inevitably triumph. We are therefore prepared to pass on to the consideration of the application made by the Speaker to the case of a suffering Church praying to God. We observe that the evangelist introduces the epilogue by the formula, "And the Lord said." It is a formula of frequent occurrence in his Gospel, and it has attracted the notice of critics, especially in connection with the title 'Lord,' used where the other evangelists would employ the name Jesus, and not unnaturally regarded as one of the traces in this Gospel of the influence of the faith of the apostolic Church on the mind of its author. Here the formula seems intended to mark the important character of the statement which follows. The evangelist is not content that it should come in simply as the conclusion of a parable; he desires it to stand out prominently as a substantive part of Christ's teaching. Looking then into this statement as one thus proclaimed to be of great importance, we find that the nota bene of the evangelist is fully justified. The application of the parable is in effect an argument à fortiori. If even an unjust judge can be moved to grant redress to a forlorn widow, what may not be expected of a righteous God by those who stand to Him in the relation of an elect people, chosen out of the world to be the heirs of His kingdom? They ought to feel assured that God will not allow His purpose in their election to be frustrated, but will certainly and effectively give them the kingdom, and so possess their soul in peace, though they be but a little flock in a wilderness swarming with wolves and ravenous beasts of every description. But unhappily the 'little flock,' the 'elect' race, in their actual position are not able to appreciate the force of this à fortiori argument, because God seems to them the opposite of righteous, and the very idea of their election an idle, fond dream. Deep down in their hearts there may be a faith both in God's righteousness and in His gracious purpose, but it is a faith bewildered and confounded by the chaotic condition of the world, which seems incompatible with the reality of a moral order maintained by a righteous and benignant Providence. They are in a state of mind similar to that of the prophet Habakkuk when he penned those sublime words: "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore then lookest Thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest Thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he? And makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them?"[1] The prophet was distracted by the glaring contradiction between his idea of God and facts. He regarded God as a Being who could not look on with indifference while an iniquity was being perpetrated like that wrought by Babylonian tyrants, who threw their net of conquest into the sea of the world and drew whole nations as captives away from their native land; and yet God does actually look on, a passive spectator, while that very thing is being done to Israel, His elect

people. Precisely similar is the state of mind of the 'elect,' whom Christ has in view. For men in this mental condition the à fortiori argument suggested can have little force, for they stand in doubt of the very things on which the à fortiori element rests: the righteousness or faithfulness of God, and the reality of the covenant relation implied in election. And Christ was perfectly well aware of this, and showed that He was by what He said. For He is not content, we observe, with merely asking the question, "Shall not God avenge His elect ones?" as if there were no room for reasonable doubt in the matter, or as if doubt were impious. He adds words which clearly show how sensible He is of the difficulty of believing in God's judicial interposition, in the circumstances. The added words contain three virtual admissions of the difficulty. The first is contained in the description given of the elect ones as a people in the position of crying unto God day and night, and of not being heard by Him. Such we take to be the import of the second half of the seventh verse, rendered in our version, "which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them." We adopt the reading μακροθυμε■, found in the chief uncials, and approved by the critics, as the more probable just because the less obvious, and we take it as depending not on ο■ μ■ ποι■ση, the construction required if we adopt the reading μακροθυμ■ν, but on τ■ν βο■ντων. The whole sentence from this point onwards is in effect a relative clause descriptive of the situation of the elect. Their position is that of persons "who cry to Him day and night, and yet He delays interposing in their cause" (■π■ α■το■ς).[2] The same meaning comes out if we adopt the other reading and construction. What is then said is, "Shall not God eventually avenge His elect, although He delays in their case, while they cry unto Him day and night?" Thus on either reading or construction the words undoubtedly contain the thought that there is such a delay in answering prayer as is extremely trying to faith. The elect ones are in the position of David when he complained, "O my God, I cry in the daytime, but Thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent."

[1] Hab 1:13-14.

[2] For the suggestion that μακροθυμε■ is dependent on βο■ντων I am indebted to Dr. Field, who kindly communicated his opinion in a letter to my colleague, Dr. Douglas, Principal of the Free Church College, Glasgow. Dr. Field's view of the whole passage, since published in 'Otium Norvicense,' is the same as that given above. In support of the use of the verb μακροθυμε■ in the sense of delay (moram facere) he refers to Sir 35:18, and also to the following passage in Chrysostom's works: ο■κ ο■κτε■ρει τ■ γ■ναιον (the Syroph. woman) ■λλ■ μακροθυμε■, βουλ■μενος τ■ν λανθ■νοντα θησαυρ■ν ■ν τ■ γυναικ■ κατ■δηλον ■πασι πο■ησαι.—Opp. T., iv. p. 451, A. Ed. Ben. The solution of the grammatical difficulty is at once simple and satisfactory, and it is confirmed by the reference made by Dr. Field, and introduced in the text, to the experience of David, expressed in very similar terms. The passage in Ecclus. is still more closely parallel. It runs, "For the Lord will not be slack (ο■ μ■ βραδ■ν■), neither will the Mighty be patient towards them" (ο■δ■ μ■ μακροθυμ■ση ■π■ α■το■ς—said with reference to the prayers of the poor). Dr. Field proposes this translation of the clause: "Who cry unto Him day and night, and He deferreth His anger on their behalf." The second admission of the difficulty of believing in God is contained in the asseveration which follows in the next verse: "I tell you that He will avenge them speedily." It is very significant that Jesus deems it necessary to make this strong assertion. It is evident that He relies more for the inspiration of faith into doubting spirits on His own personal assurance than on the à fortiori argument. It is a repetition in effect of the emphatic "I say unto

you" in the former parable. It is one seeking by the emphasis with which He declares His own belief to communicate faith to other minds, even as David sought to inspire courage and hope in the breasts of his brethren by the hearty counsel "Wait, I say, on the Lord." We must bear this in mind in interpreting the closing expression of this declaration, 'speedily' (■ν τ■χει). If, as some think, the phrase signifies 'soon,' 'without delay' it must be understood rhetorically, not as a prosaic statement of fact. In any case the exclusion of delay implies delay, the excuse implies that there is ground for accusation. The Speaker means to say that whatever delay there may have been in the past, there will be no further delay. But we doubt whether the phrase is thus correctly rendered. It means, we think, not soon, but suddenly. So taken, the expression conveys a truth which we find elsewhere taught in Scripture, viz. that however long the critical action of Divine providence is delayed, it always comes suddenly at last, "as a thief in the night." Slow but sure and sudden at the crisis, such is the doctrine of Scripture as expressed in the proverbial phrase just quoted, in reference to the action of God in history. It is a doctrine confirmed by the historic records of nations, as exemplified in the case of Israel herself, whose awful doom, foretold by ancient prophets and long delayed, at last overtook her literally like a thief in the night. It was probably to this very doom impending over Israel that Jesus referred when He said, "I tell you that He will avenge them ■ν τ■χει■."[1]

[1] Godet also takes ■ν τ■χει in the sense of suddenly: "non bientot mais bien vite." That this phrase does not necessarily exclude delay in the future any more than in the past appears from the final words, which contain the third implicit admission that there is much in the experience of God's people to try their faith in His righteousness and love. "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith upon the earth?" The question amounts to an assertion of the negative.[1] It does not mean that there will be no Christianity, no piety in the earth or in Palestine when the Son of man comes to judge the enemies of His gospel and to vindicate the rights of His followers. It means that the faith in demand, the faith He wishes to inspire, faith in God's providence, will have all but died out in the hearts even of the godly, even of the elect. So long will the Judge delay His coming, that it will come to this. What an ample admission of trial involved to faith in God's peculiar manner of acting in providence! And there is no exaggeration in the statement. It is often the case that God's action as a deliverer is delayed until His people have ceased to hope for deliverance. So it was with Israel in Egypt; so was it with her again in Babylon. "Grief was calm and hope was dead" among the exiles when the word came that they were to return to their own land; and then the news seemed too good to be true. They were "like them that dream" when they heard the good tidings.

[1] Bengel on ■ρα finely remarks: magnum ■θος habet, oratione negante per interrogationem temperata. This method of Divine action—long delay followed by a sudden crisis—so frankly recognised by Christ, is one to which we find it hard to reconcile ourselves. These parables help us so far, but they do not settle everything. They contain no philosophy of Divine delay, but simply a proclamation of the fact, and an assurance that in spite of delay all will go well at the last with those who trust in God. It is very natural that we should desire more, that we should seek the rationale of the mystery, so strikingly expressed in those words, "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." Why is the Divine temper so calm that He can regard events when they happen as we regard those which happened a thousand years ago, and yet so impulsive that at the end of a thousand years He acts as suddenly and hotly as we men do

when our purposes are just freshly formed in our hearts? Unbelief will reply, Because God is simply a synonym for a stream of tendency which silently moves on like the river Niagara till it approaches its natural consummation, when it makes its mighty plunge, to the astonishment of all spectators. Christians cannot accept this solution. They must find a way of reconciling delay with the reality of a Divine purpose, and with the graciousness of that purpose. And it is not impossible to find such a way. Delay is not incompatible with grace. It is simply the result of love taking counsel with wisdom, so that the very end aimed at may not be frustrated by too great haste to attain it. Men must be prepared for receiving and appreciating the benefit God means to bestow on them, and delay is an important element in the discipline necessary for that purpose. The child cannot at once enter on its inheritance; it must be under tutors and governors in order that it may at length enjoy and rightly use the freedom to which it is destined.

01.08. Chapter 7. The Parable of Extra Service

Chapter 7.

The Parable of Extra Service Or, the Exacting Demands of the Kingdom, and the Temper Needful to Meet Them. On a certain occasion Jesus said to His disciples, Which of you is there, having a servant ploughing or feeding cattle; who will say to him on his returning from the field, Go straightway[1] and sit down to meat? And will not rather, on the contrary, say to him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me till I have eaten and drunken; and after that thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank the servant because he hath done the things commanded him? I trow not.[2] So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all the things commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have (but) done that which it was our duty to do.—Luk 17:7-10.

[1] The ε■θ■ως is to be taken with παρελθ■ν following, not as in A. V., with loft going before. Bengel truly remarks that whatever the master said He would say it at once, so that ε■θ■ως is superfluous as joined to ■ρε■.

[2] The words ο■ δοκ■ are omitted in some MSS., probably by mistake of the transcriber through similar ending (α■τ■ δοκ■).

Little or no help in the interpretation of this parable can be got from the previous context. There is no apparent connection between it and what goes before, and it would only lead us out of the track which conducts towards its true meaning to endeavour to invent a connection. Critics who are ever on the outlook for traces of tendency in the Gospels tell us that the parable and the two preceding verses are connected by the Pauline bias of both. As in these two verses Jesus, in true Pauline fashion, teaches the omnipotence of faith to disciples who had asked Him to increase their share of that grace, so in the parable He inculcates the not less Pauline doctrine of the insufficiency of works.[1] We will not deny that the Pauline character of these two sections may very possibly have been what chiefly interested the evangelist’s mind, and led him to introduce them into his narrative in juxtaposition. In that case, if we were bound as expositors to have supreme regard to Luke’s motive as a reporter, we should have to relegate the present parable to the second head in our classification of the parables, and to treat it as a parable of grace, designed to teach that in the kingdom of God all is of grace, and not of debt, or that merit in man before God is impossible, the key-note of the whole being the closing words, "We are unprofitable servants." But we do not feel bound to adopt as our clue the private feelings of the evangelist. It is quite conceivable that what chiefly interested his mind in reporting the parable was its bearing on the doctrine of salvation, and that nevertheless the purpose of our Lord in uttering it was more comprehensive in its scope. As the Spirit of God often meant more by a prophecy than the prophet was aware of, so Christ might mean much more by a parable than an evangelist was aware of. In this sense there is truth in the remark of Mr. Matthew Arnold, that Jesus was over the head of His reporters. It will be best, therefore, to lay little stress either on the external connections of the narrative or on the supposed private thoughts of the narrator, and to regard this parable as a precious fragment which Luke found among his literary materials, "at the bottom of his portfolio," as a recent commentator

expresses it,[2] and which he put into his Gospel at a convenient place that it might not be lost. If by this mode of viewing it we lose the benefit of a guide to the sense in the context, we have a compensation in the reflection made by the same commentator, that the very fragmentariness of this precious morsel is a guarantee of its originality as a genuine logion of Jesus.[3] [1] So Hilgenfeld, 'Einleitung.'

[2] Godet.

[3] Schleiermacher tries to make out a connection between Luk 17:5-6, and Luk 17:7-10. He thinks it was quite natural that, after saying that faith would enable them to do all things required of them, Christ should go on to teach that they were not to expect outward stimuli and privileges as a reward. 'Uber die Schriften des Lukas,' p. 154.

What then is the doctrinal drift of this striking fragment? On the surface it wears a harsh and, if one may venture to say so, unChrist-like aspect. It seems to give a legal, heartless, inhuman representation of the relations between God and man, and of the nature of religion. God appears as an exacting taskmaster or slave-driver, who requires His servants, already jaded with a full day's toil in the fields, to render Him extra household service in the evening, before they get the food and rest which their bodies eagerly crave. And the Master is ungracious as well as unmerciful. He doth not thank His weary slaves for their extra service in the form of attendance at table, but receives it as a matter of course. Then, finally, those servants are required to submit to this merciless and ungracious treatment without complaint or surprise, as quite right and proper; nay, they must even go the length of making the abject acknowledgment that in all their toil, day and night, they have been unprofitable servants, and at most have done no more than their statutory duty. Now we may be sure that if we could only penetrate to the heart of our Lord's meaning, we should find it to be thoroughly like Himself, and thoroughly consistent with His other teaching. It is indeed a strange, hard saying, but it is not the only hard saying which fell from His lips; and just because it is so strange we may be sure it really was spoken by Him; and just because it was spoken by Him we may be sure that, like many other of His sayings, with a very hard shell on the outside, this saying has within the shell a very sweet kernel. Let us try to break the shell and to get at the kernel.

Some interpreters of note have sought an escape from the difficulties of the parable by finding in it not a prescription, but a description, of legal religion. We are told, that is, not how we ought to serve God, but how men of a legal spirit, hirelings, mercenaries, such as the Pharisaic Jews, do serve God, and how their service is estimated by God. The parable is in fact a picture of the kind of religion which Jesus saw around Him. Religious people were acting like men hired to do a certain work, in return for which they were to receive their meals. They did their 'duty,' the things expressly enjoined, in the spirit of drudges rather than in the generous spirit of devotion, and their work so done was of little value, and not deserving of thanks: they really were unprofitable servants. And such men are pointed at as persons not to be imitated. Jesus says in effect, "Be ye not like these; serve God in a different fashion, and ye shall receive very different treatment. Men of servile, mercenary spirit God treats as slaves; serve God liberally, and ye shall be treated as sons."[1]. On this view the parable teaches the same lesson as the parable of the labourers who entered the vineyard at different hours of the day, in which those who entered in the morning and did a full day's work, and bore "the burden and heat" of the day, are represented as being paid last, and

without any thanks; while those who entered at the eleventh hour are paid first, as if the master had pleasure in paying them, and are paid as much as those who had worked the whole day. Another expedient for getting out of the difficulty, proposed by a different class of expositors, is to suppose that the parable teaches not how God does deal with any of His servants, but how He might deal with all. He might treat all in justice as worthless slaves; but that He does not we know, not indeed from this parable, but from other places of Scripture. The object of the parable is not to set forth the whole truth about God's relations to men, but merely to negative the idea of human merit, and to beat down human pride.[2] Neither of these interpretations hits the mark. The one errs in assuming that the parable has no application to the devoted servants of the kingdom; the other in assuming that the parable gives us no information as to how God does deal with men. In opposition to the former, we believe that the parable has truth for all servants of the kingdom, especially for the most devoted; and in opposition to the latter, we believe that it teaches not how God might act, but how He does act with His servants; in other words, that it shows a real phase of the actual experience of the faithful in this present life. They are treated in providence as the parable represents. Jesus spake the parable to the twelve, as the future apostles of Christianity, to let them know beforehand what to expect, and so to prepare them for their arduous task.

[1] So Grotius [2] So Trench, controverting the view of Grotius.

We believe then that the purpose of this parable is neither by implication to condemn servile religion, nor to inculcate humility for its own sake; but to set forth the exacting character of the demands which the kingdom of God makes on its servants, and to inculcate on the latter humility only that the work of the kingdom may be better done, and may not be hindered by self-complacency. We take the extra service of the slave in the parabolic representation to be the key to the interpretation, and assume that Christ meant to suggest that something analogous to such extra service will be found in the Divine kingdom. On this reasonable assumption, the direct object of the parable will be to teach that the service of God, nay, of Christ Himself, is a very exacting and arduous one; much more arduous than human indolence cares to undertake; far exceeding in its demands the ideal of duty men are prone to form for themselves. Christ would have His disciples understand that the Christian vocation is a very high one indeed; that for those who give themselves to it, it not merely brings hard toil in the fields through the day, but also, so to speak, extra duties in the evening, when the weary labourer would fain be at rest; that it has no fixed hours of labour, eight, ten, twelve, as the case may be according to agreement, but may summon to work at any hour of all the twenty-four, as in the case of soldiers in time of war, or of farm labourers in the season of harvest, when the grain must be secured when weather is propitious. He would have His disciples lay this to heart, that they may be on their guard against impatience when they find, in the course of their experience, that new demands of service are made upon them beyond what already seemed a fair day's work; and against such a self-complacent satisfaction with past performances, however considerable, as might indispose them for further exertion.

Such being the drift of the parable, there is of course no intention revealed in it to represent God in an ungracious light. Christ's purpose is not to teach in what spirit God deals with His servants, but to teach rather in what spirit we should serve God. Doubtless the language put into the master's mouth does convey the impression that the demand for additional service arises out of a despot's caprice rather than out of a real necessary occasion. But any one acquainted with our Lord's

method of teaching knows how to interpret this sort of language. Christ was ever very bold in His representation of God's apparent character, knowing as He did that God's real character could stand it, and knowing well also what a hard aspect the Divine character sometimes wears to our view As in the parables last considered He drew pictures of a selfish neighbour and an unjust judge, meaning these to represent God as He appears to His people when He delays answers to their prayers; so here He depicts God not according to the gracious reality of His character, but according to the stern facts of Christian life. As on other occasions Jesus spake parables to teach that men ought always to pray and not faint, showing how importunity would ultimately prevail; so here He speaks a parable to teach that men ought always to work and not faint, schooling themselves into a spirit of severe dutifulness which yields not readily to weariness, nor is prone to self-complacent contentment with past attainments and performances, seeing that such a spirit is demanded by the course of providence from all who serve the Lord. The doctrine implied in our parable, that the kingdom of God makes very exacting demands on its servants, is not one that will startle any one familiar with our Lord's general teaching. How many words He uttered bearing the same import! "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." "Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." "If thou wouldst be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and come and follow Me." "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and He that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." These are hard sayings; so hard that we are strongly tempted to exercise our wits in polishing off their sharp angles, in discovering some way by which, without setting them aside as Utopian, we may ease their pressure on the conscience. One way of doing this was very early found out. It was to convert those sayings of Christ, which seem to require renunciation of property and abstinence from domestic ties, into "counsels of perfection," as distinguished from positive commandments obligatory on all. Let all who would be perfect, who would take honours, so to speak, in the Divine kingdom, part with their property and practise celibacy. It is not necessary to do these things in order to have admission into the Divine kingdom; but those may do so who choose, and if they do it will be put to their credit. As for the common herd of Christians, all they need to mind is the keeping of the commandments of the Decalogue in their plain, obvious sense. In this way Christianity was made easy for the multitude, and those who went in for a higher style of piety had the pleasure of thinking that they were doing more than was commanded, and were therefore very far indeed from being unprofitable servants. Voluntary poverty and celibacy were the extra service after the day's work of commonplace morality and religion was over, and, as such, received a higher rate of payment, in the form of praise and honour in earth and heaven. A most ingenious and plausible theory, but not true. Monkish asceticism is not the extra service of the Christian life. The over-time duty consists rather in extraordinary demands on God's servants in exceptional times and unusual emergencies; when Christian men, already weary, must continue to work though sentient nature demands repose; when old men, who have already served God for many years, cannot enjoy the comparative exemption from toil which their failing powers call for, but must toil on till they die in harness; when liberal men, who have already given much of their substance for the advancement of the kingdom, are called on to give still more—it may be to give their all; when young men have to renounce the felicity of domestic life "for the kingdom of heaven's sake," that they may be free from family cares and find it easier to bear hardship when it is restricted to their own person, and falls not upon any loved ones. In ordinary circumstances such extra service may not be called for. The servant after he has done his day's work may at once sit down to meat and enjoy rest; the veteran soldier may

retire on a pension; the man of wealth may retain his means; the young man may marry. But when the emergency arises which calls for extra service, then the extra service is obligatory on all. That such emergencies do arise every one knows. Extreme emergencies, times of persecution, for example, are rare; but minor emergencies are frequent; in fact, it may be said that to every Christian there come opportunities which test his patience and his obedience: times when, if he be half-hearted, self-indulgent, or self-complacent, he will say, "I have done enough;" but when, on the other hand, if he be of a dutiful mind, he will say, "I may not look on the things which are behind, or speak of past performances; my Master bids me gird myself for further service, and I must run at His call."

We can now see how appropriate is this parable as a representation of an actual experience in the life of godliness. The parable is true at once to natural life and to spiritual life. In societies where slavery prevails the slave is treated as the parable represents—as one who has no rights, and who therefore, do what he will, can be no profit to his master, and can have no claim to thanks. The assertion implied in the phrase "unprofitable slaves," so far from being an exaggeration, is rather a truism. The emphasis is to be placed on the word slaves: they are unprofitable because slaves; unprofitableness is a matter of course in a slave. And as slaves deserve no thanks, they receive none; and so long as they are slaves in spirit it is best they should not. This may seem a harsh statement, but we can cite a curious illustration of its truth from a recent book of African travel. The writer, giving some of his experiences in connection with his servants, says, "Afterwards when travelling with Arabs I found that we had treated our men with too much consideration, and they in consequence tried to impose on us, and were constantly grumbling and growling. Our loads were ten pounds lighter than the average of those carried for the Arab traders. And since they do not employ askari (soldiers, servants, donkey-drivers), their pagazi (porters), besides carrying loads, pitch tents and build screens and huts required for the women and cooking, so that they are frequently two or three hours in camp before having a chance of looking after themselves. With us the work of our porters was finished when they reached camp, for the askari pitched our tents, and the task of placing beds and boxes inside was left to our servants and gun-bearers."[1] [1] Lieutenant Cameron, 'Across Africa,' vol. i. pp. 107, 108. The parable may be transferred to the spiritual sphere with one important exception. It is not needful or desirable that the servants of the kingdom be treated in the thankless manner in which Arab traders deal with their slaves. For God's servants are not slaves in spirit, they are free men, and their service springs out of entirely different motives from those which influence slavish natures. And this observation leads us to notice the temper needful in order to compliance with the exact demands of the kingdom. Of what spirit must they be who shall prove themselves capable of rising to the heroic pitch when called on?

Two virtues at least are indispensable for this purpose—patience and humility. Patience, lest when the demand for new service comes we be unwilling to respond, and so either refuse the service or do it in a grudging humour; humility, lest we think too highly of what we have already done, and so be ignobly content with past performances and attainments. Of the two vices, impatience and self-complacency, the latter is the more to be feared. There is doubtless in all a tendency to grow weary in well-doing; but when the sense of duty is strong the temptation will be resisted. The word of God will be like a fire in the bones, and will make it impossible to refrain from action. But the spirit of self-complacency is specially to be feared just because its tendency is to drug conscience,

deaden the sense of duty, lower the very ideal of life, and make us think we have done exceeding well when we have done very indifferently. There is no enemy to all high attainment so deadly as self-satisfaction. On the other hand, and for a similar reason, there is nothing more favourable to progress than a humility which expresses itself thus: "We are unprofitable servants." This may seem servile language, not fit to be used by a spiritual freeman, however humble. But it is not servile language. It is true of slaves that they are unprofitable, but it is not true of them that they confess themselves to be such, except it may be by way of a mere façon de parler. It is only the freeman who makes such a confession, and in the very act of making it he shows himself to be free. And whence springs this confession of the free, self-devoted spirit? Is it out of an abject sense of personal demerit, or an exaggerated sense of Divine majesty? No, but rather out of a sense of redemption. It is a deep sense of Divine grace which makes a man work like a slave, yet think little of his performance. The French have a proverb noblesse oblige, which means that rank imposes obligations; so that a true noble does not require to be told his duty, but is a law unto himself. In like manner, it may be said of a true Christian that the consciousness of redemption obliges, grateful love constrains, taxes energies, time, possessions very heavily; has the greatest possible difficulty in satisfying itself—in truth, never is satisfied; makes one work like a slave, refusing to be limited by hours and fixed measures and proportions, and yet pronounces on all actual performances the verdict, 'unprofitable,' 'nothing to boast of.' And thus it appears that our parable, though on the face of it ignoring or even denying the gracious character of God, and turning Him into a slave-driver, has for its unseen foundation the very grace which it seems to deny. Nothing but a belief in Divine grace can make it possible for a man to work with the devotion and the temper required of him by the service of the kingdom. A legal relation between God and man never could achieve such a result, never could make a man in spirit and conduct a hero. Legal relation can make men unprofitable servants; but it cannot make them supremely profitable, yet all the while so humble that they can honestly think and call themselves unprofitable. That moral phenomenon in which the extremes of devotion and modesty meet can be found only where God is conceived of as a God of love, freely giving, not severely exacting; in the lives of men like Paul and Luther, and the genuine offspring of their faith. Said we not truly at the commencement, that if we could only break the shell of our parable we should find it contain a very sweet kernel? The implied doctrine is that the kingdom is a kingdom of grace, and that devotion is the cardinal virtue of its citizens; a devotion rendered possible by the grace of the kingdom, and necessary by its imperial tasks.

01.09. Chapter 8. The Hours, the Talents, and the Pounds

Chapter 8.

The Hours, the Talents, and the Pounds Or, Work and Wages in the Kingdom of God. The parable of Extra Service considered in the last chapter, when superficially viewed, makes, as we saw, the unpleasant impression that in the kingdom of heaven service is rendered to a thankless, unappreciative Master, who receives all work done for Him as a matter of course, possessing no merit, and entitled to no reward. The hastiest glance at the three parables now to be studied suffices to show that this impression is a very false one. From these parables we learn that the kingdom of God is a kingdom of perfect equity; that the Lord of this kingdom is one who knows how to value and repay all faithful, devoted labour, and in all His dealings with His servants approves Himself to be at once just and generous; and that in this kingdom rewards are bestowed on principles which commend themselves to right reason as in entire accordance with the eternal laws of righteousness.

All three parables manifestly relate to the problem of Work and Wages. Their common theme is the political economy of the kingdom. On this account alone they might fitly be made the subject of one connected study. But we have a better reason than this for taking them up together as forming conjointly a single topic The parables do not merely bear upon the same general theme; they are mutually complementary, and constitute together a complete doctrine on the important subject of work and wages in the kingdom of God. To see this we have but to remember that three things must be taken into account in order to form a just estimate of the ethical value of men’s work: viz. the quantity of work done, the ability of the worker, and the motive. Where ability is equal, quantity determines relative merit; and where ability varies, then it is not the absolute quantity of work done, but the ratio of the quantity to the ability, that ought to determine value. But however great the diligence and zeal displayed or the amount of work done may be, no work can have any real value in the kingdom of God which proceeds from an impure motive. In this world men are often commended for their diligence irrespective of their motives, and it is not always necessary even to be zealous in order to gain vulgar applause. If one does something that looks large and liberal, men will praise him without inquiring whether for him it was a great thing, a heroic act involving self-sacrifice, or only a respectable act, not necessarily indicative of earnestness or devotion. But in God’s sight many bulky things are very little, and many small things are very great; for this reason, that He seeth the heart and the hidden springs of action there, and judges the stream by the fountain. Quantity is nothing to Him unless there be zeal, and even zeal is nothing to Him unless it be purged from all vainglory and self-seeking—a pure spring of good impulses, cleared of all smoke of carnal passion; a pure flame of heaven-born devotion. A base motive vitiates all.

Each of the three parables now to be considered gives prominence to a distinct element in this complex doctrine of moral value. The parable of the Pounds illustrates the proposition that where ability is equal quantity determines relative merit. In this parable each servant receives one pound, but the quantity of work done varies; one servant with the one pound gaining ten, while another

gains only five. In right reason the rewards ought to vary accordingly, and so in fact they do in the parable. The first gets ten cities to govern, the second only five. Not only so, but, what is more remarkable, words of commendation are uttered by the master in addressing the first servant which are not repeated to the second. To the former he says, "Well, thou good servant, because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities;" to the second no praise is given, but only the bare commission, "Be thou also over five cities." The parable of the Talents, on the other hand, illustrates the proposition that when ability varies, then not the absolute quantity of work done, but the ratio of the quantity to the ability, ought to determine value. Here the amount of work done varies as in the parable of the Pounds, but the ability varies in the same proportion, so that the ratio between the two is the same in the case of both servants who put their talents to use. One receives five and gains five, the other receives two and gains two. In right reason the two should be held equal in merit, and so they are represented in the parable. The same reward is given to each, and both are commended in identical terms; the master saying to each in turn, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." The purpose of the parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard, or, to use a briefer expression, the parable of the Hours, is to emphasise the supreme importance of motive as a factor in determining moral value. It teaches in effect that a small quantity of work done in a right spirit is of greater value than a great quantity done in a wrong spirit. One hour’s work done by men who make no bargain, but trust to the generosity of their employer, and who seek by ardent devotion to make up for lost time, is of more value than twelve hours’ work done by men who regard their doings with self-complacency, and who have laboured all along as hirelings. That this is the drift of the parable will appear more clearly hereafter; meantime we content ourselves with briefly stating our opinion, our present purpose being to point out how, on the hypothesis that the view just given is correct, the parable of the Hours completes the doctrine of Christ concerning the relation of work to wages in the kingdom of heaven, by setting forth that not the quantity of work done alone, nor even quantity combined with zeal, but above all things quality, pure motive, right affection, determines moral value. The fact just pointed out, that the three parables before us constitute together a complete doctrine on the subject of rewards, suffices to settle the question as to the originality and independence of these parables; to prove, that is, that they are three distinct parables, and not two. The question concerns the parables of the Talents and the Pounds, for the originality and distinctness of the parable of the Hours is not disputed. It is held by many interpreters that the two former parables are simply different versions of one and the same parable, opinion being divided as to which of the two comes nearer to the original form as spoken by Jesus. The most plausible view is that of those who maintain that Matthew’s version approaches nearest to the primitive form, and that Luke’s parable is simply Matthew’s transformed, and combined with another parable about a king and his subjects, which was spoken at a different time, and appears in Luke’s narrative only in a mutilated state.[1] With all deference to the learned commentators who treat the two parables as one which had assumed two different forms in the course of tradition, we must express our firm belief that they are two, spoken by our Lord on different occasions and for different purposes. That the parables are very similar we do not deny; we will even admit that they are simple variations on the same theme. But they are, in our judgment, variations originating with the Master Himself,[2] not due to the blunders of reporters, or to the modifying influence of inaccurate tradition. And we base this judgment on the remarkable manner in which the three parables as they stand fit into each other, and together form

a complete doctrinal whole. It is not by accident or blundering that variations arise which fit so well to each other and to the didactic significance of a third parable. Such fitness bears witness to a single mind in which the three parabolic representations took their origin, and formed together a whole. In saying this we but apply to these parables the well-known argument of design. Even as the theist in enforcing the teleological argument maintains that by the adaptations of the different parts of an organism to each other, and of the whole organism to its environment, he is constrained to rise above the action of chance or mere mechanism to a designing mind, in which the idea of this organism pre-existed, and by which its function was pre-determined; so we, having regard to the indubitable fact that these three parables as we find them in the Gospel records do form as it were an organism of thought on the subject to which they relate, feel constrained to conclude that they owe their origin not to the accidents of tradition, but simply to the fact that they constituted a unity in the mind of the Great Teacher, and were each and all spoken by Himself as occasions occurred.

[1] This is the view of Unger. He thinks that the image of the king and his subjects does not agree with the remaining image, either in itself (princeps enim bellum gesturus, et negotiatores porro, hi atque urbium præfecturæ, minus congruunt) or in illustrating the matter in hand. He makes an attempt at restoring the mutilated parable of the king and his subjects. The king goes to a distant land, to return afterwards (λαβε■ν βασιλε■αν he thinks belongs only to the story, not to its meaning). He commits his kingdom to his servants; to one more, to another fewer cities. The citizens rebel. On his return he takes account or his vicegerents, and gives them power accordingly.—'De Parabolarum Jesu natura,' p. 130. Among more recent writers who concur in this view are Strauss, Bleek, Ewald (who also attempts to construct the lost parable somewhat differently from Unger), and Meyer, and to a certain extent Reuss in 'Histoire Evangelique.' Calvin also held that the parables of the Pounds and the Talents are essentially one. Matthew he thinks more suo inserts this parable among others, neglecting the order of time, which he supposes to be given by Luke.

[2] So also Schleiermacher, who regards the inequality of endowment as an essential feature of the one parable, and equality of endowment as an equally essential feature of the other.—'Über die Schriften des Lukas.'

While maintaining with some measure of confidence that these parables form a didactic whole, and on that ground asserting their originality, we do not therefore feel justified in asserting that the sole design of the Speaker in each case was simply to make a contribution to a scientific doctrine on the subject of work and wages in the Divine kingdom. Had Christ been animated by a purely theoretic interest, He might have uttered all three parables at one gush, as all bearing on one theme, and have taken care so to construct them that they should all be strictly confined to one topic, and serve only one end. But such was not His way as a teacher. He was never guided by a purely theoretic or scientific interest; His utterances, however capable of being systematised, were not systematic in method, but occasional; and the motive to speech being often not simple, but complex, the words spoken frequently served more than one purpose. So it was in the case of these parables. They were in all probability spoken at different times, to different audiences, and from mixed motives, and were meant to teach not one truth only, but several;[1]

[1] This statement applies chiefly to the parables of the Talents and the Pounds. and not merely to teach, but to warn, admonish, comfort, stimulate.

Having regard to these facts, we will not pursue what might be called the scientific order in studying our parables, which would require us to consider first the parable of the Talents, then that of the Pounds, and lastly that of the Hours; setting forth in connection with the first the function of ability in determining value, in connection with the second the function of diligence, and in connection with the third the function of motive. We will rather take them up in the order in which they occur in the evangelic records, which may with some degree of probability be regarded as also the order in which they were delivered,[1] beginning with

[1] On such questions it is unsafe to dogmatise, but there seems no good reason to doubt that Matthew gives us the parable of the Hours in its proper historical connection, though some have been led to think otherwise by the difficulty of finding in the parable an illustration of the saying, "Many that are first shall be last, and the last first" (Neander, Bleek, Reuss). There seems also good reason to regard the other two parables, from their contents, as belonging to a later time; and of the two, Matthew's is probably the earlier, though it is brought in by him at a later period. This is the opinion of Schleiermacher, who thinks that the parable of the Talents cannot be regarded either as an imperfect understanding of that of the Pounds, or as a remodelling by Christ Himself of the latter on a later occasion. The contrary he thinks the more natural. He thinks, further, that the parable in Mat 25:1-46, where it stands, does not suit the connection. The probability, according to Schleiermacher, is that Christ, on an unknown occasion, spoke the parable of the Talents, in which unequal endowment was an essential feature, and then took it up again, introducing the noteworthy difference of equal endowment.—'Uber die Schriften des Lukas.' The Labourers in the Vineyard; Or, the Supreme Value of Motive in the Divine Kingdom For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that was an householder, who went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And going out about the third hour, he saw others standing idle in the market-place, and said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give unto you. And they went their way. Again going out about the sixth and the ninth hour, he did likewise. But going out about the eleventh hour, he found others standing,[1] and saith to them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard (and whatsoever is right that shall ye receive).[2] So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received each a denarius. But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. And having received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, saying, These last wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, who have borne the burden of the day and the heat. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I wrong thee not: didst not thou agree with me for a denarius? Take up thine,[3] and go. It is my pleasure to give to this last even as to thee. Is it not lawful to do what I will with mine own? Or is thine eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last (for many be called, but few chosen).—Mat 20:1-16.

[1] The best MSS. omit ■ργο■ς here.

[2] A doubtful reading, omitted in R. V. and by Westcott and Hort.

[3] ■ρον τ■ σ■ν. The verb implies either that the money had been laid down by the steward to be taken up by the labourers, or that it had been thrown down by the latter in disgust. The former is the view of Morrison, the latter of Greswell. The 'for' with which the parable is introduced connects it with the saying with which the previous chapter concludes, and plainly implies that the parable is, in the view of the evangelist at least, an illustration of that saying. This connection supplies us with a clue to the interpretation of the parable whereof we stand much in need; for in truth the parabolic explanation of the saying immediately preceding is harder to understand than the saying itself. Apart from the parable, there would probably have been a tolerable amount of agreement as to the meaning of the moral apophthegm. The idea it naturally suggests is that of a change of places between those who in a certain respect are first, and those who in the same respect are last. The first in one respect become last in another, the last taking their place and becoming first. The respect in which the reversal of position takes place is sufficiently clear from the connection in which the saying was spoken by Jesus. Peter had asked the question, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed Thee; what shall we have therefore? and had received a very inspiring answer to the substance of his question, to this effect: They who make sacrifices for Me and My cause shall receive an hundred-fold of the things renounced, and in the world to come eternal life. But the spirit of Peter's question required an answer too. It was a spirit of self-consciousness, self-complacency, and bargain-making, and a faithful master could not allow such a spirit to appear in his disciples without a warning word. The warning word is to be found in the saying which forms the motto of our parable. "But," said Jesus, as if with upraised finger, and in a grave, monitory tone, "many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first;" manifestly meaning to hint, Think not that the mere fact of having made a sacrifice, or even a great sacrifice, for the kingdom necessarily insures the great reward I have spoken of: all depends on the spirit in which sacrifices are made; and it is possible for one who is first as to the extent of his sacrifice to be last in the esteem of God and in the amount of reward, because his sacrifice is vitiated by the indulgence of a mercenary, self-righteous, self-complacent temper. A small sacrifice made in a right, i. e. a humble, self-forgetful, devoted spirit, is of more value in God's sight than a great sacrifice made in such a spirit as seems to have prompted your question.

Such is the meaning which one naturally puts upon the moral saying with which Mat 19:1-30 closes, viewing it in connection with all that goes before. But when the reader passes on to the parable in the next chapter, which seems designed to illustrate that saying, he is tempted to doubt the correctness of his first impression. For what he finds on the surface of the parable is not a change of places, but an abolition of distinctions by putting all on one level; not first ones in one respect becoming last in another, and last ones in the former respect becoming first in the latter, but first and last in respect of length of service becoming equal in respect of pay. This, we say, is what one finds on the surface; and the superficial aspect has misled many interpreters into the opinion that the design of the parable is to teach the doctrine that in the kingdom of God all shall be rewarded alike.[1] But if that be indeed its design, then one of two things must follow. Either the parable as originally spoken by Christ stood in no connection with the proverbial saying in question, or that saying must be made to bear a different meaning from that which it naturally suggests. Not a few interpreters have felt themselves shut up to the adoption of one or other of these alternatives; those who adopt the latter putting upon the gnome this sense: the first shall be

as the last, and the last shall be as the first; that is, first and last shall be alike, all distinctions of first and last shall disappear.[2]

[1] So most recently Reuss in 'Histoire Evangelique.' He thinks the parable is not in its true place or setting, and that it is designed to teach the equality of Divine grace in face of the inequality of the human condition in respect of the gospel promises—diversity in hours of labour, but above all in the fact of a covenant in the case of one of the parties (the Jews).

[2] So Unger: per se probabiliter explicantur: postremi atque primi pari loco erunt. Meyer takes the same view.

Either of these courses appears to us violent, and not to be followed except under direst compulsion. For our own part, we much prefer trying to bring the parable into conformity with the gnome as naturally understood, than to force upon the gnome a meaning which shall bring it into accord with the supposed didactic import of the parable. For of the two things, the import of the parable and the import of the proverb, the latter seems to us much the clearer. There is little room for doubt that the proverb points not at a levelling of distinctions, but at an exchange of places. Several considerations might be adduced in support of this position. In the first place, the word many is in its favour. "Many that are first shall be last." Why not all, if the purpose of the proverb be to teach the general truth that in God's sight the distinctions between men vanish into nothing? Does the term many not suggest the thought that what actually happens too often is what ought not to be; that it is a departure from the normal and desirable state of things due to the action of some disturbing cause; that if all things were as they ought to be, the first in respect of sacrifice would also be first in respect of reward; that in fact there is no law in the Divine kingdom that all must share alike? Then, secondly, it is only when thus understood that the saying has any relevancy to the question of Peter. The words are a pointless commonplace in the connection in which they stand if they signify, all shall be alike in respect of the reward; not to say that they are in manifest contradiction to the terms of the foregoing promise: for these are "shall receive an hundred-fold," an expression implying a proportion between the reward and the sacrifice. So manifest is the incongruity, that a recent commentator, who understands the saying when it recurs at the close of the parable as teaching the doctrine of equality, finds it necessary to invent a meaning for it in its first position different from either of those already indicated, to the following effect: Many who are first (in a worldly point of view) because they have not forsaken their goods, will be last when they lose salvation in Messiah's kingdom; while such as through sacrifice of all have become last (in a worldly point of view), will be first because they attain unto the highest salvation.[1] That this is not the sense of the saying is proved by the simple fact that it is not introduced by a 'for' (γ■ρ), as a reflection confirmatory of the foregoing statement, but by a 'but' (δ■), as a thought looking in a different direction, and qualifying the promise going before. The interpretation is interesting and valuable simply as showing what shifts men are driven to who, despairing of bringing the proverb into harmony with the parable following, desire at least to adjust it in some not quite intolerable manner to the conversation going before. Once more, in interpreting this striking saying we are entitled to attach some weight to the general ethical teaching of Scripture. Now one great thought we find running through Holy Writ, viz. that God giveth grace to the lowly, and knoweth the proud afar off; a truth of which we find many echoes in the teaching of Christ Himself, as in that word which closes the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican: "Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."[2] Here

is taught just such a change of places as on first thought we found in the saying now under consideration; and our second and final thought concerning that saying is that our first impression was right, and that in it we ought to find a moral reflection kindred to that illustrated by the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, and in sympathy with that vein of moral doctrine which more than all other doctrines pervades the Scriptures, to the effect that God's favour is in proportion to man's humility.

[1] Weiss, 'Das Matthäus-Evangelium,' p. 441.

[2] Luk 18:14.

We regard it as a settled point then, that what the apophthegm points to is not a levelling of distinctions, but an exchange of places, by which the first in the amount of service and sacrifice becomes, through pride, or vainglory, or self-seeking, last in the esteem of God; and what we have now to do is to ascertain by careful examination whether the parable cannot be brought into harmony with the saying thus understood, so as to serve as an illustration of the doctrine that quality, not quantity, determines the value of work in the Divine kingdom.

1. First we must fix our attention very closely on the householder; as we may find that to understand him is the nearest way to an understanding of the parable. This man is no ordinary employer of labour; by no means the first man of the kind you happen to meet. Before the kingdom of heaven can be likened to a man who possesses a vineyard, the man has to be assimilated to the kingdom; and the man in the parable has actually been so assimilated. Such men as he may possibly be found among this world's employers of labour, but they are rare; men like the gifted author of a charming tractate on political economy, which takes its title from a sentence in our parable, and which has for its burthen that in the business relations of men you cannot without fatal results ignore the social affections, and for its unconscious scope to turn the commercial world into a kingdom of God.[1] Our householder is not of this world, any more than Plato's republic, nor are his ways the ways of the world, or likely to be approved by the world, but rather certain to be found fault with; as in point of fact they are represented as having been found fault with by the parties who were most closely related to him, who doubtless thought they did well to be angry. Were such a man to appear among us, he would probably give similar offence to parties similarly related; and to the outside world he would, in all likelihood, appear an eccentric humorist, to be laughed at rather than to be imitated. And this judgment would not be very much to be wondered at For in truth our householder is a humorist, and his ways are in some respects very peculiar. Two peculiarities especially are notable in his character. One is, that besides hiring men in the ordinary way, and at the ordinary time, to work in his vineyard, he now and then takes it into his head to go at an advanced time of the day in search of labourers, from benevolent motives; not for his own advantage, but for the advantage of those who have the misfortune to be unemployed. For what other motive could move any one to go to the marketplace at the eleventh hour, when the working portion of the day was about to close? What evidence is there that in this procedure our householder followed ordinary usage? Commentators have been able to cite from books of Eastern travel passages proving that the parabolic picture of an employer of labour going out in the morning to hire labourers, is in accordance with Oriental custom.[2] But we have not met anywhere with anything tending to prove that the quest of workers at the close of the day is in accordance with the customs of any part of the world. The learned Lightfoot indeed quotes certain

phrases from the Talmud which he thinks may tend to throw some light on this feature in the parable. The Talmudists distinguish between persons hired for the day, and persons hired for so many hours,[3] and they direct hirers of labour to note whether those to be hired come from various places; for, say they, there are places where people come earlier to work, and other places where they come later.[4] The author of the 'Horæ Hebraicæ' suggests that the fact referred to in this last observation may serve to explain how there came to be persons in the market-place to be hired at such different times of the day. But in any case, the fact stated cannot explain the hiring of workers at the eleventh hour, for it is not credible that it was the custom of any place to begin work at so late an hour; and besides, both the question of the master addressed to those then hired, and their reply, imply that they had been present in the market-place all the day, ready to work for any one who engaged them. The compassionate tone of the master's question suggests the true explanation of his conduct. Not custom, and not need of more labourers, but pity for the idle moved this eccentric landlord to go at the eleventh hour in search of new labourers.[5] The very manner in which this part of the narrative is introduced, reveals a purpose on the part of the Speaker to signalise the action of the master as something peculiar and exceptional, indicative of a moral characteristic deserving attention. The sentence begins with the adversative particle (δ■) as if to say, Note especially what follows, and consider well what it imports as to the character of the chief actor.

[1] 'Unto This Last,' by John Ruskin.

[2] Trench quotes 'Morier's Travels in Persia' to this effect, p. 177, note.

[3] Distinguunt canones Hebræorum de conducendis operariis, prout ratio postulat, inter conductos in diem, et conductos in horas quasdam.

[4] Observandum an veniant ex locis variis; sunt enim loca ubi citius ad opus pergitur, et sunt ubi serius.

[5] So Olshausen, with his usual insight: "Less out of need than out of pity for the idle, did the true Hausherr from time to time call new labourers into his vineyard." Similarly Goebel says: "An unusual proceeding, which shows that the master is concerned not merely about the amount of work, but about employing as many as possible." The other peculiarity of our householder is that he seems to attach importance not so much to the work done as to the spirit in which it is done. He delights in the spirit of grateful devotion, and he abhors with equal intensity the spirit of envious, selfish calculation. The parable supplies evidence of this assertion. The master's abhorrence of the mercenary spirit comes out very clearly in his reply to the murmuring of those first hired, in which every word breathes indignation and disgust. But not less truly, though less obviously, does the narrative reveal the action of an opposite feeling of delight in the spirit of uncalculating devotion. For, to this feeling in the breast of the employer we must ascribe the fact of his paying the last hired first, and also the fact of his paying them a full day's wage. The commentators indeed endeavour to rob both facts of all moral significance. As to the former, one commentator tells us that the expression, "beginning from the last unto the first," signifies: No order being observed among them, but so that no one may be omitted.[1] Others assure us that the sole reason why the last are paid first, is that the first hired might observe what was done, and have their expectations awakened.[2] But they forget that the motive leading the Speaker of the parable to tell His story in a certain way is one thing, and the motive of the actor in the parable is another. It

may be that the Speaker’s reason for telling the story as He does is, that He may be able to exhibit a certain class of workers behaving in a particular way. But the landlord must be conceived to act from a motive of his own, all unconscious of the use that is to be made of his action to point a moral. And what could his motive be but a desire to manifest special interest in those who, having come into the vineyard at the close of the day, must have cherished very humble expectations as to what they were to receive, although they had done their best during their one hour of work to show their grateful appreciation of the master’s kindness?[3] And if this was indeed his motive, then the action was not so insignificant as some would have us believe. In itself, to be paid first was a small advantage to the last hired; too small to bear the chief stress in the illustration of the principle: the last first, and the first last. But the paying of the last first was a very significant circumstance as an index of the master’s mind, for in that connection we have to consider not merely the action itself, but what it may lead to.

[1] Grotius.

[2] So Calvin and Bleek.

[3] Morrison refers to Löfler, author of a monograph on this parable, published in the early part of last century, as suggesting that the words of the murmurers concerning the last hired, ο■τοι ο■ ■σχατοι μ■αν ■ραν ■πο■ησαν, are meant to convey the idea that their work was not worthy to be called work, but was a mere consumption of a little time. This is not probable, as the verb was quite commonly used to denote working for so long. But in any case, the bitter remark of envious fellow-workers cannot be taken as a reliable statement of fact. The significance of the other fact above alluded to, the paying of the last hired a full day’s wage, cannot well be denied; yet here too some commentators seem bent on making the householder’s action appear as commonplace as possible. Greswell, for example, adduces from Josephus, doubtless as the result of much learned research, what he regards as an instance of similar payment made to the builders of the temple by King Herod. The words of the Jewish historian are to the effect: If any one worked one hour of the day, he received straightway the reward of this; which our commentator interprets to mean that he was paid a whole day’s wage for one hour’s work.[1] There is reason to believe that he has made a mistake in rendering the Greek, and his mistake is due not to any want of scholarship, but to a perverse desire to bring the action of the owner of the vineyard into harmony with ordinary practice. An instance must be found of similar conduct, and the needful example is discovered in the most unlikely quarter. Who can believe that Herod would act so generously towards the builders of his temple; and what rational being, however generous, would make a habit of paying one hour’s work with a whole day’s wage; a habit which, as Alford well remarks, could only have the result of preventing work from being done? What egregious errors learned and ingenious men fall into when they miss the track of true interpretation! That track, in the present instance, does not lead in the direction of making our householder as like other people as possible, but rather in the direction of recognising boldly and decidedly his peculiarity and originality, or, if you will, his eccentricity. He chooses for a reason of his own to pay one hour’s work with a whole day’s wage. And what is his reason? It is not benevolence, at least not exclusively; for he does not seem to have intended it at first, for when he engaged those who entered the vineyard at the eleventh hour, he said to them, as to the others, "Whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive." The reading here, it is true, is doubtful; but the omission of the words may be due to a desire to remove an apparent incongruity between the terms of engagement and the actual payment made at the end of the day.

And even if, in deference to the canons of criticism laid down by the highest authorities, we regard the clause as an expansion by copyists, we may assume that it expresses correctly the understanding on which the late-hired workers were allowed to enter the vineyard. The master seems to have decided to pay the last a whole day's wage after seeing them at work. The heartiness of their endeavours pleased him much, and he was in the mood to bestow on them an amount of pay out of all proportion to the amount of work done, paying them not so much for their work as for their good will.

[1] The passage cited is from 'Antiq. Jud.,' xx. ix. 7, and is as follows:—κα■ γ■ρ ε■ μ■αν τ■ς ■ρυν τ■ς ■μ■ρας ε■ργ■σατο, τον μ■σθον ■π■ρ τα■της ε■θ■ως ■λ■μβανεν. Greswell thinks that the use of ■ μισθ■ς absolutely requires it to be understood of the wages of a day.

"An eccentric man, most unlike other people, and by no means to be imitated!" Yes; but how like is this man, with his strange humours, to the Divine Being as depicted by the sweet singer of. Israel: "With the merciful Thou wilt show Thyself merciful; with an upright man Thou wilt show Thyself upright; with the pure Thou wilt show Thyself pure; and with the froward Thou wilt show Thyself froward. For Thou wilt save the afflicted people; but wilt bring down high looks."[1] How true to this poetic picture of God is the character of our householder in the parable I He, too, is froward with the froward. How sharp and curt his words to the grumbling churls. "Friend, I wrong thee not: didst thou not agree with me for a penny? Lift thine, and go;" the last words accompanied, we may imagine, with an imperative wave of the hand. Then how good he is to the meek, the afflicted people who had hung about all day in the marketplace till they had become utterly disheartened because no man had hired them, and who work during the last hour like men mad with joy! His conduct towards them well entitles him to apply to himself the august title ■γαθ■ς.[2] For whereas he had promised at first merely to do what was just (δ■καιον), or at least abstained from giving any hint of a purpose to do more, he far exceeds the limits of justice, and rises to the level of heroic benignancy and magnanimity.

[1] Psa 18:25-27.

[2] The use of the word here (Mat 20:15) supplies the best evidence possible that it really represents a different idea from δ■καιος, which Jowett in his work on the Epistle to the Romans disputes; vide remarks on the meaning of ■γαθ■ς at page 35. Bengel's remark on ■γαθ■ς is: qui etiam plus praestat quam justitia (ver. 4) infert.—Rom 5:7.

Such then, according to our reading of his character, were the characteristics of the householder in our parable; characteristics not only admirable, but useful, if the possessor's chief aim in life were the culture of right affections in those about him. For benevolence tends to produce in its objects gratitude, and grateful devotion generously rewarded rises to still higher heights of devotion. But if the possessor's chief aim in life were the culture of grapes, these characteristics, however admirable, are not so obviously useful. For in that case chief importance must be attached to the work, not to the spirit of the worker; and it may be as well not to be too sentimental, lest the indulgence of good feeling breed disaffection in men who, however defective in temper, have nevertheless proved themselves good workers, and borne well the burden of a long day, and the scorching heat of a broiling sun.[1] Manifestly it is right affections rather than grapes that this householder is mainly concerned about, and it is this peculiarity which fits him to be an emblem of the kingdom of God.

[1] Τ■ β■ρος τ■ς ■μ■ρας signifies the labour of the whole day; τ■ν κα■σωνα the intense heat of the middle portion of the day.

2. Having ascertained with tolerable certainty the character of the householder, we shall find little difficulty in proving that the aim and effect of the parable is to illustrate the supreme importance in God's sight of motive as a measure of value. Two objections may be taken to this view. First, that the parable itself contains no trace of right motive in those who are favoured; and, second, that all receive the same sum, whereas the supposed design of the parable requires that the last should be not merely put on a level with the first, but placed above them.

Now as to the former of these objections, it is true that the parabolic representation contains no express allusion to the existence of right feeling in the last hired, or to the influence of such feeling on the master's conduct. But was such express mention really necessary? That such feeling existed goes without being said. It was probable, natural, almost inevitable in the circumstances. Then we must assume its existence in order to render the master's conduct intelligible and reasonable. Reasonable, we say; for although this householder was from the world's point of view eccentric, he was not foolish. He must be assumed to have acted from motives thoroughly rational, regarded from his own point of view. But if we assume that his action had no relation to the state of mind of those whom it concerned, then it ceases to be rational, and becomes purely arbitrary. But surely it is not Christ's intention to represent the principal actor as arbitrary, though He does make him use language which has a sound of arbitrariness in rebutting the pretensions of unreasonable men, when He puts into his mouth the question, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?"[1] We cannot, therefore, agree with the opinion expressed by a respected commentator, that "when we rise above the particular sphere of ideas with which the parable deals the quality element of character comes into account; but the parable itself does not lift us into this sphere, it leaves us simply in the sphere of the negative ideas that the time consumed in working and the quantity of work performed do not determine absolutely the amount of glory that shall be enjoyed."[2] It seems to us plain that the parable does lift us into this sphere. The principal actor in the parable rises into this sphere, and has his being in it, and he lifts the parable itself and all the subordinate actors therein along with him. In order that the situation may suit his character, we must assume that the first and last hired represent two classes of men morally distinct: the first being the self-complacent and calculating; the last the humble, self-forgetful, trustful, grateful. The first are the Simons, righteous, respectable, exemplary, but hard, prosaic, ungenial; the last the women with alabaster boxes, who for long have been idle, aimless, vicious, wasteful of life, but at last, with bitter tears of sorrow over an unprofitable past, begin life in earnest, and endeavour to redeem lost time by the passionate devotion with which they serve their Lord and Saviour. Or, once more, the first are the elder brothers who stay at home in their father's house, and never transgress any of his commandments, and have no mercy on those who do; the last the prodigals who leave their father's house and waste their substance in riotous living, but at length come to their senses and say, "I will arise and go to my father," and having met him, exclaim, "Father, I have sinned, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."

[1] Mat 20:15. The force of this question is increased if we insert the ■ at the beginning of the sentence found in many MSS. It then means, Do you dispute what I had thought was indisputable?

[2] Morrison, 'Commentary on Matthew,' in loc. The other objection to our view of the parable may also be disposed of without much difficulty. It is true that all receive the same sum, the denarius, which was the ordinary pay for a day's work in those times. But this fact is not fatal to the view that the purpose of the parable is to illustrate the truth that diversity of spirit may cause men to change places, so that the first in the amount of work or sacrifice shall be last in the reward, and vice versa. In making this assertion we do not insist either on the fact that the last were paid first, which in itself is of no great moment, or on the fact that the last were paid at a far higher rate than the first, which nevertheless deserves serious consideration; but simply on this, that the point of importance is not what each received at the end of the day, but the will of the master manifested in making payment, and what that will involved and must lead to. In the sentence "I will give unto this last even as unto thee," the part to be accentuated is not the "even as," but the "I will" (θ■λω ■γ■). The denarius is not the centre of the story, as some have imagined, but the will of him who gives it to each of his labourers. The denarius is not a fixture for that will; equality of payment is not a law by which it is bound. The master might have given more than the denarius to the last, but he sufficiently asserted his freedom and sovereignty in giving so much; and there was a certain appropriateness in fixing on the particular sum—it was a day's wage for an hour's work. And then it must be remembered that the master's will is not limited in its action to one day. It is so limited in the parabolic representation, and hence the illustration of the apophthegm with which it begins and ends is necessarily defective; for one day is too short to exhibit fully the action of the forces which the parable sets in motion. But the master's will will burst the bonds of to day, and act to-morrow, and produce results in advance of those of to-day. The murmurers of to-day will not be employed at all to-morrow unless they change their mood; for the ominous "Go thy way" is in reality an order to quit the service, and the last-hired of to-day will be morning workers to-morrow; working in an altogether different spirit from the murmurers of yesterday. And so at length the last shall be first,[1] and the first last, to a degree not visible within the narrow space to which the parabolic representation is confined.

[1] The use of the future (■σονται) in the repetition of the apophthegm at the close of the parable is worthy of notice. One would have expected rather, So the last in this case were first. May the reason not be that the parable shows a process of reversal begun, but not finished, and pointing into the future for its consummation? It cannot be said that the sentence is merely a repetition of the one at the close of the previous chapter, and that therefore the tense of the verb has no significance. It is not a case of exact repetition, for the important word πολλο■ is omitted. This omission is made to adapt the saying to the parable; so also is the inversion of the clauses. Why then was the tense not changed for the same purpose, so that the sentence might stand, Thus the last in the parable became first, and the first last?

It only remains to add that no parable could possibly supply an adequate illustration of the action of the great moral law enunciated by Jesus in the close of His reply to Peter's question, for the results therein pointed at are realized only gradually, through the slow but sure operation of tendencies. In making this remark we have in view such fulfilments of the law as fall within our observation in this present life. We do not of course mean to limit the operation of the law to this life. The question has been much discussed by commentators, What does the denarius denote? Does it refer to the life eternal, or to something experienced in this world? In our way of looking at the parable the question is not of such cardinal importance as some suppose. But if we must

answer it, our reply is, The denarius denotes what ever comes under the category of reward, and that, as we see from our Lord's own words to Peter, embraces both the life eternal and experiences of this present life. And we believe that the law, the last first and the first last, applies to the eternal as well as to the temporal side of the reward. We do not believe in the equality of men's conditions in the life to come any more than in the life that now is. The general felicity of the life eternal common to all the saved will embrace much variety of special condition corresponding to the spiritual histories of individuals: some will receive a full reward, others a less ample recompense; and then, too, it will be seen that some last ones will take precedence of some who in this life were reputed to be first. But of the life to come and its conditions our thoughts are dim, and we are perplexed when we attempt to apply to eternity the graduated distinctions of time. The category, of the absolute dominates all our thoughts of the eternal world. We think of the good as absolutely good, and of the evil as absolutely evil, and of the blessedness and misery of the two classes as admitting of no degrees. Therefore it is easier for us to understand the application of the law to this present life, where the distinction of good and evil is relative, and where the action of spiritual law reveals itself in the form of tendencies. Under this form we may confidently expect to find every law, valid for the eternal world, exercising its influence unceasingly. For with respect to the action of moral law, the two spheres, the eternal and the temporal, are virtually one. As the blue sky is but the omnipresent atmosphere projected by the eye to an indefinite distance in space, so the eternal judgment is the incessantly active moral order of the world, projected by the conscience to an indefinite distance in future time. This general observation applies in full force to the law now under consideration. It is a law amply illustrated in history. In the parable the will of the householder has a very narrow platform on which to exhibit itself, but God's will has the whole history of the world in which to display its purposes. The moral order of the world serves that will, and unfolds to view its contents. And to a wise observer the law, first last and last first, can be seen slowly but certainly fulfilling itself both in individuals and in communities. It is possible even to classify the cases in which the first tend to become last. The law fulfils itself in such cases as these: when those who make sacrifices for the kingdom of heaven manifest the spirit of self-devotion in occasional acts rather than in a fixed habit; when any particular species of Christian activity has come to be in fashion, and therefore in high esteem among men, involving consequently temptations to vanity, spiritual pride, and presumption; or when, as in the case of the ascetics, self-denial is reduced to a system practised, not for Christ's sake, but for its own sake.[1] When we consider how much Christian activity comes under one or other of these heads,—occasional spasmodic efforts, good works in high esteem in the religious world, and good works done, not so much from interest in the work, as from their reflex bearing on the doer's religious interests,—we must feel that Christ did not speak too strongly when He said many that are first shall be last. Far from charging His language with exaggeration, we rather admire its moderation in virtually admitting that there are exceptions. Exceptions unquestionably there are. There are some first ones who shall not be last; and there are some last ones who shall not be first. If it were otherwise—if to be last in length of service, in zeal, or in devotion gave one an advantage invariably and of course, it would be ruinous to the kingdom of God; as in effect putting a premium on indolence and encouraging men to stand all the day idle. But it is not so. It is no advantage in itself to be last, and it is no disadvantage to be first. The first in sacrifice may also be first in reward; the Church's noblest ones are men who have been first in both respects. But the number of such is comparatively few. "For many are called, but few are chosen." Many, that

is,—for so we, with Bengel and others, understand the reflection wherewith the parable concludes,—many are called to work in God's vineyard, and many are actually at work; but few are choice workers, few work for God in the spirit of the precepts taught by Jesus; with ardent devotion, yet with deep humility.[2] [1] For more extended observations on this topic, vide 'The Training of the Twelve,' cap. xvi. sec. 3.

[2] The words in question are of doubtful authority, and Calvin thought they should be omitted. If retained they must bear the meaning given to them in the text, as the only one in harmony with the connection of thought It is the sense put on the words by Bengel, Grotius, Unger, Olshausen, &c. Bengel says: ■κλεκτο■ exquisiti præ aliis. Videtur hoc loco ubi primum occurrit, non omnes salvandos denotare, sed horum excellentissimos. Grotius observes that the Greeks also used the word ■κλεκτ■ν to denote what is distinguished in anything (τ■ ■ξα■ρετον) and quotes as a parallel saying, πολλο■ μ■ν ναρθηκοφ■ροι, πα■ροι δ■ τε β■κχοι. Kuinoel, who adopts the same view, cites as a parallel sentiment from Virgil: Pauci, quos æquus amavit Jupiter, atque ardens evexit ad sidera virtus.—'Æn.,' vi. 130. Olshausen says the κλητο■ are all workers, even the πρ■τοι. The ■κλεκτο■ are the ■σχατοι, who occupy a freer position to the kingdom, and work out of inner pleasure and love. Arnot, who takes the same view, refers to Rev 17:14 for a similar use of the word ■κλεκτο■, where the Lamb's followers are spoken of as κλητο■ κα■ ■κληκτοδ κα■ πιστο■; picked men, spiritual heroes so to speak.

Taking the householder in this parable, benevolent towards those whom no man had hired, and showing favour to those who gratefully appreciated his kindness, as a type of God, the lesson taught by the parable is that God is a God of grace, and that He giveth His grace to the lowly. The lesson is a perfectly general one, susceptible of many historical illustrations, no one of which is entitled to be regarded as the one principally intended. Some think the parable refers especially to the case of the Jews and the Gentiles; the Jews being represented by the men hired in the morning, the Gentiles by the men engaged at the eleventh hour. It has been suggested by others that the parable primarily relates to grudges within the circle of disciples on the part of the first called against those called at a later period.[1] Such suggestions are legitimate and useful when they are put forth simply for the purpose of exemplifying the operation of a principle, but they ought not to be regarded as exhausting the scope of the parable.

[1] So Weizsäcker, 'Untersuchungen,' p. 429. The Talents; Or, Equal Diligence in the Use of Unequal Endowments Equally Rewarded in the Divine Kingdom For [the kingdom of heaven is][1] as a man travelling into a far country,[2] who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and then he took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went straightway[3] and traded with the same, and made other five talents. And likewise he that had received the two, he gained other two. But he that received the one went away and dug in the earth, and hid his lord's money. And after a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And he that received the five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained five talents more. His lord said unto him. Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things:[4] enter thou into the joy of thy lord. And he also that received the two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: lo, I have gained other two talents. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou

hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he also that received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou didst not sow, and gathering where thou didst not scatter: and I was afraid, and went away and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, thou hast thine own. But his lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I scattered not: thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the bankers, and at my coming I should have received back my own with interest. Take the talent from him, and give it to him who hath the ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken even that which he hath. And cast ye out the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.—Mat 25:14-30.

[1] There are no words in the original answering to those within brackets. We may fill up the hiatus either as in the A. V. or, as some prefer, the return of the Son of man will be, so connecting the parable closely with the previous verse. The formula of the A. V. is to be preferred, as it takes nothing for granted as to the historical connection.

[2] Rather into a foreign country, leaving his own.

[3] Vide further on for justification of this arrangement of the words.

[4] This does not signify a change of sphere, as in the parable of the Pounds (from traders to rulers), but advancement within the same sphere. The rendering in the A. V. betrays the influence of the other parable. The alternative title above indicated is not proposed as an exhaustive statement of the didactic significance of the parable of the talents. The parable manifestly springs out of two motives, and we run no great risk of too much subtlety in our analysis if we represent it as the outcome of three. It teaches these three distinct if not equally important truths concerning work for the kingdom of God:—

1. The consummation of the kingdom will be long enough deferred to leave ample time for work.

2. The kingdom imperatively demands work from all its citizens.

3. The work done will be valued and rewarded according to the principle above enunciated: equal diligence in the use of unequal endowment receiving an equal reward.

I. Certain features in the parable seem intended to teach that there will be time to work—to work as well as to wait.[1] The chief points bearing on this topic are the following:—(a) The householder travels into a far country, and returns not till after a long time.[2] The phrase is an elastic one, and may denote either a large portion of the life of an individual, or an age in the history of the world. We now naturally put the latter interpretation on the words, but it is probable that they suggested the former sense to the first hearers of the parable.[3] Even on the narrower interpretation they contained an important hint to those who belonged to the first Christian generation. The mind of that generation was fixed, with an intensity which we have difficulty in conceiving, on the second coming of the Lord; and some seem to have expected that event so soon that they abandoned all worldly business, and gave themselves up to an attitude of passive waiting, or to feverish, restless excitement. The demoralising effect of the belief in the near approach of the second advent manifested itself to such an extent in the Church at Thessalonica, that the Apostle Paul found it

needful to interpose, and to endeavour by seasonable counsels of Christian wisdom to bring the fanaticised community to a soberer state of mind. The sum of his advice was, Work, and do not merely idly wait. The disease and the remedy are admirably hit off in a couple of verses: "We hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread."[4] Nowhere does the apostle's good sense appear more conspicuously than in his manner of dealing with the spiritual malady that had broken out in that community. We know not whether he was acquainted with our parable when, at an early stage in his apostolic career, he wrote his Epistles to the Thessalonians, but in any case he was in full sympathy with the mind of Christ as revealed in the parable. For by the use of the suggestive phrase after a long time Jesus significantly hinted just what Paul afterwards more plainly said: that the day of the Lord would not come so soon that there would be no use setting oneself deliberately to any task; that, while ever watching, disciples must also ever cultivate a sober temper, and give themselves earnestly to Christian work, as if all things were to follow their wonted course till the end of their lives.

[1] Trench has some good remarks on the affinities and contrast between this parable and that of the ten virgins (Mat 25:1-12), the object of which is to inculcate the duty of watching and waiting. As we deem it undesirable to be over-confident as to the historical connection, we refrain from indulging in a similar line of reflection, while sensible of its fruitfulness in edification.

[2] μετ■ πολ■ν χρ■νον, Mat 25:19.

[3] Olshausen says the phrase does not exclude a return of the Lord in the time of the apostles.

[4] 2Th 3:11-12.

(b) There will be time enough, according to the parable, for diligent servants to double the capital entrusted to them.[1] How long that process may take depends on circumstances; it may be a year, or it may be well on for a lifetime. But beforehand the longer period is more likely than the shorter one; and a prudent trader who starts with a capital equal to about a thousand pounds sterling[2] will think of such a substantial increase only as the result of a long-continued course of industry.

[1] Mat 25:16-17.

[2] The value of a talent was in round numbers about £200, so that five talents would amount to about £1000.

(c) The lapse of a considerable period ere the master's return is implied in the absence of all reference to a speedy return in the excuse of the slothful servant. It may be taken for granted that that servant would have been glad to excuse himself in a less impudent way if he could. He could not but know the risk he ran in speaking of one who had absolute power over him, to his face, as he did, calling him an hard man, reaping where he had not sowed, and gathering where he had not strawed;[1] in other words, as an arbitrary, exacting tyrant, who expects his servants to perform impossible tasks; to make bricks without straw, to produce a harvest of results where he had not supplied them with the seed out of which such a harvest might naturally grow. It was not in wanton recklessness that he thus spoke, but because nothing more plausible in the way of excuse

occurred to him at the moment. How gladly would he rather have pleaded, I was just about to begin to work when your arrival took me by surprise; I did not expect your return so soon;[2] or, I did not think it worth while to begin trading, for I knew that you would return so soon that there would be no time to buy and sell and make gain—that is to say, make the very same excuse for idleness with which the religious busy-bodies of Thessalonica justified to their own consciences their neglect of the ordinary duties of their calling.

[1] It is doubtful whether the two parts of this proverbial saying employed to describe a curmudgeon mean the same thing or different things. Trench paraphrases the second clause, "gatherest with the rake where others have winnowed with the fan," thus finding in it a reference to threshing. Weiss is of the same opinion; also Olshausen. It seems likely that the proverb contains reference to two forms of keen dealing: one drawn from reaping, another from winnowing. So viewed it has a greatly intensified strength.

[2] The fact that such an excuse is not represented as being advanced is used by Schleiermacher as an argument to prove that the parable is not in its proper historical place. He thinks if the parable had been spoken to enforce the duty of watching, such an excuse would have been put into the mouth of the unprofitable servant.

2. The second lesson—that the kingdom imperatively demands work from all its citizens—is taught by several outstanding features of the parable.

(a) First[1] we note the minute but significant touch about the servant who had received five talents proceeding straightway to trade with the money lent him. For we cannot but agree with those interpreters who think that the adverb (ε■θ■ως) is to be taken along with the verb following (πορευθε■ς),[2] rather than with the verb going before (■πεδ■μησεν). By this arrangement the word is charged with immensely increased significance. To what end say of the master that he straightway took his journey? It has been suggested that the end served is to convey the idea that the lord gave no further instructions how to use the money, but left his servants to use the talents according to their own discretion.[3] But to this it has been effectively replied that the clause "to each man according to his ability" rendered that unnecessary; and, moreover, that in that case the idle servant would have referred to the fact as an excuse.[4] On the other hand, take the ε■θ■ως along with what follows, as even usage requires us to do,[5] and how full of important meaning it becomes! It then teaches the great lesson of urgency and promptitude. It says to us, The demands of the kingdom are very pressing; to work then at once without delay; to be prompt in action is a cardinal virtue in the kingdom.

[1] We do not make a point of the fact that the talents were given to trade with, for that is not said in this parable, though a similar statement is made in Luke’s parable of the Pounds. But in reality what is not said is implied in the nature of the case. The talents were not gifts to friends, but loans to slaves, who belonged themselves to the master, and traded solely for his benefit. Such a procedure as the parable supposes was in accordance with custom.

[2] Mat 25:16.

[3] So Meyer.

[4] Weiss, ’Matthäus-Evang.’ Fritsche takes the same view of the verbal connection.

[5] Weiss points out that in Matthew ε■θ■ως always stands before the verb which it qualifies.

(b) The rigour with which the unfaithful servant is judged points In the same direction. The epithets applied to him are very significant in this connection. He is called wicked (πονηρ■ς), slothful (■κνηρ■ς),[1] and unprofitable (■χρειος).[2] The first epithet refers not so much to the injurious opinion expressed by the unfaithful one of his master, as to the unrighteousness of his conduct in not following a course that was open to him, even if all he said of the master were true. So far as mere personal feeling is concerned, the master can bear to be evil thought of and evil spoken of. He calmly repeats the injurious, insolent words, and instead of complaining of them, or being roused to indignation by them, or endeavouring to show how unfounded they are, he proceeds rather to point out what the servant ought to have done if he believed his own opinion of his master to be true. It is the interest of the work, not the personal insult to himself, that the lord thinks of when he calls his slave wicked. It almost seems as if he felt that there was something, if not to justify, at least to excuse the unfavourable opinion of himself cherished by the servant. He knows there is that about his requirements which may not unnaturally wear an aspect of hardness to certain men, especially to those who have received small endowments; nay, even to those who have been most liberally endowed. And his very tolerance of hard thoughts is another index of the exacting demands of his service. There is just one thing he cannot tolerate—waste of opportunity, keeping his money lying idle, neglecting to make the most of things, sloth, unprofitableness. Mere indolence is in his view wickedness, for it is selfishness, and selfishness, as the moral opposite of that self-devotion which is the cardinal virtue of the Divine kingdom, is to the Lord of the kingdom the very essence of evil.

[1] Mat 25:26.

[2] Mat 25:30.

Then observe, as another index of rigour, the declinature to sustain any excuse on the part of the unprofitable servant. If a servant fear his master’s anger in case he lose his money in some unfortunate venture, and on that account shrink from running ordinary business risks, he must find out and follow some other method of turning his capital to account. He may not content himself with digging a pit in the earth and burying his talent there, where it will be safe at least, if not in the way of making increase. If the master is to be regarded as a hard man, he must get the benefit of his bad character, and his money must be laid out to usury at least, if it is not to be employed in commerce.[1] This stern rejection of excuses is specially instructive when it is considered that the excuses are offered by the man who received only one talent. It is natural to inquire why he is selected to play the part of the unprofitable servant. The explanation which most readily occurs to one is, that those who receive small endowments are most tempted to negligence by a depressing sense of the insignificance of their powers and the valueless-ness of any results which they may be able to achieve. And there is certainly some truth in this view. Yet second thoughts breed doubt as to whether this be indeed the true rationale of the matter. For one who reflects on the history of mankind cannot but feel that sloth is by no means confined to the poorly endowed; that indeed some of the most tragic examples of negligence and unprofitableness have been exhibited among the most highly-gifted of men. Probably the true reason of the selection is to enforce the doctrine of universal and exceptionless obligation. The man of one talent is represented as playing the part of idler, just because he is the man who would be thought most easily excusable; the purpose

being to teach that excuse for negligence will be accepted in no case, not even in the case of those whose power of service is a minimum.[2]

[1] On το■ς τραπεζ■ταις Grotius remarks: ne dicas invenire te non potuisse quibus pecunia esset opus. Argentarii ab omnibus pecunias sumunt fœnore. The words ■γ■ ■κομισ■μην, &c. (I would have received mine own with usury, Mat 26:27) he paraphrases ■λθον κομ■ζεσθαι, i. e. exegissem, and gives as the sense, non est etiam quod in collocanda pecunia periculum obtendas: mea erat. Ego eam exegissem non tuo sed meo periculo. Tuti enim sunt qui res alienas administrant quoties eis credunt quorum fidei publice creditur. It was a way by which the servant might benefit the master without incurring any risk himself. Meyer points out that the expression (βαλε■ν το■ς τραπ.) conveys the idea of an action involving no trouble. The servant had only to throw the gold on the table. Lightfoot ('Horæ Hebraicæ') anxiously defends Christ from the charge of approving of the custom of taking usury by pointing out that the lord did not give the talents at first to be put to usury, but merely referred to the money-changers in self-defence and by way of argumentum ad hominem.

[2] So Unger.

(c) Another most significant feature in this connection is the taking of the talent from the unprofitable servant and giving of it to him that had ten. It is taken from the one because he is unprofitable, because he has already shown that he can make no use of it; and it is given to the other because he has shown that he can make most use of it. Both facts indicate most forcibly the urgency of the demand for work and profit; and, we may add, both facts are in most exact accord with the moral order of the world as revealed in human history. It is not merely in the parable that unto every one that hath much is given more, so that he hath abundance, and from him that hath nothing which he can show as the fruit of his own industry is taken away even that which he hath in the form of stock in trade.[1] This stern law verifies itself with inexorable rigour in the history of individuals and of communities, and in giving utterance to the remarkable saying Christ but read off accurately one of the great moral conditions of human life.

[1] The sentence is thus explained by Weiss.

(d) Note finally under this head the doom of the unprofitable servant. "And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth." An awful doom, however mildly interpreted. A commentator whom we often quote with approval remarks thereon, "The punishment of the slothful one is not eternal damnation. The Bible is very exact in its speech on the subject. The unfaithful children of light are cast into darkness; the children of darkness are cast into eternal fire, each being punished through his own opposite."[1] Another commentator of sound judgment and unimpeachable orthodoxy says, "Outer darkness is opposed to domestic light; for as in ancient times feasts were held commonly in the night, Christ represents those who are cast out of the kingdom of God as thrust forth into the darkness."[2] Be it so; the least doom of the unprofitable one is to be left out in the cold and the darkness of night, while the faithful ones who have done well share the joy of their returned lord within the bright festive halls; and while they enjoy the good cheer, there is for him, poor wight, nothing but "weeping and gnashing of teeth"—tears of regret over a wasted life and lost opportunities, and bitter chagrin at thought of the joy he too might have had, had he only been faithful. And all this for no greater offence than burying his talent in the earth. He has not squandered it in riotous living, he has simply been timid,

over-cautious, too nervously afraid of responsibility, too gloomy in his views of God's character and of life's risks. How hard that the "fearful,"[3] the cowards, should fare as the vilest of sinners! How needful, this being so, to remember that God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind; how valuable the virtue of manly courage to face the stern responsibilities of life and the inexorable demands of the Divine kingdom!

[1] Olshausen.

[2] Calvin.

[3] Vide Rev 21:8, where the cowards (δειλο■ς) are classed with murderers, adulterers, liars, &c.

(e) One other reflection may here be added. Nothing can more strikingly evince the intense desire of Christ, in uttering this parable, to impress upon His hearers the sense of obligation than the manner in which the religious application breaks through the parabolic form of representation. Three times over in the replies of the master to his servants the figurative manner of expression appropriate to the parable is replaced by language belonging to the spiritual interpretation. "To enter the joy of the Lord, and to be cast into outer darkness, are phrases which have nothing in common with the affairs of the bank."[1] [1] Reuss, 'Histoire Evangelique.' But let us not exaggerate the severity of the demands which the kingdom makes. While certainly exacting, these demands are at the same time reasonable. First, to each man is given and of each man is required only "according to his several ability." This is a very suggestive expression. If we assume that the talents signify spiritual endowments, gifts directly fitting for service in the kingdom of God,[1] then the phrase in question suggests the idea that the spiritual is shaped by the natural, so that the lowest in the scale of natural ability is also the lowest in the scale of grace. That this is the actual fact observation attests, and though at first sight it may appear a hard law, on deeper consideration it will be seen to be merciful. For "the degree of the gift is the measure of accountability. Whether is it fairer to give to a man possessed of one degree of ability five talents or one? Is it fairer to endow him according to his ability or beyond his ability? It is enough to say that in the one case failure is crime, in the other necessity."[2]

[1] This is the usual view; but Weiss thinks that the talents have no reference either to spiritual gifts or to the exercise of a spiritual calling, but are perfectly general, embracing all manner of endowments. Their meaning is explained, he thinks, by the gnome "unto him that hath," &c., and the lesson is that the right use of gifts and goods, both in nature and in the kingdom of God, is rewarded with more, and the neglect with deprivation. That this is true there can be no doubt, and it is an instance of the deep wisdom of Jesus that He thus enunciates a far-reaching moral law. But the primary reference is to spiritual gifts, else what is meant by κατ■ τ■ν ■δ■αν δ■ναμιν?

[2] 'The Stewardship of Life' (p. 52), by the Rev. James Stirling, an admirable study on this parable, and a model of homiletic treatment; published by Hodder and Stoughton, 1873.

Next, for the timid and unventuresome there is always an alternative. There are the money-changers (τραπεζιται) for those who shrink from the risks of trade. Here it is unnecessary to inquire what precisely Christ had in view when He used this remarkable expression. All we can be sure of is that He meant to teach that no man in this world is absolutely doomed to inactivity and uselessness, that there will be opportunity to every one that is willing to use his talent in a humble, obscure, if not in a heroic and conspicuous way. We may, if we choose, occupy ourselves

in suggesting possible meanings for the money-changers and the bank,[1] such as that they denote in our day the machinery of religious and charitable societies;[2] only we must remember that in making such suggestions we are not, strictly speaking, interpreting the parable, but merely making our contribution to a proof that the general doctrine of the parable is true, viz. that opportunities of using our gifts in the service of the kingdom will never be wanting. This is the truth which we have to lay to heart. It is a very cheering truth, as tending to show that the service of the kingdom, if exacting, is also reasonable and considerate; a service in which not merely the heroic, but the timid may take part. If any one ask, How shall I know where to find the bank in which I may deposit my talent? we may use for reply the opinion of an esteemed commentator as to what the bank in the parable of the pounds signifies, viz. that the bank is Divine omnipotence, whereof we can avail ourselves by prayer. "Of him who has not worked the Lord will demand, Hast thou at least prayed?"[3] This may be a fanciful interpretation, but it contains a valuable hint to those who are perplexed concerning their responsibilities. Let such pray for guidance, and the Spirit of truth will show them how they can avoid the sin and the doom of the unprofitable servant.

[1] Τρ■πεζαν, the expression in Luke's parable of the pounds (Luk 19:23).

[2] So Alford and Godet. The author of 'The Stewardship of Life,' already quoted, makes the bank the Christian Church, and thinks that the idea intended is that the slothful servant might have retired from the position of leader, and fallen into the ranks of ordinary membership. "We must bear in mind," he says, "that he occupied a representative place, otherwise we are thrown into the perplexities which have vexed interpreters of the τραπεζ■ται, bankers. Fearing the great peril that surrounded the teacher and leader, he failed to fall into the ranks, where ordinary powers mingle with the currency of related forces. He might have retreated to a secondary place, a line of service lower in reward and less exposed to danger, without breaking loose from the living body of Christ. There is the guild of medium endowment where men of lowest grade may be woven into muscle running into higher will. The talent divorced from kindred talents is unproductive; the associated talents constitute a power; their confederation is a bank, and that bank is the Christian Church" (p. 254). This is certainly the most definite and suggestive view we have met with. Goebel's; view is somewhat similar. Assuming that the talents refer to the ministry of the word, he makes delivery of the talent to the bankers signify retiring from the ministry which one is unable to occupy with advantage, and so leaving the office to more competent parties.

[3] Godet on Luke.

3. We come now to the most specific feature of the parable, its indirectly conveyed yet most definite teaching concerning the principle on which faithful service is valued in the Divine kingdom. The principle is that equal diligence in the use of unequal endowment shall have an equal value set upon it. This principle we infer from the repetition in identical terms of the encomium pronounced on the first servant in addressing the second. To the servant who received five talents and gained other five the Lord said, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." To the servant who received two talents and gained other two he said the same thing, word for word. What now does this imply? Does it signify that both these servants are in future to be put on a level, not only as to joy, but as to power and position, no regard being henceforth had to the difference between them in respect of natural ability? We might fairly enough put this construction

on the expression "I will place thee over many things." But it has to be considered that many is an indefinite term, which might mean different things for different men; and that the idea it is intended to express may be the disproportion between the past and the future position of either party, rather than the equality of the future positions of both. In both cases it might be said, "Thou hast been faithful over a few things, henceforth thou shalt have an opportunity of being faithful over many things," though the many things of the future differed in the same proportion as the few things of the past. Then, seeing that a part of the reward of faithful ministry here is opportunity of exercising a higher ministry hereafter,—for such seems to be the import of the word in question, the interests of the Divine kingdom may require that the largest scope for service should be afforded to him who has shown greatest capacity for service. It is in fact on this very ground that the talent is taken from the unprofitable servant and given to him that has ten talents. We cannot, therefore, press the view that many must be held to denote equality of position in all respects. The most we are justified in saying is that the language is so chosen as to throw into the shade any inequality which may still exist. If there is to be inequality in the future, as in the past, the speaker has no wish to emphasise it; the truth to which he desires now to give exclusive prominence is that the two men are in a spiritual point of view peers. On this point we are left in no doubt. If many be a vague word, there is no vagueness or ambiguity in the terms of commendation bestowed in common on the two servants. Both are pronounced to have done well, and both receive the honourable appellation good and faithful servant. There can be no mistake as to what the words mean. The exclamation ε■ is an expression of admiration. The master, hearing the reports of his two servants, is satisfied that they have done their utmost, that they have performed an amount of work which supplies indisputable evidence of steadfast application, unflagging energy, and enthusiastic devotion, and he generously allows his feelings to appear in the utterance of that expressive monosyllable. Though not a word more had been said, we should have known what to think of the two servants. But we are not left to conjecture the character of the men. It is drawn for us by two significant adjectives, good and faithful (■γαθ■ κα■ πιστ■). The former means here, as in the parable of the Sower, devoted, enthusiastic, single-hearted. That being the import of the one epithet, the other goes along with it as a matter of course. One who is good, ■γαθ■ς, in the sense of putting his whole heart and soul into his work, cannot fail to be faithful, πιστ■ς, for the very secret of fidelity is single-heartedness, and the sole cause of unfaithfulness is a divided heart. No fear of neglect when the whole heart is engaged. No need of a taskmaster’s eye to keep the devoted man at his work. Love is its own taskmaster. Such then is the common character of the two men. The discerning eye of the master detects the precious characteristics in both, and he pronounces on both the same eulogium in identical terms, with equal warmth of tone. For keen and sharp as he seems to be in looking after his interest, he does not value men merely by the amount of money they bring in. It is no drawback in his view that the second servant brings only two talents more, having received only two. He is pleased with him not less than with the other, because he too has done what he could; and he confers on him the badge of the legion of honour, in which distinctions of rank are lost sight of, and all belong to the one order of Heroes. The judgment is according to equity, and it is a faithful reflection of the judgment of Him with whom the citizens of the Divine kingdom have to do. For the Lord of that kingdom judges not men after the vulgar fashion of the world, by the mere magnitude of the results achieved. He has regard to the diligence and devotion displayed, whether the results be great or small, and He will pronounce the encomium "good and faithful" on many whom the world has regarded as comparative failures. If there be a willing mind,

it is accepted by Him according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not. The widow's mite is more to him than the large gifts of the wealthy, because it is the offering of a devoted spirit. How blessed to serve a Master who is utterly superior to the vulgar worship of success and quantity! How blessed, moreover, to serve one who is as generous as He is equitable! For that any servant should be praised as both these servants are, is not less noteworthy than that the one is praised as much as the other. In this respect also the parable is faithful to the Spirit of God and of Christ as exhibited in the Bible. The God of the Holy Scriptures is characteristically generous in His moral estimates of His servants. He pronounces perfect and good men in whom we have no difficulty in seeing moral defect. The epithets are freely applied wherever there is single-hearted devotion to the cause of God—to a Moses, a David, a Job, a Barnabas. And those who serve the Lord of the kingdom ought to bear this truth in mind. It is well that we think humbly of ourselves, but it is not well that we imagine that God thinks meanly of the best endeavours of His servants. It is injurious as towards Him, and it is degrading in its effect on our own character. Religion, to be an elevating influence, must be a worship of a generous, magnanimous God. Therefore, while in the language of a former parable we say of ourselves we are unprofitable servants, so disclaiming all self-righteous pretensions to merit, let us remember that we serve One who will pronounce on every single-hearted worker, be his position distinguished or obscure, or his success great or small, the honourable sentence Well done, good and faithful servant. What the joy of the Lord into which the faithful are to be admitted may be we can only dimly guess;[1] in what the higher ministries of eternity, with which the ministries of time are to be rewarded, consist, and under what conditions they are to be exercised, we can but feebly attempt to imagine; but the cordial approval of the Lord is something we can understand, is something to look forward to, is something which all faithful souls shall share, and share alike.

[1] Goebel makes it promotion from a servile condition to the friendship of the Lord, and to participation in his position of possession and power.

We conclude our study of this parable by drawing a contrast which enhances our sense of its beauty and wisdom. In the Talmud are found parables similar to this one and to that of the labourers in the vineyard, but similar only as a dead, leafless, barkless tree of stunted dimensions is to a great forest tree with wide-spreading branches clothed with foliage. The Rabbinical parable analogous to that of the labourers in the vineyard is so meagre as not to be worth quoting, and the motive is as petty as its conception is mean. The purpose is to praise a certain Rabbi who made as much progress in the law in twenty years as others could in a hundred.[1] What an insignificant aim compared with that of Christ to illustrate the truth of the wide-reaching moral law that the first may be last and the last first! The other Rabbinical parable analogous to that of the talents is to this effect: "A certain king gave a deposit to each of his three servants. The first guarded it safely, the second lost it, the third defiled it and committed a part of it to another to keep. After a certain time the king came to demand the deposit Him who guarded it he praised, and made prefect of his house. Him who lost it he visited with capital punishment, and ordered that neither his name nor his possessions should remain. To the third the king said, Retain him till we see what the other will do in whose hands he left a part, and meantime let him not depart from my house. If he has treated the deposit rightly, let this one be restored to liberty, but if not let him be punished." The observations of the author from whom we take this miserable sample of parabolic narratives are so just, that we feel constrained to quote them at length. "What more frigid than this parable? what

more insipid can be conceived? Almost the same things are related as in the parable of Jesus; but no ornaments are added which give alacrity, so to speak, and a certain vivid movement to the whole. Jesus exhibits a picture; the Talmudist presents the barest outline—not a picture, but a caricature. And the things are so compared as to injure rather than assist verisimilitude and the imagination. A king gave a deposit to his three servants. For what reason? No reason is given; but Jesus says that the master went away into a far distant region. And what sort of deposit was it, and how great? It does not appear. Jesus says 'his goods,' and accurately indicates the number of the talents. Had the king of the Talmudist's parable any regard to the disposition or ability of his servants in distributing the deposits? None. Our king gives five to one, two to another, to a third one, to each according to his several ability. With what view was the deposit given? That they might keep it. Our parable says that they might trade with it. And what sentence is pronounced on the servants? For simply keeping the deposit the first is praised and promoted; for losing it the second is put to death; the treatment of the third is made dependent on the behaviour of another man. What prodigality in rewarding, what cruelty in punishing, what injustice in all! Who could believe such trifles, and what influence can they have on the minds and hearts of men?"[2] Such senilities do not deserve to be rescued from the dust of oblivion, but they help to deepen our impressions of the literary charm, and, what is more important, of the profound insight into moral and spiritual truth, displayed in the inimitable parables of Jesus.

[1] For this parable vide Lightfoot, 'Horæ Hebraicæ.'

[2] Limburg Brouwer, 'De Parabolis Jesu Christi.' The Pounds; Or, Unequal Diligence in the Use of Equal Endowments Unequally Rewarded A certain man noble born went into afar country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called ten servants of his, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them. Occupy till I come.[1] But his citizens hated him, and sent an ambassage after him, saying, We do not wish this person to reign over us. And it came to pass that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know what they had made by trading. And the first presented himself, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant, because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Thy pound, lord, hath gained five pounds. And he said also to this one, Thou also, be thou over five cities. And another came, saying, Lord, behold thy pound, which I had, laid up in a napkin. For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. He saith to him, Out of thine own mouth I will judge thee, wicked servant. Thou knewest that I am an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow. Why then gavest not thou my money into the bank, and I on coming would have required it with usury? And he said to those standing by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say unto you, that unto every one that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away.[2] But those mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.—Luk 19:12-27.

[1] Πρανματε■σασθε, occupy yourselves in business, engage in trade.

[2] This saying is found also in Luk 8:18, slightly altered, ■ ■χοι being changed into ■ δοκε■ ■χειν; the former suits material possessions, the latter spiritual possessions—such as understanding of Divine truth, in which possession in the case supposed is only imaginary. This parable is of a more subjective and personal character than the kindred parable of the talents. It is obviously but a veiled parabolic history of the present and future fortunes of the Speaker, and so possesses all the pathetic interest attaching to the actual humiliation and the prospective hopes of the Son of man. He is the noble-born man who goes to seek a kingdom; but is hated by His rightful subjects, and loved by only a faithful few. If we keep this fact well in mind it may help us to understand the peculiarities of this parable, and solve difficulties connected with it which have been stumbling-blocks to many.

1. Foremost among the peculiar and difficult features of the parable is the union in it of two points of view, which has suggested, not only to negative critics like Strauss, but even to sober and believing interpreters, the hypothesis that, in its present form, it consists of two parables originally distinct blended into one—a lost parable concerning a king and his subjects, and Matthew's parable of the talents transformed. It cannot be denied that the hypothesis possesses considerable plausibility. For the parable as given by Luke combines traits so diverse, that on first thoughts one is tempted to regard them as incompatible. The main actor appears to be at once a king and a private person, a nobleman and a tradesman; the persons to whom he is related are partly subjects and partly servants; the sum he gives the latter seems unworthy of a king, and the reward he bestows on them, while such as becomes a king, seems inappropriate to the character they have hitherto sustained, which is that of traders. In presence of these incongruities it appears excusable to ask,[1] Can such heterogeneous traits have been brought together by Jesus, all whose other parabolic representations are characterised by unity, harmony, and fitness? Yet we venture to think that, if only the situation be steadily kept in view, the objections to the originality of the parable, which appear at first so formidable, may to a large extent be removed.

[1] As is actually done by Reuss: vide his 'Histoire Evangelique.' As to the chief difficulty, that respecting the double point of view, the fact is indisputable, and the only question is as to its psychological truth. This question resolves itself into two: first, is it likely that Jesus would attempt in one parable to express His relations to the two sections of Jewish society, those who were hostile to Him and those who were attached to Him? and, second, is it likely that He would use the precise figures which we find employed in the parable before us? The circumstances amid which the parable appears to have been spoken go far to answer the first question in the affirmative. Jesus found Himself surrounded by a mixed multitude of people of diverse tendencies, and variously affected towards Himself. On one side were men of Pharisaic sympathies, to whom it was an offence that He had gone to be a guest with a man like Zacchæus, who, being a chief publican, was therefore of course a chief sinner; on the other side were many who had followed him from Galilee, full of the admiration awakened in their minds by His ministry in that region, and confidently believing that the journey towards Jerusalem portended the near approach of the long and ardently expected kingdom. From the lips of the one class came sullen murmurs; in the countenances of the other were visible the traces of enthusiastic and romantic expectation. By both classes Jesus was utterly misunderstood; the one having no comprehension of, or sympathy with, the yearning love for the lost which was the key to his conduct towards Zacchæus, the other being equally ignorant of the nature and future history of the kingdom whose coming they eagerly

desired. He was alone in the midst of that great crowd. Here was a situation fitted to evoke the parabolic mood; for it was, as we pointed out in our introductory observations, when made conscious of isolation, by the stupid or malignant misapprehensions of men, that Jesus spake in parables, A parable, therefore, might be looked for in the circumstances. But if a parable is to be the outcome of the situation, we expect that it will be a faithful reflection of the situation; that it will show on the one hand what the murmurs of the disaffected will come to, and on the other hand, how far the hopes of friends would be fulfilled Or frustrated by coming events. We are not surprised, therefore, to find in the evangelic record a parable said to have been spoken at: this time of the two-sided character which the circumstances called for, with one side turned towards foes, another side towards friends; warning the one of a fearful doom awaiting them if they persisted in their present mind, and seeking to moderate the ignorant enthusiasm of the other by a sober picture of the future that lay before them. But the question remains, Were the figures employed in this two-sided parable appropriate to the purpose on hand? Now there can be little doubt as to the appropriateness of one of the tableaux, that, viz. of a king and his rebellious subjects. That picture was true to the claims of Jesus to be the Messianic King, and to the future doom of Israel, which was indeed to be destroyed before the face of the Lord. It was also true, as has been pointed out by several commentators, to the external, geographical situation; for the parable was spoken in the neighbourhood of Jericho, where was the palace of Archelaus, who had done the very thing the king in the parable is represented as doing, viz. gone to a far country, to Rome, to seek a kingdom; not without opposition on the part of the Jews, who, tired of a dynasty of adventurers, besought the emperor rather to convert their country into a Roman province.[1] But what are we to think of the other picture, that of a man noble born, and expectant of a throne, giving to his servants a pound apiece to trade with? Is it suitable to the dignity of a man of royal birth and hopes to be a trader, or even to be in any way connected with trade? Now here we might plead that the act is the act of a nobleman, not of a trader, and that its purpose is not even to make the servants traders, but simply to test their fidelity. But it must be admitted that the transaction is a most unusual one for a nobleman, suggestive of trade rather than of royalty, and fitted to compromise a high-born person’s dignity. But what then? Was not this very incongruity and indignity most suitable to Christ’s actual position? Was not His life on earth filled with incongruities between His intrinsic dignity and His outward lot? Was not this Nobleman born in the home of a village carpenter? Did He not Himself become a carpenter when He grew to the years of manhood? If He had to endure this extreme indignity, He might well bear the miner indignity arising out of trade associations. Those who are in quest of crowns must not be too fastidious, for they are liable to encounter strange turns of fortune on their way to sovereignty.

[1] Josephus, ’Antiq..,’ 17, 11, 1 But we may be called to vindicate the appropriateness of the figure with reference even to the followers of Jesus. It may be asked, Might not their position have been indicated in connection with the same figure of a king and his subjects by representing them as a minority of loyal subjects who had to endure oppression at the hands of the majority during the prince’s absence? Such, in fact, is the opinion of Ewald, who sees no necessity for the two figures, and thinks that Luke mixed the two together for no other reason than because they both referred to a journeying lord, and because they probably lay side by side in his sources.[1] But this view, in the first place, assigns a more subordinate position to the faithful portion of the Jewish people than seems intended, if we may judge from the parable in which the place of prominence is given not to foes, but to friends. Moreover, a parable constructed as Ewald suggests, while teaching disciples

one important lesson often inculcated, viz. that the joys of the kingdom could be reached only through suffering, would have failed to convey another lesson not less important, viz. that the way to the kingdom lay through a life of strenuous activity. For this purpose Jesus must have deemed the other emblem not unapt, for He certainly employed it once (in the parable of the talents); and if once, why not a second time? In the form which it takes in the parable of the pounds the fiction is peculiarly well fitted to dissipate idle dreams, and bring the thoughts of enthusiastic disciples down from the cloud-land of romance to the ground of sober reality. In this connection the paltriness of the sum given to the servants to trade with is significant, as suggesting that what lay before them in the immediate future was a life not merely of activity, but of obscure, inglorious activity, amid hard, necessitous circumstances. By this parable Christ says to His faithful followers, Ye are to be rulers eventually, but ye must be traders first, and for a long time,[2] and in a very small way—village tradesmen, itinerant pedlars, so to speak. I give you each a pound; do with it what you can, use it as opportunity offers, so as to earn a livelihood, and if possible make a fortune. Hard lines surely to have to live upon such a pittance, not to speak of earning money for the master's benefit! Certainly the lot appointed to these servants is one involving a severe discipline; and the end contemplated is evidently not money-making, but character-making—the development of a hardihood of temper and a firmness of will which can be turned to good account when the obscure traders shall have been transformed into distinguished rulers. Strange transformation doubtless, yet not unexampled even in our own land. How many in this great commercial country have risen from mean obscurity and utter poverty first to wealth, and then to positions of authority, beginning with the pound, and multiplying it into ten, and repeating the process; times without number; and not always bringing to the high position ultimately reached the petty vices of narrowness and hardness which are apt to be contracted in the process of building up a fortune from small beginnings, but sometimes exhibiting a truly princely spirit of generous, free-handed benevolence!

[1] 'Die drei ersten Evangelien,' pp. 419, 420

[2] Long enough to allow the one pound to be multiplied into ten, which implies a longer period than the doubling of the capital in Matthew's parable.

2. These observations have already in part disposed of a second difficulty that has been found in this parable, viz. the smallness of the sum given to each of his servants by the nobleman, which seems altogether unworthy of a man in his position.[1] It might be enough to say, as we have already in effect said, by way of reply to this objection, that it was good tor those who were ultimately to be promoted to positions of authority that they should first pass through a discipline of severe hardship. But another explanation may be offered. What if the smallness of the sum given be due to the necessitous condition of the prince himself? Candidates for crowns, however noble by birth, are apt to be needy. The Nobleman of our parable is in this case. He has the highest prospects, but His present state is one of abject humiliation and poverty; and in this veiled history of Himself Jesus takes care that the picture at this point shall be in keeping with reality. To which we may add, that in any case the very smallness and meanness of the sum given to the servants is an argument for the authenticity of the parable. No one but Christ would have dared to name so small a sum, appropriately described in the parable as a very little. He alone knew how to value the superlatively small, and to estimate the moral worth of those who have been faithful in that which is least. Christian tradition would magnify, not diminish, the amount. We could imagine

tradition increasing the pound to a talent; we cannot imagine it reducing the talent to a pound.

[1] The Attic pound was in value somewhat less than four pounds sterling, and the sixteenth part of a talent. Kuinoel refers to an opinion of Michaelis that the translator of this parable from Hebrew into Greek had confounded the Hebrew word for portion (■■■■■■■) with the word for a minæ (■■■■■■■), and that the parable spoke not of ten minæ, but of ten portions. This is another instance of learning going egregiously astray through want of insight into the moral import of the parables. Some men would be better expositors if they had less learning, as they might then take more pains to understand ideas as distinct from words.

These remarks, we trust, suffice to show the natural propriety of the parabolic representation at this point. But what, it may now be asked, is represented by the pound? Various answers have been given to the question. The pound, according to one, is the common grace of salvation bestowed on all believers;[1] according to a second, it is the mission of all Christ's disciples to advance His kingdom;[2] according to a third, it is the word which Jesus had committed to His believing followers,[3] and which Paul in his Epistles to Timothy speaks of as the trust, the noble trust,[4] and which is spoken of in the Acts of the Apostles as increasing and multiplying.[5] The two last opinions are nearly coincident, and may be accepted as the most probable interpretation. What the servants of the nobleman have to trade with and seek to multiply is the word of the kingdom. This association of the Divine word with the idea of trade is legitimated as Scriptural by a text in Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians, rendered in our English version, "We are not as many, which corrupt the word of God"; but which may be more exactly translated, We are not as many who deal after the fraudulent manner of huckstering merchants with the word of God.[6]

[1] Godet.

[2] Reuss.

[3] Hofmann, 'Das Evangelium des Lukas,' p. 462.

[4] 1Ti 6:2; 2Ti 1:14 : ■ παραθ■κη, ■ καλ■ παραθ■κη.

[5] Acts 12:24.

[6] 2Co 2:17. The expressive word is καπηλε■οντες. Paul claims to be a fair trader, who deals in unadulterated wares, in all simplicity and godly sincerity. In the Clementine Homilies Peter calls the apostles good merchants of the true religion, as if offering to men's choice the seeds of Plants, Hom. ix. 8.

3. A third peculiarity in this parable is the equality of endowment—all the servants receiving the same sum; whereas in the kindred parable of the Talents the servants receive each a different sum. This feature can cause no difficulty when it is considered what is meant by the pound; for the word of Christ and the commission to teach it was one and the same for all. But without seeking aid from the spiritual interpretation, we may learn from the parable itself, taken in connection with the circumstances amid which it was spoken, the rationale of this equality. The time of trading is a time of preparation for the higher occupation of ruling, when they who have been with Christ in His temptations shall receive kingdoms,[1] and sit on thrones.[2] It is therefore a time of trial, when it has to be ascertained what they are fit for in. the higher ultimate state, to which the lower transitory one is a stepping-stone. But the best way to ascertain this is to put all on a level to begin with, and

leave them to determine by their own exertions what place they are worthy to occupy.[3] In a race which is to settle who is to win the prize for greatest speed, all must start in a line, and at the same moment.

[1] Luk 22:28.

[2] Mat 19:28.

[3] So Schleiermacher, 'Uber die Schriften des Lukas.'

4. This brings us to what may be called the theoretic feature of the parable, which, though it comes in only incidentally, is worthy of the prominence we have given it in taking from it our alternative title. The servants equally endowed make an unequal use of their endowments, and unequal use of equal endowment is unequally rewarded. He who with one pound gained ten is made ruler over ten cities, and he who with the same sum gained only five pounds is made ruler over only five cities. It may be said indeed that in bestowing unequal measures of power upon his servants the king does not indicate unequal approbation, but simply adapts their appointments to the ascertained capacity of each, in other words, that this parable ends where the parable of the Talents begins, viz. by treating men according to their several ability.[1] But this view, though in the abstract legitimate, is excluded by another feature in the parable, which plainly shows that what had been ascertained by the time of probation was not the varied ability of the servants, but the unequal measure of their zeal and industry and force of will. What we allude to is the withholding of all expressions of praise in addressing the second servant. He is not said to have done well, and he is not called good. Let it not be supposed that this happens as it were per incuriam. Christ was not likely to commit the mistake of withholding approbation when it was due. He was habitually careful in His use of moral epithets. He was characteristically generous in bestowing them when they were deserved; and, on the other hand, He would not only not ascribe the quality of goodness to others who possessed it not, but He would not even allow it to be ascribed to Himself by persons who were not in a position to speak with intelligence and conviction, and who meant merely to pay a flattering compliment. Why callest thou Me good? He said sternly to the young ruler who inquired concerning eternal life; and from the second servant in this parable He withholds the epithet not inadvertently, but deliberately, because in His judgment he had not earned it. And what does this imply? That the second servant had not done all that it was possible for him to do; that he had been lacking in devotion, perseverance, steadfastness; that his whole heart had not been in the business he had on hand; that he had not been a hero in the struggle of life; that he had acquitted himself only fairly, respectably, not nobly. That the first servant had possessed all the virtues opposed to these defects is signified by the title ■γαθ■ς ascribed to him; and that the second servant was chargeable with all these defects is not less surely signified by the withholding of the title from him. Therefore we may legitimately represent this parable as teaching that in the kingdom of heaven unequal zeal in the use of equal ability will be unequally rewarded; a principle just in itself, and, when added to the principles set forth in the two other parables previously considered, completing the doctrine of Christ on the great subject of the relation between work and wages.[2]

[1] So in effect Weiss, who remarks that the ■δ■α δ■ναμις in Luke comes into view in the use of the common gift, while in Matthew it is kept in view in the distribution: 'Das Matthäus-Evangelium.'

[2] The view we take as to the didactic import of the two parables of the Talents and the Pounds is advocated among others by Dr. Gray, author of a work entitled 'A Delineation of the Parables,' published about the beginning of this century. He says, "In the one parable we see the two industrious servants are represented as equally diligent in their respective trusts, and therefore were entitled to the same commendation and reward. But in the other, where a greater degree of industry under the same advantages is supposed to produce greater success, we see the reward assigned to each bears a proportionable respect to his diligence and improvement." Gray was parish minister of Abernethy in Perthshire.

5. It remains to advert in a sentence or two to yet another feature in this parable, viz. that in its doctrine of rewards and punishments it seems to have in view chiefly if not exclusively the temporal aspect. The rebellious subjects are slain before the eyes of the king, the allusion being obviously to the ruin which, a generation later, overtook the Jewish people; the faithful are rewarded with appointments to rule over cities, no mention being made of the joy of the Lord spoken of in Matthew's parable; and the unprofitable servant is punished simply by being deprived of an endowment which he had not known how to use, but had tied up in a napkin, whose proper use was to wipe the sweat from his brow.[1] We read not here of the outer darkness where is weeping and gnashing of teeth. In all these respects the parable is obviously political rather than religious; and it is only a perverse ingenuity which seeks to find out what its expressions mean in reference to eternity, as when it is said that the ten or five cities represent beings who are yet in an inferior moral position, but whom the faithful in glory have a mission to elevate to their destination; or the words, To him that hath shall be given, are made to bear the meaning, Such and such a pagan people, which that young Christian might have evangelised, but did not, remaining here below the slave of ease, will be intrusted in the future economy to the devoted missionary who had here used all his powers in the service of Jesus.[2] As to what that law may mean in reference to the world to come we prefer to confess our ignorance. It is a law as mysterious as it is certain in its operation even in this world. The remark of the bystanders, "Lord, he hath ten pounds," was a very natural expression of surprise that to him who had so much already more should still be given. Who has not in his heart made the same remark many a time! The law on both sides of its operation seems partial, unjust, inhuman. But it is idle to complain of the laws of the moral universe. We shall be better employed in endeavouring to accommodate ourselves to the conditions of our existence as responsible beings, and striving so to live that they shall be for us, not against us. Let us study to be faithful in that which is least, and then we also may have an opportunity granted us of showing fidelity on the great scale, and shall be prepared to make the most of such an opportunity when it comes.

[1] Σουδ■ριον is the Latin word sudarium imported into the language of the East. The unprofitable servant wraps his money this time in a napkin, instead of burying it in the earth, because it is a small sum.

[2] So Godet.

01.10. Book 2. The Parables of Grace

Book 2.

The Parables of Grace

01.11. Introductory

Introductory In an early chapter of his Gospel Luke tells of a discourse delivered by Jesus in the synagogue of Nazareth on the Acceptable Year of the Lord, and records that His hearers wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth.[1] That scene was thoroughly congenial to the taste of the Pauline Evangelist, and he took it out of its historical connection and put it in the forefront of his narrative of our Lord's public ministry, assigning to it the same place in his Gospel which is occupied by the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's, that he might introduce Christ to his readers at the very outset as the preacher of glad tidings. Not less congenial to his liking was the phrase he employs to describe the character of the Nazareth discourse: Words of Grace, λ■γοι τ■ς χ■ριτος. One recommendation of it doubtless was that it suggested a connection between the doctrine of Christ and the doctrine of Paul, in which the idea of grace occupies a very prominent place. But it was, apart from that consideration, a well-chosen title or motto. For though the word grace, χ■ρις, is of very rare occurrence in the Gospels, the thing signified is manifest in every page: Jesus as He appeared among men in His public ministry was indeed, as the fourth evangelist says, full of grace. And of all the evangelists Luke has done most to justify the representation by the account he has given of our Lord's teaching; for many words of Jesus that are peculiarly and emphatically words of grace have been reported by him alone. Among the words of grace spoken by Jesus a prominent place belongs to the group of parables now to engage our attention, much the larger number of which are peculiar to Luke, among that number being some which are the very poetry and quintessence of the gospel of pardon and of Divine love; very specially those to be studied in the next two chapters, to which may be justly given by way of eminence the title of the Parables of Grace.[2] [1] Luk 4:16-30.

[2] Godet gives this title to the three parables in Luke xv., but the parable of the Two Debtors may well be classed along with these. The four form a distinct group connected together by one aim, as shall appear forthwith. A peculiar charm surrounds the doctrine of grace as taught by Jesus, not in dogmatic formulae defended by controversial dialectics as in Paulinism, but in poetic utterances of exquisite simplicity and beauty, yet infinitely suggestive. The doctrine is of course less developed, less dogmatically complete, but just on that account the more attractive. To the gospel of grace as preached by Jesus belongs the charm of the dawn, which is a delight to all mankind, which our Aryan ancestors in their childish wonder even went the length of worshipping under the name of Ushas. Christ's preaching was the dawn of the era of grace, when the Dayspring from on high visited this world, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.[1]

[1] Luk 1:78-79. Let us turn our eyes towards the mild sweet light of this morning of our eternal hope with awestruck humble gratitude. In many of the parables belonging to the class now to be considered there is a striking union of the true, the good, and the beautiful. Jesus appears in them the Artist, the Sage, the Philanthropist, and the Hero, all in one. From the parables of grace we may learn the genius of genuine evangelic piety, the beau ideal of a truly evangelic ministry. The term 'evangelical' ought to signify a Christ-like spirit of love for the 'lost,' combined with a wide,

genial culture, and a manly type of character. In actual use the term sometimes denotes something widely different—a type of religion which combines strenuous advocacy of the doctrines of grace with an attitude of hostility or at least of indifference to culture, and with an ethical character which, in respect of scrupulosity, censoriousness, and narrowness of sympathy, bears a painfully close resemblance to Pharisaism as we know it from the Gospels. Going to the fountain-head of evangelic life we discover that this unattractive combination is not necessary, but only an accident; due probably to the circumstance that the evangelical faith united to such heterogeneous attributes has been received not as a revelation from heaven, but by tradition from a former generation. The parables of grace are in their substance intensely evangelical. But in the form of thought homage is done to æsthetics; taste, culture, art receives due recognition, not perhaps intentional but only instinctive, but for that very reason the more effectually vindicating for these things a place of their own. Whether from deliberate design or from the unconscious action of a happy genius matters not, the fact is that in these parables we find displayed a literary taste and grace unsurpassed, inimitable. Then, when we consider the occasions which called forth many of these parables, we see how utterly antagonistic to Pharisaism the true evangelic spirit is. The most remarkable were spoken in self-defence—in defence of a habitual disregard of superstitious scruples, and of an unconventional charity and width of sympathy most offensive to the Pharisaic mind; were, in short, Christ's apology for a way of life utterly anti-Pharisaical; holy, but not severe towards the unholy; pure, but not puritanic; conscientious, but unfettered by the commandments of men; wearing a noble aspect of liberty, and breadth, and power. This is only what we should expect from One in whom dwelt Divine charity in all its fulness. For charity brings liberty to the conscience, and largeness to the heart, and light and beauty to the mind; banishes feebleness, narrowness, and fear, and endows the character with health, vigour, and courage. The Parables of Grace may be distributed into groups as follows:

1. The Two Debtors, and the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Lost Son—four, constituting Christ's apology for loving sinners.

2. The Children of the Bride-chamber (including the New Patch on an Old Garment, and New Wine in Old Skins) being Christ's apology for the joy of disciples.

3. The Lowest Seats at Feasts, and the Pharisee and the Publican; or the kingdom of God for the humble.

4. The Great Supper, or the kingdom for the hungry and the needy.

5. The Good Samaritan, or charity the true sanctity.

6. The Unrighteous Steward, or that charity covers a multitude of sins.

7. The Rich Man and Lazarus, and. the Unmerciful Servant, or implacability and inhumanity the unpardonable sins. Twelve in all. The first group being the evangelic parables par excellence, some general observations on them may here be added as a contribution towards the illustration of the genius of the whole class. These four parables, as already hinted, are connected together by a common aim, that being to furnish an answer to those who found fault with Jesus for associating with the disreputable classes of Jewish society. They are Christ's apology for loving sinners, and only when this fact is steadily kept in view can they be fully understood and successfully expounded. It is somewhat difficult for us to keep the fact in view, so completely has

Christian civilization advanced beyond the stage at which such conduct as was found fault with in Jesus could be regarded as needing defence. We can hardly realise that the Founder of our faith was seriously put upon His defence for an "enthusiasm of humanity" which we now regard as His glory, and as the most effective evidence of the Divinity of His doctrine. And when we do by an effort succeed in realising it, we are apt to think that the fault-finders were a peculiarly barbarous and heartless class of men. But in truth it was perfectly natural that they should find fault; they had a perfectly good conscience in doing so; they thought they did well to be angry with Jesus, and with the ideas then current in the world they could hardly do otherwise. For the charity of Jesus was a new thing under the sun, alien not only to the spirit of Pharisaism, but also to the aristocratic genius of ethnic religion. Hence Christ's love for the lost appeared a fault quite as much to the heathen philosopher Celsus as to the holy men of Judaea. In his attack on Christianity he alluded to it as a characteristic fact that the chosen companions of Jesus were disreputable persons, publicans and sailors, and he represented the preachers of the gospel in his own day as saying in effect: Let no one who is wise or educated approach; but if any one is illiterate, foolish, or untaught, a babe in knowledge, he may confidently come to us; and as aiming at making converts of the silly and senseless, of slaves, women, and children. In honest amazement and disgust he asked: "Whence this preference for the sinful?" contrasting with this strange procedure of Christians the more rational practice of Pagans in inviting to initiation into their mysteries only men of pure and exemplary lives. "While Christians address to men this call: Whosoever is a sinner, whosoever is unwise, whosoever is a babe, in short, whosoever is a κακοδα■μων, him the kingdom of God will receive—we, calling men to participation in our sacred rites, say: Whoso has pure hands and is wise of speech, whoso is clean from all impiety, whoso has a conscience void of offence, whoso liveth a just life, let him come hither."[1] If Origen had to defend Christianity against such a charge brought by a philosopher of the second Christian century, we cannot wonder that Christ had to meet a similar charge as advanced by his Jewish contemporaries, who deemed it a positive religious duty to keep themselves aloof from the unholy, in accordance with the negative notion of holiness which not unnaturally had been bred in their minds by the election and the whole past history of Israel, and the peculiar character of her religious institutions. All new things have to fight for their right to existence, and there never was a greater novelty, never a more audacious innovation, than the charity of Jesus; and therefore it was, as a matter of course, violently and repeatedly assailed, and the question often asked: Why eatest thou, why consortest thou, with publicans and sinners?

[1] Origen, 'Contra Celsum,' lib. i., c. 62.

Jesus was ready with His answer; and as the incapacity of those who interrogated Him to understand His conduct was great and their ignorance deep, the answer he gave was ample, and his apology varied. It is to be gathered from the four parables of the first group, and from another word which may be called a parable-germ, a proverbial saying needing only to be expanded into a history to become a parable; that, viz., spoken at Matthew's feast, in reply to those who expressed surprise at Jesus being a guest among a gathering of publicans: They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.[1]

[1] Mat 9:13. The apology embraces three great ideas, which in general terms may be expressed thus:

1. Christianity is a remedial system, and therefore it busies itself with those who most manifestly need remedy.

2. It has faith in the redeemableness of human beings however sunk in sin and misery; nay, it believes in the possibility of extremes meeting, of the last becoming first, of the greatest sinner becoming the greatest saint.

3. It thinks the meanest and lowest of mankind worth saving, has such joy in saving the: lost, that it can take delight in saving one sinner repenting, not a picked sample, but any one taken at random. In other words, man at his worst is a being of priceless worth in God's sight, as a moral personality. The first of these thoughts was the truth hinted at by Jesus in the word spoken in the house of Matthew, under the form of a personal apology. The point of the saying lies in the suggested comparison of Himself to a physician. That comparison accepted, all the rest follows as a matter of course. No one wonders at a physician visiting most frequently the houses of those who are afflicted with the gravest maladies. In doing so he is only showing a becoming enthusiasm in his profession, an enthusiasm which all regard as a virtue, the want of which would cause him to be lightly esteemed as one whose heart was not in his vocation. Neither is any one surprised that a physician, though refined in his personal tastes and habits, is not nice and dainty in the pursuit of his calling, avoiding with disgust loathsome diseases; but goes without hesitation wherever duty calls, though every sense should be offended. All that is in the spirit of his profession. He is a physician, and therefore cannot afford to be fastidious. Even so would men have thought of Christ's behaviour, had it occurred to them to regard Him as a Spiritual Physician, and the religion He came to establish as before all things redemptive. A spiritual physician must visit those who are spiritually diseased, and a religion of redemption cannot consistently be exclusive and dainty, but must address itself to the million, and be ready to lay its healing hand even on such as are afflicted with the most repulsive moral maladies. Had Christ come to be a mere rabbi or teacher of the law, then He might consistently have said of the ignorant multitude: This people that know not the law are accursed. Had He come as a philosopher, He might appropriately enough have addressed Himself exclusively to the cultivated, disregarding the illiterate vulgar. Had He come offering to initiate men into a system of religious mysteries, then He might have confined His invitations to the privileged few, neglecting the many as unworthy of initiation, as Celsus thought He and His followers should have done. But He came not as a rabbi, or a philosopher, or a mystagogue, but as a Healer of human souls; and that was an occupation with which the world was unfamiliar, and hence the need for those apologetic proverbs and parables. The parables of the Two Debtors spoken at another feast, taken along with its application, has for its didactic kernel the second of the three foregoing truths. That Jesus, while ostensibly defending the woman against the evil thoughts of His host, was in reality on His own defence on that occasion also, for the same offence of loving the sinful, there can be no reasonable doubt. The evangelist evidently introduces the story in the place where it occurs to illustrate by what kind of conduct He earned for Himself the sneering epithet, or nickname, "the friend of publicans and sinners,"[1] to which he alludes in the immediately preceding context, and how He justified that conduct when it was called in question. And the parable must be studied from this point of view, and when so studied it will be found to contain a most important contribution to the apologetic of redeeming love. Its drift is to teach that vast capacities for discipleship are latent in the depraved and despised classes of society, that thence in truth may be obtained the best citizens for the Divine kingdom. A very good reason for

attending to these classes, if true; and the virtue of the parable is to show how easily it may be true; for what more likely than that those who are forgiven most should love most?

[1] Luk 7:34. The three parables concerning the joy of finding things or persons lost complete the apology of Jesus for loving the sinful, by emphasising the truth that the lowest of men are worth saving. After you have said the worst of these "publicans and sinners," whom all morally-respectable persons shun, what does it amount to? Simply to this, that they are lost; lost to God, to righteousness, to wisdom, to all the chief ends and uses of life. But if so, what a joy if they could be found! All men have joy in finding things lost; shepherds in finding lost sheep, housewives in finding lost pieces of money, fathers in finding lost sons: why then should there not be joy also in finding morally-lost men? It is the desire of such joy that moves me to mix with the depraved and the disreputable. Surely a very good reason, if there be a tolerable hope of success in the quest.

These preliminary hints will prepare us for studying sympathetically the whole class of parables which are next to engage our attention, and specially the four which come first.

01.12. Chapter 1. The Two Debtors

Chapter 1.

The Two Debtors Or, Much Forgiveness, Much Love. The parable is so deeply embedded in its historical matrix that we must take as our text the whole narrative as it stands in Luke's Gospel.[1] It is as follows:— And one of the Pharisees desired Him that He would eat with him. And He went into the house of the Pharisee, and sat down[2] to meat. And, behold, a woman who was in the city, a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster vase of ointment, and standing at His feet behind Him weeping, began to wet His feet with her tears, and did wipe them with the hair of her head, and ardently kissed[3] His feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden Him saw it, he spake within himself, saying: This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him, that she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him: Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. A certain creditor had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And as they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Which of them, therefore, will love him most? Simon answered and said: I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And He said unto Him: Thou hast rightly judged. And turning to the woman, He said unto Simon: Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine own[4] house, thou pouredst no water upon My feet: but she with her tears wetted My feet, and with her hair she wiped them. A single kiss thou gavest Me not; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased kissing My feet. My head with oil thou anointedst not; but she with spikenard[5] anointed My feet. Wherefore I tell you, forgiven are her sins, her many sins,[6] for she loved much; but he to whom little is forgiven, loveth little. Then He said to her: Thy sins are forgiven. And His fellow-guests[7] began to say within themselves, Who is this who also forgiveth sins? But He said to the woman: Thy faith hath saved thee, go into peace.—Luk 7:36-50.

[1] On this account Goebel has not deemed this parable a suitable theme for an independent discussion, thereby missing a most outstanding feature in our Lord's parabolic teaching.

[2] κατεκλ■θη, literally lay down on the couch, the reclining posture being in use; the head towards the table, the feet stretched out behind, so that the feet of Jesus were easily accessible to the woman.

[3] κατεφ■λει; the κατα is intensive, kissed tenderly; and, as appears from Luk 7:45, repeatedly.

[4] σου emphatic, to suggest that he had neglected the duty of a host.

[5] μ■ρ■ (so Luk 7:38), in contrast to the more common olive oil (■λα■■). Grotius remarks that though the Hebrews, like the Greeks, were wont to call all sorts of ointments by the name of oil, it cannot be doubted that in this place common oil is meant by ■λα■■, because a contrast runs through the whole verse (est enim perpetua ■ντιστοιχ■α).

[6] Such is the order in the original; the significance of it will be brought out in the exposition.

[7] ο■ συνανακε■μενοι.

Where, when, and by whom, this, anointing of Jesus was performed, whether by Mary of Bethany, or by Mary of Magdala, or by any other Mary, are questions which cannot be answered, and which therefore it is idle to discuss. All we know of the time and place of the remarkable scene is, that it occurred in a certain city or village in the house of a Pharisee named Simon, and that the story is told by Luke at this point in his narrative because it served to illustrate how Jesus earned the honourable nickname of the sinner's friend. And all we know of the heroine of the scene is, that she had been a woman of evil life in that town, and was still in evil repute, the secret of her repentance being as yet known only to God—a 'sinner' in a sense needing no explanation, there being only one form of sin which the world takes special note of in woman.[1] That a female of such a character should have gained an entrance into the house of a respectable member of society may seem surprising, evert when we recollect the customs of the country. It was, we know, no breach of good manners for uninvited persons to enter a house when a feast was going on, and sitting down by the wall to observe and even converse with the guests; travellers report such invasions of privacy, as they appear to us, as happening in Palestine in our own day.[2] But a woman who was a 'sinner,' how could she venture upon such a liberty?—what chance of her presence being tolerated even if she dared to intrude herself? Possibly her sin was an open secret known to all, yet which all could ignore if they chose: the sin not of a harlot, but only of a woman of frail virtue.[3] In that case it was perhaps not much more surprising that she should appear in Simon's house as a spectator, than that Jesus should appear there as a guest; for there were not many Pharisees who thought well enough of Him to be willing to do Him such an honour. Both events were somewhat out of course, not every-day occurrences; but unlikely things do happen occasionally to interrupt the monotony of ordinary existence; and these were of the number, perfectly credible as matters of fact, and things to be thankful for on account of the animated scene to which they gave rise. When two such persons meet the company is not likely to be dull.

[1] For examples in Greek and Latin authors of the use of the generic term 'sinner' to denote the special sin of unchastity in women, see Wetstein, in loc.

[2] Vide Farrar's 'Life of Christ,' vol. i. p. 298, where the author speaks of the custom from personal observation.

[3] So Grotius: non publicae libidinis victima, sed alioqui vitae parum pudicæ. Against this view, however, is the reading in Luk 7:37, approved by critical editors: γυν■ ■τις ■ν ■ν τ■ π■λει ■μαρτωλ■ς, which seems to imply that she practised a shameful calling in the city, whereas the reading in the T. R., which places ■τις ■ν after π■λει, implies merely that she was a woman of evil reputation. So Godet; but the moral import of the two readings is not so certain as he represents. The woman had a definite purpose in coming into the house of Simon. She came not to be a mere spectator, but to anoint her benefactor with a box of precious ointment. Her benefactor we must assume Jesus to have been, though we know nothing of the previous relations. It were easy to invent a past history which should account for the present situation. Jesus lived in public; He went about the land doing good, preaching the good tidings of the kingdom, and healing the sick; all had opportunities of seeing Him and hearing Him. Many of the degraded class did see and hear Him with blessed effects on their hearts, and we may safely assume that this sinful woman was of the number, and that she is here to do honour to One whose

gracious words and benignant aspect have changed the current of her affections, and possibly "to give to Him and to herself a pledge of her resolution to change her life."[1] But in proceeding to carry out her purpose she does more than she intended. As she approaches the object of her devoted regard her heart begins to swell with contending emotions of shame, sorrow, love, and fear; she bursts into a flood of passionate tears which fall upon the feet of Jesus; the feet so wetted with 'heart-water'[2] she dries with her flowing hair, having nothing better at hand for the purpose;[3] then pressing them to her lips she covers them with fervent kisses; and only after her transports have thus been calmed, and she has somewhat recovered her composure, does she at length perform the more ordinary act of homage.

[1] Reuss, 'Histoire Evangélique.'

[2] Luther's expression, Herzenwasser. Vide 'Hauspostillen. Bengel's phrase is, Lacrimæ aquarum pretiosissimæ.

[3] Godet suggests, not without probability, that she unbound her hair for the purpose.

Conduct so unusual could not fail to create a general sensation in the guest-chamber, and especially to arrest the astonished attention of the host. Had the woman come in quietly and taken a place apart, as a spectator, her presence though unwelcome might have been overlooked by Simon. But behaviour so bold, so impudent, how could he regard otherwise than with amazement, disapprobation, and disgust? And then what was he to think of Jesus for suffering such attentions? He could not think so ill of Him as to believe Him capable of receiving these with complacency had He known the character of the person bestowing them; but at the least he must gravely doubt His prophetic insight. What he felt was apparent in his face and manner to any eye of ordinary discernment. The intruder appeared to him to be simply acting her characteristic part as a 'sinner,' and the behaviour of his guest cast him into a state of painful perplexity. The woman was unhesitatingly condemned, and Jesus was put upon His defence. Now to us, who are in the secret, these hard suspicious thoughts seem of course altogether groundless. Yet we must do the Pharisee the justice to say that in his circumstances, and from his point of view, they were very natural. How was he to know that a great moral change had come over this woman, whom he had hitherto known only as a person of evil life? Doubtless he might have observed those tears, which were suggestive of another hypothesis than that by which he accounted for her strange behaviour. But then how unlikely that other hypothesis! how improbable that the frail one is here in the capacity of a penitent! how rare an event is such a moral transformation! Celsus said, "to change nature perfectly is very difficult;"[1] and holding such an opinion he was very naturally surprised at the interest taken by Christians in the vicious. Simon doubtless shared the heathen philosopher's scepticism regarding conversion, as does the world in general, and therefore we cannot wonder if the penitence-hypothesis did not even so much as occur to his mind. He grievously misjudged in consequence; but his mistake was at least quite as excusable as that of Eli, who deemed that Hannah was drunk, when she was only a woman of a sorrowful spirit.[2] It needs an unusually delicate and sympathetic mind to judge rightly in such cases, and Eli and Simon were commonplace men.

[1] Origen, 'C. Celsum,' lib. iii. C. 65. Φ■σιν γ■ρ ■με■ψαι τελ■ως παγχ■λεπον.

[2] 1Sa 1:14-15.

Happily for the object of Simon's harsh judgment, there was one present who could divine the real situation. The quick loving eye of Jesus detected what escaped the observation of a Pharisee whose vision was blunted by prejudice and custom; and, reading at the same moment with equal rapidity and certainty the thoughts of His host, He forthwith proceeded to put the true interpretation on the phenomena, and so to defend at once the woman and Himself. Nor was He sorry to have the opportunity of offering the double apology. For He had felt the coldness of Simon's manner towards Himself on entering his house as a guest. He saw at once on what footing He stood; that He was regarded as a social inferior, and that He was there to be patronised by one who thought he showed condescension in inviting Him to his house, and might therefore excuse himself for neglecting the ordinary attentions paid by a host to guests of his own rank.[1] Such indignity the lowly Son of man could meekly endure, nor did He resent it in the present instance, for the tone of the words which He spake at this time is not that of anger, but of one who, feeling His own moral superiority, can with easy self-possession say what fits the occasion. "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee:" what composure is in that beginning! But though He cherishes no resentment against Simon for the treatment He has received, He deems it right to avail Himself of a legitimate opportunity of setting it also in its true light, in the hope that he who has hitherto been occupied in judging others, may enter upon the more profitable occupation of judging himself. And with exquisite felicity, He contrives to accomplish this purpose at the same time that He is pursuing the other, that viz. of defending the woman and Himself against Simon's; unjust suspicions. One brief, simple parable serves both ends—at once apologising for the accused, and bringing a countercharge against the accuser. Were it not, indeed, for the interpretation given by Jesus Himself, in which He makes a complaint of Simon's coldness, we might not be perfectly sure that the parable was meant to have an offensive as well as a defensive bearing. We might think that the second debtor did not necessarily represent Simon or any one in particular, but was merely introduced as a foil to the first and for the sake of contrast. But even apart from the interpretation following, there are little touches in the parable itself which seem to indicate a purpose to attack as well as to defend. There is the pointed manner in which the Speaker intimates to Simon His desire to say something to him.[2] Then there is the question with which the parable winds up, Which of them now will love him most? which looks very like a device to entrap Simon into a judgment on himself after the manner of Nathan with David.[3] One would say, beforehand, even without reading the application, that the woman being of course the greater debtor in the parable, Simon is represented by the other, and that Jesus meant to insinuate that if the woman had loved Himself so ardently, Simon had sinned in the opposite direction, though in what precise respects he had come short we should not have known unless we had been informed.

[1] Meyer remarks that the custom of feet washing was not an absolute rule, but was observed chiefly towards persons arriving off a journey. But there can be little doubt that a difference had been made between Jesus and other guests of higher social rank.

[2] Σ■μων, ■χω σο■ τι ε■πε■ν.

[3] On ■Ορθ■ς ■κρινας, v. 43, Godet well observes, that it is the Π■νυ ■ρθ■ς of Socrates, when he had caught his interlocutor in his net. This parable of the Two Debtors is so simple in its structure, that it needs hardly any explanation. The case put is plain, and the inference suggested is equally so. The answer of Simon to the question, Which will love him most? is the judgment of common sense. He to whom most is forgiven will certainly love most; that is, on the assumption

that the two debtors are in other respects alike; for we know, of course, that a man of a generous disposition will be more grateful for a small favour than a man of selfish nature will be for a greater. The only feature that may seem a little surprising is the smallness of the sums owed, especially when compared with those named in the parable of the Unmerciful Servant. The purpose may have been to insure an unbiassed judgment on the part of Simon, by preventing the suspicion arising in his mind that he was aimed at. So important a person was not likely to think of himself as concerned in a transaction where such paltry sums were involved as fifty and five hundred pence. If this was what was designed, the device was perfectly successful. The air of languid indifference with which Simon gave his judgment, as if the case supposed were too insignificant to awaken any interest in his mind, shows that he had no thought of its having a reference to himself. Then while the pettiness of the amounts served this purpose beforehand, the utter insignificance of the smaller amount served another purpose after-hand, when Jesus had given His own interpretation of the parable, that viz. of letting Simon see what value his lightly-esteemed guest set upon his love. You have loved me, it said in effect, as one who has been forgiven fifty pence; as one, that is, who has received a scarcely appreciable favour. On the other hand, the larger sum, though in itself of no great amount, was sufficiently great to be a measure of the penitent's gratitude both by comparison and absolutely. By comparison, for it was ten times greater than the smaller sum; absolutely, for it was a considerable amount in relation to the social position of the humbler debtor.[1]

[1] The smallness of the sums owed may be an indirect indication of the prevalent poverty of the country. Hausrath, in his 'Neutestamentliche Zeitgeschichte'—'History of the New Testament Times'—has gathered together the many indications in the Gospels of the prevalence in Palestine of impoverishment produced by excessive taxation. "The most frequent images in the utterances of Jesus are those of the creditor, the debtor, and the debtor's prison. In one parable, everybody except the king is bankrupt; the steward is in debt to the king; the servant to the steward (Mat 18:23); the rich who remit to their debtors fifty or five hundred pence are rare indeed (Luk 6:34; Luk 7:41); the unmerciful creditor who always has the bailiff at hand is much more frequent. In the street, the creditor seizes the poor debtor, and the judge's officer casts him into prison, out of which he does not depart before he has paid the very last farthing (Luk 12:58); and if he cannot pay, his lord commands him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he has, and payment to be made (Mat 18:25). Oil and wheat, the first necessaries of life, are furnished on credit (Luk 16:6-7); buildings that have been commenced remain unfinished for want of money (Luk 14:29); the merchant puts all his means, in order to keep them safe, into a single pearl (Mat 13:46); in digging in the field, one finds the treasure which another has buried to keep it from the rapacious hands of the oppressor (Mat 13:44); speculators keep their corn back from the markets, and enlarge their storehouses (Luk 12:18). With this impoverishment is connected the parcelling out of estates; in place of the plough, appears on the smaller allotments spade husbandry. "What shall I do?" says the ruined steward; "I cannot dig, to beg I am ashamed" (Luk 16:3). The result of this want of money is usury. The bank of exchange flourishes (Luk 19:23); in a short time (?) the speculator multiplies his capital five-fold and ten-told (Luk 19:16; Luk 19:18). This is the economic background of the evangelic history which comes to light in a hundred places."—Vol. I. pp. 188, 189. English translation, Williams and Norgate. The one matter regarding this parable which needs careful consideration is its aim. What purpose or purposes was it designed to serve? Now, as we have already indicated, the parable was spoken with a threefold aim; first, to defend the conduct of

the woman by suggesting the point of view under which it ought to be regarded; second, to impugn the conduct of the Pharisee; and third, to defend the conduct of Jesus Himself in accepting the homage rendered. We will consider the parable in these three points of view in succession.

I. When the whole circumstances are duly borne in mind, it becomes clear that the first thing to be done was to put a right construction on the strange behaviour of the woman. That she loved Jesus, loved Him much, was evident; but the quality and motive of the love were not so apparent; they had in fact been grievously misunderstood by Simon. These therefore must first be set in their true light. And how is this done? Simply by constructing a story of two debtors, and thereby suggesting that the case of the woman is the case of a moral debtor forgiven. As in the saying, "They that be whole need not a physician," the point lies in the suggestion that Jesus was a physician; so in this parable the emphasis lies in the suggestion that the accused is not merely a sinner, but a sinner forgiven, and that her love proceeds from gratitude for the remission of her debts. It is true no express mention is made of the quality of the love, but only of its quantity, but the quality is involved in the relevancy of the parable. It had been a mere impertinence to speak a parable of two debtors, unless it were meant to convey the idea that the woman was a debtor forgiven, and her love a debtor's love to her generous creditor. This indirect way of saying the thing chiefly intended is incidental to the parabolic style, and when that is remembered it is very forcible. We then see the point of the parable, as we see a star glimmering into view in the evening twilight, most clearly, by looking a little to one side of it. Unfortunately many commentators have not looked a little to one side, but have gazed too directly at the object, and so have failed to see it, and in consequence have fallen into error in the interpretation of the sentence in which our Lord explained His leading purpose in uttering the parable: "Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much."[1] These words have been a stumblingblock to many, logically and theologically; the latter because they seem to teach the Romish doctrine of justification by charity, as opposed to the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith; the former because, so understood, they stand in no relation to the connection of thought either before or after The logical difficulty is the more serious of the two; for one might manage to overcome the other, either by magnanimously conceding the point to the Catholic interpreter, and contenting ourselves with the philosophic reflection that in these enlightened times "we have surmounted the polemical antithesis to work-holiness,"[2] or by ingeniously endeavouring to attach to the verb "loved" a sense approximating to the idea of faith, making it e.g. equivalent to 'longed,' so that the didactic import of the words should be somewhat like this: He who is to believe in forgiveness must have that longing for pardon which is love in its passive or receptive side, and is at the same time substantially faith.[3] Such ingenious devices for reducing love to faith, and so squaring Christ's doctrine with Protestant orthodoxy, do certainly leave on the mind an impression of artificiality; but one could reconcile himself to that if no better way out of the difficulty could be found. But the logical difficulty remains, the irrelevance of the words so interpreted to the situation and the connection of thought. Thus; understood, the words do not contribute to the explanation of the parable, but simply contain an independent didactic thought, to the effect that the woman will receive forgiveness of her many sins, because she has a great yearning for forgiveness, as evinced by her whole behaviour. It is very hard to believe that any such incoherence characterised the utterances of Christ on this occasion. But we are not reduced to such an unwelcome necessity. If we only keep in mind the situation, the meaning, point, and appositeness of the disputed sentence become perfectly clear. Christ's purpose in uttering these words is to suggest to Simon

the true point of view from which the woman's conduct is to be regarded. He says here plainly what he has already said parabolically: the case of this woman is the case of a debtor forgiven. The solemn manner of address, "Wherefore I say unto thee," indicates a purpose to correct a wrong impression, indicates that as the chief purpose of the Speaker, though it is not the first thing spoken of.[4] The order of the words which follow points in the same direction: "Forgiven are her sins, her many sins; for she loved much." The idea of forgiveness is put in the forefront, to suggest a way of regarding the woman's conduct which Simon had never thought of. "She is a moral debtor forgiven, Simon "—Jesus would say: "she is forgiven—that is the key to the strange behaviour you have so grievously misconstrued. Her sins have been forgiven, her many sins: for you are not wrong in thinking of her as a great sinner—that is manifest from her behaviour: for in all these acts which have awakened so much surprise, 'she loved much,' and that is the way of those who have been forgiven much." Thus paraphrased, the saying which has created so much perplexity fits naturally into the whole situation. The first clause, "forgiven are her sins," corrects Simon's misconstruction and reveals the character of the woman's love; the second clause, "her many sins," concedes all that Simon can say as to the woman's past life; the third clause, "for she loved much," at once indicates the source of the knowledge that her sins were many, and the existence of a connection between the multitude of her sins and the excess of her love. For this last clause does not depend on the first clause, but on the second, not on ■φ■ωνται, but on πολλα■;[5] and so connected it contains by implication the didactic statement which we expect as the counterpart to that which follows: "but to whom little is forgiven, the same also loveth little." Expanded, Christ's whole meaning is this: "Now then, Simon, let me tell you the truth about this poor woman: Her whole conduct means that she is a penitent who has been led by me to entertain the hope that her sinful life may be forgiven. That life in your opinion has been very full of sin. I can see that there you are not mistaken: that her sins are many her behaviour towards myself attests, for in all these acts she showed much love;[6] and that much love is the sure sign of much forgiven, just as little love, exemplified in your own conduct, is the sure sign of little forgiven."[7]

[1] Luk 7:47.

[2] So De Wette; as if feeling that the tense was against him he says, we may add to ■γ■πησε ■γαπ■.

[3] So Olshausen, who views faith as love receptive or the negative pole, forgiving love as the positive pole. Similarly Trench, who finds comfort in the fact that Theophylact identifies the love referred to in Luk 7:47 with faith. Having stated in the text that the woman's yearning love "in fact was faith," he appends the note, "very distinctly Theophylact in loc., ■τι ■γ■πησε πολ■, ■ντι το■ π■στιν ■νεδε■ξατο πολλ■ν." It is true that Theophylact does say this, but his saying so does not settle the matter. It only shows that he felt the pressure of the difficulty.

[4] I take ο■ χ■ριν as connected with λ■γω σοι, not with what follows, and understand it as mediating a return to the principal thought in the mind of the speaker, from the detailed contrast between the conduct of the woman and that of Simon. Taken with the clause beginning with ■φ■ωνται the phrase must be rendered "on this account"—because of the love displayed as aforesaid, her sins are forgiven.

[5] The interpretation of this verse by Grotius is not the same as ours, but he recognises that πολλα■ is emphatic. He gives to the verse this turn: God pardons sin, great sin, in the hope of

producing such great love as this woman has shown. The woman’s sin was pardoned in the foresight of such love as the natural effect. This idea corresponds to the text, "there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared," and coincides with our view as to Christ’s motive in receiving publicans and sinners.

[6] The aorist ■γ■πηαε implies a reference to the acts enumerated in the previous verses.

[7] The view above given, according to which ■τι in last clause of Luk 7:47, points out that by which a certain fact is; known, not that on account of which a certain thing is done, is that taken by Unger; Meyer (■τι, vom Erkenntnissgrunde zu fassen); Kuinoel (who holds that the other view, even if true, is an irrelevance); Bengel (■τι, Remissio peccatorum, Simoni non cogitata, probatur a fructu); Reuss, Stier, Godet, and most recent commentators (not Keim). The greater number make ■τι depend not on πολλα■, but on ■φ■ωνται. The old Protestant interpretation which took ■τι as equivalent to δι■ is entirely out of date, and may be referred to merely as an instance of exegesis occupying a position of servile subordination to the dogmatic interest.

2. The parable was spoken not only in defence of the woman, but as an attack on the fault-finder. It is in a particular instance the judgment of Pharisaism, as an ungenial soil in which the gospel of the kingdom had little chance of taking root. It is a judgment pronounced in a fair and candid spirit through a favourable sample of the class, for such Simon seems to have been. This Pharisee was of a milder spirit than the majority of his co-religionists. He cherished no unkindly feelings towards Jesus. When puzzled by His conduct, as at this time, he did not think the hardest thoughts of Him, for many would have plainly said something much more injurious than, "He cannot be a prophet." Simon was a sort of Nicodemus; he had respect enough for Jesus to invite Him to dinner, though too hampered by pride and prejudice to be cordial in his hospitality; as Nicodemus had respect enough for Jesus to visit him, but only by night In this light Jesus seems to have regarded him. He was willing to recognise him as one who cherished towards Himself at least a little love. If He animadverted on the littleness of the love, it was in no vindictive spirit, not to gratify private resentment, but for a higher purpose. The very frankness of the complaint testifies to the absence of perturbing passions from the mind of the Speaker. The description of a little debtor’s love, as exemplified by Simon, is pervaded by a triumphant buoyancy of spirit and a. happy play of humour which exclude the supposition that injured feeling was the source of inspiration. Far from being angry with his host, Jesus pitied him as a soul in bonds, unable to break away from conventionalism in thought and action, and He described his state in hope to set him free. And how significant as well as graphic the description! "Thou gavest Me no water for My feet; thou gavest Me not a kiss; My head with oil thou didst not anoint." Cold civility, no heart, no cordiality, no spontaneity, no free play of natural affection. This in the matter of hospitality, and the same thing of course in all other departments of conduct; for the ruling spirit of a man reveals itself in all he does. The ruling spirit in this Pharisee, and in all his class, is pride, protecting from sinful excess on the one hand, but disqualifying also for heroic virtue on the other, and dooming them to moral monotony and mediocrity. The pride of virtue binds their souls in the ice of a perpetual winter, so that in their life are seen neither the devastating floods of passion nor the fertilizing streams of charity. How certain that the kingdom of heaven will draw few citizens from the ranks of Pharisaic society, and what poor citizens even the few are likely to make! Why, this man is so enslaved by caste prejudices that he dares not treat Jesus, socially his inferior, and suspected by his class, with gentlemanly courtesy and right hospitable welcome, but must needs receive Him in

a style which is a miserable compromise between civility and insult. What chance is there of such an one condescending to become a disciple of Jesus, and identifying himself wholly with His cause?[1] As we read this indictment for inhospitality we feel that Pharisaism is hopeless, and that if Jesus desires to make disciples, He must seek them not among the men that need no repentance, but among the erring and lost, who neither can boast of 'Pharisaic virtue, nor are enslaved by Pharisaic pride.

[1] Hofmann states it as the aim of the evangelist in introducing at this point in his narrative the scene in Simon's house, to show by an example how the Saviour of sinners could not be their Saviour, viz. because wanting the sense of sin they had no desire for forgiveness ('Das Evang. des Lukas,' p. 203). This is a defective account of the design of the narrative, but it is true so far as it goes. To show the hopelessness of the Pharisaic class as a field for evangelistic effort, and the hopefulness of the classes they despised, and so to justify in both directions the public action of Jesus, is the full purpose and effect of the narrative.

3. To say just this in His own defence was the third purpose Jesus had in view in uttering this parable. This purpose is indeed not so apparent on the surface of the parable, and it has been very little noticed by interpreters, nevertheless that Jesus had it in view may be considered certain. For in the first place He was put on His defence by Simon's uncharitable thoughts. Then, that He meant to defend Himself may be inferred from the question with which the parable ends, "Which of them will love Him most?" the question clearly implying that the amount of debt remitted and the amount of grateful love are connected by a general law. It is in effect predicted that every debtor who is forgiven much will love much.[1] But if this be indeed the law of the case, what more natural than that Christ, as the recipient of the gratitude, should be influenced by that law in His conduct, and pay most attention to those who, being forgiven, would have most love to give Him, as having been forgiven most, and that having a good opportunity of justifying Himself for so acting, as in the present case, He should avail Himself of it? Further, is it not sufficient evidence of intention to defend conduct impugned that the parable serves the purpose so admirably, saying in effect: I repel not this woman, I accept gladly those demonstrations of devoted love, for I desire to be much loved: and for this very reason it is that I am drawn by powerful attraction to company which you Pharisees shun, and if the truth must be told prefer it to yours, for I find that when they have been brought to repentance and to faith in the forgiveness of sins, their love is as great as their previous sinfulness. But it becomes if possible still more certain that a purpose of self-defence was in Christ's mind, when we take into consideration the pointed contrast between the penitent and the Pharisee in the application of the parable. "Water for My feet thou gavest not, but she with tears did wet My feet, and with her hair she wiped them. A single kiss to Me thou gavest not, but she, from the time I came in, hath incessantly kissed My feet. With common oil My head thou didst not anoint, but she with costliest ointment anointed My feet." Who, as he reads these impassioned sentences, does not say to himself, No wonder that Jesus Christ preferred the society of publicans and sinners to the society of Pharisees I Who would not take pains to earn such love as that of the woman? Who would not rather be excused from being the recipient of such cold love as that of Simon? And who can doubt that Jesus meant to suggest such thoughts as a part of His apology for loving sinners, not merely in self-defence, but in self-revelation, that all men might know where His preferences lay?

[1] τις... ■γαπ■σει; the predictive future.

It is matter of regret to us, that in ascribing to Jesus this aim we part company with the commentators, few of whom, as already noticed, allude to it. We take comfort, however, from the fact that we have an our side one who, though no learned commentator, was as likely as any to grasp the particular truth we now insist on. Bunyan saw it, and proclaimed it with all his characteristic force and felicity. In his famous sermon on "The Jerusalem sinner saved," he specifies as one of the reasons why Jesus would have mercy offered in the first place to the biggest sinners, that "they when converted are apt to love Him most," appealing in proof to the words spoken by Jesus in the house of Simon. We would gladly give our readers the benefit of the whole paragraph, all the more that in these days few probably will think of turning to such a quarter for light upon a parable. But we can find space for only one or two sentences. "If," shrewdly remarks our author, "Christ loves to be loved a little, He loves to be loved much; but there is not any that are capable of loving much, save those that have much forgiven them." He then cites Paul as an illustration; and having given a graphic description of the apostle's intense devotion to Christ and to the gospel, he adds the quaint reflection: "I wonder how far a man might go among the converted sinners of the smaller size, before he could find one that so much as looked anything this wayward. Where is he that is thus under pangs of love for the grace bestowed upon him by Jesus Christ? Excepting only some few, you may walk to the world's end and find none." Next follows another illustration, drawn from the very narrative now under consideration, but told as a story concerning Martha and Mary, which Bunyan had read in a religious book some twenty years before. The story as told is homely enough, but the moral is admirably put. "Alas! Christ has but little thanks for the saving of little sinners. 'To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.' He gets not water for His feet, by His saving of such sinners. There are abundance of dry-eyed Christians in the world, and abundance of dry-eyed duties too: duties that were never wetted with the tears of contrition and repentance, nor even sweetened with the great sinner's box of ointment." And the conclusion of the whole is: "Wherefore His way is oftentimes to step out of the way, to Jericho, to Samaria, to the country of the Gadarenes, to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, and also to Mount Calvary, that He may lay hold of such kind of sinners as will love Him to His liking."[1]

[1] Weizsäcker is of opinion that the parable of the Two Debtors does not fit into its present surroundings, and that it was spoken on some other occasion. But he thinks that its original sense certainly throws light on the procedure of Jesus with the classes of people who are represented as approaching Him in the narrative of the palsied man, and the feast in Levi's house. "He draws gladly to Himself the distinctively sinful and the apostates from the law (Gesetzesabtrunnigen=publicans, &c.), because such, from the sense of their guilt, have also a strong sense of their deliverance, and therefore can be won in a deeper, more enduring manner."—'Untersuchungen,' p. 386. This declared preference of Christ is certainly very comfortable news to those whom it concerns—to 'Jerusalem sinners,' to sinners, so to speak, writ in large capitals. But moralists may suggest the expediency of treating both the preference and the ground on which it rests as esoteric doctrines, to be whispered in the ear of the select few, lest the open proclamation of them should give rise to licentious abuse, by leading men to think that the best way to qualify themselves for being eventually great saints is in the first place to be great sinners. In their laudable zeal for the interests of morality, they may even suggest a doubt whether we have correctly understood Christ's meaning—whether He really intended to say that He expected the most devoted disciples to come from among those who had greatly erred, and on this very ground exercised His ministry chiefly among this class. Is it not permissible, they may

ask, to interpret the maxim "Much forgiven, love much," subjectively, so that it shall mean, he who hath the greatest sense: of sin, being forgiven, shall love most, thus making the difference between men turn not upon the comparative amount of their outward transgressions, but upon the comparative sensitiveness of their consciences, which may quite easily be found in its highest degree in him who has outwardly offended the least.[1] Now we have the greatest respect for such scruples and for the motives from which they arise. And we admit, as Bunyan admitted, that the doctrine in question, like the kindred doctrine of justification by grace, may be abused by evil-minded men to their own hurt We acknowledge further that great devotion does not necessarily imply great antecedent misconduct, and that in point of fact, many notable Christians never were notable offenders in outward conduct against the laws of morality; as an example of whom may be cited Luther, who was not remarkable among men for crime or vice, like Augustine before his conversion, but only for the morbid intensity of his moral consciousness. And we accept it as a corollary from this fact, that Christ's words must not be so strictly interpreted as to exclude from the category of great debtors, who are greatly grateful for forgiveness, such men as the German reformer. He to whom much is forgiven may mean he who feels himself to be a great debtor, and he to whom little is forgiven may mean he who feels himself to be a small debtor; and the latter may in fact be the greater sinner of the two, as we know that many of the Pharisees were really worse men than the very publicans and harlots. Still the fact remains that the original debtors of the parable were, in the broad outward sense, great and small debtors respectively, the woman being the great debtor, and Simon the small. The further fact remains, that Jesus did really seek and find disciples chiefly among those whose lives were far from correct and exemplary, instead of among those who, as regards outward conduct, needed no repentance. Therefore, if, on the one hand, the subjective interpretation of the parable may not be altogether excluded, neither, on the other, may the objective. It must be recognised as a fact that among those who have gone furthest wrong the kingdom of God not only may find, but is likely to find, its best citizens, so that the ministers of the kingdom are justified in paying special attention to that class. And if the rationale of this fact be demanded, it is not very hard to give. In the first place, it is much easier for one who has been a transgressor, to attain unto a strong sense of his moral shortcoming, than for one in whom the sinful principle has remained comparatively latent. Given the same native strength of conscience, the man who has been carried headlong into evil action, will, when moral reflection commences, have a keener sense of demerit than the man who has not been assailed by, or has not yielded to, the same temptation. Then, secondly, the natural constitution of those erring ones who have great need of repentance must be taken into account. They are children of passion: endowed with powerful impulses, good and bad, unharmonised, warring against each other, the flesh against the spirit, the spirit against the flesh, the law in the members against the law in the mind, and vice versâ. Such natures are capable of going far wrong, but they are also capable, when a moral crisis comes, often brought about by their very excesses, of, being very decided for the right. Men of this stamp, of whom Paul may be taken as the type, being converted, become the most devoted Christians. It is not merely that, having abundant materials in their previous life to supply a strong sense of sin, they feel themselves more than other men indebted to Divine grace, and are therefore more intensely grateful. It is that they have a natural faculty of loving, of throwing themselves with abandon into all they undertake, beyond that of ordinary men. The passionate energy formerly employed in doing evil is now brought to the service of righteousness. The sinful woman hitherto the slave of unlawful passion, now transfers the whole wealth of her affections to

her Saviour, and loves Him with a love purified, but not less fervent than the sinful love of other days.[2] Saul, the fierce persecutor, becomes the equally energetic apostle of the faith he once destroyed.[3] Surely Jesus, in seeking to make disciples among such, rather than among men of frigid natures not likely to do either much evil or much good, acted wisely. Let us not hesitate to say so, out of fear lest some abuse the doctrine. We cannot afford to conceal the truth out of regard to such. It is misspent anxiety to have so much regard to them. For as Bunyan well remarks: "These will neither be ruled by grace nor by reason. Grace would teach them, if they knew it, to deny ungodly courses: and so would reason too, if it could truly understand the love of God. Doth it look like what hath any coherence with reason or mercy, for a man to abuse his friend? Because Christ died for men, must I therefore spit in his face?"[4] [1] For the above view vide Trench.

[2] "See," says Euthymius Zigabenus ('in Quatuor Evangelia'): "How with those things wherewith she was wont to hunt after (■θ■ρευε) her own destruction, she now hunted after (■θ■ρευσε) salvation; for with amatory tears and curiously plaited hair and myrrh, she bewitched youths, but what were before the instruments of sin she now makes the instruments of virtue" (τ■ πρ■ν ■ργανα τ■ς ■μαρτ■ας ■ργανα ν■ν πεπο■ηκεν ■ρετ■ς).

[3] That Paul was once a Pharisee, may seem to militate against the view that from the ranks of Pharisaism good samples of Christians were not likely to come. But exceptio probat regulam. Saul of Tarsus was by education and profession a Pharisee, but he had not the Pharisaic nature and temperament. It was inevitable that a man of his moral energy should one day break with Pharisaism, bursting its bonds, as Samson burst the green withs of the Philistines.

[4] 'The Jerusalem Sinner Saved.'

It thus appears that in the words which He spoke in the house of Simon the Pharisee Jesus gave, in the form of a defence of the sinful woman, and of a censure on His host's unkindness, a complete vindication of his habitual policy as the Founder of the Divine kingdom. The Son of man came eating and drinking, living in a fashion which threw Him into contact with the less reputable portion of Jewish society, and produced an ever-widening alienation between Him and the socially and morally respectable class. For this He was much blamed, but the results quaintly hinted at in the parable of the two debtors proved that he took the course best fitted to advance the great aim of His life. The wisdom of His conduct was justified at once by the great love of the sinful woman, and by the little love of Simon. And the vindication of Christ is at the same time the vindication of the course taken by Christianity at all great epochs of its history, and very specially in the apostolic age. Speaking of the progress of Christianity in such cities as Alexandria, Antioch, and Corinth, Renan remarks: "Like the socialisms of our day, like all new ideas, Christianity germinated in what is called the corruption of great cities." The observation is just, and the reflection appended to it is not less so: "That corruption, in truth, is often only a life more full and free, a more powerful awakening of the innermost forces of humanity."[1] All is not bad that is to be met with among "publicans and sinners;" there lies waste a wealth of moral energy which, properly directed, will do excellent service for the kingdom of God. Therefore, the followers of Jesus, when they understand their true interest, are not grieved when the kingdom suffereth violence at the hands of those whom the wise and prudent and morally respectable regard askance, and the violent take it by force, knowing that the force displayed in storming the kingdom will all be available for its

advancement.[2] [1] ’Saint Paul,’ p. 334.

[2] When one considers how much profound far-reaching thought is hidden in this simple parable, he cannot but be sensible of the incomparable excellence of Christ’s parables as contrasted with those of the rabbis. The rabbis also had their parable of Two Debtors to explain how it came to pass that Israel, while loved by God more than all other nations, was most punished for her sins. In the rabbinical parable the creditor accepts payment from one of his debtors in small instalments, and so facilitates payment in full From the other he exacts nothing till he fails, and then he demands the whole at once. The question is thereon put, Which of the two is most favourably treated? The parable in itself is passable, but its moral is commonplace. The excellence of our Lord’s parables, on the other hand, is that by the most obvious analogies truths unfamiliar and hard to be believed are made to appear intelligible, rational, and credible Rabbinical parables are nuts which on being cracked are found to be empty. For the above parable see Weill, ’Le Judaisme,’ vol. i. p. 158.

Having finished his eloquent panegyric on the sinful woman’s love, Jesus turned to her and said: "Thy sins are forgiven."[1]. From this it has been inferred that up to the moment when these words were spoken the woman did not know that her sins were forgiven.[2] The inference indicates a very inadequate conception of the position in which the poor penitent was placed in the house of Simon, which was such as to make confirmation of her faith or hope of pardon very needful, even assuming that she had cherished such before, as the parable implies she had. How chilling and discouraging to the contrite heart, the unsympathetic, or even loathing, looks of the company! How hard in such a company on earth, where is no joy over a sinner repenting, to believe that there is such joy even in heaven! By our sympathy, or the want of it, we can much help or hinder faith in the forgiveness of sins. For this woman there was no sympathy in Simon’s house, save in the heart of Jesus. Therefore Jesus, knowing this full well, felt it all the more necessary that He should make a decided demonstration of His sympathy and assure the penitent that though there was no forgiveness with men, there was forgiveness with God; and so, with a firm, cheerful, sympathetic voice, He said, "Thy sins are forgiven."[3]

[1] Luk 7:48 [2] So Trench, p. 306.

[3] Arndt says: "This word was needed as consolation for the humiliations experienced in the house of Simon." This friendly word, like all the words spoken by Jesus, and His whole bearing on this occasion, were out of harmony with the spirit of the company. His fellow-guests showed by their looks that the thought of their heart was: Who is this who also forgiveth sins, so committing a greater offence than is that of receiving sinners, the one being an offence against piety, while the other is only an offence against morality? Treating this new exhibition of the censorious spirit with magnanimous disdain, and caring only for the spiritual well-being of the penitent, Jesus repeated his assurance in another form, and bade her farewell with the cheering words: "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."[1] Certain critics, it is true, tell us that these words must be set down to the credit of the evangelist, and that we ought to see in them, as in some other features of this narrative, traces of his Paulinist tendency.[2] Now the sentiment is certainly thoroughly Pauline, but it is also thoroughly in keeping with the teaching of Jesus. Jesus not less than Paul, according to the concurrent testimony of all the evangelists, gave great prominence to faith, and repeatedly expressed His delight in signal manifestations thereof, and this is only what we should expect

when we consider that the kingdom of God, as presented to view in the teaching of our Lord, is essentially a kingdom of grace. The ideas of faith and of grace are kindred, and He who knew so well how to exhibit the gracious aspect of God was sure to magnify the importance and the power of faith. And we have here one of the instances in which Jesus did most signally magnify faith's power to save. The statement is not to be restricted to the one blessing of the forgiveness of sins. Jesus meant to say that faith would do, had already done in principle, for the sinful mortal before Him all that needed to be done in order to a complete moral rescue. Faith, working by love, would purify her heart, ennoble her life, and, what was very necessary, protect her against the demoralising influence of social scorn which dooms so many 'sinners' to perdition. It was a bold assertion to make, but the confidence of Jesus in the power of faith was justified by what it had already done. Had not a believing reception of the glad tidings filled her soul with inexpressible love to the Preacher and to the Father in heaven whose grace He revealed: had it not transformed her into a poet, a devotee, a heroine, capable of conventionality-defying demonstrations—those gushing tears, the drying of the feet of her Redeemer with her hair, the fervent kissing of His feet, and the anointing of them with ointment? Here already was a new spiritual creation all due to faith, producing through the nature of the thing believed and its priceless value to the recipient intense gratitude, which by deeds more eloquent than words said: "O Lord, truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant; thou hast loosed my bonds."[3] Well might Jesus say, "Thy faith hath saved thee," for a more complete demonstration of the recuperative ennobling power of that faculty through which we let God's grace flow into our hearts cannot be imagined. And what faith had done it might easily continue to do. The main difficulty lies in the beginning. Faith has already cast out the devils of evil passion and put Christ in their place; has already dared to face Pharisaic contempt. It will be able hereafter to keep out the demons of desire which have been cast out by the expulsive power of a new affection, and to bear with equanimity the light esteem of a world which regards the sins of the past as unpardonable. Therefore we may not doubt that when she left that house she went away into abiding peace, very probably to join the company of those of whom the evangelist speaks in the commencement of the next chapter as following Jesus and ministering unto him of their substance.[4]

[1] Luk 7:50.

[2] Vide Hilgenfeld, 'Einleitung,' p. 560.

[3] Psa 116:16.

[4] Luk 8:1-3. It is noticeable that the evangelist begins this chapter as if he were continuing the previous narrative. He does not name Jesus but uses the pronoun: "It came to pass after words that He went," &c.

01.13. Chapter 2. The Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Lost Son

Chapter 2.

The Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Lost Son Or, the Joy of Finding Persons and Things Lost. The manner in which Luke introduces these three parables is such as to indicate, not the particular occasion, but the kind of occasion on which they were spoken. The words, "Now there were approaching Him all the publicans and the sinners, to hear Him," could scarcely be used with reference to any one time. What is described is a prominent feature in the ministry of Jesus, ever growing more conspicuous, and arresting the attention and provoking the criticism of unsympathetic observers, viz. the interest awakened thereby in the minds of the classes in evil repute, and the gracious manner in which Jesus regarded those by whom that interest was manifested.[1] That the Evangelist has correctly indicated the general nature of the occasion of the parables recorded in the fifteenth chapter of his Gospel, is evident at a glance. On the very face of them these charming parables are an apology for loving and receiving the sinful—forming a part, and, we may add, the crowning part of Christ's inimitable defence for that noble crime committed by Him against the conventional law and custom of contemporary Jewish society. The use made by Matthew[2] of the first of the three parables—that of the Lost Sheep—in introducing it into the discourse on Humility, to teach the truth that God cares for the lowly and insignificant, is legitimate; but it is easy to see that the parable, in that connection, falls short of its full significance and pathos, as also, and perhaps just in consequence of that, of its original literary grace. For Divine love is seen at its maximum, not in caring for the lowly, but in caring; for the low; and it was when speaking of this intensest and most pathetic manifestation of love, that the mind of Jesus was likely to conceive the parabolic representation of love's gracious impulses in its most felicitous form, including the feature of the shepherd carrying the erring sheep on his shoulders, omitted by Matthew, which we cannot doubt belonged to the parable as originally spoken.[3] [1] Vide Hofmann, 'Das Evangelium des Lukas,' p. 382.

[2] Mat 18:12.

[3] Ewald remarks that Matthew's form of the parable wants den schönen Farbenschmelz, which it has in Luke. Weizsäcker, on the other hand, thinks Matthew gives the parable in at least the original connection; its design, according to him, being to apologise for despised ones against the grudges of Christ's own disciples.—'Untersuchungen,' p. 501.

We have as little doubt that these three parables, related by Luke at one gush, were all spoken at the same time; albeit the third is introduced in a very loose way with the vague phrase, "And He said,"[1] suggesting the idea that what follows is an annex to what goes before. Accumulation of parables teaching one lesson was certainly not a usual practice with Christ, but on the present occasion it was fitted to serve an important apologetic purpose. Multiplication of instances of rejoicing over things or persons lost tended to convey the impression that such joy was universal, a touch of nature in which the whole world was kin. Jesus thereby arrayed against his critics all mankind, people of all ranks, conditions, and relations: men, women, shepherds, housewives,

fathers, householders, domestics; saying in. effect to the sour, cynical fault-finders: Are ye not men?—have ye not human hearts that I should need to explain to you so simple a matter? Multiplied illustration was thus an essential part of the argument.[2] [1] ε■πεξ δ■, Luk 15:11.

[2] Hofmann thinks the third parable was spoken on a similar, but not on the same, occasion.—'Das Evang. des Lukas,' p. 386. Assuming that they were all spoken on the same occasion, the effect would be to suggest that such illustrations might be multiplied ad libitum. Augustine, in his Confessions,' cap. viii. 3, supplies a sample of how this might be done. One might have expected more from him, a prodigal returned to his father's house, than this commonplace service in such a book. This consideration may be regarded as conclusive in favour of the view that a plurality of parables, exemplifying the law of human nature according to which a peculiar joy is felt in connection with the finding of things lost, was à priori to be expected. But it may be asked, On what principle is the second of the three parables to be justified, which, in comparison with the first, seems inferior, and as coming after it superfluous? By itself it might be well enough, but placed beside the other two, is it not deprived of all interest, so as to make it very doubtful that it was uttered at the same time? Such an objection would indicate a very imperfect comprehension of the moral situation. The very paltriness of the second parable is what gives it its value. The story of the housewife finding a piece of money worth little more than a sixpence, and rejoicing over the discovery, serves to suggest the thought, that it does not require things of great value to call into play the tendency of human nature to rejoice in finding things lost. And, be it noted, such a suggestion was most pertinent to the purpose for which all these parables were spoken, viz. to defend the conduct of Jesus in taking a warm interest in the moral recovery of the degraded. For, in the view of the fault-finders, publicans and 'sinners' were infinitely insignificant. The conversion of one belonging to these classes to wisdom and righteousness was, in their esteem, all but an impossibility, and even should it occur, of no consequence. That Christ did not share their despair and indifference was what they could not comprehend, was so incomprehensible that they felt shut up to account for the fact by imputing to Him sinister motives. As addressed to such an audience, the parable of the lost sheep was not unlikely to fail of its purpose; for in Pharisaic esteem a man of the despised classes was not so valuable as a sheep.[1] If there were such a thing in the history of humanity as joy over the finding of a lost sixpence, a parable to that effect might serve the turn better, for probably the Pharisees would allow that a small coin was not unfit to represent the value of a publican. That joy of the kind described was by no means unexampled in Judaea in those days we may well believe, when we consider the many indications of abject poverty contained in the Gospels to which this same parable of the lost coin may be added.[2] The parable, therefore, did not violate natural probability; and if not, it certainly was in other respects most apposite, as virtually involving the argument: many poor housewives have genuine joy in finding a lost coin of small amount; is it so very surprising that I should experience similar joy when a lost sinner, no matter how insignificant socially, repents, that I should deem the meanest of mankind worth saving, and his salvation a cause of satisfaction?[3]

[1] Goebel thinks the parable of the lost sheep contains an argument à fortiori, on the principle: "How much better is a man than a sheep." Unfortunately the principle was practically denied, so that the argument would not be felt lo be à fortiori.

[2] Vide note in last chapter containing extract from Hausrath on this subject

[3] Unger takes this view of the argumentative import of the second parable: in quâ auctior adeo apparet probans illa gradatio quatenus intendit, solitam in exiguâ adeo re perditâ curam.—'De Parab.' p. 148. The two foregoing considerations—the cumulative force of the three parables, and the peculiar appositeness of the second to the moral situation—are of prime importance as enabling us to understand the general drift and exact point of these parables, regarded, as they ought in the first place to be, from the apologetic point of view. If the chosen point of view were the didactic or dogmatic, we might set ourselves, after the fashion of some interpreters, to discover reasons for there being three parables, and three just such as those recorded; one about a shepherd, a second about a housewife, and a third about a father; and to ascertain the recondite theological lessons distinctively taught by each. We have no objections to such lines of study, and are willing to allow that here, as elsewhere, they may serve the good purpose of bringing out into relief the felicity of the parables in suggesting thoughts which they are not primarily intended to teach. But for our own part, we prefer the historical to the dogmatic or mystic method of interpretation, and therefore mean to keep close throughout to the original apologetic aim, and to give greatest prominence to those thoughts which serve to show how the parables bear thereon. We do not, therefore, ask ourselves, Why precisely these parables? We are content to regard the first parable as the standard one, as it is most akin to Christ's professed character as a Shepherd who was in quest of the lost sheep of the house of Israel; and the second as a supplement to the first, rendered necessary by the contemptuous feelings of the Pharisees towards the lower orders, and meant to teach that the law of joy over things lost obtains in reference even to things of little value; and the third as meant to exemplify the action of the same law in the human sphere, and to suggest the great truth, that even the meanest of mankind is, at the worst, only a degraded son of God, whose repentance ought therefore to be an occasion of joy to all who love God. Nor do we find any mystery in the numbers—one hundred, ten, two. The hundred sheep are the property of a shepherd of ordinary average wealth; the ten pieces of money the pecuniary possession of a woman in humble life; the two sons signify a family just large enough to supply illustrations of the two contrasted characters, and concentrate attention upon them. In one respect only do we feel disposed to accentuate the distinctive didactic significance of the parables, viz. in regard to the different senses of the term 'lost' employed in them all. We reserve our remarks on this point till the close.

There is one aspect of these parables closely connected with their apologetic use to which we have not yet referred, and of which we must here take notice. In all three there is apparent not merely a defensive, but an offensive, attitude. Christ not only apologises for His misunderstood love, but rebukes the Pharisees for their want of sympathy with such love as inspired His conduct, and the inhumanity therein revealed. The shepherd not only himself rejoices over his lost sheep, but he calls on his neighbours and friends to sympathise with his joy, and it is taken for granted that they do so. The same holds true of the woman who lost and found the piece of money. These two parables showed the Pharisees how they ought to have acted towards Jesus as the friend of the publicans and sinners. The third parable assails them in another way, not by showing them how they ought to have acted, but by showing them how they did act. The elder brother in the parable is the Pharisee's picture, and the elaboration of this part of the story shows how distinctly the purpose to attack and rebuke was present to Christ's mind.[1] But having pointed this out, we must at the same time point out another fact in a preliminary way, reserving details for a more advanced stage. The exposure of Pharisaic inhumanity, though unavoidably severe, is markedly

mild and conciliatory in tone. Jesus had no wish to exasperate His critics; His heart was too sad to indulge in bitterness. Throughout, He aims, on the one hand, so to depict the publicans and sinners as to awaken pity, and on the other, so to speak of the Pharisees as, while pointing out clearly to them their characteristic vice, if possible to win them to a better mind. The Saviour spoke these exquisite parables in a tender, gracious mood, as one who would by the very words he uttered be a healer of social breaches, and reconciler of alienated classes. These parables, and especially the last of the three, are thus, as it were, a prelude to the cross. Heavenly charity enacts in word the part of a peace-maker, which it afterwards enacted in the death on Calvary. When we read these parables we wonder not at the spectacle presented in the crucifixion; for the love which could inspire such touching utterances in the interest of redeeming love could also, if needful, die. Jesus said of the anointing in Bethany, "she did it for My burial." We may say of these irenical parables that they were spoken against the day of the Passion.

[1] Goebel's exposition has the merit of duly emphasising the offensive aspect of the three parables. With these remarks we proceed to the consideration of the individual parables, and first that of— The Lost Sheep

He spake to them this parable, saying: What man of you having an hundred sheep, and having lost one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness,[1] and go after the lost one, until he find it? And having found it, he layeth it upon his shoulders rejoicing. And on arriving at his house, he calleth together his friends and neighhours, saying to them: Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner repenting, more than over ninety and nine just persons such as have not need of repentance.—Luk 15:3-7.

[1] ■ν τ■ ■ρ■μω, in the pastoral country where sheep might feed, but where grain was not cultivated. In Matthew the phrase is ■π■ τ■ ■ρη, on the mountains.

There is much latent pathos in this short parable which it is desirable we should make an effort to perceive, that we may be prepared to understand the shepherd's demand for sympathy, which, on a superficial reading of the story, before we have penetrated to its heart, may appear exaggerated. The chief interest, of course, centres in the shepherd, and his behaviour on one of his sheep being found missing. And in the first place, it is taken for granted that any shepherd to whom this happens will immediately set off in quest of the erring sheep. "What man of you having a flock of sheep, and losing one, will not go after it?" asks Jesus, confident that here at least He will meet with no contradiction, virtually asserting that it is a universal human instinct to go in quest of lost property. This implied assertion is in truth the radical part of His apology for His own conduct. As in the earliest instance in which He was put on His defence he vindicated Himself by the suggestion, "I am a Physician," so in the present instance He offers as His apology the suggestion, "I am a Shepherd;" and as in the former case so in the latter, the suggestion being once accepted all the rest follows of course. No one wonders that a shepherd goes after his straying sheep, any more than one wonders that a physician visits the sick rather than the whole, and visits most frequently those whose ailments are most serious. Neither is any one surprised at the joy of a shepherd on finding his sheep, which is the special feature insisted on in the present parable; the most cynical will admit that the finding of a lost sheep is a most legitimate occasion of satisfaction to the finder himself at least, and therefore a perfectly reasonable motive for seeking the lost. Such joy in a

shepherd, and we may add similar joy in a physician on succeeding in restoring a patient to health, Christ's Pharisaic censors were not so stupid as to condemn. Their want of sympathy with Him as the friend of publicans and sinners sprang from their failure to recognise in Him a Physician and a Shepherd. And that failure again was due to their own want of love for their fellow-men. Their hearts were hardened against the social outcasts by prejudice and pride, and therefore when they saw the common people scattered and torn[1] like a flock of sheep without a shepherd, the spectacle did not make their hearts bleed as it made the heart of Jesus bleed. And that made all the difference. Jesus, seeing the miserable plight of the lost sheep of the house of Israel, sought to be a Shepherd to them and associated with Himself in the pastoral care of the people His disciples;[2] while the Pharisees, on the other hand, neither cared themselves for the lost, nor sympathised with, or even so much as believed in, the loving care of others.

[1] Mat 9:36.

[2] Mat 10:1-42., which relates the mission of the twelve to the people of Galilee. The next feature in the shepherd's conduct is that he seeks till he finds.[1] He is thoroughly in earnest in the search; he is determined to recover his lost property, and will spare himself no trouble for that end. This touch is omitted in Matthew's version of the parable, where we read instead the expression, "if he happen to find it;"[2] but who can doubt that it belongs to the original form of the parable as first uttered? Jesus was a very earnest Shepherd Himself, who spared no pains to find the lost sheep of God's fold, and he was not likely to omit this trait in the portrait of the shepherd's character. It is true that the most earnest quest may after all, end in failure, and therefore such a phrase as "if so be he find" is perfectly legitimate and appropriate. Jesus Himself knew too well what such failure was, and therefore it is quite possible that in repeating the parable, if He did repeat it, He gave prominence to that aspect. But it is certain that if there is to be failure it will not be for want of effort and pains on the shepherd's part. There will be persistent search in every quarter where there is the least chance of the lost being found. How true is this of Christ Himself! He could say for Himself as the Shepherd of Israel, "How often would I have gathered thee!"[3] and His failure after all His efforts broke His heart and made Him shed bitter tears. This phrase, until he find it, is a touch we owe to the pastoral love of the speaker, as the spiritual Shepherd of men.

[1] ■ως ε■ρ■ α■τ■.

[2] ■■ν γ■νηται ε■ρε■ν. (Mat 18:13.)

[3] Mat 23:38.

Having found the straying sheep, the shepherd layeth it upon his shoulders. This possibly he would do in any case, however short the distance the sheep had strayed from the fold, to make sure of his captive; but this feature in the picture most probably points to exhaustion produced by long-continued wandering, exposure, and lack of food. The erring sheep needs to be carried, it cannot return on its own feet; the shepherd finds it with torn fleece, lying on the ground, emaciated, helplessly weak. This is intrinsically probable, even had we nothing but the language of the parable itself to guide us; it becomes almost certain when we bear in mind the terms in which Jesus described the state of the people at the time of the Galilean mission. To His compassionate eye the lower masses of Jewish society appeared torn and scattered about,—weary, worn, abject,[1]—like sheep without a shepherd; therefore he sent His disciples among them to preach

the good tidings of the kingdom and to heal their diseases, deeming it better they should have the benefit of inexperienced care than that they should continue longer utterly uncared for. He had the same people in the same miserable condition in view when He spake this parable. The straying sheep of our parable represents the neglected, perishing masses of the people, is one of the scattered and torn. Jesus thinks of it now, as He thought of the people on that other occasion—would have His hearers so think of it, as found by the shepherd in a pitiable plight; for His own heart is now as full of compassion as it was then, and He desires to awaken compassion in the hard hearts of His audience, that they may cease to blame Him, and begin rather to imitate Him by compassionate consideration for the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

[1] Mat 9:36. ■σκυλμ■νοι κα■ ■■■ιμμ■νοι. So the shepherd has to carry his captive all the way back to the fold, and has to carry it a long way. Nevertheless he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing, heeding not the weight, nor the fatiguing journey before him, for gladness over the recovery of his lost property. Love makes the burden light, and the way short. This feature is true to natural life, and not less true to the character of the Good Shepherd, the author of the parable. The Son of man had heavy burdens laid on His heart by that unspeakable sympathy with the woes of humanity which is so conspicuous in His history. The diseases of men, their poverty, their sins, their ignorance, their pains, their hopeless misery—all pressed on His spirit "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows," and so was a "Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." Yet withal there was a wondrous gladness in the heart of Christ. He experienced a perfect rapture of delight when He found a lost sheep: witness His bearing at the well of Sychar, when His joy over the repentance of the woman of Samaria made Him forget hunger, insomuch that the disciples wondered if any man had given Him to eat.[1] That joy, hoped for or experienced, made all His burdens light; made even the cross itself, abhorrent to His sentient nature, more than bearable. Therefore, in drawing the picture of a faithful shepherd, He might with a good conscience put in this trait, 'rejoicing.'

[1] John 4:31-34. The weary, fatiguing journey at length comes to an end; and naturally, on arriving at his home, there is a new rush of emotion in the shepherd's heart, and an eventful story to tell, and a craving for friendly neighbourly sympathy. This accordingly is the next feature in the parable: "When he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost." This is the point in the parable at which our sense of its fitness or naturalness is apt to be weakest. Is there not, we are ready to ask, something resembling effeminate sentimentalism in that calling of friends and neighbours together, and that demand for sympathy with the joy of finding the lost sheep? Would it not have been more manly and more shepherd-like to have returned quietly to ordinary duties as if nothing had happened? Have we not reason to suspect that at this point the natural realism of the parable has been sacrificed to the feelings of the speaker smarting under a keen sense of the general lack of sympathy with His own aims, and eager to reproach the Pharisees on that account? Now in meeting these objections we assume the truth of the interpretation we have put on the previous points of the parable; that is to say, that the parable has reference to a serious occurrence, and not merely to an insignificant everyday case of wandering for a short distance from the fold. We are entitled to assume this, for the simple reason that a trivial case would not be parallel to the circumstances which created the need for a parable. That which made apology necessary was Christ's interest in men who, in the opinion even of His critics, had gone far astray, and the

parable, to serve its purpose, must put a case analogous to that of those whom the straying sheep represents. This would be perfectly understood by the parties to whom the parable was addressed.

But, even in that case, was not the shepherd's demand for sympathy overdone? We think not, and in saying so we take no account of difference of temperament between Eastern shepherds and those of our own land, though doubtless this might somewhat affect the manner of parties similarly situated. Two considerations suffice to redeem the shepherd's behaviour from sentimentalism. On the one hand, it was perfectly natural that there should be a desire, at the end of an eventful journey, to give expression to the pent-up feeling connected with its object, and to talk to acquaintances about the incidents of the way; all the circumstances connected with the search, and the finding of the lost sheep. His whole interest has been concentrated upon, his whole mind absorbed by, that one sheep; it has cost him much thought, anxiety, and effort; and now that all is happily ended, there is a rush of emotion which seeks relief in the narration of the story to sympathetic hearers. All men may not speak as the shepherd is represented speaking, but all men feel as he felt, in similar circumstances. The secret thought of every human heart, on the recovery of something lost after much and painful anxiety and effort, is, "Rejoice with me, for I have found that which was lost;" and Christ makes the shepherd say what all men think, because one chief purpose of the parable is to accentuate the joy of finding things lost. Then, on the other hand, the shepherd's desire to unburden himself to his neighbours would be greatly intensified by the assurance that his tale would greatly interest the listeners. On that he might safely reckon; not merely because of the innate curiosity of mankind, or of the craving for news to relieve the dull monotony of life in a thinly peopled, pastoral country, or of the interest which human beings take in each other, especially in rural districts, where the feeling of neighbourliness is strong, making the simple, honest denizens of hills and dales mutually communicative and sympathetic; but more particularly because of the bearing of the tale on their own personal interest. For the case of their friend and neighbour might be their own, and it would greatly interest them to know the track of the wanderer, the risks it ran, where it was found, and in what condition; for such knowledge would be useful to themselves in case any of their own sheep should stray from the fold. Therefore the returned shepherd, in asking neighbours to come and hear his story, was but giving them an expected opportunity. And we are not to think of the invitation as formal, as of a host inviting guests to a feast. The words put into the shepherd's mouth scarce needed to be spoken. The home-coming of one who had been absent for days on so interesting an errand said to all the dwellers around: Come hear my story; come congratulate me on the success of my quest. And the point of importance here is, that the neighbours would certainly gather around their fellow-shepherd to hear his tale, and would hear it with sympathetic ears. That is not expressly stated, but it is more impressively said by being taken for granted. Jesus pays human nature the compliment of treating neighbourly sympathy in the circumstances as a thing of course. In the application of the parable, which we have now to notice, neighbourly sympathy could not be treated as a thing of course, for it was precisely the absence of it that had given occasion to the parable being spoken. It is therefore to this side of the subject that prominence is given. Jesus passes over in silence His own feelings as the Shepherd of morally lost men, His joy over finding even one, and His desire that others should rejoice along with Him, delicately leaving these to be inferred from the behaviour cf the shepherd in the parable; and emphasises the sympathy which He receives in the prosecution of His work—receives, however, not from men, but from the

inhabitants of the upper world. There is wonderful pathos and pungency in this reference to heaven as the scene of sympathetic joy over the restoration of erring sinners to the fold of God. It implies that Jesus meets with no such joy on earth. It is a virtual complaint against his Pharisaic critics, which is none the less effective that it is indirectly conveyed in the form of a contrast between their conduct and that of celestials. The Son of man, who was ever busy seeking the lost, finds Himself utterly isolated and misunderstood; and with His back to the wall, as it were, He is fain to go to heaven in quest of beings who shared His feelings towards the sinful. To heaven, since He could not find backing nearer hand. Where shall I go, He asked Himself, to find beings who feel as I do? To the righteous men of Israel? No! they have no joy over poor vulgar publicans and sinners repenting; they joy only in the fact that they are not as other men. To cultivated Sadducees? No! they think men well enough as they are, and look on repentance as much ado about nothing, an unnecessary disturbance of one's happiness during his brief tenure of existence. To the world outside Judaea? No! the day will come ere long when they will be thankful to hear of Him whose countrymen brought it as a heavy charge against Him that He received sinners; but as yet the heathen know neither the joy of saving, nor the joy of being saved. Nowhere on earth can I find sympathisers. In heaven then? Yes! in heaven they understand Me; in heaven they feel as I feel; there is joy in heaven, I tell you, over sinners repenting; yea, even over one of these despised sinners repenting, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance. The Pharisaic fault-finders might well feel ashamed for compelling the object of their censure to go so far in quest of sympathy, and they might also well feel self-condemned if they reflected for a moment on the startling declaration their cynicism had provoked. For it was by no means an improbable statement, however strange it might appear; no mere justifiable jeu d'esprit, uttered on the spur of the moment by one who felt himself hard pressed. A jeu d'esprit it certainly is; for the occasion is one of those in which Christ's words were apt to be full of poetry and passion; not merely rays of light, but flashes of lightning. But it is more, even sober truth. For, take the kernel of the statement—that there is joy in heaven over the repentance of a sinner, is that incredible? The denizens of heaven are the good; and what better occasion for joy can good beings have than the turning of a sinner from evil to righteousness? Ask not sceptically:

"Is there care in heaven? and is there love In heavenly spirits to these creatures base That may compassion of their evils move?"

Why not? The angels have the same occupation as Jesus: they are ministering spirits to those who are about to inherit salvation, and they have therefore a fellow-feeling with the Good Shepherd, like the neighbours of the shepherd in the parable. Nay, hath not the Eternal Himself a most real joy over a sinner repenting? God is love, therefore He hath no pleasure in the death of a sinner, therefore He hath pleasure when a sinner turns from his evil ways; yea, even if that sinner be the meanest of mankind. For consider what a difference it would make to ourselves if that meanest one were related to us as a son or a brother! Now the blessed truth is, that in the meanest member of the human race repenting, God sees a prodigal child of His returning to his Father's house. That is the truth implied in the golden saying with which the first and second of these three parables end, and it is the truth expressly taught in the third. It is the great Christian doctrine concerning God which the world never has believed, and which the Church has only half-believed, and which God knew from of old men would ever be slow to believe; hence the protestation by the mouth of prophecy: "My thoughts are not your thoughts," following the

declaration: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."[1]

[1] Isa 55:7-8.

There may appear to be more difficulty in understanding this declaration of our Lord's, taken as referring to God, when regard is had to the comparative form in which it is put—more joy over one sinner repenting than over ninety-and-nine just persons who need no repentance—the reason being the peculiarly sweet pleasure connected with finding things lost. It may appear that this peculiar experience is due to the constitution of human nature, and that it therefore savours of anthropopathism to ascribe such joy to the Divine Being. We need not, however, trouble ourselves with this metaphysical problem; for if we are going to be sensitive about anthropopathism, we must go further back, and inquire whether we can legitimately ascribe joy in any form, or any emotion whatsoever, to God. We shall, therefore, rather ask what this comparative statement made by Christ signifies for men; or, to be more definite, for Christ Himself. What does our Lord mean, when he says in effect: I have more joy in one of these poor sinners repenting, than in ninety-and-nine just men who need no repentance? Is He sneering at the sham righteousness of the Pharisees? No! He is in too tender a mood for sneering, not to say that He has too much love in His heart, even for Pharisees, to sneer at any time. He argues with His censors on the assumption that they are as good as they think themselves. He means to say, that there is a sense in which a man may rationally rejoice more over the repentance of a notable sinner than over the righteousness of many men who have all their days lived in an exemplary manner, if not absolutely, yet comparatively, sinless. This greater joy over the penitent sinner needs no more explanation than the joy of the shepherd over the sheep which was lost It is simply an illustration of the great law, according to which all human beings have peculiar joy over lost things found. If the Pharisees had only made use of their own human instincts as a guide to their judgment in the affairs of morals and religion, they would not have thought the statement surprising. Nay, if they had but recollected their own theoretical views, even within the moral sphere, they would have sympathised with Christ's conduct and feelings, instead of putting Him on His defence by captious criticism. For it was a doctrine of the Talmudists of after-days, and was probably an opinion current in Rabbinical schools even in our Lord's time, that a man who had been guilty of many sins might by repentance raise himself to a higher degree of virtue than the perfectly righteous man who had never experienced his temptations.

1 Vide on this Lightfoot, 'Horæ Hebraicæ,' and Schwab, 'Traité des Berackhoth,' introduction, p. xxxii. There is not perfect consent as to what the Rabbinical doctrine was; but Schwab's view is that in the case of sins against God and sobriety, a man might by repentance make himself equal or superior to the perfectly just man, Zadic gamour; but in the case of sins against men, repentance, while obtaining pardon from God, and regaining the esteem of men, could not make the penitent equal or superior to the perfectly good man. If this were so, surely it was reasonable to occupy oneself in endeavouring to get sinners to start on this noble career of self-elevation, and to rejoice when in any instance he had succeeded. But it is one thing to have correct theories, and another to put them in practice. These Pharisaic faultfinders believed in a coming Messiah, but they rejected Jesus; they searched the Scriptures as writings in which they expected to find eternal life, and they listened not to Him who had the words of eternal life; they reckoned it possible for a

penitent sinner not only to equal, but to excel, one that by comparison needed no repentance, and they found fault with one who not only held this view as an abstract doctrine, but acted on it, and sought to bring those who had strayed furthest from the paths of righteousness to repentance, believing that though last they might yet be first The Lost Drachma Or what woman having ten drachma, if she lose one drachma, doth not light a lamp, and sweep the house, and seek carefully till she find it; and, having found it, she calls together her female friends and neighbours,[1] saying: Rejoice with me, because I have found the drachma which I lost.—Luk 15:8-10.

[1] τ■ς φ■λας κα■ γε■τονας, feminine, the corresponding expression in the first parable being το■ς φ■λους κα■ το■ς γε■τονας. This parable suggests the case of a poor woman, living possibly in widowed loneliness, in a humble cottage in a country village, and possessing very scanty means of livelihood; and its special lesson is that the joy of finding things lost may be experienced and sympathised with even in connection with things of little intrinsic value. A housewife who loses one piece of silver out of ten, which constitutes her stock of money, quite naturally rejoices when she recovers it, and she will receive neighbourly congratulations from her acquaintances on her good fortune. Such is the implied assertion; but if any one has difficulty in believing that the loss of one piece of money, of the value of a sixpence, out of ten, could appear a serious matter even to the impoverished population of a Syrian village, it is easy to conceive circumstances which would give even to the one lost coin a special value. It might form part of a whole which had been hoarded, and was all needed, for a special purpose; as to pay a tax, or to defray the expenses connected with a religious festival. In such a case, to lose one coin was to be unable to meet the emergency for the sake of which the whole had been carefully scraped together, and such inability might be the occasion of no little anxiety. Our ministerial experiences have afforded opportunity of knowing into what distress a poor, but honest, Highland widow can be thrown by her inability to pay on demand the half-yearly rent for her miserable garret, amounting to the petty sum of one pound sterling, and with what joy she will receive from a friend the means of satisfying her landlord. Suppose such a poor widow had succeeded in accumulating in the course of six months the twenty shillings necessary for the purpose, and that towards the end of the period, as rent-day was approaching, she had somehow lost one of the twenty—would you wonder that the misfortune put her much about, if she spoke of it to her neighbours and to her pastor; if she searched for it day after day, and if on finding it she joyfully reported the fact to the same parties, and met with honest sympathy from them all? We can only say for ourselves that we should feel ashamed if the joy of a poor fellow-creature in the case supposed did not awaken a very hearty response in our bosom. This little parable gives a very life-like description of the search for the lost drachma. The woman lights a lamp, sweeps the house, and seeks carefully till she finds it. The lighting of the lamp speaks to a house ill-provided with windows, perhaps having no windows at all, but receiving light only from the door.[1] There may be light enough in the clay hut to enable one familiar with all its corners to grope about and find all she wants, but there is not light sufficient to guide one in searching for something lost. The housewife must go, lamp or candle in hand, looking narrowly into the dark nooks. But this will not suffice. For in dark neglected corners there will be dust, and if the lost coin happens to have fallen into such a dusty corner it will not be visible to the eye. The besom will be necessary as well as the lamp, and instead of sweeping here and there it will be best to sweep the floor all over, in hope of sweeping up the coin along with the dust. Then, the sweeping ended, a search among the accumulated heap of dust must be commenced. And so the anxious woman commences the search, slowly, carefully

examining in the heap, and looking narrowly at everything in the least; degree resembling a coin. At last her patience is rewarded; there it is shining in the lamplight. She sets down her candle, rushes out of her dwelling, and into the house of her nearest neighbours, exclaiming, "Rejoice with me, I have found the piece which I lost" And of course they do rejoice with her; for doubtless they have heard of her loss ere now; they know about the missing drachma, and they have sympathised with their neighbour's anxiety, with the sympathy peculiar to fellows in poverty; and now they sympathise not less sincerely with her in her joy over the recovery of her lost property.

[1] Robinson, in his 'Biblical Researches,' vol. iii. p. 44, mentions a house in the Lebanon in which he passed a night, answering to this description. "There was no window, and no light except from the door."

It scarcely needs to be remarked that the housewife of the second parable would be more demonstrative than the shepherd of the first in the expression of her joy, and in her demand for the sympathy of her female friends and neighbours. Of this difference some trace may be found in the text, if we regard that as the true reading which gives the Greek verb rendered in the English Version, "calls together," in the middle voice in the second parable, instead of in the active as in the first. With Godet we think this reading is to be preferred, but we doubt if he has correctly indicated the significance of the change in the mode of expression. He thinks that the active (συγκαλε■) is used in the first instance because the shepherd has not a monopoly of the joy, the lost sheep sharing it in part, and that the middle (συγκαλε■ται) is used in the.second instance, on the other hand, because the joy is wholly the woman's,—that which was lost being a thing without life, incapable of any sensation of joy. In a similar way he explains the diverse terms in which the lost object is spoken of in the two parables: in the first, described as "the lost" (τ■ ■πολωλ■ς), as an object of pity; in the second, as "the drachma which I have lost," the whole sympathy being concentrated upon the loser.[1] The suggestions are ingenious, but possibly just a little over-refined. We are inclined to explain the first of the two differences by a reference to the difference in sex between the principal characters in the two parables. The middle voice is used in the second parable, because the actor is a woman, not a man, to mark the greater intensity and subjectivity of her sex. The second difference may be explained in a similar way. The shepherd speaks of his lost sheep in an objective way, without emphasising the fact that the loss was his. The housewife, on the other hand, puts the loss which she sustained in the forefront, and says: Not my drachma which was lost, but the drachma which I lost It is, however, questionable whether it were not better to regard the two modes of expression as equivalent.[2] [1] 'Commentaire' in loc.

[2] To show bow much in such minute points one is apt to be influenced by fancy, it may be mentioned that Trench puts the following construction on the diverse manner of expression in reference to the two lost objects: The Shepherd, being Christ, says My sheep; the woman, being the Church, says the drachma. In the application of this parable Jesus contents Himself with the positive statement that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." A comparative statement in this case would have been unsuitable, as tending to weaken rather than strengthen the sentiment expressed at the close of the first parable; seeing that it would have had to run thus: There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over nine sinners that need no repentance.[1]

[1] Lightfoot (’Horæ Hebraicæ’) gives a parable from the Talmud like the foregoing one of the Lost Piece, the aim of which is to illustrate the quest of wisdom. Here again we have to note the comparatively commonplace moral of the Talmudic parables. But the moral as repeated here has an interest and a pathos of its own. It suggests the thought that the repentance of the meanest of mankind, however insignificant in social position or degraded in character, calls forth a sympathetic thrill in the heart of God. It teaches us that all souls and their moral history are precious in God’s sight, that every human being has value in the esteem of heaven, as endowed with reason and free will, and subject to infinite moral possibilities. This was then a new doctrine concerning man, and it is still very contrary to the world’s way of thinking concerning human beings. For on this earth men are still very cheap in one another’s esteem for various reasons, theoretical and practical. Some regard the moral interests of humanity with comparative indifference because their philosophy teaches them to treat as insignificant the distinction between man and beast, in nature and in destiny. Others, through the lust for gain, are accustomed to regard human life as of no account in comparison with commercial profit. Jesus assures us that in heaven human beings are not valued so cheaply. There, He tells us, all souls are precious, the souls of publicans and profligates, of bondsmen and negroes; and though nothing spiritually great should come out of the repentance of any of these least ones, though they should remain least ones for ever, yet is the change implied in repentance, even in their case deemed an event of solemn interest, because the blurred image of God is restored in some degree, and the soul is at least saved, though as through fire. Surely an altogether God-worthy way of thinking! Long may it prevail on earth as well as in heaven! For if even in spite of a Christian way of thinking and acting, the condition of many be far from satisfactory, it would certainly be infinitely worse were the way of thinking peculiar to philosophic atheism, or to brutal mammon-worship, universally prevalent. As it is, we manage to make many ignorant and erring ones imperfect Christians; as it would be then, the multitude would live unheeded in misery, and die unmourned in sin. This is all that needs to be said on this parable. If we were anxious to draw out our exposition to a greater length, we might easily do so, by following the example of commentators who indulge in spiritualising interpretation, telling us that the house is the Church; and the woman the indwelling Spirit; and the drachma, man with the image of God stamped upon him, but lying in the dust of sin and corruption; the candle the Word of God held forth by the Church, and the sweeping the disturbance caused by the action of the Spirit in the individual and in society, making dust rise and fly about, and turning the world upside down. To our mind, however, this style of interpretation savours of frigidity. If we may say it without offence, it seems to us to savour, moreover, of Pharisaism. It looks as if interpreters found it impossible to discover any real interest in the story itself, taken as a natural illustration of the joy of finding things lost, and felt it necessary to fly to the spiritual sense to get something to say. What is this but Pharisaic indifference to the affairs of common humanity in a new form? The parable as a scene from ordinary life is of no account, and all the objects must be transformed into theological equivalents ere they can be worthy of attention. How much better to try first of all to feel the human pathos of the parable as a story of real life, and then to make that pathos the one link of connection between the natural and the spiritual. The Lost Son And He said, A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of the property that falleth to me as my share.[1] And he divided between them his living.[2] And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with prodigal living.[3] And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty

famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went ana attached himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into the fields to feed swine. And he was fain to fill his belly with the carobtree pods[4] that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. Bui when he came to himself he said, How many hired servants of my fathers have bread enough and to spare, and I am perishing here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, I am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I sinned against heaven and before thee, I am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth quickly[5] the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it: and let us eat and be merry: for this person, my son, was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. But his elder ton was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And, calling one of the servants, he asked what these things meant. And he said to him (it is), Because thy brother is come; and thy father killed the fatted calf, because he received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: and his father came out and entreated him. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment, and thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as thy (precious)[6] son, this fellow who devoured thy living with harlots, arrived, thou didst kill for him the fatted calf And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me and all mine is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad; for this thy (dear) brother was dead, and is alive again, and was lost, and is found.—Luk 15:11-32.

[1] τ■ ■πιβ■λλον μ■ρος τ■ς ο■σ■ας: a quite classic expression; vide Wetstein for examples.

[2] τ■ν β■ον, practically synonymous with the τ■ς ο■σ■ας going before.

[3] ζ■ν ■σ■τως, living in excess, with special reference to extravagant expenditure. From this phrase comes the common title of this parable, The Prodigal Son—■Ο υ■■ς ■σωτος, filius perditus, or prodigus. Dr. Field, with reference to the old rendering, "riotous living," retained in R. V., asks why not "with prodigal living," with reference to the familiar English title of the parable.—'Otium Norv.'

[4] κερ■τια, so called from their horn-like, curved shape. On the carob or locust tree, and its fruit, and its use as food for animals and for the poor, vide Tristram's 'Natural History of the Bible,' also Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible.'

[5] ταχ■ probably forms part of the text, though it is not found in many MSS., and is omitted by Tischendorf.

[6] We throw this word in to bring out the tone in which the elder son referred to his brother. It is gratifying to find Dr. Field suggesting the use of the same epithet, also of the epithet 'dear' in the next verse to bring out what the returned son ought to be to his brother. The latter suggestion we have adopted from him. This parable differs from the preceding two in length, in the multiplicity of picturesque and pathetic details, in heightened moral interest due to the fact of the example being taken from the sphere of human conduct, and in the manner in which Pharisaic severity is

rebuked; the former parables showing the censors of Jesus how they ought to have acted, this parable showing them (through the picture of the elder brother) how they did act. It was fitting that this should be done in the last of the three parables rather than in the others because, the illustration being taken from human conduct, the term ’lost’ has a moral sense, and there is a conflict of feeling towards the lost object; on the one hand resentment against folly, on the other pity awakened by misery. In this case, therefore, sympathy with one who has recovered the lost cannot be taken for granted, as it could in the case of a lost sheep, or of a lost coin; for the feeling of resentment might predominate, as accordingly it is made to do in the case of the elder brother. By conveying reproof in this instance under this form, Jesus showed His respect for the feelings of men of exemplary lives against the sinful, so far as these were based on sincere love of virtue. He said thereby in effect: "What I condemn in you is not your disapprobation of sin, but merely the excessive one-sided nature of your resentment, shutting your hearts against pity for the sinful." This tone of carefully-qualified and guarded blame, very observable in the closing part of the parable, is traceable throughout the whole, in the picture of the Prodigal, and of the Father, not less than in that of the Elder Brother. Christ’s purpose evidently is not to provoke but to conciliate, not to treat moral severity as inadmissible, but to moderate its excess, and to soften it with a mixture of compassion. The three pictures of the Prodigal Son, the loving Father, and the relentless Elder Brother, make up this parable of exquisite beauty and inexhaustible didactic significance. Let us stand and gaze upon each of them in turn, till we have become duly impressed with the inimitable skill of the Artist who drew them.

1. The prodigal is so depicted as to show us his sin and folly, and yet to awaken in us pity for his misery. He is an unfilial, thoughtless, self-willed, sensual youth, who by his follies brings upon himself many sorrows; and he excites in us just the sort of mixed feeling with which Jesus regarded the publicans and sinners whom he represents, extenuating not their guilt, yet deeply commiserating them. This foolish, wayward one is the younger of two sons. He might have been either of them, but it was fitting to make the younger the prodigal; because the younger the more likely to be thoughtless, and the weaker the influences tending to give steadiness by developing the sense of responsibility; for by the Hebrew Law the younger of two sons had a claim to only one-third of the paternal inheritance, the elder receiving a double share of two-thirds,[1] and being the more likely just on that account to conduct himself with gravity as one conscious of the dignity of birthright. The career of this younger son is exhibited in four successive scenes, in the first of which we see his self-will, in the second his folly, in the third his misery, and in the fourth his repentance.[2] His self-will manifests itself in the request to have his share of the paternal property given into his hands at once, that he may be free to do with it what he chooses. His motive is speedily revealed by his subsequent conduct in setting off with all his means to a distant country, where he can forget his home and family, and be, as he hopes, forgotten by, and hidden from the knowledge of, his friends.[3] There are passionate impulses and hungry appetites within him which can get no outlet in his father’s house, and he is impatient to get away from it to a place where he can follow his bent without restraint. The youth is in the Byronic or Werterean vein, and he desires freedom to sow his wild oats. It is strange that the father, who, if he had any discernment, must have noticed the mood of his boy, consented to his request;[4] but parental softheartedness often does what a dispassionate judgment cannot approve. Moreover, the exigencies of the parable required that he should so act, and also the rôle which he sustained as the representative of Divine Providence: for God in his Providence often gives to men towards whom He has a high

purpose of grace, free rein, permitting them to go to wild excesses of riot before he breaks them in to the yoke of obedience; of which we have a notable instance in the case of Augustine, whose history supplies a far more instructive commentary on our parable than anything to be found in his writings.[5]

[1] Deu 21:17.

[2] Luk 15:12; Luk 15:13; Luk 15:14-16; Luk 15:17-19.

[3] Luk 15:13.

[4] Legally he might either grant or refuse the request: "Fecit non quod oportebat, sed quod licebat facere."—Maldonatus.

[5] Godet refers to Rom 1:24 as illustrating the father's consent to his son's foolish wishes. The folly of the youth is depicted in very few words. He scattered his substance, living in sensual indulgence, continuing this course of wasteful excesses till all his means were gone. Melancholy picture of enslavement to passion, and of utter thoughtlessness and absence of self-control! The fire of sinful impulse once kindled burns on till the fuel is exhausted, when the poor wretch, who in thoughtless joy kindled this fire, and for a while compassed himself about with its sparks, must lie down in sorrow.[1]. Where, all the while, is the reason firm and temperate will? Alas! these do not usually keep company with self-will and lawless desire. They may return when the tempest of passion has spent its force, but meantime madness rules the hour. How the youth spent the months of folly it is not difficult to imagine. With characteristic delicacy Jesus omits details, leaving the ungracious task of filling in repulsive particulars to the elder son.[2] It is the animus of his representation that is at fault; his statement, though brutally unfeeling, was probably too true. We may without any breach of charity conceive the prodigal as wasting his means on every form of sensual gratification, playing the fool in no half and half manner.[3]

[1] Isa 1:11

[2] Luk 15:30. μετ■ πορν■ν.

[3] From a fragment of Eusebius it might be inferred that the Ebionitic Gospel went beyond the elder brother in describing the evil life of the prodigal. In that passage Eusebius refers to the 'Gospel according to the Hebrews' in connection with the parable of the Talents, and uses the expression, μετ■ πορν■ν κα■ α■λητρ■δων (with harlots and flute women). It is, however, not clear whether the words are a quotation from the Hebrew Gospel, or a phrase employed by Eusebius himself to describe the prodigal's conduct. The passage in question is given by Mr. Nicholson in his recently-published work on 'The Gospel according to the Hebrews,' p. 59. The inevitable end of such courses is want and misery, and these all too soon overtook the prodigal. His money is squandered, and he is now almost without the means of purchasing the necessaries of life, not to speak of hurtful, pleasures. And, as evil fortune would have it, about the time when his resources were nearly exhausted there "arose a mighty famine in that land." This may seem a blemish in the parable, as introducing an element of an accidental character, having no necessary connection with the prodigal's misconduct. But it is not by accident that physical and moral evil meet in human history. There is a Divine teleology in the conjunction, whether appearing in individual experience, or in the life of nations, and the parable only recognises this truth in

exhibiting a correspondence between moral state and outward circumstances which is often exemplified in history, and as often shown by the result to have been designed by Providence to serve a beneficent purpose. By this unhappy conjunction of exhausted personal resources with general scarcity the luckless spendthrift is reduced to a state of destitution. And at the heels of want comes degradation. The well-born and once wealthy youth is driven by need to force himself[1] into the service of a citizen of the country, who has no better employment for him than the one of all others the most abhorrent to a Jew, that of a swineherd to a Gentile owner. A humiliating downcome, and a representation of the degradation of the publicans, Jews by birth, serving Roman masters as tax-gatherers, such as would satisfy even Pharisaic hearers.[2] The sorrows of the prodigal, beginning in want and passing into degradation, reach their lowest depth in desperation. His hunger at length attains such a pitch that he has a craving "to fill his belly," according to the homely but expressive phrase of the reading we follow,[3] with the fruit of the carob tree lying on the ground, and on which the swine fed. He had little else to eat, for nobody thought of giving to him when all had so little to themselves.[4]

[1] ■κολλ■θη. "The word implies that the citizen of the country to whom he applied was unwilling at first to receive him, and only after persistent pressing entreaties took him into his service."—Goebel, 'Die Parabeln.' Se obtrudat (■κολλ■θη, contemptim)—Unger, p. 148. "The term has something abject; he was, as it were, suspended on another personality."—Godet [2] Negotium quod antehac quam maxime abhorruisset subit. Judæus porcos pascit hominis Gentilis.—Unger.

[3] γεμ■σαι τ■ν κοιλ■αν. The reading in א, B, &c., is χορτασθ■ναι, which Godet regards as a euphemism substituted for the true reading in the Lectionaries, and thence transferred into the text by copyists. Westcott and Hort, however, regard this as the true reading, alleging that the other reading misses the point, and holding that the documentary evidence in any case is here decisive. The R. V. also adopts this reading. The American revisers, however, prefer the other, and our sympathies are with them.

[4] The words ο■δε■ς ■δ■δου α■τ■ it is best to understand as assigning a reason why he was fain to eat of the κερ■τια. The prodigal got a modicum of bread in the famine, but not enough to satisfy; he was therefore glad to eke out his diet with swine's food, which he could get for the lifting (like hungry children eating turnips out of a field). So Godet Similarly, Calvin.

Desperation formed the turning-point in the youth's career, and the next scene shows him returning to his senses, and beginning to think soberly and wisely. He is brought to his last shifts, but there is one course open: he may go back to his father's house. Of that house, and of the happiness of even those in servile position therein, he begins now, for the first time for many days, to think. The thought begets a purpose, and suggests a plan. He will go home, and he will make confession of his sin in well-premeditated form, suited at once to propitiate an injured father, and to express the modesty of his present expectations. He will own that he has been an offender both against God and against his parent, and he will beg a servant's place and position, a great boon to a starving man.[1] The picture of the penitent is not drawn in the ethereal colours of philosophy. Repentance has its source in hunger, and its motive is to get a bit of bread. How much nobler to have returned to rationality in folly's mid career, to have pulled up suddenly and said: "This will never do; I have been a fool. I will be a fool no longer; I will henceforth live a life of sobriety and

wisdom." Perhaps; but the parable is true to life. Hunger, stern necessity, abject poverty, has made many a man wise who had been foolish before, and though the repentance which thus begins is somewhat impure in its source, it clears itself betimes, as reason gradually gains its ascendancy, and the moral nature grows into strength. The prodigal's repentance became purified, whether as the result of reflection on the way home, or as the effect of an unexpectedly gracious reception from his father, is matter of conjecture; but, at all events, he dropped the last part of his premeditated confession when he came into his father's presence, and made no request, but only owned his sin.[2]

[1] ■ς ■να τ■ν μισθ■ων. Trench thinks the μ■σθιοι are to be regarded as occupying a lower position than even the δο■λοι, so that the sense is: a place among the lowest class of servants. But the contrast suggested is rather that between the condition of the μ■σθιοι in his father's house, and that of the μ■σθιοι in the land where he now spends a miserable existence. So Goebel. Godet identifies the μ■σθιοι with the pagan proselytes of the outer court, and says the prodigal, in his hope and desire, takes his position beside the publican (Luk 18:13).

[2] The premeditated confession was the repentance of fear; the actual confession, the repentance of love. The discovery of the difference produced the Reformation.—Godet.

2. We have now to look at the picture of the father of this penitent prodigal. He descries his son while he is yet a great way off, at the point where the road brings a traveller first into view. He has not forgotten his son, though his son has long forgotten him. He has been thinking of him through the long period of his absence. Probably he often cast glances along the road to see if perchance the erring one was returning, thinking he saw him in every stranger who made his appearance. He has continued looking, longing, till hope deferred has made his heart sick and weary almost to despair. If he is not represented as going in search of his lost child, it is not because he cares less for that child than the shepherd for his straying sheep, or the housewife for her missing coin; but because in this case the lost one is a man, not a beast or a lifeless thing, and can return of his own accord when his mind changes; and because only when the return is his own act, has it any moral significance. The father's solicitude therefore takes the form of waiting for his son's return. He has to wait long, but at last his patience is rewarded. For lo! at length there is one who does look like the long lost one. He is much changed, wears the aspect of a beggar, and trudges along like an aged man, weak and footsore. But love is quick to discern resemblances, and there is something in the stranger's gait and bearing that recalls the lost son. The father watches his movements for a little, till in the end he feels certain that it is none other than his son. The tide of compassion rises instantaneously, sweeping every other feeling before it. There is not even a momentary struggle between pity and resentment, such as the prophet represents taking place in the Divine bosom, in reference to Ephraim.[1]. He "ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him;" kissed him not once but many times, with fervency and rapture.[2] The moving scene over, the son gets an opportunity at length of making his confession. On arriving at the homestead together, the happy father gives orders to his servants, which indicate the completeness of his forgiveness, and the depth of his joy. First, he commands them to bring forth quickly the best robe and put it on him as the badge of distinction,[3] and a ring for his finger, and shoes for his feet as the badges of a free man[4] (though the shoes, and indeed all the three things—robe, ring, shoes, may be regarded simply as a provision rendered necessary by the destitute condition of the beggared prodigal). These instructions signify full reinstatement in filial position and privilege. He who has confessed himself

no more worthy to be called a son is to be treated as a son, not as a servant, and as the son of such a father, attired as becomes the member of a respectable family. He receives the adoption, the νοθεσα, to employ a prominent word of the Pauline theology. This feature in the parable is of great importance in respect of its religious significance. It is designed to suggest the doctrine that God deals with sinners repenting, as the father dealt with his returning son. God receives all penitents, even such as the publicans and sinners of Jewish society, as sons. It may become such to say: We are not worthy to be called thy sons, in the same spirit as Jewish exiles returned from Babylon are represented by the prophet as saying: We are so changed that Abraham would not know us, so degraded that Israel might be ashamed to acknowledge us.[5] But God is their Father notwithstanding; regards them as His sons, whence His joy on their return; treats them as sons, not forgiving them with a grudge, or partially, or in contempt, but to all intents and purposes acting towards them as if they had never sinned. At this point the doctrine of Christ remarkably coincides with that of St. Paul, who represents the standing of sonship as the privilege of every justified man. and the spirit of sonship as the ideal of the Christian's conscious relation to God. This harmony is only what we should expect when we consider that in the teaching both of Christ and of Paul the supreme category is Grace.

[1] Jer 31:20 [2] κατεφλησεν, the same word as in Luk 7:38; Luk 7:45.

[3] στολν τν πρτην: literally the first, whether in time or in degree must be determined by other considerations. Theophylact understood it in the temporal sense, and rendered πρτην by ρχαιαν, the reference being supposed to be to the pristine state of innocence before the fall. Similarly Calvin. The other view is favoured by most interpreters, and is doubtless to be preferred. For the use of πρτος in the sense of 'chief,' vide 1Ti 1:15.

[4] So Meyer. Grotius takes δακτλιον as a sign of dignity, and refers to Gen 41:42.

[5] Isa 63:16.

Next the father gives orders that a feast be made to celebrate his son's return, not merely to express his own joy and thankfulness, but to give the whole household an opportunity of sharing his gladness. The fatted calf, which had been in keeping for some periodically recurring high tide,[1] must be killed to-day, for never was there a fitter occasion for feasting and mirth than the day on which a son who has been as dead comes to life again, and who has been lost is found. So the father describes the case, and we can understand what a depth of meaning the words have for him. For the servants to whom he first utters them, they describe merely the outer aspect of the fact: a son who has been very long away from home and of whom no tidings have been received, returned to his father's house in good health. For the father, they express this outer fact, and more, the inner ethical aspect of the event, the great fact of a morally altered life. It is idle* therefore, to discuss, as some recent writers have done, the question, whether the words "dead and alive," "lost and found," have an ethical or only a physical meaning.[2] That depends on who uses them or hears them. The father employed a mode of expression which conveyed to his servants a meaning which they could understand and appreciate, and at the same time expressed for himself a thought he hid in his own bosom, as one with which hirelings might not inter-meddle. For him such words could not but mean more than met the ear of unreflecting domestics. But what did meet their ear sufficed to make them happy. They sympathised heartily with their master's joy, promptly executed his orders for the preparation of a feast, and then "began to be merry."[3] All in that

household were in holiday humour that day,—all but one.

[1] τ■ν μ■σχον τ■ν σιτευτ■ν, the fatted calf. "On every farm was the calf that was being fattened for the feast day. Jesus knew rural manners."—Godet.

[2] Hofmann contends that the words are to be taken in an ethical sense; Goebel takes the contrary view.

[3] Viewing the return of the prodigal simply from the outside as a finding of one lost for a time, the servants in this parable hold the place of the neighbours and friends in the other two parables. They, regarding the event from the outside, as a matter of course sympathise with their master.

3. That one was the elder son. He has been "in the field" all the day long, so that he is ignorant of what has happened, till returning home towards the evening he learns, from sounds which reach him from the house, that something unusual is going on. He has been busy at work on the paternal estate, for he is a dutiful, diligent, methodical, plodding, prosaic, uninteresting man. Inquiring what the music and the sound as of dancing means, he receives from the slave to whom he addresses his question the answer: "Thy brother is come, and thy father killed the fatted calf, because he received him safe and sound." In the words we are to find neither a sneer, nor a studied reserve in reporting the facts, as if in doubt how the news would be received, but simply an honest statement of the facts as they appeared to the superficial view of the servile mind, which thought only of the outward aspect of the event related.[1] Probably the honest slave expected that the tidings he communicated would give the elder son as much pleasure as they gave himself. If he did, he was very much mistaken. The report that a feast had been extemporised, to celebrate the return of a worthless member of the family, roused in the virtuous man a storm of indignation, and he could not endure the thought of appearing in a company where a spirit of mirth reigned, with which he had no sympathy. Strange that a brother should come behind even a slave in joy over the return of the erring one! And yet we must not overlook the fact, that in his very anger the eldest son showed himself morally superior to the slave. The slave was glad because he looked merely at the exterior side of the event: a member of the family long absent from home, at length returned. The son was angry because he looked at the moral side of his brother’s history; at the cause of his absence, and the sort of life he had been living. For thinking of these he was not to be blamed; his fault lay here, that he was readier to think of the sin than of the repentance, which in the judgment of charity might be presumed to have been the motive impelling the prodigal to return. This was the fault of the Pharisees, of whom he is the type. They thought only of the vices of the class whom Jesus loved, never of their repentance, and hence their inability to comprehend the motives, and to sympathise with the feelings, of Jesus. It was a fault due immediately to the want of a hopeful spirit in reference to the moral reformation of the degraded members of society. But that want of hope resolved itself ultimately into a lack of love. Charity hopeth all things. Jesus hoped for the repentance of publicans and sinners, because He loved them deeply; the Pharisees despaired of them because their hearts were cold, frozen with the pride of virtue. Even so with the elder son, to return to him. His virtue made him hard and severe, and unable to be forbearing, gentle, pitiful, or, to use the pregnant word of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, μετριοπαθε■ν, towards the erring.[2] He thought he did well to be angry, and therefore, when his father, on receiving the servant’s report that he was standing without in sullen humour, came out and entreated him to come in, his respect for his sire did not prevent him from expressing himself in the tone of one who

felt himself deeply injured, dwelling with not unnatural pride on the length and faithfulness of his service, and then complaining that his devotion had never been rewarded with so much as a paltry kidling to make a feast with his friends. Of this he should never have thought of complaining under ordinary circumstances; but when he sees how this worthless fellow is received and honoured by the killing of the calf that was being fattened against a family high-tide, as if no worthier occasion could be found than the day of his return, it is more than he can bear in silence. Verily he seems to have a good case against his father, and one wonders how the old man will defend himself. And on scanning his reply, one is half inclined to suspect that he is conscious of occupying a somewhat indefensible position. For he speaks with wondrous mildness, seeking to appease his angry son by calling him child,[3] and reminding him that his place in the house is such that to offer him a kid would be no compliment; for what was such a paltry gift to one who was lord of all? But this mildness does not really spring out of weakness; its true source is paternal love. The tender-hearted parent desires to soften the heart of one brother towards the other. For this purpose he first gently reminds the offended one that the returned prodigal was his own brother. "Thy son," he had called the prodigal, but the father calls him "thy brother." Then with the softness in word and tone which turneth away wrath he pled: "It was meet that there should be mirth and gladness, for thy brother was dead and is alive, and was lost and is found." It was a plea in justification of the mirth and gladness in which he and all the rest of the family had freely indulged, and also indirectly for the mirth and gladness which ought to have been, but was not, excited by the good news in the breast of the elder son himself.[4] It was the wisest plea the worthy head of the household could have advanced, but had he been disposed to retaliate he might easily have found a vulnerable point. He might have said, what indeed his words implied, that in complaining that he had never been presented with a kid the fault-finder had degraded himself to the position of a servant.[5] Nay, he might have said with perfect truth, that he was not the sort of man to awaken in others the festive mood. He was an eminently respectable, correct, exemplary man, but not one to be enthusiastic about. Prosaic himself, he could never excite gushes of emotion, lyric states of soul, in his fellow-men. The fountains of emotion are opened, not by moral mediocrity and correctness, but by wickedness penitent, or by heroic goodness. For a great sinner repenting, or for a moral hero who has achieved great deeds, one would readily make a feast, but scarcely for a righteous man like the elder brother would one even so much as kill a fatted calf, not to speak of dying oneself.

[1] Hofmann, with a strange want of insight, finds in the words a sneer adapted by a cunning domestic to the manifest ill-will of the elder brother. Meyer, on the other hand, thinks the servant showed discretion in speaking only of the physical health of the returned son. Godet, with superior discernment, says, the words of the servant describe the fact without the moral appreciation which did not suit a servant.

[2] Heb 5:2.

[3] Luk 15:31. τ■κνον.

[4] ■δει may refer either to something which has happened as it must have, or which ought to have happened but has not. Here it is used in both senses; in the first sense, with reference to the father and the rest of the family; in the second, with reference to the elder brother. So Goebel.

[5] The servile tone pervades the elder brother's words throughout, and in this he was a faithful picture of the Pharisees, whose religion was essentially legal and servile in spirit. The elder brother in the parable is the representative of the Pharisees in their good and bad points, in their moral correctness, and in their severity and pride, as the younger brother is the representative of the "publicans and sinners" in their depravity and repentance. This seems so evident to us, that we have all along taken it for granted. Some, however, and notably the critics who are always discovering traces of tendency in the Gospel, are of opinion that the two brothers represent not the Pharisees and publicans respectively, but Jews and Gentiles. But we must here, as in all cases, distinguish between the applications of which the parable admits, and the application primarily intended. That the reference, in the first place, is to Pharisees and publicans is to us beyond question; but that the doctrine of the parable admitted of being applied to Jews and Pagans, and that Jesus, and likewise Luke, was conscious of its applicability to the wider distinction, we have as little doubt. The Pharisees themselves could hardly fail to discern in Christ's sympathy with the degraded class, and in His defence thereof a latent universalism. The offence they took at Christ's conduct was probably due to an instinctive, half-conscious perception, that this new love for the sinful portended a religious revolution, the setting aside of Jewish prerogative, and the introduction of a religion of humanity to which Jew and Gentile should be as one.[1] They might arrive at this conclusion by a very simple process of reasoning. They themselves called Jesus "Friend of publicans and sinners"; but publicans were to them as heathens, and 'sinners' was the epithet they used to denote the Gentiles. Therefore they might readily argue that the man who took such an interest in publicans and sinners could have no objection in principle to associating with Gentiles, and that when the leaven of His influence had had time to work, the religion associated with His name would become the religion, not of the Jews, but of mankind. If they reasoned thus they reasoned rightly Christ's love was indeed revolutionary in tendency, and so was the doctrine He taught in these apologetic parables. The doctrine that every penitent sinner, though he were the meanest of mankind, is a son of God, could only issue in the new humanity of Paul, wherein "is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female, but all are one in Christ Jesus."[2] [1] Reuss says under 'sinners' Pagans are included, and in the sense explained above we agree with him.

[2] Gal 3:28.

It remains now to make a few observations on the import of the term 'lost' which occurs in all these three parables. It was a term frequently employed by Jesus to denote the objects of His redemptive activity. "I came," He said once and again, "to seek the lost" (τ■■πολωλ■ς). In endeavouring to appreciate the moral significance of this figurative term, it is important to note the difference between the second perfect participle used passively and the middle voice of the verb ■π■λλυμι, as employed in a sense peculiar to the New Testament, viz. to denote the future condition of the unsaved, as in the familiar text: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that every one believing in Him might not perish (μ■ ■π■ληται), but have eternal life."[1] The participle ■πολωλ■ς is used to denote a condition of peril, but the middle voice in New Testament usage denotes absolute perdition. The state indicated by the participle in question is one from which recovery is possible; the state indicated by the verb ■π■λλυσθαι or by the noun ■π■λεια is one of irretrievable loss.[2] Hence that which is lost, ■πολωλ■ς, is represented as the object of redeeming love. The Son of man came to seek τ■ ■πολωλ■ς.[3]

[1] John 3:16.

[2] On this distinction vide Cramer's 'Dictionary of New Testament Greek.'

[3] Luk 19:10; cf. Mat 10:6; Mat 15:24.

What, then, is the moral condition of humanity considered as that which, while lost, is yet capable of being found and saved? The parables we have been considering help us to answer this question. Man, viewed as the object of the Saviour's solicitude, is lost as a straying sheep is lost, through thoughtlessness; as a piece of money is lost to use, when its owner cannot find it; as a prodigal is lost, who in wayward-ness and self-will departs from his father's house to a distant land, and there lives a life utterly diverse from that of the home he has left, and so living holds no correspondence with his family, but is content to be as dead to them, and that they in turn should be as dead to him. Man as 'lost' is foolish as a straying sheep, to his own peril; lives in vain, not fulfilling the end of his existence, like a lost coin; is without God in the world, alienated from God, like a prodigal son. As a straying sheep he is not only lost, but has lost himself, bewildered like a traveller in a snowstorm, or a child in a wood. He has gone astray not in wantonness merely, but in quest of pasture, seeking after good, blindly groping after the summum bonum. He has gone further astray from that which he seeks, instead of coming nearer it. As a lost piece of money, he is forgetful of his chief end, and so lives in vain, so far as the higher purposes of life are concerned. As a lost son of God, he is not only witless like a sheep, and useless like a lost coin, but positively evil-minded, disobedient, undutiful, devoid of right affection, a lover of pleasure more than of God, one who banishes God from his thoughts, and who desires that he may not be in God's thoughts, and does what he can to hide himself from God, by living a prayerless, irreligious life, behaving as a runaway who holds no correspondence with friends that he may conceal from them his whereabouts. Such were the thoughts of Jesus concerning man when He described him as τ■ ■πολωλ■ς.[1]

[1] Bengel distinguishes the senses of the term 'lost,' as used in the three parables respectively, thus: Ovis, drachma, filius perditus; peccator stupidus, sui plane nescius, sciens et voluntarius. Our interpretation agrees with his in the first and third cases, but diverges from it in the second—he emphasising the unconsciousness of the lifeless piece of money; we, the fact that a lost coin is lost to use.

01.14. Chapter 3. The Children of the Bride-chamber

Chapter 3.

The Children of the Bride-chamber Or, Christ’s Apology for the Joy of His Disciples.

Then come to Him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft,[1] but Thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn, as long as the Bridegroom is with them? but days will come when the Bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.[2] And no one putteth a piece of unfulled cloth[3] unto an old garment, for that which filleth up[4] taketh from the garment, and a worse rent takes placed.[5] Neither do they put new wine into old skins; else[6] the skins burst, and the wine is shed, and the skins perish; but they put new wine into new skins, and both are preserved.—Mat 9:14-17. (Luk 5:33-39; Mark 2:18-22.) [1] πολλ■, much: πυκν■, in Luke (Luk 5:33).

[2] Luke adds ■ν ■κε■ναις ται■ς ■μ■ραις, "those days;" Mark, ■ν ■κε■ν■ τ■ ■μ■ρ■, "in that day:" the repetition adds solemnity to the statement.

[3] ■■κους ■γν■φου: so also in Mark.

[4] τ■ πλ■ρωμα α■το■ = the patch which fills the hole in the garment. Mark says, "that which fills up (τ■ πλ■ρωμα) takes from it, the new from the old (τ■ καιν■ν το■ παλαιο■). The mode of expression in this parable, as reported, is somewhat obscure throughout.

[5] χε■ρον σχ■σμα γ■νεται.

[6] ε■ δ■ μ■γε, or at least if they don’t attend to this rule.

It is not usual with writers on the parables to include among the number the three suggestive comparisons or illustrations contained in this remarkable section of the Gospel History. But without disputing the right of others to act otherwise, we have no hesitation in giving them a place in our studies on the Parabolic Teaching of Christ. For, if not fully developed parables, these similitudes are at least parable-germs; a fact recognised by one of the Evangelists, who applies the terra parable to the second and third of the three, the new patch on the worn-out garment, and the new wine in the old skins. And what is lacking in the artistic finish of these parable-germs is fully compensated for by their number, which is a significant hint of the importance of the subject to which they refer. Once more Jesus is put on His defence with reference to departure from the custom of the time by Himself and His disciples, and this time as usual His apology assumes the parabolic form; only in this case He does not, as in His apology for loving the sinful, seek so much to play the part of a consummate artist in the construction of exquisitely finished parables, but rather that of the suggestive original thinker, throwing out in rapid succession fruitful ideas which might be worked out by the hearers themselves. The change in the style was suited to a change in the circumstances; for the new interrogants do not seem to have been, as in the former case, captious, disaffected fault-finders, but rather men honestly perplexed by a surprising diversity in the religious-habits of the disciples of Jesus as compared with those of the Pharisees, and of

John’s disciples. What was called for in the former case was an effort to make a moral and emotional impression, and hence the artistic beauty and the pathos of the parables last considered: what is needed in the present case, on the other hand, is instruction in the form of hints at the true cause of the conduct animadverted on, and at the principles applicable to such a matter as the practice of fasting. And the instruction given is admirably adapted to its purpose. No hints could be more suggestive or stimulative of thought, more pregnant with deep meanings far-reaching in their application, more illustrative of the originality of the speaker, and more surely indicative that a great outstanding characteristic of the kingdom, a cardinal feature of the new movement heralded by the Man who was such a puzzle to His contemporaries, was pointed at. We should be very sorry indeed not to have a good excuse for including in our scheme these three parable-germs—the children of the bride-chamber, the new patch on the worn garment, and the new wine in the old skins. Of these parable-germs any one might have been selected to be the title of this chapter; but after due consideration we have deemed the first worthiest of the honour, not merely because it is the first, but specially because it gives us the deepest glimpse into the heart of the subject. For while the second and third simply illustrate the general principle that incongruous things ought not to be combined, that is, in the particular case in hand, that fasting should not be forced upon men whose mood it did not meet, the first tells us precisely what was the mood of the disciples of Jesus which made fasting an uncongenial practice, reveals to us the latent spiritual characteristic of the Jesus-circle, which accounted for this superficial divergence from religious custom. And what then was that mood and characteristic? It was. Joy. Jesus and His disciples were a wedding party; He the bridegroom, they the sons of the bride-chamber, the bridegroom’s friends who with Him conducted the bride to her new home, and there spent a happy week in unrestrained festivity. For all this is implied in the question, Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn? The question is an implicit assertion, the case put is the actual case, here as in all the parables. Such then being the relations and circumstances of the parties, of course mourning, and therefore by the law of congruity fasting, is out of the question. Joy, mirth, rules the hour, and the appropriate behaviour is not fasting, but dancing and song. But whence this joy, whence in other words the relations alleged to subsist between the Galilean Master and his companions? The question throws us back on the characteristics of the kingdom as preached by Jesus. There is joy in the Jesus-circle because the kingdom is a kingdom of GRACE, a kingdom the announcement of whose advent is good news, the very gospel, and whose presence is the summum bonum, signifying God a Father, and men His sons. This idea of the kingdom, the one ever presented by Jesus, was the true source of the behaviour of His disciples, and the radical cause of the difference between their behaviour and that of John’s disciples. The difference ran up ultimately into this: the diverse conceptions of the kingdom as preached by Jesus and John respectively. The diversity of their conceptions may be very simply formulated. The kingdom as preached by Jesus was good news. As preached by John it was awful news. In the mouth of the one it meant God regarding men as a Father ready to bestow upon them His grace, yea, willing to receive graciously, as still His children, though erring, the most depraved of men returning to Him in penitence. In the mouth of the other it meant God coming in the majesty of His justice, to execute judgment; Messiah coming with fan in hand to sift wheat from chaff, and with axe to hew down unfruitful trees. No wonder that the followers of the two preachers differed widely in their way of life, the disciples of the one resembling a wedding party making the welkin ring with laughter and song, the disciples of the other resembling a band of pilgrims trudging with rueful look and

weary foot to the shrine of a saint to do penance for their sins. No wonder that the disciples of Jesus were a puzzle and a scandal to the disciples of the Baptist; for it is not easy to understand or sympathise with conduct springing out of a radically different spirit to that which animates oneself. No wonder, finally, that Jesus himself was a mystery to the Baptist as he lay brooding in melancholy fashion in the prison of Machærus; for in His hand was no axe or fan, in His mouth no words of terror, in His heart no severity, but only gentleness and pity dictating deeds of kindness and messages of mercy. In all Christ's teachings can be found no more decisive indication of the gracious character of the kingdom than just this parable of the Children of the Bridechamber. But we must not suppose that the joyous mood of His disciples sprang directly out of a clear conception on their part of the nature of the kingdom. A kingdom is a very complex phenomenon, and the kingdom which Jesus preached was as yet but very imperfectly understood by those who followed Him. Their conscious thoughts about it were crude and mistaken, and what knowledge of its true nature they had was of an instinctive, unconscious, and implicit character. They knew the kingdom through Jesus the King; not through His words, but through the spirit that was in Him, and that revealed itself in His whole bearing. They knew it as voyagers know the near neighbourhood of an unseen land, by the sweet odour borne thence on the breeze. They discerned the perfume of the oil of gladness emanating from their Master, and hence divined the nature of the, kingdom which He came to found. And the gladness which was in Him passed into them by sympathy. Being in His company they were infected with His spirit, and acted as they saw Him act. Their neglect of fasting was imitative in its origin, not based on reflection. They acted from impulse, not from principle. They did what they did they knew not why, and on being found fault with they would not know what to answer. Men constantly in Christ's company might be expected at length to understand the rationale of the conduct impugned, but to such insight they had not yet attained. In the foregoing remarks we have implied that the spirit or mood of Jesus was characteristically one of joy. To some this may seem a very questionable position. Was not Jesus the man of sorrow and sadness rather than the man of gladness? He was a man of sorrow; there was ever in Him a deep sadness, of whose presence we have a significant index in the words, "there will come days when the bridegroom shall be taken from them," which are an ominous hint of a tragic experience awaiting Him in the future that cast its shadow on His spirit now; how deep a shadow we may judge from the repeated mention of the days of mourning, in the version of the saying given by the other Evangelists. But this deep habitual sadness notwithstanding, the spirit of Jesus was emphatically joyful, and His face radiant with the oil of gladness. There was a sunny brightness in His temper as well as an undertone of melancholy. And the springs of His gladness were twofold. First there was the joy inseparable from a religion which has its source in fresh intuitions of truth and rests not on the mere traditions of men, the joy of perfect freedom combined with absolute devotion to God, a joy of which they know nothing whose souls are imprisoned in a complicated system of conventional religious observances such as those practised by the Pharisees, or even by the Baptist's disciples. What a dull, dreary, sombre existence is that of the tradition-enslaved soul, doomed to perform the daily routine of fasting and praying and almsgiving, which composes the dead carcase of works technically holy! But how inexpressibly sweet the joy of "religion new given," consisting in "a revival of intuitive and fresh perceptions."[1] It is the joy of the lark soaring to heaven's gate, and singing in the bright sunshine and warm air of summer. It is a joy given to men in certain ages to know in exceptional measure (happy they who live then), and to none more than to Jesus and His disciples. The sign of its presence is the term new applied by implication in

our parables to the religious movement with which Jesus and His disciples were identified. Jesus in effect calls His cause a new garment and a new vintage. He does this, moreover, not as one apologising for His existence, but rather as one asserting His own importance. He not merely concedes, he triumphantly proclaims the novelty of His religion. What was a fault in the eyes of others was a virtue in His view. And here we have to note the affinity between Christ's spirit and that of Paul, who gloried in the novelty of the Christian religion as a merit, inasmuch as it was but the fulfilment of the prophetic oracle which proclaimed God to be the Maker of new things.[2]. Of the same mind also was the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, whose whole argument is a vindication of the rights of the new as opposed to the prescriptive rights of the decadent old, which he regarded as cancelled and antiquated by the bare uttering of the word 'new' in the prophetic oracle of the new covenant.[3] This joy in the new is indeed characteristic of the whole New Testament, and it is a standing characteristic of the genuinely evangelic spirit in all ages.

[1] 'Literature and Dogma,' p. 91.

[2] 2Co 5:16 : cf. Isa 43:18-19

[3] Heb 8:13.

Besides this joy of fresh religious intuition, Jesus also knew the not less intense joy of love. His passion for saving the lost brought Him wondrous gladness, as well as deep sadness. It was meat to Him to create a spring of new spiritual life in the heart of any human being, even though it were but a publican or a Samaritan woman. He drank deeply of this joy of redeeming love at the feast in Matthew's house with publicans for fellow-guests, the occasion on which our parables were spoken. "In the midst of this feast of publicans the heart of Jesus is overflowing with joy; it is one of the hours when His earthly life seems to His feeling like a marriage day."[1] Generous natures can appreciate this joy of doing good; Paul showed that he appreciated it when in his catalogue of the fruits of the Spirit he placed joy next to love.[2] It was a true instinct which guided him in the collocation, for where the spirit of beneficence is, there inevitably will be the spirit of gladness. Christ could not be full of grace without being also full of joy.

[1] Godet in loco.

[2] Gal 5:22. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy," etc. In a faint degree the disciples were partakers of their Master's joy in both aspects. They knew a little, as yet only a little, of the joy of fresh religious intuition, and of the liberty thence accruing; a little also of the joy of saving the lost. But they had a joy of their own distinct from that of Jesus, the joy, not of giving, but of receiving grace, the joy of faith in the love of a Divine Father to the sinful and unworthy. And in proportion as they experienced this joy would they also experience the species of joy first described, the joy of religious liberty. Faith in God's grace has for its natural issue and consummation that exultant, triumphant joy which was so marked a feature in Paul's religious consciousness, and which finds such impassioned expression in his great controversial epistles—the joy of the spirit of sonship which dares to call God, Father;[1] the joy of hope which can take an optimistic view of life, and believe that all things work together for good;[2] the joy which can exult even in tribulation, because it only tends to develop patience and test character, and so to confirm hope;[3] the joy last, but not least, of liberty from law,[4] of happy riddance from that stern tyrannical husband, to be united in blessed wedlock to the soul's true husband, Jesus Christ.[5] There are many in our

time who gravely doubt whether the companions of Jesus ever attained to the perfect Christian joy of the Pauline theology, deeming it rather highly probable that to the end the original apostles, the eleven, continued to do the very thing their Master had treated as an absurdity; to combine, that is, incongruous elements in their religious faith and practice, law and grace, works and faith, the old worn-out garment of Judaism with the new garment of evangelic righteousness; the old skins of Jewish religious custom with the new wine of a gospel of mercy which God meant to be preached to every creature under heaven. If this were indeed the case, then we can only say that the eleven made little use of their opportunities during the time "they had been with Jesus." For it cannot reasonably be doubted that Pauline antinomianism, to use the word in an uninvidious sense, was the natural outcome of Christ's own teaching, and that in accustoming His disciples to disregard existing Jewish religious custom in certain particulars he was educating them for the ultimate abandonment of the whole system as superseded by, and incongruous with, the new order of things brought in with the era of grace.

[1] Gal 4:6; Rom 8:15.

[2] Rom 8:28.

[3] Rom 5:3.

[4] Gal 4:5.

[5] Rom 7:1-4. The idea in this passage is essentially the same as in the parable of the children of the bride-chamber. These children of the bride-chamber are from another point of view also the bride, as the Baptist himself hinted when he said, "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice" (John 3:29). Olshausen remarks on it as somewhat surprising, that in the passage before us the disciples are merely the παραν■μφιοι. He reconciles the representation with the other, by saying that while with all believers they were the bride, the first disciples were the first rays shed upon humanity by the rising Sun of the spiritual world, and so might be said to introduce the heavenly Bridegroom to His earthly bride. This we take to be the hidden import of the two parables concerning the new patch on the old garment, and the new wine in old skins, though on the surface they merely teach the general truth that incongruous elements ought not to be united in religion. One consideration that tends to justify the ascription to the two parables of such deep significance is the fact that in uttering them Jesus was defending His disciples for divergence from the religious customs, not of the Pharisees only, but of the Baptist's followers. From this it follows, that the religious movement inaugurated by Jesus was a new thing, new wine, a new garment, in reference even to the religion of the Baptist-circle. Much is implied in this. If Christ had called his religion new as compared with Pharisaism it might have signified no more than that His religion was Judaism reformed, for Pharisaism was Judaism deformed. But John's religion was itself a reformed Judaism; if therefore Christ's was new in comparison with it, it must have been something more than a reform, even a revolution, an absolutely new thing, having its roots in the Old Testament doubtless, but radically diverse in spirit, principle, and tendency, from the whole religious life of the age whether deformed or reformed.

Passing from this let us observe the reasons by which the law of congruity is enforced in these parables. The chief reason is the incompatibility of the new with the old, leading inevitably to

rupture and waste. But it is interesting to note that besides this Luke mentions another, in connection with the first of the two parables; viz. the want of correspondence or keeping between the new and the old. Besides the rending which takes place in connection with the patching of an old garment by a piece from a new one, there is the further objection to the proceeding that the new piece will not agree or harmonise with the old.[1] It is an offence against aesthetics, objectionable on the score of taste, even if no serious result were to follow from the inharmonious combination. The garment so patched will present a grotesque aspect to be avoided by all means. This recognition of æsthetical considerations as having their own place in religion (for we may legitimately transfer this feature of the parable to the spiritual sphere) is well deserving notice, though in comparison with the more serious consequences resulting from disregard of the law of congruity, it be but of subordinate moment. It is a word in favour of the beautiful from the author of our faith. And it is further to be noted, that the parable of the new patch, as given in Luke, conveys to us an important hint as to the true source of beauty and harmony in religion. A religious cultus will only then exhibit a fair aspect and harmonious proportions when it is all of a piece, generated from one principle, the embodiment of one spirit, not an eclectic patchwork of beliefs and practices borrowed from various sources. This is but to say that religion is only then seen in its native comeliness when it is the religion of the spirit. Then it possesses the incomparable attractions of naturalness, spontaneity, free unfettered movement, doing whatever the spirit prompts, and doing it gracefully and heartily. How repulsive by comparison a religion of mechanical habits, of which no account can be given except that they are sanctioned by tradition and custom; and not less, let us add, a religion of merely negative affected spirituality, whose mechanicalism consists in avoiding everything savouring of taste as sensuous, mistaking barbarism for purity. It is an error of the same kind in worship, as that in religious life which makes the new nature consist in being unnatural.

[1] τ■ παλαι■ ο■ συμφων■σε ι τ■ ■π■ το■ καινσ■ (John 3:36). The expression might be interpreted as referring to the stronger quality of the new cloth leading to the result pointed at in Matthew and Mark, but, as Godet remarks, it much more naturally refers to a contrast in appearance between the two cloths. Besides, as we shall see, Luke’s conception of the new cloth does not make room for the idea of contraction resulting from the unfulled condition of the cloth.

Turning now to the principal reason for observing the law of congruity, viz. the damage and loss caused by the breach of it, we find here also a peculiarity in Luke’s narrative, in so far as the first of the two parables is concerned; this, viz., that the injury is done not, as in Matthew and Mark, to the old garment, but to the new one. In the first two Gospels the evil to be shunned is the rending of the old patched garment by the contraction of the new piece of unfulled cloth under the influence of moisture. In Luke, on the other hand, the evil is the spoiling of a new garment,[1] from which a piece has been cut out. This seems a somewhat unnatural turn of thought, for the procedure pointed at, that of patching an old coat by a piece cut out of a new one, seems too absurd for any human being in his senses to think of. And when we endeavour to apply the idea to the spiritual situation we find ourselves somewhat at a loss in which direction to turn. Is Jesus justifying Himself for not playing the part of a patcher as described in the parable, or is He representing John as playing that part; and in either case what is signified by the spoiling of the new garment? If cur Lord stated the case as represented in Luke’s narrative we must put upon His words some such sense as the following:—It is a folly to combine the new doctrine of the kingdom with old customs

associated with a religion of an entirely different spirit. The necessary effect of such a course must be to do fatal injury to the new doctrine, by obscuring its true nature and weakening its influence. We certainly can imagine Jesus saying this in reference to John's disciples, for the deprecated line of action was just that which they pursued. They believed in the kingdom preached by their Master, and so far were on the side of the new movement; but they combined this belief with Judaistic or Pharisaic practice, with the result that their faith in the kingdom was practically neutralised, or extinguished as a light put under a bushel. And we can also conceive Jesus saying the same thing concerning Himself to the effect of justifying Himself for not pursuing the policy indicated; though not without qualification, for while He disregarded Pharisaic practice in such matters as fasting and ceremonial washing, He did certainly accommodate Himself to many existing usages, which were destined to fall into desuetude when the spirit of the new religion had had time to create for itself a fitting garment of habits.[2]

[1] The piece used as a patch is taken from a new garment, ■π■ ■ματ■ου καινο■, and the evil one does by such a procedure is that he rends the new (garment) τ■ καιν■ν (■μ■τιον) σχ■σει. The A. V. renders this "the new maketh a rent" (in the old), which brings Luke into harmony with Matthew and Mark. But this construction is hardly admissible. Besides, the new piece of cloth in Luke's version does not possess the property which causes rending, for it is taken from a new garment which would not naturally be made of unfulled cloth.

[2] Godet understands the parable as referring to Christ, that is, as containing a repudiation on Christ's part of the rôle of a patcher. Hofmann, on the other hand, thinks the reference is to the Baptist, so that the parable contains a description of what John and his disciples did. They did what Jesus declined to do; spoiled the new religion by using it to patch up, or reform, a worn-out religion.

We are inclined to think that while the thought to which Luke gives prominence in the first parable may have been glanced at, it was not the one emphasised by the speaker, but rather that brought out in the version of Matthew and Mark, viz. the tearing asunder of the new from the old after the patching process has been accomplished.[1] In this form the first parable sympathises best with the second, for then it becomes apparent that the mischief wrought in both cases is due to the forces latent in the new. Rending in the one case is produced by the contraction of the new cloth, in the other by the fermentation of the new wine. And the great truth in the spiritual sphere thus pointed out is, that the attempt to force old beliefs and customs on a new religious movement must ever be disastrous either to the old or to the new, probably to both, in consequence of the vital force of the new life, which will never rest till it has rid itself of bondage to foreign elements with which it has no affinity.

[1] So Olshausen, who thinks that in Luke's narrative our Lord's words have undergone modification, with a view to assimilate the two parables by making Christianity in each the chief thing: the new garment and the new wine. Godet takes strongly and even enthusiastically the opposite view. In the natural sphere men take the disruptive forces latent in the new into account, and so avoid the risks run by disregard of the law of congruity. No man putteth a piece of unfulled cloth on an old garment, or new wine into worn-out skins. Such prudence is so much a matter of course, that but for the sake of the spiritual application of the parables, it had been wholly unnecessary to point out the consequences of neglect. But, alas! in the spiritual sphere the

exceptional man is he who has the wisdom to act on the law of congruity. The admirers of the old will insist on forcing the new wine into old bottles, regardless of the thousandfold illustrations supplied by history of the danger and folly of so doing. How is it that a prudence which is so common in natural life is so rare in religion? It arises from failure to recognise in new religious phenomena a new wine of the kingdom. Once recognise the presence of a new wine, and the sense to know what to do with it may be expected to follow; just as, once recognise that Christ is a Physician and a Shepherd, and you will no longer wonder that He takes an interest in publicans and sinners. But the difficulty is to discern the true character of the novel in religion. One is so apt to regard it not as a new wine of the kingdom, but as a poisonous liquid, the fruit of levity, impiety, youthful vanity, restless love of change. That it objects to anything in the established beliefs and customs is sufficient evidence of its dangerous character. But even after the initial difficulty of discerning in the new the traces of a genuine wine of the kingdom has been got over, there are still hindrances to be overcome before the new wine shall receive wise treatment. Men are apt to say, Why cannot the new wine go into old skins? why should not forms of belief and worship and modes of action which suited the fathers suit the children also, and what harm can result from insisting on conformity to existing custom? This is the position usually assumed virtually or avowedly by the patrons of use and wont Conservative minds have a very inadequate idea of the vital force of belief. Their own faith having become a tame lifeless thing, they imagine tameness or pliancy to be an attribute of faith generally, and too often they do not find out their mistake till an irrepressible revolutionary outburst causes them to open their eyes in amazement. They insist on adherence to what is old till the new proves its inherent power by producing an explosion needlessly wasteful, whereby both wine and bottles are destroyed, and energies which might have wrought much unmixed good are perverted into blind powers of indiscriminate destruction. The unwisdom of the old in dealing with the new has yet another source: dislike of the unamiable repulsive elements characteristic of the latter. It may be taken for granted that there are such elements in all new movements, however noble and wholesome in the main. The existence of defects, imperfections inseparable from the initial stage of the new life, is clearly implied in both the parabolic emblems. The new piece of cloth is unfulled, not fit for wear. The new wine has to go through a process of fermentation before it be drinkable, or at least in its present state it is very inferior to the old wine in flavour. In the very striking sentence with which Luke’s report of our Lord’s words ends, this is very frankly recognised. "And no one," said Jesus, "having drunk old wine, wishes new, for he saith, the old is mild."[1] It is an observation full of kindly humour, rare charity, and deepest wisdom; a candid concession to the honest lovers of old ways, and, in effect, a modest appeal to them to exercise indulgence towards the new ways. Had Christians but entered fully into the spirit of this one saying of their Lord, what a difference it would have made in the history of the Church. Then men had known how to combine preference for the old with tolerance of the new, so as to give the new time to grow mellow in turn. But such wisdom is often sadly lacking even in good men, men of taste and culture, the reverent and devout, themselves excellent samples of the old vintage. Such not unfrequently make no allowance for youth and inexperience, but treat faults which are at worst but the escapades of noble energies not yet perfectly under the control of wisdom, as if they were unpardonable sins. Because the new wine is as yet harsh and fiery they think they do well to spill it, saying it is naught and unprofitable. How much wiser to give heed to the appeal of the new wine as uttered by the mouth cf the Eternal Vine: "We know that we are unpalatable to those accustomed to the old vintage; but bear with us, do not

hate us, do not destroy us, do not cast us out. Keep us, we will mend with age, and may ultimately be as good to drink as that which is at present in use."[2]

[1] Luk 5:39, before θ■λεε many copies read ε■θε■ς = 'straightway,' A.V. For the positive χρηστ■ς some MSS. read χρηστ■τερος. The positive is to be preferred as more emphatic.

[2] Godet finds in this saying, recorded alone by Luke, a third parable, having for its distinctive aim to teach that the organs of the new principles must not treat those of the ancient order with harshness, but remember that it is not easy to pass from a system with which one has been identified from childhood, to an entirely different principle of life. This is certainly an important truth which was often enforced and habitually acted on by Paul, and this sentence may be used for the purpose of inculcating it on Christians, as showing how kindly their Lord treated the adherents of the old order of things. But the saying seems intended primarily to show how a plea for the toleration of the new may be combined with recognition of the merits of the old, and in this view it is better to take it as a reflection appended to the preceding parable than as a new one.

What 'sweet reasonableness' is in that saying of Jesus concerning the old wine and the new! What rare qualities of mind and heart are exhibited in all the sayings spoken by Him on this occasion: what ready wit, what kindly humour, what gaiety of spirit, what profound yet homely originality of thought; what clear insight into the significance of His own position and vocation, what confidence in His own cause, what resolute determination to maintain His independence, and to decline all self-stultifying compromises; and yet withal what patience and tolerance towards all honest earnest men who in matters of religion cannot see with His eyes!

01.15. Chapter 4. The Lowest Seats at Feasts, and the Pharisee and the Publican

Chapter 4.

The Lowest Seats at Feasts, and the Pharisee and the Publican Or, The Kingdom of God for the Humble. At a Sabbath-day feast in the house of an influential and wealthy Pharisee, Jesus spake the following parable to His fellow-guests, when He marked how they chose out the chief places: When thou art bidden of any one to a wedding, sit not down in the chief seat, lest a more honoured one than thou be bidden of him; and he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give place to this one; and then shalt thou begin with shame to take the last seat. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the last place, that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, come up hither:[1] then shalt thou have glory before all thy fellow-guests. For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.—Luk 14:7-11.

[1] προςαν■βηθι; the προς implying approach towards the host at the head of the table. So Field, criticising the A. V. and R. V. "No account," he says, "is taken of the πρ■ς. It must have one of two values, either of addition,—ascende adhuc superius,—or motion towards—ascende huc superius. The latter seems to be the case here. The host comes into the room, takes his place at the head of the table, and calls to the guest whom he intends to honour, Friend, come up higher. This view is remarkably confirmed by Pro 25:7, which our Lord had in view."—'Otium Norv.' This parable has not, any more than those considered in our last chapter, the honour of being included among the parables of our Lord in many of the books belonging to the literature of our subject. This may be due to the fact that it offers few topics for remark, and that the one lesson which it teaches, the moral enunciated in the closing verse, is more impressively enforced in the more important parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. It deserves however at least a passing notice, if it were only to give occasion for pointing out the prominent place which the great truth that the kingdom of God is for the humble, occupied in the thoughts of Jesus, as evinced by the fact of His uttering two parables to enforce it We have discovered it to be His way to multiply parables to inculcate truths either ill understood, or of cardinal importance. We have two parables setting forth the kingdom of God as the summum bonum, two to teach the value of perseverance in prayer, three to declare the joy of men in finding things lost, three to vindicate the joy of those who have believed in God's grace. In like manner we have two parables to teach that he who humbleth himself shall be exalted, and he who exalteth himself shall be abased; whence we may confidently infer that, in the view of Christ, this is one of the great laws of the kingdom of God. On the surface this portion of our Lord's table-talk at the Sabbath feast wears the aspect of a moral advice, rather than of a parable. But it does not require lengthened consideration to be satisfied that Jesus is not here performing the part of a mere censor of manners, but is following His true vocation as the Teacher of the Doctrine of the Kingdom. Through the medium of a counsel of prudence relating to ordinary social life He communicates a lesson of true wisdom concerning the higher sphere of religion. The

Evangelist perceived this, therefore he called this piece of advice a parable; most legitimately, inasmuch as a parable has for its aim to show by an example of human action in natural life, how men should act in the sphere of spiritual life. There is indeed a manifest difference between this parable and all others hitherto considered, viz. that it tells us not how men do act in the natural sphere, but how according to the dictates of prudence they should act. The guests whom Jesus saw before Him, and whose conduct called forth the parable, had been acting in a different way, not prudently sitting down in a humble place in the hope that their host would invite them to a place of greater distinction, but proudly appropriating to themselves the places which they thought due to their social importance. The morality of the advice given to them was not high, for it simply showed them a slyer way of gratifying ambition; but low as was its moral tone, the line of action apparently recommended was too high pitched for most of those present The prudence prescribed, though worldly in its spirit, was too like genuine wisdom to be generally practised. The truth seems to be that Christ had no serious intention to give a lesson in social deportment, and that the parabolic element in His words is confined to this, that instruction valid only for the religious sphere is couched in terms which seem to imply a reference to ordinary social life. At the table of this chief man among the Pharisees He has an excellent opportunity of witnessing the spirit of Pharisaism in full bloom; and as He notes its characteristic vanity and pride exhibiting themselves in a struggle for the chief rooms at the feast, He thinks how different the order of things here from that which obtains in the kingdom of God! Here pride grasps at distinction and gets its reward, there pride is abased and the humble are exalted. He puts His reflections in the form of a counsel how to behave at feasts, not that He, expects any one present to act on the advice, or to regard it otherwise than as the whimsical utterance of an eccentric person, to be received with a smile. He knows that no proud man can ever believe that humility is the way to exaltation, and therefore that no proud man ever will take that way. He knows also that humility does not gain honour among the worldly-minded, that on the contrary the world generally takes men at their own estimate, and gives to ambition the first place, and to modesty the last. He understands, consequently, that to attempt to change the customs of society by moral advice were to waste words and to lower Himself. What He really does is to remind His fellow-guests that there is a society in which humility is held in honour and pride gets a downsetting. That He is thinking of this sacred society is apparent from His manner of expressing Himself. The case supposed is that of an invitation to a wedding.[1] Why a wedding, instead of an ordinary feast? Because He has in mind that kingdom of heaven which He more than once expressly represented by the emblem of a marriage-feast,[2] and which He thought of under that figure when He spake of His disciples as the children of the bride-chamber. Then the word "glory" (δ■ξα) in the closing sentence of the parable is very suggestive: "Thou shalt have glory before all thy fellow-guests." Would Jesus use such a term in reference to the little triumph of a guest at a common feast over his fellow-guests, in being promoted to a place of distinction? The expression, it has been well remarked, would be puerile, if it did not open up a glimpse of a heavenly reality.[3] [1] ε■ς γ■μους. D. has γ■μον.

[2] Mat 22:1; Mat 25:1.

[3] Godet. The Pharisee and the Publican The parable of the Pharisee and the Publican shows us the same spirit which at the Sabbath-day feast eagerly sought the first places, at work in the sphere of religion: the Pharisee confidently taking for himself the first place among the ranks of the righteous and the devout. On this account this history cannot strictly be considered a parable, for

in it is no comparison between action in the natural sphere and action in the higher spiritual sphere; but rather an illustrative example of a certain kind of action in the latter sphere, with a declaration of the Divine judgment thereon. Nevertheless the Evangelist calls it a parable, and expositors with one consent have agreed to regard it as such. To certain men who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and were in the habit of despising others, Jesus spake "this parable:"

Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee and the other a publican. The Pharisee, having taken up his position,[1] prayed within himself thus: God, I thank Thee, that I am not as the rest of men,[2] extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican, I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I acquired.[3] But the publican, standing[4] afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes unto heaven, but kept smiting his breast, saying: God, be merciful to me the sinner.[5] I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other;[6] for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.—Luk 18:9-14.

[1] σταθε■ς. The word implies confidence. Bengel: fidenter, loco solito. Reciprocum plus notat quam ■στ■ς neutrum (Luk 9:13). Similarly Unger: σταθε■ς, elatus.

[2] ο■ λοιπο■ τ■ν ■νθρ■πων, all but himself and his class.

[3] κτ■μαι, not κ■κτημαι, which it would require to be in order to bear the rendering in A. V.

[4] ■στως, vide note 2: the publican stood in a timid attitude, as it apologizing for his existence.

[5] τ■ ■μαρτωλ■, not the only sinner, but the man who is known by his sin, the notorious sinner.

[6] The reading here is very uncertain. T. R. has ■ ■κε■νος. The most probable reading is that of א, B, L. παρ■ ■κε■νον. Another reading adopted by Tischendorf is ■ γ■ρ ■κε■νος, which seems to be a combination of the other two, γαρ being a mistake for παρ. The sense in any case is clear.

It is idle to ask when or to whom this parable was spoken. The Evangelist states that it was spoken to or about certain persons who trusted in themselves that they were righteous. It is evident that it might have been represented with equal propriety as spoken to or about men of an opposite spirit, such, viz., as were ready to acknowledge their shortcomings. The really important thing to note is that this is a parable which sets forth one of the great laws of the kingdom of God, viewed as a kingdom of Grace, that enunciated in the closing verse: "Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." It was doubtless the perception of this fact which led Luke to gather up the precious fragment and preserve it in his basket. Luke was the Evangelist, as Paul was the Apostle, of the Gentiles, and in collecting materials for the composition of his Gospel he was ever on the outlook for such incidents in the ministry of Christ as tended to show that the Gospel was designed for the whole world, and that it was fit to be a Gospel for the world. A salvation to be preached to the human race, a salvation by grace, and therefore available for Gentiles on the same terms as for Jews, these were the fundamental articles in Luke’s as in Paul’s creed; and in writing the life of our Lord he was ever intent on showing that these doctrines had a root in His teaching. This parable he rightly considered fitted to serve that purpose. The poor publican, though a Jew, was in Pharisaic esteem as an heathen man; and in representing a

penitent publican as an object of Divine favour, Jesus in effect and in principle proclaimed the truth: "There is hope in God even for Gentiles, for all, who are objects of contempt, as aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, to the proud self-righteous Jew." Then in declaring that the penitent publican was justified rather than the Pharisee who had no sins to confess, Jesus in effect proclaimed that other grand truth, that men are saved not by works of righteousness which they have done, but by God's mercy. Christ's reflection on the two men is equivalent in drift to Paul's doctrine of justification by grace through faith. It is not so clear and explicit an announcement of that doctrine as we find in the Pauline Epistles; but it tends that way, it looks in the direction of Paul's doctrine, it is Paul's doctrine in germ, and hence the interest it awakened in the mind of Luke, who was a thorough believer in the Pauline programme: salvation by grace, therefore salvation for all on equal terms, there being no difference between Jew and Gentile, for "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

We shall best study this parable by making our starting-point the judgment of Jesus on the two men whose characters are so graphically depicted in it, and considering in order these points: First, the import of the judgment; Second, its grounds; Third, its uses.

I. It is declared that the publican went down to his house justified rather than the Pharisee. In endeavouring to ascertain the import of this declaration we must assume that it is not intended to call in question the statements of fact made by the two parties. Neither is supposed to have borne false witness for or against himself, whether in ignorance or with intent to deceive. Even the self-laudatory statements of the Pharisee are allowed to pass unquestioned. It is not said, insinuated, or tacitly implied that he gives himself credit for actions which he has not performed, or for virtues which he does not possess. It is conceded that he is not an extortioner, or an unjust man, or an impure man, and that he fasts twice a week, and gives tithes of all he acquires, so adding works of supererogation to his virtue, doing more than the statute required.[1] What is blamed is not his statement of facts, but the spirit in which he makes that statement, the spirit of self-complacency. There is the less reason to doubt this that the Pharisee is not represented as uttering his prayer aloud. He took up his posture and prayed thus with himself. Some indeed would connect the words differently, so as to make the sentence run—he stood by himself and prayed thus, the isolated position being supposed to be the point our Lord wished to emphasise as a mark of pride. There seem to be no good grounds, however, for departing from the arrangement as it stands in our English version, which is approved by the great majority of interpreters. But if πρ■ς ■αυτ■ν is to be taken with προση■χετο, the fact implied is that the Pharisee's prayer was mental not audible. He prayed "within himself," even as "there were some that had indignation within themselves" at the waste of precious ointment by Mary of Bethany.[2] It has been asked what was there characteristic of a Pharisee in praying mentally?[3] But this trait is added not to distinguish the Pharisee from others, but to keep the account given of his prayer within the limits of verisimilitude. Even a Pharisee would hardly dare to utter such a prayer in the hearing of his fellow-men, speaking as if he were the only good man, and all the rest of the world given up to iniquity. Had his prayer been meant for the public ear there would probably have been in it less depreciation of others and also less praise of himself. But just on that account there would likewise have been less sincerity, less fidelity to the actual thoughts and feelings of the man. However the Pharisee might pray in public, the prayer put into his mouth shows us how he prayed in his heart. And just because it is a heart prayer it is a true prayer reflecting his real belief.[4] He thinks as

badly of the world as he is represented; he thinks as well of himself, and he does so on the ground of the virtues and pious practices for which he gives himself credit, with perfect fidelity to fact It is his self-complacency alone, therefore, not its fact-basis, which is liable to question.

[1] The Pharisees fasted on Mondays and Thursdays. The law prescribed only one regular fast, that on the great day of atonement. The law as to tithes prescribed that a tenth part of the produce of the fields and of the herds should be devoted to the Levites (Lev 27:30-32; Num 18:21; Num 18:24). The Pharisee pays tithes of all he acquires, from whatever source.

[2] Mark 14:4. ■γανακτο■ντες πρ■ς ■αυτο■ς

[3] Goebel raises this objection to the view we advocate as to the connection.

[4] So Godet. The Pharisee, he remarks, prayed "très sincèrement (car la prière était faite intérieurement)." The publican's account of himself is also assumed to be correct In declaring that this man went down to his house justified, our Lord does not mean to say: This publican was mistaken in imagining himself to be so great a sinner—standing in a timid, abject attitude, as if apologising for his existence—calling himself the sinner, as if sin were the one thing by which he was known, beating on his breast, and, under an overwhelming sense of guilt, not daring to lift up his eyes to heaven. It is taken for granted that the publican's confession is true, and that his whole demeanour is but an appropriate expression of contrition. He is a sinner as he says in words, a great sinner as he declares by significant gesture. The validity of the judgment pronounced concerning him, does not at all rest on the comparative smallness of his guilt. Suppose the penitent had said more against himself sincerely (sincerely, observe, for he might have said more, and in stronger terms, and meant less), the verdict had not been different. Suppose he had said: "I am what that holy man yonder thinks he is not, an extortioner, unjust, an adulterer. He points at me, to make a long story short. He has good right. I am an epitome of all the sins": still the judgment of Jesus had been the same.

These things being so, it is clear how the judgment must be understood. It means, not the publican is a just man, and the Pharisee an unjust, but the publican is nearer the approval of God than the other who approves himself. The approval or good will of God is what both are seeking. Both address God. The one says, "God, I thank Thee;" the other, "God, be gracious to me." The one expects God to endorse the good opinion he entertains of himself; the other begs God to be merciful to him notwithstanding his sin. And what our Lord means to affirm is, that the publican came nearer the common end than the Pharisee did; that God regarded the self-blaming sinner with more favour than the self-praising saint; that the two men in a manner changed places, the self-styled just man being in God's sight as an unrighteous man, and the self-styled sinner being in God's sight as a righteous man. In short the term "justified" (δεδικαιωμ■νος) is used in a sense kindred to the Pauline, and the comparison between the two dramatis personæ has reference not to character, but to the relation to God in which they respectively stand.[1]

[1] Some commentators, whose minds are dominated by the theological interest, say there is no comparison, because there are no degrees in justification. This is too rigid. To the same bias is due the attempt of Trench and others to find in the publican's ■λ■σθητ■ μοι a reference to a propitiatory atonement. This is to overlay nature by dogmatic theology. Goebel, recognising a comparison in the expression παρ■ ■κε■νον, thinks that the δεδικαιωμ■νος points back to

δ■καιοι, Luk 18:9, and that the idea is, the publican got a better righteousness than the Pharisee's.

We must add another observation by way of determining the import of the judgment. It does not mean that the publican went down to his house thinking that God regarded him with more favour than the Pharisee. Our Lord's purpose is to point out what God did indeed think of the two men, not what they thought He thought of them. Stier affirms that our Lord meant His declaration to refer to the consciousness of the two parties, in which the one was sensible of his justification, the other not.[1] This is an utterly groundless assertion, and in its practical tendency most mischievous, as fitted to rob the parable of its great use as a source of comfort to contrite souls. It is moreover a very improbable assertion. It is by no means likely that the publican felt surer of God's favour than the Pharisee did. The Pharisee, it may be shrewdly suspected, went down to his house quite confident that God was as well pleased with him as he was with himself. And it may be feared the publican went down to his house still in an anxious apprehensive frame of mind, thinking it hardly possible God could have mercy on such a wretch; walking homeward with slow and melancholy step, and eyes cast down to the ground. Strange state of mind, it may be thought, for a justified man! But we must remember that God's thoughts of us do not take their complexion from our opinion of them; that they may be very gracious towards us, when we are unable to believe it, and that salvation does not depend on our changing moods, any more than the existence of the sun depends on the presence or absence of clouds. We will return to this point Meantime let us consider—

[1] 'Reden Jesu.' Similarly Trench affirms that the publican was not merely justified in the secret counsels of God, but had a sweet sense of forgiveness, &c., &c All which is pure assumption.

2. The grounds of the judgment. Only one reason 19 expressly referred to by Christ, but there is another reason implied to which it may be well to advert. It is this: The publican's self-dissatisfaction had more truth or religious sincerity in it than the Pharisee's self-complacency, and God, as the Psalmist tells us, desires and is pleased with truth in the inward parts.[1] In making this statement we do not, any more than our Lord, mean to call in question the correctness of the description which the Pharisee gives of his own moral and religious character. We assume that all the statements he makes, viewed as matters of fact, are true. But it does not follow from this that he had any just reason for self-complacency. For to be pleased with oneself goes a great deal further than to make some particular statements of a satisfactory nature about one's conduct. It implies a comprehensive judgment concerning one's whole spiritual condition to the effect that it is as it ought to be. Now, so far is this from being necessarily involved in an enumeration of some favourable particulars concerning myself that such an enumeration may be but the preface or prelude to a heavy charge which I mean to bring against myself, to a long catalogue of confessions which I feel constrained to make. This worshipper, e.g., might have said all he did say concerning himself, and yet have made as many confessions as would have put all self-complacent thoughts out of his mind. Every act of thanksgiving might have been followed by an act of confession, as thus: I thank Thee I have been preserved from extortion, but I confess I have coveted ofttimes what I have not laid hands on. I thank Thee I have not been an unjust man, but I acknowledge that I am far from being a generous man. I thank Thee I am not an adulterer, but I confess that my heart has harboured many wicked thoughts. I thank Thee that my lot, my opportunities, and my. habits differ widely from those of the class to which this man my

fellow-worshipper, who beats his breast, belongs; but I do not flatter myself that had I been in his circumstances I should have been better than he, and I deplore that I and the class of which I am a member feel so little compassion towards these much-tempted men, that we content ourselves with simply abhorring them and holding aloof from their society. I thank Thee that it is in my heart to attend punctually to my religious duties, but I acknowledge that my zeal and my liberality come immeasurably short of what is due to Thee, and contrast but poorly with those of him who centuries ago offered up this prayer and thanksgiving in this holy city: "Now therefore, our God, we thank Thee and praise Thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee. O Lord our God, all this store that we have prepared to build Thee an house for Thine holy name cometh of Thine hand, and is all Thine own."[2] What are my poor tithes to the liberality of King David, or what my religious devotion compared to his whose whole heart was set upon building a temple for Jehovah such as that within whose sacred precincts I now stand?

[1] Psa 51:6.

[2] 1Ch 29:13-14; 1Ch 29:16. The self-complacent Pharisee made no such confessions, was utterly unconscious that he had any such confessions to make, and hence we may with certainty infer that if not a conscious hypocrite, he was at least an unconscious one, a self-deceived man, utterly devoid of the soul of true goodness. For all the truly good are conscious that they have confessions to make which exclude all boasting. While not indulging in indiscriminate self-condemnation, and distinguishing between occasions for thankfulness and occasions for self-humiliation, they are ever more sensible of their shortcomings than of their good performances. And speaking generally, it may be said that a man confessing sin, is nearer to true goodness than a man boasting of his goodness. Confession of sin is the homage of an awakened conscience to the moral law; boasting of goodness is the lying vanity of a foolish self-deceived heart. He who does nothing but confess, may or may not have some good qualities which he might have specified had he been in the humour; but even at the worst, supposing previous character to have been utterly bad, he who with his whole heart says, "I am a sinner," hath more of God’s spirit in him, than he who makes no confession at all, and does nothing but boast.

It is characteristic of this self-complacent Pharisee, and another index of the want of truth in the deeper sense, that while apparently unconscious of any sins of his own, he is very much alive to the sins of others. With a coarse sweeping indiscriminateness he pronounces all men but himself and his class guilty, and of the grossest sins. He makes himself very good, by the cheap method of making all others very bad. It is easy to be a saint by comparison, when all the world consists of extortioners, knaves, and adulterers. But what truth or delicacy of conscience can there be in one who can adopt the method of an unbridled censoriousness for advancing his own reputation?[1] It is sad to reflect that at this point in the parable the speaker can be charged with no exaggeration, but has faithfully described a feature of the Pharisaic spirit in every age, as exhibited both in individuals and in communities. The vulgar method of self-exaltation by depreciation of others has been and is too commonly practised.

[1] Unger: De toto hominum genere quam humillime sentit (i.q. Lutherus notat) tum semet perfectum jam superbit, quod a flagitiis humillimis liberum se sentit. Hofmann thinks the ο■ λοιπο■ in Luk 18:11 does not mean all other men besides himself, but men of another disposition.

Perhaps, but it does not make matters much better. What is noticeable is the absence of all indications in the Pharisee’s language of an anxiety to do justice to the characters of others.

We come now to the reason expressly stated by our Lord in support of His judgment concerning the two men. "Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." This statement is valuable as teaching that self-praise and self-condemnation produce the same effects on the Divine mind as they produce on our own minds. When a man praises himself in our hearing the act provokes in us a spirit of criticism; when, on the other hand, we hear a man condemn himself, there arises in our bosom a feeling of sympathy towards him. Just the same effects, Christ gives us to understand, do the same acts produce on the mind of God. And with His teaching all Scripture agrees. All through the Bible runs the sentiment so forcibly expressed by the Psalmist: "Though the Lord be high, yet hath He respect unto the lowly; but the proud He knoweth afar off."[1] This Bible doctrine may be said to be a part of the philosophy of justification. It does not tell us the whole truth on that subject, but it certainly gives us some insight into the Divine procedure in connection with the forgiveness of sin. It teaches us that God forgiveth sins to such as acknowledge them, and imputeth sins to such as deny them, for this among other reasons, because it gives Him pleasure to exalt those who humble themselves, and to humble those who exalt themselves. A very good reason truly, which commends itself to the common conscience, and we may say to the common sense of mankind. Let us not despise it because it is elementary, and does not belong to the more specific doctrines of Christian theology on the subject of justification. Let those who do not feel at home in these doctrines, and to whom perchance they appear not only mysterious but unreal, lay this elementary ethical truth to heart, and it will be at least one lesson learnt on a very important subject. Believe with all the heart that God forgiveth sin penitently acknowledged, because His moral nature is like our own in this, that He scorneth scorners and giveth grace to the lowly, is pleased to save the afflicted and to bring down high looks, lightly esteems those who highly esteem themselves and regards with favour those who humble themselves. It were well that men did lay these truths more to heart, and considered that he who judgeth himself shall not be judged, that he who criticises himself disarms criticism, that he who frankly says "I have sinned" shall hear no further mention of his sin. So many imagine that their interest lies in stoutly denying or extenuating sin; so few understand that policy, not to say truth, dictates rather the use of such a prayer as that of the Psalmist, "For Thy name’s sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great." To deny sin, wisdom! Nay, it is utter folly. Consider what a man does who denies sin. He simply identifies himself with his sin, and compels God to treat him and it as one. He makes his innermost self responsible for his sin, binds it like a millstone round his neck to sink him down to the depths of perdition, gathers it round his person like a burning garment to consume him with the fire of damnation. But confess your sin, say it is yours, and you separate yourself from it, show that though it is yours it is not you, show that there is something in the heart of your being that abhors it: you cut the cord which suspends the millstone about your neck, and escape drowning; you tear off the burning clothes from your person and escape a horrible death by fire. It is well to have the courage to acknowledge offences. It requires an effort, but it is an effort to which humility is equal; for it has been truly said by a German writer, that the essence of Demuth, humility, is Muth,[2]

[1] Psa 138:6.

[2] Arndt, "Das Wesen der Demuth ist Muth." It is a pretty play upon words, but it is more, a great moral truth. courage. A proud man cannot dare to say, "I have sinned," but a humble man can, and his daring is his salvation.

3. The uses of the judgment. It may be remarked here in the first place, that it were not to use but to abuse the words of Christ to find in them a doctrinally complete statement on the subject of justification. We learn from the verdict pronounced on the two worshippers, that it is necessary, in order to please God, to be sincere and to be humble, but we may not hence infer that we are saved by our sincerity or by our humility. We are not saved by these virtues, any more than by boasting of our goodness, but by the free grace of God. From Luke's introduction it might be inferred that the chief purpose for which the parable was spoken was to rebuke and subdue the spirit of self-righteousness. To do this effectively is not easy, though that is no reason why it should not be attempted. Another service, however, was probably also kept in view by the speaker, which was much more likely to be accomplished, viz. to revive the spirit of the contrite, and embolden them to hope in God's mercy. This is a service which contrite souls greatly need to have rendered them, for they are slow to believe that they can possibly be the objects of Divine complacency. Such in all probability was the publican's state of mind, not only before but even after he had prayed. He went down to his house justified in God's sight, but not, we think, in his own. He had not 'found peace,' to use a current phrase. In technical language we might speak of him as objectively, but not subjectively, justified. In plain English the fact was so, but he was not aware that the fact was so. In saying this, we do rot forget that there is an instinct, call it rather the still small voice of the Holy Spirit, which tells a penitent, "there is hope in God," "there is forgiveness with Him that He may be feared;" "wait for God, as they that wait for the dawn." But a man who beats his breast, and dares not look up, and stands afar off in an attitude which seems an apology for existence, has some difficulty in trusting this instinct. To fear and despond suits his mood rather than to hope. There are physical reasons for this, not to speak of spiritual ones. The whole behaviour of the publican speaks to a great religious crisis going on in his soul. For that beating of the breast, and that downcast eye, and that timid posture, are not a theatrical performance got up for the occasion. They bear witness to a painful, possibly a protracted, soul-struggle. But one who passes through such a crisis suffers in body as well as in mind. His nerves are sorely shaken, and in this physical condition he is apt to become a prey to fear and depression. He starts at his own shadow, dreads the postman, trembles when he opens a letter lest it should contain evil tidings, can scarce muster courage to go into a dark room, or to put out the light when he goes to bed. How hard for a man in this state to take cheerful views of his spiritual condition, to rejoice in the sunlight of Divine grace! In the expressive phrase of Bunyan, used with reference to himself when he was in a similar state, such an one is prone rather to take the shady side of the street. Is it improbable that one object Christ had in view in uttering this parable and the judgment with which it winds up, was to take such contrite and fear-stricken ones by the hand and conduct them over to the sunny side? There are some who are stupid enough to take unfavourable views of the spiritual state of such as walk in darkness and have no light, punishing them for their despondency by declaring them to be under the frown of the Almighty. But Jesus was not one who could thus break the bruised reed or quench the smoking taper. The spectacle of a publican repenting of his sin, but hardly daring to hope for pardon, would excite the deepest sympathy in His breast Far from harshly condemning him for his despairing mood, He would witness with respect the tremendous earnestness of his repentance, and with pity the

acuteness of his mental sufferings, and He would seek to convince him that God's thoughts towards him were such as His own. Think not, He would say to him, that God casts the poor, nervous, trembling, desponding penitent out of His sympathies. Nay! the Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart. If they be too sad to walk in the sun, He takes the shade along with them; for He is not as the heartless men of the world, who desert a poor unfortunate in his time of need. He loves the company of the sad better than the society of the gay, and He is ever with them, though in their melancholy they know it not: with them to comfort and exalt, if not soon, then all the more effectually in the end. To suggest such thoughts, we believe, Christ spake this parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. Who can tell how many repentant ones went down to their houses cheered by the words which had fallen from the lips of the sinner's Friend! Let us use the parable for kindred purposes still; learning from it ourselves to cherish hopeful views concerning such as are more persuaded of their own sinfulness than of Divine mercy, and doing what we can to help such to believe that verily there is forgiveness with God.

01.16. Chapter 5. The Great Supper

Chapter 5.

The Great Supper Or, the Kingdom for the Hungry. On hearing the table-talk of Jesus at the Sabbath-day feast in the Pharisee’s house, one of the guests took occasion, from the reference to the resurrection of the just, to make the pious reflection: "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!" Whereupon Jesus proceeded to speak the following parable, for the benefit of His fellow-guest, and all the rest who were present:— A certain man made a great supper,[1] and bade many: and sent his servant at supper time, to say to them that were bidden. Come, for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent[2] began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought afield, and must needs go to see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. And the servant returned, and reported to his master these things. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, what you commanded has been done, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you, That none of those men, the invited, shall taste of my supper.—Luk 14:16-24.

[1] δε■πνον, the principal meal in the day, not necessarily the evening meal; at least that is not the point intended to be emphasised, as is evident from the first two excuses.

[2] ■π■ μι■ς; γν■μης, καρδ■ας, φων■ς, or some such word, being understood. This parable Jesus spoke for the immediate purpose of teaching those present how little they really cared for the kingdom of heaven, whatever they might pretend. Knowing well the stony indifference with which He and His cause had been treated by the class of Jewish society to which His host and fellow-guests belonged, He heard with impatience the sentimental reflection which had just been uttered concerning the blessedness of eating bread in the kingdom of God. It sounded as cant to His ear, as a statement, that is, which, while true in itself, was not true for the speaker; and it is characteristic of all earnest minds to have a hearty abhorrence of cant. The prophet Jeremiah, e. g., could not bear to hear a godless generation talk glibly of the "Burden of the Lord," while the word of the Lord was in truth no burden to them as it was to his own heart; and in the name of God and of sincerity he interdicted further use of the phrase, saying, "The burden of the Lord shall ye mention no more."[1]. It made his spirit bitter, and almost cynical, to listen to such religious phraseology, as employed by men who had no comprehension of its meaning. Similar were the feelings awakened in the breast of Jesus by the pious reflection of the sentimental guest, and He uttered the parable as one who would say: "Think you so? Let Me tell you how little many such as you care for the privilege you seem to value so highly."

[1] Jer 23:36 But it is easy to see that the parable serves a wider purpose than merely to hold up the mirror to spurious self-deceiving piety, and show it its own worthlessness. There are elements

in the parable not required for that purpose, but serving admirably another, viz. the defence of the speaker’s conduct in frequenting ofttimes very different company from that in which He found Himself. In that part of the parabolic representation which relates to the invitation of the poor from the streets and lanes, and of the poorer still from the highways and hedges, Jesus but describes His own conduct in preaching the Gospel to the publicans and sinners, and indirectly vindicates the policy by its success; saying in effect: "Ye wise and prudent, holy and respectable ones, despise the kingdom I preach; I invite therefore the outcasts to participate in its joys, and I am justified by their prompt response to my invitations."

Viewed didactically these two uses of censure and self-defence coalesce in one lesson. The parable teaches that the kingdom of heaven is not for the full, but for the hungry. In concrete pictorial form it declares that God filleth the hungry with good things, and sendeth the rich empty away. In conveying this lesson it sets forth another most important doctrine concerning the kingdom as a kingdom of grace. Indeed we cannot over-estimate the present parable as a contribution to the illustration of the gracious aspect of the kingdom. It is, in that point of view, full of most significant features. Everything is significant of grace: the selection of a feast as the emblem of the blessings promised, the behaviour of the first invited, the character of those invited in the second and third place, and the avowed motive of the repeated invitations—the desire to have the house filled. How easy to read off from these indications the truths that the kingdom is a free gift of Divine grace; that therefore it is despised by those who are full, and valued by those that are empty; that being for the needy it is offered to all the needy alike—to the most needy, most urgently—a catholic boon for the sinful suffering race of mankind! Undoubtedly we shall not err in our interpretation of this parable, if before all things we regard it as designed to exhibit the spirit of the kingdom which Christ preached, with its policy of unconventional worldwide charity, gainsaid of men, but justified by history.

We begin our study of the parable by considering first the account which it gives of the behaviour of the men first invited to the feast. Now what strikes one at the first glance in that behaviour is its unnaturalness or improbability. Invited to what is described as a great feast on some important occasion, instead of regarding the invitation as a great honour, and making every endeavour so to arrange their affairs that nothing may occur to prevent them from being present at the entertainment, all lightly esteem the privilege, and begin with one consent to invent excuses for absenting themselves. It is not usual with men invited to feasts so to act; the very feast at which the parable was spoken suffices to show how far such behaviour diverges from ordinary practice. Those who had been invited to sup with "one of the chief Pharisees" appear all to have presented themselves punctually at the supper hour, and they show the value they put on the honour conferred on them by striving eagerly to obtain the best places" at the table. It is no fault in the parable, however, that its representation at this point violates natural probability; the fault rather lies with those who act as represented. The story is invented to suit the facts; and if, as a mere story of natural life, it seems highly improbable, it is because men’s conduct in regard to the Divine kingdom is not according to right reason. And, in passing, we may take occasion to note the contrast between those parables which apologise for Christ’s conduct as the sinner’s friend, and this parable which describes the conduct of many in reference to the kingdom. What perfect naturalness characterises the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son! The shepherd, the housewife, and the father act exactly as we should expect; we should feel surprised

if they acted otherwise. Here, on the contrary, our surprise is awakened by the behaviour depicted, and we are conscious of the need of effort to overcome distaste for the parabolic representation because it violates the law of probability. The difference is due to this, that Christ's conduct was in accordance with right reason, and that of those who despised the kingdom of heaven was not. However strange Christ's behaviour might appear to contemporaries, it was characterised by 'sweet reasonableness,' and therefore it was easy to find parallels thereto in ordinary life, the naturalness of which would be recognised by every one. On the other hand, however common it might be for men to treat the Divine kingdom as the parable represents, such conduct was inherently unreasonable, and therefore it was difficult, if not absolutely impossible, to find a parallel to it in natural life, or to make a parabolic representation of it which should not appear highly improbable.[1]

[1] Professor Calderwood ('The Parables of our Lord,' p. 102), remarking on the unusual character of the occurrences narrated in this parable, speaks of the expedients for supplying guests in place of those first invited as even more strange than the refusal of the latter. They are not so, however. Lightfoot and Schöttgen quote the Talmud in proof that the poor and wanderers were often invited. This being understood, it will at once be seen that it is no part of an expositor's duty to set himself to invent hypotheses for the purpose of removing, or at least alleviating, the aspect of improbability presented by the behaviour of those first invited to the feast; or to waste time in trying to account for conduct which, like the origin of sin, is really unaccountable. The unanimous refusal of the guests to come to the feast is, indeed, hard to explain on any conceivable hypothesis. The hypothesis, for example, of a double invitation, one a good while before the feast day, and another when the festive hour was at hand, will not avail for the purpose. Whether such double invitations were customary or not, is a point on which it is difficult to arrive at a certain conclusion, and concerning which, accordingly, interpreters are divided in opinion. A double invitation is certainly implied in the parable. The guests were first bidden, and then the message was sent at supper-time: "Come, for all things are now ready." This representation is in accordance with the facts of Jewish history. The Jewish people were first invited by the prophets to participation in the blessings of the kingdom, and then when the hour of fulfilment came, and the kingdom was at hand, Jesus, as God's servant, appeared, and cried, "Come to the feast long promised, and now ready." But it would be a mistake to imagine that the double invitation is meant to bring the conduct of the invited within the limits of natural probability. It is not fitted to do this, however we conceive of the two invitations, whether with some we regard the second invitation as rendered necessary by the first being indefinite, not fixing the time,[1] or, with others, as owing its origin to the dilatoriness of the guests, and being merely a reminder of a definite invitation previously given.[2] It is enough to say that no custom could live which could have such utter failure to insure the end aimed at as its natural, or even as a possible, result. The result is a reductio ad absurdum of the method supposed to be adopted to insure attendance. The custom of issuing two invitations could only have prevailed, because on the whole it was found to work well; that is, because it usually issued in those invited to feasts presenting themselves duly at the festive hour. If so, then how came it to pass in this instance, that none of the invited rendered themselves at the feast chamber, but with one consent begged off from the engagement? However the strange fact is to be accounted for, no supposed customary double invitation will suffice to explain it; so that the question as to the actual existence of such a custom possesses only an antiquarian interest. For the discussion of such a question we do not profess either special competency or great inclination;

therefore we content ourselves with expressing the opinion that it has not been proved that it was usual to send a message at the last moment,[3] and that a second message is represented as being sent, for a special reason. That reason may be, as already hinted, to make the parabolic representation correspond more exactly with the history of Israel, or it may be, as Godet suggests, to bring out the indisposition of the intended guests. The hour pre-announced, and well known to all, had arrived, and no guests had made their appearance. Therefore a second invitation is sent that no one might have it in his power to plead forgetfulness, and that it might be made apparent that the true cause of absence was indifference. With this view it accords that none of the guests does plead either ignorance or forgetfulness, as they all certainly would if they honestly could, for either plea would have been a stronger one than any of those actually advanced.

[1] So Goebel.

[2] So Meyer and Hofmann.

[3] Goebel quotes Rosenmüller in proof of the custom of double invitations, and Trench, after Grotius, refers to Est 5:1 to Est 6:14. Thomson, 'Land and Book,' states, that a friend at whose house he was invited to dine, sent a message when the feast was ready. To the question, is this customary, he replies, "not among common people, or in cities whose manners are influenced by the West, but in Lebanon it still prevails. If a Sheik, Beg, or Emir invites, he always sends a servant to call you at the proper time." The custom he represents as confined to the wealthy (ν.p. 125).

Proceeding now to consider these excuses, we observe that they are all of the nature of pretexts, not one of them being a valid reason for non-attendance at the feast. The engagements with which the guests were preoccupied were all in themselves lawful and reasonable, but it could easily have been arranged, had the parties been so minded, that they should not come into collision with the previous engagement to attend the feast Even the marriage itself, the most urgent affair, could have been adjusted to the feast, and would have been by one who was in the humour. The pleas, one and all, indicate indifference. The state of mind of those who advanced them was this. They were aware that they were under invitation to a feast They cherished no disrespect to him from whom the invitation came, and had no desire to insult him by sending a blunt refusal to accept his hospitality. On the contrary they were pleased to have that hospitality in their offer, and probably at the moment of receiving the invitation their intention was to be present at the feast. But the feast did not appear, to their minds, an affair of urgent or supreme importance. So they went on their several ways after receiving the invitation as if nothing had happened, forming new engagements, without even recalling to their thoughts the prospective feast, or asking themselves whether the engagement already made, and those which they were making from day to day, were compatible. And so it happened that when the feast-day came, one found himself in possession of a newly-purchased piece of land which he greatly desired to see, another had just bought five yoke of oxen whose qualities he wished to ascertain by trial, and a third had just got married to a wife whom it would be altogether unseemly to leave so soon after. We are to assume that the facts were as stated. It is not necessary, in order to convict the intended guests of indifference, to suspect them of inventing excuses. Granting the truth of their respective allegations, it is evident that these are insufficient reasons for not going to the feast. Can the visit to the newly-bought land and the trial of the oxen not stand over till to-morrow, and what bride would object to her husband leaving her for a few hours to attend a feast in the house of one whom he held in honour, and

whose favour it was important to secure? Manifestly, those who advance such pleas have no real desire to attend the feast Out of their own mouth they are condemned. Indifference is their common sin, and it is the sufficient explanation of their common behaviour. No need to seek for any other explanation. There may have been forgetfulness as well as indifference; but it was forgetfulness caused by indifference. Men do not forget what they are very much interested in. No wonder the host was angry when the excuses of his guests were reported to him by his servant. The men whom he invited had trifled with him. In spite of civil phrases and flimsy pretexts, that was the manifest state of the case.

Just such as these intended guests in the parable were the hearers of Jesus, and all like-minded, in their relation to the kingdom of God. They were solemn triflers in the matter of religion. They were under invitation to enter the kingdom, and they did not assume the attitude of men who avowedly cared nothing for it. On the contrary, they were pleased to think that its privileges were theirs in offer, and even gave themselves credit for setting a high value on them.[1] But in truth they did not. The kingdom of God had not, by any means, the first place in their esteem. And so it came to pass that when Jesus came and proclaimed the advent of the kingdom, and expounded to them its true nature, they turned a deaf ear to His message, and refused to accept His invitations, on grounds not less flimsy than those advanced by the men in the parable. The indifferent guests of the parable represent the sentimental guest of the Sabbath feast, and he, in turn, was a type of his generation, a fair sample of a large class of men who put right sentiment in place of right action; who said to God, "I go, Sir, and went not;" who talked much about the kingdom of heaven, yet cared little for it; who were very religious, yet very worldly; a class of which too many specimens exist in every age.

[1] Bleek assumes the first invited guests to have accepted the invitation. This, so far as the Jewish nation is concerned, is practically correct. They had accepted God’s invitation in the letter, but not in the spirit.

While altogether insufficient as excuses, these reasons for absence are very instructive as to the causes of indifference to the Divine kingdom. The samples supplied do not by any means exhaust the list of possible causes; they are only three out of many, and these such as are most suitable to be mentioned in a parable or popular story. They do not even, as some interpreters seem to think, indicate exhaustively the classes of causes of indifference. Worldly possessions, business occupations, social ties, are certainly very prevalent sources of religious indifference, but they do not account for all the ungodliness that is in the world. It may be questioned, indeed, whether they were the chief causes of the lukewarmness in reference to the kingdom, of Christ’s immediate hearers. At all events it is certain that there were other influences at work in producing the widespread unbelief with which Jewish society regarded Jesus and His teaching. The instructiveness of the excuses specified in the parable is to be found not in the exhaustiveness of the list, but in the suggestion of a general idea embracing all the various kinds of influence by which human hearts are rendered indifferent to the chief end and good of life. That general idea is preoccupation of mind.[1] Whatever preoccupies or fills the mind prevents the hunger which is necessary to the appreciation of God’s feast of grace. Among the things which fill the mind and heart are worldly goods, cares about food and raiment and business, social relationships and enjoyments. But there are preoccupations of a more spiritual kind by which even the nobler natures innocent of vulgar worldliness are kept aloof from the kingdom; preconceived opinions,

philosophical or religious prejudices, pride of virtue. These fill the minds of many, and deaden the hunger of the soul for God’s kingdom and righteousness. These influences were powerfully at work among the contemporaries of Jesus, producing apathy or dislike towards Himself and His teaching. He indicated His knowledge of the fact when he uttered the familiar words, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent." The words point to a very different sort of preoccupation from any named in the parable—the preoccupation of the wisdom of the world. The wise men of Judaea in those days had their minds filled with cut and dry notions and theories about all things human and Divine; with a fixed idea about God, a fixed interpretation of every important Scripture text, a fixed theory as to the notes of the true Messiah, the nature of the kingdom and its righteousness. Hence when Christ came to them with a different set of ideas on all these topics He found among them no hunger or receptivity. He came teaching that God is a Father, and His doctrine met with no acceptance, because the public mind was preoccupied with the conception of God merely as the High and Lofty One, living above the world. He came preaching a righteousness which springs out of faith in God’s grace, and manifests itself in devoted love to Him who proclaims and embodies Divine grace. What chance was there of such views finding entrance into the hearts of men who conceived of righteousness as consisting in punctilious observance of a multitude of petty rules concerning matters of no ethical or intrinsic importance? He came offering to his contemporaries, in His own Person, a meek, lowly, suffering Messiah, a man of sorrows and tenderest human sympathies; and He was welcomed only by a few ’babes,’ ignorant, obscure, sinful persons of no social consequence, because the minds of the ’wise and understanding’ were preoccupied with an entirely different Messianic ideal, that of a conquering Christ who sought and received honour from the world, and made all things serve His ambition. In a word, Jesus came offering to men these supremely valuable boons: a Divine Father, a Kingdom of Grace, a Christ who was the sinner’s Friend, and a righteousness possible even for the most depraved, nay, in which precisely they might make the greatest attainment; and He found no appetite for these benefits, no eagerness to come to the feast which He had spread, because with reference to all the topics on which He discoursed men’s minds were full of thoughts and beliefs of a wholly diverse character, wherewith they were perfectly satisfied. Hence, in order to find disciples, He was obliged to seek them elsewhere than among those whom He described as the wise and knowing: hot in Jerusalem, the seat of legal lore and Pharisaic influence, but in northern Galilee, where life was simpler; not among the doctors of the law, but among the mob who knew not the law; not among the elders who by long study had matured a system of opinions which had become part of themselves, but among the young who had not had time to build up a system, and whose minds were empty, open, and receptive; not among the well-conducted who made a point of observing all conventional moral proprieties, and prided themselves on an orderly and blameless life, but among the social and moral outcasts who were glad to hear that God was merciful, and that there was hope in Him even for the guiltiest Galilean rustics, illiterate laics, open-hearted youths, penitent "publicans and sinners"—these were the likely classes to yield converts to a doctrine like that taught by Jesus. Therefore He addressed Himself chiefly to such, and was by many of them made welcome. And so it came to pass that the intellectually and morally empty and hungry were filled with the good things of the kingdom, while the rich in reputation for wisdom and sanctity turned away in indifference or disdain.

[1] The parable no more binds us down to the precise forms of preoccupation specified than it binds us to understand the poor invited in the second place as the literally poor, as Keim very prosaically does, so finding traces of Ebionitism in the parable. The poor represent all who from any cause are empty, and need filling with the good things of the kingdom. The poor in the literal sense are referred to only in so far as their circumstances exempt them from many of the causes of self-satisfaction to which the rich are exposed.

It is this state of matters, Christ's activity and success among those of least account and poor in wisdom and sanctity, that is depicted in the second half of our parable. The people in the streets and lanes who were invited in the second place are those in Judaea who, in the ways indicated, were hungry for such a feast as Jesus invited them to; those from the highways and hedges invited in the third place were all within or without Palestine—Jews, Samaritans, and Pagans, who were needier still, and might be glad to come to the feast, could they only be brought to believe that it was meant for the like of them. It is at this point that the gracious aspect of the parable becomes most conspicuous, and it is that aspect which must now engage our attention. Our exposition will consist in pointing out how every turn of the story and every phrase serves the purpose of accentuating the grace of the kingdom. The first point to be noted in this view is the selection of the needy and hungry to be the recipients of benefit. To the citation of this as an index of grace it may be objected that such parties are invited only in the second place. The invitation of them is an after-thought, a device forced upon the host by the refusal of those first invited, and which he will rather have recourse to than let all the precious dishes he has prepared be lost. On the surface this is indeed the state of the case, and the fact with regard to Christ's own action was somewhat analogous. We may say that He turned His attention to the publicans and sinners because He found, and knew instinctively beforehand that He would find, little acceptance with those who were socially and morally in repute. And when we look to the action of the apostles in after days, more particularly of Paul, we find the same line of procedure reappearing. Paul's habit was to offer the gospel to the Jew first, and then to the Gentile. But the method of procedure does not in either case derogate from the grace of the procedure, so far as those to whom the gospel was preached in the second place is concerned. For when we come to inquire why Christ met with so poor a response among the wise and the righteous, we discover that the real cause lay in the gracious nature of His gospel. The gracious attitude of Jesus to publicans and sinners was not produced by the indifference of other classes. The grace went before the indifference, and was its cause, not its effect. Jesus came from the first preaching a God who was the Father of men, not the patron of favourites, and a kingdom into which the most depraved might find admittance on repentance; and the Scribes and Pharisees did not love such a doctrine—it was too humane, too catholic, too revolutionary, too vulgar in its sympathies for their taste; and so Jesus, who had the lower classes in His heart from the first, was forced by the disdain of the higher orders to turn His attention more and more exclusively to them. Similar observations apply to the case of Paul. He preached first to the Jews, because that appeared the natural order of procedure. But he preached a gospel avowedly universal in its destination, and offering to all, to Jews and Greeks alike, a righteousness not of works but of faith, that is of grace. And it was because His gospel was catholic and gracious that the Jews rejected it, and compelled him to turn away from them and address himself to the Gentiles. The truth just stated, viz. that it was the gracious character of the gospel of the kingdom which caused the unbelief of those to whom it was first preached, does not come out in the parable. The parable depicts facts, it does not set forth the rationale of the facts;

hence the defect that the second and third invitations appear as after-thoughts, and the motive appears to be not so much love to the invited as a dislike of waste, as if the host had said to himself, "As the food has been prepared, it had better be eaten than thrown away."

Most significant as indexes of the grace of the kingdom are the two phrases, "yet there is room," and "that my house may be filled." These two words indeed might be singled out as worthy to be the mottoes of the kingdom, interpretative of its genius, bearing witness to the vastness of its charity, and its desire to communicate its blessings to the greatest possible number. Doubtless it is easy here also by plausible reasoning to rob these mottoes of their significance. It may be said of the former of the two that it is merely the word of a servant. And so indeed it is; but it were a pertinent counter-remark that it is the word of a servant who has his master's confidence, is intimately acquainted with his disposition, and fully sympathises with it. But without pressing these considerations, there is enough in the mere fact reported by the servant to indicate the gracious mind of his lord. There is still room in the guest-chamber even after all the poor and suffering of the city have been invited, and have, as we are to assume, responded to the invitation. What a great chamber that must be! What a great feast must have been prepared, and what a magnanimous man he must be who has it in his heart to prepare such a feast! The report of the servant is a sure witness to the riches of God's grace, to the boundlessness of Divine liberality, the immeasurable dimensions of redeeming love: it is put into the servant's mouth by Jesus for that end, not merely to supply the motive for the next turn in the story, in which the host commands his servant to go forth to the highways and hedges to invite those found there to fill up the still vacant places. Only a greathearted man indeed would issue such an order; any other would be content if his house were fairly well filled. "That my house may be filled," is the speech of one animated by the very enthusiasm of hospitality. But this expression, too, may seem liable to cavil, as a motto expressive of grace. It may be pointed out that the sequel seems to imply that the host's chief reason for wishing his house filled, even if it should be with vagrants and vagabonds from the highways and hedges, is to spite the first invited and exclude them from the feast by cramming the house, in case any of them should repent his declinature, and after all desire to be present. And without doubt this is how the story runs; such is the natural import of the concluding part of the host's speech—"for I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper." But what then? After all, the revenge proposed is the revenge of magnanimity, not of meanness and malice. If so minded the host can easily exclude the first invited without bringing in any more guests. The method of revenge is that of one who has pleasure in hospitality for its own sake, and loves to exercise it as widely as possible. It may even be suspected of being the revenge of one who is not quite in earnest in his declared purpose, and who would make room even for the first bidden if they came humbly acknowledging their offence and seeking admission. We may legitimately hesitate before taking this word spoken in anger as the last word on the subject. Christ's word, as an aside from the parable, it certainly is not;[1] to regard it as His is to invest it with much too serious and deliberate a character. It is a word put by Him into the mouth of the host very fitly, as a word spoken in anger. But it is not a word endorsed by Him as the whole truth on the subject of Israel's future. It is important to bear this in mind in order to the maintenance of harmony between the teaching of Christ and that of Paul. For Paul does not treat it as unbelieving Israel's final doom that she shall not taste of God's supper. He refuses to believe that Israel's election is absolutely cancelled, that her inheritance is finally forfeited. He does represent the evangelisation of the Gentiles as taking place to spite Israel. But he believes that the spite is the

spite of love changing its method of working towards its old end, the blessing of the covenant people; casting them out and putting the heathen in their room in order to provoke them to jealousy, and so bring them to another mind, and induce them at length to value mercies previously despised.[2] The whole passage is very instructive in its bearing on the subject of election. This Pauline doctrine, the fruit of a noble patriotism which hoped against hope for fellow-countrymen, must be kept in view in interpreting the present parable, if we would not make the Master and the apostle contradict each other The parable certainly contains no hint of the Pauline doctrine, and that is one piece of evidence that this parable has not been, as some think, remodelled by Luke to bring it into closer correspondence with Paulinism. If, as certain critics imagine, the invitation to the vagrants was added by Luke to the original parable, in order to represent the call of the Gentiles,[3] why did he stop short here in his alterations? Why not go further in accordance with the irenical tendency ascribed to him, and give such a turn to the last word of the host as to make it contain the idea not of final exclusion, which seems to be hinted, but of provocation to repentance? We see no reason to doubt the originality of this feature of our parable. We cannot certainly regard the universalism latent in it as a good reason for such doubt. That Christ's teaching was in spirit universalistic is admitted; universalism was also immanent in His conduct, for His behaviour towards publicans and sinners could be explained only on principles equally applicable to all mankind, irrespective of racial or other distinctions. The religion of one who acted as Jesus did could only be a religion for humanity. Why should it seem surprising if one whose whole bearing said, "I am a man, and nothing human is foreign to my sympathies," should occasionally speak words universalistic in scope? And if in any department of Christ's teaching such words are to be looked for it is in His parables, wherein truth is at once revealed and hidden. We should not expect to find in the recorded sayings of the founder of our faith any such explicit statement as this: My gospel is for the Gentiles (except, indeed, in private instructions to His disciples before He left the world), because it was meet that the purpose of grace towards the outlying nations should remain a "mystery hid in God," till the drama of the Redeemer's earthly life was complete, and the materials for the gospel were fully supplied. But we are not surprised to find mystic hints of the universal destination of the gospel in such words as these: "Ye are the salt of the earth," "Ye are the light of the world," "The field is the world;" or in parables of grace like this, telling of invitations to the great feast addressed even to homeless, characterless vagrants whose food was what they could pick up, beg, or steal, and whose couch was beneath the hedge on the highway.

[1] The ■μ■ν in Luk 14:24 might plausibly be adduced in proof that it is Christ who speaks, addressing those present and pointing for their benefit the moral of the parable: "I, Jesus, say to you now present," &c. But the form of expression in what follows excludes this construction. The use of the plural must be accounted for by the emotional character of the utterance. The host in his anger addresses himself to an ideal audience.

[2] Vide Rom 11:11-14.

[3] So Hilgenfeld, 'Einleitung.'

Yet another index of the grace of the kingdom may be found in the direction given to the servant with reference to these vagrants, to "compel them to come in." What insight into the secret thoughts, what sympathy with the miseries of the abject class, is revealed in these words! True, as

it stands in the parable, the direction seems to have reference rather to the exigencies of the host than to the circumstances of the intended guests. It seems to mean: Be urgent with them and bring them quickly, for time passes, and the feast is getting out of season; take no refusal, for I wish my house filled, so that there may be no room for the men whom I first invited. But higher motives are implied, though not expressed, or capable of expression, in the parable. The beauty of the parable is, that while moving in a lower moral plane, it constantly suggests to our thoughts a higher one in which the motives are of a purely benevolent character. The speaker of the parable lives up in the higher region, though for the sake of His hearers He comes down in the parable to the lower. It is due to the unearthly charity that dwells in His bosom that mention is made of vagrants at all as possible objects of hospitality. Nothing but such charity was capable of the audacity necessary to the bare conception of such a thought. And the same charity which could conceive the idea is revealed in the injunction, "compel them to come in." The speaker knows full well that the difficulty with the parties now to be invited will be to get them to believe that such a felicity can possibly be meant for the like of them, accustomed to misery and to the neglect of their more favoured fellow-mortals. Jesus recognises the naturalness and the excusableness of scepticism in such circumstances, and the need of compulsion to overcome doubt. He can enter into their minds and understand just how they feel. "We are hungry, and would gladly be fed, even with the plainest fare, how much more be partakers of so grand an entertainment! But such bliss cannot be in store for such wretches as we are: you trifle with us, you mock our misery." Christ knew that such thoughts would certainly pass through the minds of persons situated as described. Yes, He knew that there would always be many so situated that it would be natural and excusable in them to hear with incredulity the good news which He brought from God to the world; men accustomed to misery and to hard treatment from their fellows, or so profoundly sensible of their own demerit that they could hardly believe in God’s love, at least in so far as it concerned themselves. And He had pity on such, and He would have all possible means employed to overcome their mistrust, and lead them from incredulity to faith. "Compel them to come in," is the word He gives forth with reference to such. Indifference He will not compel, but will rather treat with dignified reserve. But the incredulity of men who would gladly avail themselves of God’s grace if they durst, He will compel. What hope there is in this sympathy of Christ with human hopelessness! And alas, what need of the humane compulsion He mercifully enjoins! How many now live even in Christian lands whose hard lot, whose experience of inhumanity at the hands of fellow-mortals—sometimes even of men calling themselves Christians—is such as to make God’s love almost incredible! How many are in danger of being driven on to deeper degrees of guilt by the thought that they have already sinned so heinously as to be beyond the reach of mercy! Nay, who does not need compulsions to faith? For is it not one of our chief hindrances to hearty faith in Divine grace that God’s love, as declared in the gospel, is so unlike anything we see in this world as to be incredible? Behold what manner of love is this, that the most high God should care for sinful and miserable men; care even for those who have rebelled against Him! Behold what manner of love is this, that God should give His Son, that whosoever believeth on Him might not perish! We need help, we need even compulsion, to receive this truth, and to convert the wonder of incredulity into the wonder of faith; and Christ’s word in this parable assures us that all who need such compulsion, have in Him a sympathetic Friend who will not fail to help them in their infirmities.

01.17. Chapter 6. The Good Samaritan

Chapter 6.

The Good Samaritan Or, Charity the True Sanctity. The connection in which this parable was spoken is so distinctly indicated by the Evangelist that it will be best to quote his introductory sentences as part of our text:

And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up to tempt Hint, saying: Master! what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And He said unto him, What is written in the law?[1] how readest thou? And he answering said: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind;[2] and thy neighbour as thyself. And He said unto him: Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he wishing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? And Jesus answering said: A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell in with robbers,[3] who having both stripped him of his raiment, and inflicted on him wounds, went away leaving him half dead. Now by chance there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. And likewise also a Levite arrived at the place, and having come and looked at him, passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, on a journey, came where he was, and seeing (his plight) he was moved with pity, and approaching him he bound up his wounds, pouring on them oil and wine, and mounting him on his own beast he brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow [when he was departing] he took out two denarii. and gave them to the host, and said: Take care of him, and whatsoever thou spendest more, I, on my return, will repay. Which now of these three seems to thee to have become neighbour to him that fell among the robbers?[4] And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, do thou also likewise.— Luk 10:25-37.

[1] Kuinoel suggests that Christ pointed at the phylactery on which the words of this law were written, as He spake. Unger quotes this opinion with approval.

[2] There are variations in the text here, but of no importance for the interpretation of the parable.

[3] Field prefers this to the rendering in A. V. and R. V. on the ground that the verb is often joined with a noun in the singular number, when of course 'among' would be unsuitable; περιπεσει might be rendered by the one word 'encountered.'

[4] γεγονναι; suggesting the adage, "Neighbour is who neighbour does." In the interpretation of this parable great regard must be had to the original question of the lawyer. Formally an answer to the question, Who is my neighbour? evasively asked by one who was not thoroughly in earnest about the subject of his professed solicitude, the parable is really an answer to the wider question, What is the supreme duty, by the performance of which a man may hope to attain eternal life? The moral of the charming story is—Charity the true sanctity. This is the key to the construction of the parable, especially to the selection of its dramatis persona—a priest and a Levite—persons holy by profession and occupation, and a Samaritan stranger of a different race from that of the man in need of neighbourly succour. Through the introduction of the two former the lesson of the parable

is accentuated by suggesting a contrast between the genuine holiness of love, and spurious forms of holiness; through the introduction of the latter, as doing the requisite good deed, the supreme value of love in God's sight is emphasised. It means: Even in a Samaritan love is acceptable to God; wherever it is there is true goodness, and therefore eternal life; like faith, love, wherever manifested, breaks down all conventional barriers: "Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." Such being its import, our parable is emphatically a parable of grace, revealing to us the nature of God and of His kingdom. Its teaching can be true only if God be love, and His kingdom a kingdom of grace, and the Speaker, not typically, as in the Patristic interpretation, but literally, the Good Samaritan par excellence—one, that is, to whom every human being who needs help is a neighbour; one who is ever ready to render, to those who require it, seasonable succour. It was not Christ's intention, perhaps, under the guise of the Samaritan stranger, to describe Himself; the less we introduce the spiritual motive into the parable itself the greater our sense of its natural beauty and pathos will be. But the present parable is one of those peculiar to Luke, in which the vehicle of instruction is not a type taken from the natural sphere to teach a truth in the spiritual, but an example of the very action recommended. In connection with such a parable it is legitimate exegesis to say that Jesus was the supreme example of the virtue inculcated.[1]

[1] So Goebel, who points out that this parable is the first of those in Luke in which instruction is conveyed, not by type, but by example. The didactic drift of the parable being such as indicated, it is obvious that the appearance on the scene of the three contrasted figures is as intentional as it is admirably fitted to serve the purpose the Speaker has in view. The Priest, the Levite, and the Samaritan do not enter on the stage by accident; they are carefully and skilfully chosen to convey the moral. In apparent contradiction with this, it is indeed said that by chance[1] a priest went down that way; and perhaps we ought to extend the scope of the phrase to the other two travellers also, as if Jesus would say: By a singular fortuitous concurrence these three men turned up in that lonely place just at the time the poor wayfarer came to grief. But the reference to the chance character of the meeting only makes the intention of the Artist in the selection of his dramatis persona more marked. It is a virtual apology for the unlikelihood of a concurrence which the purpose of the story demands. It says in effect: That these four men should come together in such a place, about the same time, and under such circumstances, seems, I admit, a somewhat unlikely supposition; yet suffer me to make it, for I need it in order to point duly my moral.[2] The apology will be accepted by all who are satisfied that the characters who figure in the parable are well selected for the didactic purpose. On this point, however, doubts have been expressed by some, as, e. g., by Keim, who, disbelieving in the genuineness of the parable, adduces in support of his opinion the fact that nowhere else do we find Jesus assuming a polemic attitude towards the priests and Levites—the usual objects of His attacks being the scribes.[3] But this objection has but little force, if the classes referred to laid themselves open to attack, after the manner of our parable. And who can doubt that they did? Who does not know that men holy by profession and occupation are very prone to come short in the duties of humanity?—so divorcing holiness from charity, religion from morality. Were the officially holy persons in Israel in the last stage of her degeneracy likely to be an exception?[4] And if not, were their shortcomings likely to escape animadversion on Christ's part, due opportunity offering itself? Far from doubting the genuineness of the parable on this score, and resolving it into a mere traditional expansion of a simpler utterance of our Lord in conversation with some legal interrogant,[5] we gladly welcome it as filling up what would otherwise have been a blank in His many-sided teaching. It was too much needed

to complete the picture of the time not to have been spoken by Him who was at once the most faithful and the wisest of all the prophets; and it is too good to have been spoken or invented by any one else.[6] [1] κατ■ ουγκυρ■αν.

[2] Godet remarks that there is a certain irony in the expression, by chance, as it is certainly not accidental that the narrative makes the two characters, priest and Levite, appear on the scene.

[3] 'Jesu von Nazara,' iii. 13, note 2.

[4] Goebel says that the priest and the Levite are introduced because they were peculiarly given to literalism.

[5] So Keim and others of similar proclivities.

[6] Keim's doubts are only a part of his general scepticism in regard to all the Samaritan incidents and sections in the Gospels, and especially in Luke, and are entitled to all the less consideration on that account.

While seeing in the reference to chance an apology for a needed combination, we must be careful not to make too much of it, as if the improbability of the concurrence were so great as to mar the natural felicity of the parable. This is so far from being the case that the Speaker might quite well have omitted the expression, and probably would have done so but for His desire to fix attention on the characters He introduced, and we may add, His exquisite sense of the fitting in narration, which was such that He felt inclined to apologise for the slightest appearance of a departure from the dictates of good taste. It was quite within the limits of natural possibility that all the persons alluded to should make their appearance in the scene of the deed of violence—the rugged, rocky pass between Jerusalem and Jericho, arduous for the traveller even on account of its physical characteristics, and dangerous as the haunt of desperadoes who lived by plunder.[1] Travellers on various errands must have frequented that road, for there had been no robbers had there been no one to rob. Among these travellers priests and Levites might occasionally be found; for Jericho was a city of priests, and officials would come and go between that place and Jerusalem in connection with their service at the temple. The pass of Adummim was not indeed the only way from the City of Palms to the capital, but it was the most direct, and would therefore be at least occasionally taken in spite of its bad renown as the "Way of Blood." A Samaritan stranger might also now and then appear there, journeying to or from Jerusalem on his private business; for his errands might require him to choose the route which lay through Jericho.

[1] Vide the passages in Josephus and Jerome, usually referred to in the Commentaries, and modern books of travel, such as Stanley's 'Sinai and Palestine.' Stanley's note on the pass of Adummim at p. 424 is worth consulting. In truth, whether we have regard to the construction of the story, or to its moral aim, we must acknowledge that in the parable before us the artistic tact of the Speaker appears in a conspicuous degree. The place, the persons, and the moral, all fit into each other admirably. A situation is chosen in which the occurrence of a calamity demanding active benevolence is probable. A wounded man in the Bloody Way, how likely a phenomenon! There, too, the men from whom help in such an emergency might naturally be expected, but from whom, alas, it will not be forthcoming, may also be met with: priests and Levites punctually attending to their religious duties according to law and custom, but deaf to the call of charity. In that same grim, perilous pass might by chance be met a Samaritan, hated of the Jews, and most probably hating

in turn, yet not necessarily, conceivably nearer the kingdom of God than those who proudly despised him as a heretic and alien, by the possession of a heart susceptible of the gentle emotion of pity, and prompt to act on its benignant impulses; not staying to inquire who or what the object of pity may be, content to know that he is a human being—"a certain man"[1] in distress. Finally, in the situation chosen love will have an opportunity of showing its true nature as an heroic passion. For the love that shall prove itself equal to the occasion must possess very uncommon attributes. It must be stronger than fear and the instinct of self-preservation which so often harden the heart It must be superior to the prejudice which chills pity by the thought that the claimant is one of another race and religion. It must be generous and uncalculating, grudging no expenditure of time, pains, or money, which may be necessary for the effectual succour of distress. In a word, it must be a love like that of God—self-sacrificing, ready to die for its object, even though that object should be an enemy; a love in which is revealed the maximum of gracious possibility, and which finds its secret reward in the blessedness of its own deed.

[1] "He was a human being (Mensch.), that is all he says; not a word about his rank, descent, or religion," quaintly remarks Arndt, whose whole treatment of the parable is spirited, graphic, and instructive, without having recourse to spiritualising. In details, not less than in general structure, the delineations of the parable are faithful to reality. The plight of the wounded man is desperate, as the didactic purpose requires; yet the description thereof cannot at any point be charged with exaggeration. It is just thus that the victims of bandits in those regions would be treated in those days, as it is just thus they are treated still. To be robbed of his purse, stripped of his garments, wounded, and heartlessly abandoned to his fate, is the lot of any one who has the misfortune to fall into such hands. The first of these particulars is omitted in the narrative, a circumstance diversely explained by the commentators; some suggesting poverty, others that plunder is taken for granted as a matter of course. The latter view is the more probable, whether we have regard to the verbal expression at this part of the story, or to the aim of the whole. The κα■ before ■κδ■σαντες (also having stripped him) seems to imply some previous act of violence, which could only have been the forcible appropriation of that which robbers chiefly seek—the purse. Then the supposition that this misfortune also befell the victim, harmonises best with the design of the parable to signalise the supreme worth of humanity: for the graver the case the greater the opportunity afforded for the display of that virtue. But why, then, is this feature not introduced? In reply, we ask, Is it quite certain that it is not? It is not indeed expressly mentioned in the description of the victim’s condition; but is it not indirectly alluded to in the picture presented of the humane conduct of his benefactor? Among the kind services of the Samaritan to the object of his care, payment of his bill at the inn is carefully specified. That implies that the wounded one was unable to pay his own way; for the services rendered by love are all supposed to be necessary, the virtue inculcated being not quixotic, uncalled-for generosity, but readiness to succour real and urgent need. Then it may further be regarded as certain, that the poverty does not belong to the man’s ordinary condition, but forms a part of the calamity which has lately overtaken him; for it belongs to the felicity of the parable that all the particulars specified should arise out of the supposed situation. The behaviour of the priest and Levite is very simply but suggestively described. They came, they saw, and they passed by. Inhuman, unnatural conduct, one is ready to exclaim. It was inhuman, but it was not unnatural. These men did exactly what all the world is inclined to do; what the majority are doing in one form or another every day—passing by need without giving pity time to rise in the bosom—what every one will certainly do in whom the impulses of fear and the instinct

of self-preservation are stronger than the nobler instincts and impulses of benevolence. The language of the parable betrays a consciousness on the part of the Speaker that the conduct he describes is not exceptional but usual. Very noticeable is the repetition of the expressive word ■ντιπαρ■λθεν. The very monotony suggests the idea of what is customary—the way of the world—and, in the present case, of the religious world. The first comer passed by, the second passed by; and in nine cases out of ten that is what you may expect.[1] It is the exceptional case when, instead of ■ντιπαρ■λθε, you can say ■σπλαγχν■σθη—not he passed by, but he was moved with pity. So it is with the beggar in the street; so it is with men placed in extreme danger whom you cannot help without serious risk to yourself. There is doubtless everything in so grave a plight as that of the wounded man in the pass of Adummim to rouse the dormant feelings of compassion which minor afflictions of everyday occurrence fail to touch. Yet let us not imagine that the priest and the Levite would necessarily have a bad conscience, or go away feeling that they were behaving in an altogether monstrous manner. Nothing so easy as to invent excuses for their conduct. Every commentator suggests a list of excuses, each one inventing his own list—so plentiful are they. "Another of these robberies. How frequent they are growing! One ought to help, but what can one do? This poor fellow seems beyond help. It is impossible to attend to every unfortunate. Then one must think of himself. True, these robbers do not meddle with us; they leave us holy men to go and come in the performance of our sacred duties; but we cannot expect them to act with such forbearance unless we observe a discreet silence as to their lawless deeds." "Alas, for the rarity of Christian charity under the sun!"—and alas for the multitude of plausible, prudent reasons by which that rarity can be accounted for!

[1] Grotius interprets ■ντιπαρ■λθε as signifying—passed in the opposite direction. ’Praeterivit contrario itinere ab Jerichunte, scil. Hiersolyma properans.’ Godet, with his usual insight, renders it—’In face of such a spectacle they passed.’ The thing emphasised is surely not the direction in which they were going, but that they avoided the sufferer, gave him a wide berth, and hurried on from the place. The reasons are good enough for all who want an excuse. But if one happen to have a big, tender heart he will not be able to avail himself of such reasons for neglecting a duty lying in his way. When the emotion of pity is strong, it prevents a man from acting on the suggestions of prudence; when it is very strong, amounting to a passion, it prevents these from even arising in the mind. Thanks be to God, there are always some such men in the world. Though such charity be rare it is not unexampled; therefore the good Samaritan is not an incredible character. His picture is one of unearthly beauty, yet it is not unreal or impossible. We exclaim as we read—"He did as he ought to have done; as we all ought to do." It has been said of the story of the good Samaritan that it has been "the consolation of the wanderer and the sufferer, of the outcast and the heretic, in every age and country."[1] It may also be said of it that it has been as a conscience in the heart of Christendom condemning inhumanity, breeding shame of cowardice and selfishness, and prompting to deeds of kindness by a heavenly yet sober and practicable ideal of benevolence. This ideal is painted with a few strokes, but with consummate art, which the Limner has learnt from His own gracious spirit. The Samaritan traveller, like the two others, comes up to the half-dead victim of violence, and sees his sorrowful condition; but, unlike the two others who preceded him, he does not pass by, but feels pity. They, too, perhaps felt a little pity, but it was just enough to scare them away in horror, and to send them on their journey inventing excuses to hide from themselves their own heartlessness. But the Samaritan’s pity was a passion and an agony; therefore he could not get away from the object which excited it, but was compelled

rather to draw near to him, and that not to gaze but to succour. The sufferer has taken full possession of his heart, and he must do for him all that he needs. And he does all promptly, without hesitation, or intrusion of any thought or feeling that can interrupt the flow of the commanding emotion. The several acts are carefully enumerated, not for mere pictorial effect, but for the sake of moral impression; even to show the genius of true love, as that which renders help with promptitude, thoroughness, self-denial, and unwearying patience;[2] and also with tact, doing all things in their proper order, and in the best, most considerate way: first staunching the wounds with wine and oil,[3] which with due forethought for emergencies it has at hand; then conveying the patient to the inn where he can stay till he recover; and making itself answerable for all charges incurred during convalescence. Noticeable yet further in this picture is the absence of all sentimentality, for this, too, is a sure mark of genuine love. All things are done without parade, and with good sense. Specially to be remarked in this connection is the pecuniary part of the transactions. The benefactor does not give to the host a large sum of money amply sufficient to pay all possible expense with a liberal margin over. He gives a limited sum, small, but sufficient to pay past outlay, and promises to pay the rest on his return. There is thrift without niggardliness, as you expect in one who is not performing a solitary act of charity in an ostentatious way, because he happens to be in the humour, but is in the habit of doing kind actions as he has opportunity, and therefore does them in sober, business style. It may indeed appear unbusiness-like to expect the host to give him credit for future expense on account of his beneficiary. But, doubtless, the host knows his man: he has been that way before, and he will come again, and he has always been a good customer.[4] [1] Stanley, 'Sinai and Palestine,' p. 425.

[2] Arndt is good on the attributes of love developed in the conduct of the Samaritan.

[3] Schöttgen asks how came the Samaritan to have wine and oil, and thinks it was usual in hot countries to carry oil. Jacob had oil to anoint the pillar, and Lot had wine with him.

[4] Possibly the inn in the dangerous pass (of which ruins are still traceable) was kept by a Samaritan. So Unger.

Such is the charming tableau. How beautiful, and also how suggestive of didactic meanings! In the first place, it completely answers the immediate question: Who is my neighbour? The whole doctrine of neighbourhood is virtually and effectively taught in the parable. First, and directly, what it is to be a neighbour, viz. to render effectual succour when and where it is needed, having regard to nothing beyond the fact of need. Next, indirectly, but by obvious consequence, Who is my neighbour?—viz. any one who needs help, and whom I have power and opportunity to help, no matter what his rank, race, or religion may be. Neighbourhood is made co-extensive with humanity. Any human being is my neighbour who needs aid, and to whom I can render aid; and I am neighbour to him when I do for him what his case demands. It matters not on which of the two sides the doctrine is approached. The relation of neighbourhood is mutual; he is my neighbour to whom I am neighbour. Jesus applied the parable on the latter side of the doctrine, as leading up most directly to the practical appeal to the conscience of His interrogant—"Go, and do thou likewise." "Which of these three," He asked, "appears to thee to have become neighbour to the man who fell among the robbers?" Had the Scribe been in the mood in which he began the interview he might have parried the question, and raised another quibble, saying: What I want to know is, not to whom I am neighbour, but who is neighbour to me? In so doing he would have

acted as reasonably as when he first put the question; for he asked it not because he did not know, but because he did not wish to act on his knowledge. But the legal quibbler has lost all his briskness and courage. The pathos of the parable has subdued and solemnized him, and for the moment called into play those feelings of nature which even in a Jewish Rabbi were only overlaid, not extinguished, by the sophistries of conventional morality. Therefore, though it went against the grain to praise a Samaritan, and his pride refused even to name him, he could not help replying: "He who showed mercy on Him."[1] And when Jesus bade him go and practise the virtue his conscience approved he had no heart for further fencing, but went away profoundly impressed with the wisdom and moral authority of Him whom he had tried to puzzle.

[1] Godet. The parable further answered the larger question first propounded by the lawyer: which is the virtue that saves? The Scriptures teach that without holiness no man shall see the Lord, that is, have eternal life; and in this parable two kinds of holiness are set before us, the one spurious, the other genuine. The spurious holiness is that of the priest and Levite, or sanctity divorced from charity. It is not indeed formally described; but the idea is suggested by the introduction of two officially holy persons. The very motive of their introduction is to suggest the thought of a religion separated from morality, and especially from that which is the soul and essence of all morality, love. The two sacerdotal characters appear on the scene as concrete embodiments of a type of piety which God abhors, sacrifice without mercy. By placing them alongside of the humane Samaritan Jesus eloquently re-utters the prophetic oracle, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." In the person of the Samaritan the nature of true sanctity is exhibited. We are taught that the way to please God, the way to genuine holiness, is the practice of charity. It has been remarked indeed, that in applying the parable Jesus did not repeat the words, "This do, and thou shalt live," and that He could not do so, because charity, though necessary, is not sufficient for salvation, faith being indispensable. But it is evident that if life could be promised to him who kept the commandments, it could also be promised to one who acted as the Samaritan, for what was such action but a most emphatic keeping of the commandments? In that action, it is true, only the second of the two great commandments is expressly involved, but neither of these commandments can be kept apart from the other. He that truly loveth God loveth his brother also; and conversely he that truly loveth his brother loveth God also, unconsciously if not consciously. The claims of faith as a condition of salvation were fully acknowledged by our Lord in His teaching, and we must take care that they suffer no neglect at our hands. But there is a better way of protecting these claims than to be jealous of the life-giving power of love. That better way is to teach that charity presupposes faith; in other words, that the man whose religion consists in loving God and his neighbour, is inevitably a man who believes in a God whose nature is love. And this leads us to remark that our parable likewise answers the question which lies behind the first question of the lawyer, viz. What is God? The parable virtually, though not formally, solves that problem; implying, though not saying, God is love; His kingdom is a kingdom of grace; the way to please Him is to walk in love; I, Jesus, am His well-beloved Son, because I delight in saving the lost and succouring the miserable. What the parable expressly teaches is true only because these things are true. To ascribe this extended significance to the parable is not, as already hinted, to indulge in a licentious, tropical exegesis; it is merely to extend its didactic import within the same sphere. For the spiritualising interpretation of the fathers, followed by some moderns, we have no taste. It seems to us frigid, trifling, even pernicious, as tending to blunt our perception of the true, natural sense. When carried far enough it becomes ridiculous; and hence the illogical moderation and discretion exercised by some patrons

of this style of exegesis, as by a leading English writer on the parables, who, having gone so far with the fathers, draws the line at the two pence, which, in the tropical interpretation, denote the two sacraments![1] But we have no hesitation in saying that this parable is a most important contribution to Christ's general doctrine of God, and of the kingdom of God, and in that view pre-eminently a parable of grace. It is implied that God is a God of love, and that His love is catholic, not partial; a love of mankind, not of Jews only, a φιλανθρωπ■α, as it is termed by an apostle;[2] a love kindred in nature to that pity which moves one human being to help another in need, to which also the name philanthropy is applied in Scripture notably, too, in the case of the kindness shown by Maltese barbarians to Paul and his shipwrecked companions.[3] How significant this juxtaposition of the love of God most high with the humane feelings to which even the most uncultured of mankind are not strangers! The catholic scope of our parable was doubtless one of its chief attractions in the eyes of Luke, the Pauline evangelist. Invent the parable he certainly did not, for that was a task above his genius; but select it with pleasure he certainly did on account of its universalism. It pleased him that it was a Samaritan who did the good action;[4] it pleased him that love in man, disregardful of conventional barriers, in the parable had free course and was glorified, as implying a similar love in God, wide as the world, and bringing healing without stint for its sin and misery. And the Church and the whole world have reason to be thankful that in such things Luke took delight; for to that fact we owe the preservation of one of the most precious morsels of our Lord's incomparable teaching.

[1] Trench, who says: "It would be an entering into curious minutiae, one tending to bring discredit on this scheme of interpretation, to affirm decidedly of the 'two pence' that they mean either the two Sacraments, or the two Testaments, or the Word and the Sacraments, or unreservedly to accede to any one of the ingenious explanations which have been offered for them" (pp. 325-6).

[2] Tit 3:4.

[3] Acts 28:2.

[4] Vide Renan, 'Les Evangiles,' p. 267.

01.18. Chapter 7. The Unjust Steward

Chapter 7.

The Unjust Steward Or, the Redeeming Power of Charity. And He said also unto His disciples: There was a certain rich man who had a steward; and the same was accused unto him as wasting his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward. Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do, for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship? I cannot dig, to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. So he called every one of his lord's debtors, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, An hundred baths of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill,[1] and sit down and write quickly fifty. Then to another he said, And thou, how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred cors of wheat. He saith to him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore. And the lord praised the unjust steward, because he had acted wisely for himself; for the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. And I say unto you; Make to yourselves friends with[2] the mammon of unrighteousness; that when ye fail, (or it fails[3]), they may receive you into the everlasting tents.—Luk 16:1-9.

[1] Τ■ γρ■μμα in T. R.; τ■ γρ■μματα according to approved reading, the bond or voucher which showed the amount owed.

[2] ■κ το■ Μαμων■, rendered ambiguously of in A. V.

[3] ■κλ■πητε in T. R.; ■κλ■πη in some copies, and adopted by most critics. De Wette prefers the former. The introductory formula might seem to imply that this parable was spoken at the same time as that of the Prodigal Son contained in the preceding chapter. In reality, however, it does not necessarily imply, and ought not in the exposition to be assumed to imply, anything more than that to the mind of the Evangelist the two parables had some connection, some word, or thought-affinity, which made the one suggest the other, and led him to introduce both in the same part of his narrative. What the subjective connection was we can only conjecture; it might be very slight, for often a very insignificant point of contact suffices to bring the law of association into play. The link might be the simple circumstance that both parables refer to worldly goods, and especially to the way in which these are often abused by men. In each there is a prodigal who wastes substance, in the one case his own, in the other that of another man; and the act of wasting is described in both instances by the same term.[1] It is quite conceivable that so slender and external a tie might bind together the two parables in the Evangelist's thought, and determine him, in absence of knowledge of the historical connection, to unite them in his story. It is probable, however, that they appeared to his view bound together by more intimate relations; by affinity in their general spirit and didactic drift not less than by their superficial features. At the least it may safely be assumed that he cannot have been conscious of any incongruity between the parables in these respects. He must have discerned even in this most unevangelic-looking parable of the Unjust Steward a vein of evangelic sentiment, which made it not unfit to stand beside that parable

of the Prodigal Son in which the gracious aspect of Christ's teaching is seen at its brightest. If so, then we too must try to pierce beneath the repulsive surface to the underlying stratum of Gospel truth. And we mean to make the attempt, and that in a spirit of good hope, not of despair. For we believe that in the whole of the section wherein, according to Renan, is to be found the great originality of Luke[2]—the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters—the evangelic tone prevails. To this extent at least we are prepared to go in opposition to another critic, who boldly affirms that the two chapters have absolutely nothing in common.[3] For we cannot regard Luke, with some, as a mere mechanical chronicler who placed side by side in his history materials of the most heterogeneous character drawn from his sources; in one chapter a section radiant with the light of divine love, in another a piece of cold Ebionitic morality, ascetic in tone and commonplace in thought.[4] The writer had religious sympathy with his subject, and was guided throughout, both in the selection and in the grouping of his materials, by a warm evangelic feeling. On this account we expect to find traces of that feeling and of that which justifies it even here, as also in the succeeding parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. In saying so we readily acknowledge that there are difficulties to be surmounted. Among these we do not reckon the selection of an unprincipled agent to be the vehicle of instruction, for there are similar instances of the same sort[5] which show that our Lord in His parabolic teaching was wont to use great boldness and freedom in the application of that method of instruction, a fact which only gives to the doctrine taught enhanced value and piquancy in the esteem of all intelligent students. If a particular character was best fitted in other respects to convey the intended lesson, the mere lack of morality was not regarded as an objection to its introduction. The main difficulty in the way of one who would get to the evangelic heart of the parable is the apparently low level of the very moral lesson itself which the parable is employed to convey. It seems to be a lesson of mere prudence in the use of money with a view to the salvation of our souls in the next world. Such a low-toned, unheroic sentiment strikes one as un-Christlike, and if that were really all that was meant, we should feel strongly tempted to acquiesce in the verdict of Keim that such a gross morality of prudence never came from the lips of Jesus,[6] and to see in this parable a foreign element that had found its way into the Gospel from extra-canonical sources current in quarters where the genuine logia of Christ had undergone corruption, or been mixed up with apocryphal additions.[7] But we should be very slow indeed to adopt any such conclusion and we do not think the facts demand it; that is, we are persuaded that in this section of the evangelic narrative we are taught no mere morality of prudence, though the lesson may be put in prudential form, but something worthy of Him whose words were always like Himself—noble, generous, unworldly.

[1] διεσκ■ρπισεν, Luk 15:13; διασκορπ■ζων, Luk 16:1.

[2] 'Les Évangiles,' p. 265.

[3] Reuss, 'Histoire Evangélique,' 495.

[4] Pfleiderer regards this parable as Ebionitic in spirit, and cites it as illustrating the evangelist's impartiality as an author in the use of his sources, of which he finds traces in Acts also. Vide 'Paulinismus, p. 499.

[5] Vide parables of Selfish Neighbour and Unjust Judge.

[6] 'Jesu von Nazara,' ii. 401.

[7] So Hilgenfeld, Weizsäcker, Pfleiderer, &c. The parable seems to us to teach not one lesson but two, one general, the other particular; the general one a lesson of prudence in the use of temporal possessions with a view to eternal interests; the special one a lesson as to the way of using these possessions which most directly and surely tends to promote our eternal interests, viz. by the practice of kindness towards those who are destitute of this world's goods. A prudent regard to the higher concerns of man, and beneficence towards the poor as a means to that end, such are the virtues which it seems the teacher's aim to inculcate. Many commentators have failed to recognise the intention to teach a double lesson, and have virtually, though probably in many instances unconsciously, proceeded on the assumption that the interpreter had to make his choice between two mutually exclusive alternatives; the result being a multitude of interpretations not altogether erroneous, but partial and one-sided.[1] One class leans to the side of prudence, another to the side of beneficence, the fewest have clearly perceived that the two points of view are perfectly compatible, and ought to be combined in order to do justice to the thought and purpose of the Teacher. As was to be expected, the smaller number give the preference to the special lesson of beneficence, the tendency of commentators, as of men in general, being to side with the common-place in thought rather than with the original, with the mean in ethics rather than with the lofty. To the honourable band who in this case have obeyed the nobler instinct belong two men of princely rank among interpreters, Calvin and Olshausen. The Genevan divine opens his comments on the parable with this sentence: "The sum of this parable is that we should deal humanely and benignantly with our neighbours, that when we come to the tribunal of God the fruit of our liberality may return to us." It is the utterance of a man thoroughly imbued with the evangelic spirit of the Reformation, who, while zealous for faith as the instrument of justification, was not afraid to give love its due; he being no mere scholastic theologian, but a living Christian endowed with fresh religious intuitions, and quick to discern in Scripture whatever was in sympathy with the doctrine of grace. The more modern interpreter reechoes the sentiment of Calvin when, comparing the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of Luke, he remarks, that what in the former is taught concerning the compassionate love of God, is in the latter exhibited as the duty of man in his surroundings. The view is significant in his case also, as an index of the close connection between the exegesis of Scripture and the life of the Church. For Olshausen also, like Calvin, was the child of a new time in which the evangelic intuition was once more restored, and Christian thought, delivered from the stupefying influence of dogmatism and the blinding influence of religious legalism, could with unveiled face and open eye see for itself the fulness of grace which was in Christ Jesus.

[1] Unger in his remarks on the parable adverts to this fact. That these two distinguished interpreters have given only a partial account of the didactic significance of our parable may perhaps be admitted. But, while defective in detail, their view is certainly right in tendency. If the duty of beneficence be not the only lesson of the parable it is certainly the chief lesson, that which gives to the parable its distinctive character, and must dominate the interpretation of the whole. We hope to show that with this key we can unlock the secret of the parabolic narration, and explain its most peculiar features. Another decided recommendation of this view is that it raises the moral tone of our Lord's teaching clear above the low level of a vulgar religious utilitarianism. For with the practice of beneficence we get into the region of love, and there we get rid of self and prudential calculation. It is true, doubtless, that the motive to beneficence is made to assume the form of a calculation. The owner of worldly goods is advised to make friends therewith of the poor,

because they in turn may be able to do him a friendly turn in the world beyond. But this will not perplex any one who remembers that the parabolic form of instruction does not afford scope for the play of the highest class of motives. It is essentially popular wisdom, and it is the way of that which aims at teaching the million to make action spring from homely motives. The prodigal is moved to return home by hunger; the host whose guests refuse to come to his feast invites the beggars to take their place from no interest in them, but to spite the first invited, and to prevent waste of the food prepared. So here, Jesus, applying His parable in the terms naturally suggested by it, bids His disciples be kind to the poor, to make sure their own admission into the eternal tents. This vulgar morality is meant to suggest the doctrines of a heroic morality. The method is of kin with the employment of bad characters to teach the lessons of wisdom. Both belong to the condescension involved in the parabolic form of instruction, and in that respect are in harmony with the genius of a revelation of grace. In all the above cases it is assumed as an axiom that the real motives are higher and purer than the ones suggested. If it were not so the action described would never be performed. Mere hunger would never bring the prodigal home. Mere anger would never lead any host to entertain the abjects of society. As little will mere self-interest lead a man to practise beneficence. Beneficence is not the product of the prudence, but the prudence is rather the product of the beneficence. A benignant spirit impels a man to do beneficent actions, and in that way, without being aware of it, or reflecting on it, he practises prudence with regard to his own eternal interest; secures for himself an abundant entrance into the everlasting tents after death; nay, does more than that, even brings into his soul now that blessedness which, just because it is the true life, is therefore eternal. With this preliminary glance at the moral import of the parable, we may now proceed to notice its more salient features.

First, we advert to the peculiar case supposed. It is that of a man occupying the position of a steward or factor to a person of wealth and rank who leaves the administration of his estate wholly in his servant's hands,[1] and systematically abusing his trust according to reports which reach his master's ears, insomuch that his summary dismissal has become inevitable. One naturally wonders that so objectionable a character should be selected as the vehicle of instruction. For though we may not insist that no bad men shall be employed to teach wisdom, we may reasonably lay it down as a rule that bad men should not be used if they can be dispensed with; that is, if good men will serve the purpose equally well, or even sufficiently well. Why, then, does Jesus oblige His scholars to make the acquaintance of so immoral and unedifying a character? The answer is, because He must find a man who is placed in a situation analogous to that which the moral lesson has in view. Now the situation contemplated by the moral lesson is that of men who look forward to the certain event of death, and who are exhorted in view of that event to make due preparation for what comes after. Such a situation suggests as its analogue in this world's affairs the position of an employ? about to lose his place and be deprived of his income. A factor on the point of being deprived of his stewardship is a suitable emblem of a man about to be removed from this world by death. That being so, it is obvious that an unjust steward is more naturally introduced into the parable than a just one, for the simple reason that his misbehaviour is the natural explanation of the impending dismissal. Why should a faithful steward be removed from office? To conceive such a case were to sacrifice probability to a moral scruple.

[1] Un grand seigneur vivant dans la capitale, loin de ses terres dont il a remis l'administration à un intendant.—Godet.

Clearly then we must overcome our distaste for this unsavoury character and be content to learn wisdom even from him. But what can he teach us? Well, two things at least. One that dismissal, death, will certainly come; another, that some provision must be made for what is beyond. The first lesson we are taught by the simple fact that the master had resolved to put away his unfaithful servant, which is carefully indicated by the words, give an account of thy stewardship, for thou canst be no longer steward. The rendering of the account is not demanded as a means of enabling the employer to decide what to do. He has decided already; he is so satisfied that his agent has been utterly false to his trust. He expects him to play the knave even in this last act, and he calls for it more out of curiosity than with any hope of satisfaction. It is meet that the steward should wind up his affairs in that way, and therefore his master will have it so; and we may add, the Maker of the parable will have it so, because the story must go on, and the steward must have his opportunity of showing how he provides for the evil day. That provision has to be made against that day—the day of Dismissal—we are taught by the vivid picture of the steward realising the fact. He said within himself: "What am I to do? My lord taketh away my stewardship. I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed." The future event is distinctly laid to heart, and the question what next deliberately, anxiously pondered, all possible courses being one after another weighed.[1] Thus would the Great Teacher have His hearers lay to heart their latter end, and consider solemnly and seriously how it will be with them thereafter. The steward’s soliloquy is not recorded merely for graphic effect, though it serves that end excellently, but to suggest the lesson, "go and do likewise." "Thou, too, must be dismissed," says Jesus to those who have ears to hear: "Think with thyself what thou canst do by way of providing against the fateful day." The meditations of the disgraced steward suggest rather gloomy thoughts as to the limited capacity of men to provide for the great future. "I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed." He is too broken-down by debauchery, too effeminate in spirit to engage in honest toil, and he is too much of a gentleman to stoop to the trade of a beggar. If he is to live at all it must be in gentlemanly fashion: by cheating possibly, but by vulgar labour or by abject dependence on charity never. Is man so helpless with regard to eternity; unable either to work for heaven or to beg for it; too broken-down by sin to work out for himself salvation as the reward of righteousness; too proud to be dependent for righteousness on another? But we are running unawares into the vice of the spiritualisers, and must return to our parable.

[1] The mention of digging is natural as typical of agricultural labour with which the steward’s position has brought him mainly into contact So Lightfoot, ’Hor. Heb.’

Thus far the delineation serves the purpose of enforcing the lesson of prudence in providing against the day of death. What follows is to be understood in the light of the second, higher, lesson of the value of beneficence as a means towards that end. After depicting the steward engaged in rapt meditation on his approaching dismissal and the measures for ameliorating the evil consequences, Jesus represents him as at length forming his resolution. "I know what I will do," he exclaims as the bright idea strikes him.[1] "I have it at last." Then follows the explanation of his plan, which is in effect so to benefit the creditors of his lord in his account to be rendered that after his removal from office they will gladly do him the counter favour of receiving him into their houses, not as a beggar, but as one well entitled to the benefit, and therefore able to receive it without humiliation. The scheme rests on the simple principle that one good turn deserves another. It involves knavery as towards the creditor, but it involves beneficence as towards his debtors. And that is the reason why the steward is made to adopt this plan of helping himself; for the Speaker of

the parable has it in view to teach a lesson of the worth of beneficence as a provision against the evil day. To make this point clear, let it be considered that the scheme of the disgraced factor was by no means the only possible one in the circumstances; he might, e. g., have required the various creditors to pay him the full sum specified in their bills while altering the figures, and then have gone to his lord and paid the sums due according to the amended accounts and pocketed the balance. This would have made provision for some time to come, if not for all time, and it would have made him more independent.[2] For after all there was something humiliating for one who had occupied his high position to be the guest of those beneath him in station, who had formerly feared him as their real master; passing from farm to farm as he tired of each host in turn, and probably each got tired of him, with the not impossible result of finding them eventually all wearied of their fastidious and moody guest. All this could not fail to pass through his mind, and to appear a serious drawback to the scheme, and to recommend some other course. It has indeed been suggested that the bills were leases, and that the change of the figures meant a change in the amount of the annual rental; in which case what he would have gained by the adoption of the other plan would have borne a very small proportion to the amount of money saved to the tenants by the transaction so viewed, that amount of course being the measure of their indebtedness to him.[3] But apart from the doubtfulness of the suggestion, it is open to the objection that if such was the nature of the transaction it is difficult to see why this great man need condescend to live under the roofs of meaner men as a homeless penniless dependent. Why not commute the advantage into a money payment, estimating the reduction of rent at a low rate which the tenants would be willing to pay, and which yet would realise over the whole a considerable sum, and having completed the nefarious business go his way, bidding good-bye to landlord and tenants alike? Obviously the plan actually adopted, however we interpret the alteration of the documents, is the one which suits the didactic purpose of the parable, the steward being made to appear a benefactor of the debtors without any pecuniary benefit to himself, because the aim of the narrative is to teach the value of beneficence as a passport into the eternal habitations.

[1] ■γνων, implying not habitual knowledge, but a conclusion at length arrived at as the result of consideration. "Not = ■γνωκα, which would be, 'I know, as part of my stock of knowledge, I am well aware,'—but implying, 'I have just arrived at the knowledge, an idea has just struck me, I have a plan.'"—Alford. Lange also puts the matter well; his account of the steward's soliloquy altogether is good. He remarks that the representation is very graphic if we regard the word as spoken ex abrupto; "What shall I do...? for my lord is going to deprive me of my office:... dig I can't, to beg I am ashamed... ε■ρηκα. I know, I have found out what I must do."

[2] The values due to the master were large, a bath being equal to nearly ten gallons, and the cor about fourteen bushels.

[3] Bailey, 'Exposition of the Parables of our Lord,' advocates this view. As helping us to understand more fully in what respect Jesus would have His hearers regard the steward as exemplary, it is important to note not only the general nature of his plan, but the manner in which it is executed. In this connection the actor in the parable exhibits certain valuable qualities of character well worthy of imitation, decision, self-collectedness, energy, promptitude, tact. Having once resolved what to do, he proceeds without hesitation to carry out his scheme undisturbed by any scruple of conscience or fear of failure. He is cool enough to perceive where the risks of miscarriage lie, and he adopts the mode of procedure best fitted to obviate them. He calls all the

debtors together not merely to save time and trouble, but that all may be implicated and none may mar the plot by becoming informer.[1] The company assembled, he proceeds to business with a briskness and spirit meant to be imposing and calculated to insure co-operation. With the documents in hand he asks each debtor in turn the amount of his obligation, and handing him his bill, in a tone of authority instructs him what to do: Sit down and write quickly such and such an amount. Nor does he give to all the same instructions. Herein he shows his tact and savoir faire. Diverse reasons have been suggested for the variation in the remission. One suggests his knowledge of the circumstances of each debtor;[2] another his idea of the varying degrees of dishonesty the consciences of the different debtors could stand;[3] a third his desire to show his power to do as he pleased, and so strengthen the feeling of obligation to himself.[4] According to a fourth interpreter the reductions were in accordance with the facts of each case. This suggestion is based on the assumption that fifty and eighty were the amounts really due to the master, and that the higher numbers indicated a fraudulent over-estimate of the indebtedness by the unscrupulous agent.[5] According to this view the steward had been a sinner against the debtors rather than against his employer. The effect of the transaction described in the parable on this hypothesis was to make the debtors under obligation to the steward by what they supposed to be a reduction of their debt, and at the same time to gain credit for him with his master by a correspondence between the bills as altered and the amounts previously reported verbally by him. This explanation has little to recommend it except that it makes the praise bestowed by the lord on his unfaithful servant less difficult to comprehend, and also exhibits the steward as in a way repenting, and by a return to honesty fitting himself to be with less impropriety the vehicle of moral instruction.

[1] So Alford.

[2] So Alford.

[3] So Hofmann.

[4] So Goebel.

[5] So Lange.

Probably the best explanation is to be found in the lordly temper of the man. He adopts the arbitrary line as the most imposing. It is not the power of his position as the real master that he calculates on, but rather the power of an imperious bearing. To give all the same reduction would be to act under law to a method, like ordinary men; to remit arbitrarily, and as whimsical impulse dictates, is to play the part of a magnifico, which suits his taste, and is not less likely to succeed. The world is largely governed by show, and many admire arbitrariness as princely, more than equity, which by comparison seems vulgar. The steward knew human nature, and acted accordingly. The scheme is carried out, and the news of it have reached the employer’s ears. How does he receive the report? The lord praised his unjust steward. This alleged praise has scandalised and perplexed commentators, and put them to shifts to explain it, or rather explain it away. The most plausible method of doing so is to suggest that the praise must be regarded from the point of view of the narrator.[1] Jesus is going to use the story for a purpose which requires that the conduct of the steward should be in some respects praiseworthy; therefore it is represented as being actually praised by the injured employer, though in reality it could hardly have been. It would compromise the natural probability of the parable were we to have recourse to

this expedient for getting rid of the difficulty. But it is really not necessary. The praise is after all not so unlikely as it seems. At first sight, no doubt, it appears as if an outburst of anger at this new act of villainy had been much more appropriate. But in truth the stage of anger is past. The master has had his bitter hours over the unfaithfulness of his servant, and these have issued in a determination to be rid of him. That resolution once formed, the master will not be troubled with any further vexation. He expects doubtless additional evidence of knavery before he is done with the unprincipled man. But then he does expect it, and has discounted it already. The exposure, when it comes, will awaken no further emotions of a painful kind. Any feeling that may be called forth will be of the nature of amusement. Henceforth the degraded steward will be a kind of psychological study to him. He will be curious to know just what the fellow will do in his extremity. And if the knave show talent, dexterity, he will be quite able to appreciate it, and in the mood even to bestow on it a sort of humorous laudation. Of course the praise will have a noticeable peculiarity of tone. You are not to imagine the master setting himself seriously to pronounce a eulogy on his ex-steward; that were a very prosaic supposition. The lord looks, says Calvin, not to the person but to the deed itself. There is humour in the situation, and the praise must be understood cum grano salis. The now completed career and the character of the dismissed servant lie in full view before his lord’s eye. The picture presents a strange mixture of prodigality, magnificence, cleverness, and unscrupulousness, not without its fascination, and exciting in the beholder mixed feelings of abhorrence and admiration. In the last act of the drama the hero displays all his qualities, bad and good. How natural that the exhibition should extort from the spectator, even though he be one who has suffered injury at his hand, such expressions of approbation as men are wont to use with reference to skill, ability, and tact, dissociated from principle. One does not need to be a "man of the world" in order to utter or appreciate such laudatory phrases;[2] nothing more is required than the power to enjoy the display of character.

[1] So Reuss.

[2] Alford and others remark that the master is a man of the world also, to account for the praise of a clever but unprincipled person. With the praise bestowed on his unrighteous servant the parable ends; all that follows is application. The moral interpretation begins properly at the ninth verse with the solemn formula—And I say unto you. The last clause of the preceding verse may be regarded as a parenthesis explanatory of the term φρον■μως, employed to describe the action of the steward. One might be tempted to regard it as a reflection inserted by the Evangelist, similar to that which occurs in the discourse of Jesus, recorded in the seventh chapter of his Gospel.[1] It has somewhat the tone of those explanatory enlargements by which primitive disciples might naturally unfold for the edification of themselves and their brethren the latent meaning of Christ’s pregnant words; whereof we have a sample in the addition of the words, unto repentance, in the saying, I came not to call the righteous, but sinners. For the reflection, though true and important, is not absolutely indispensable. Without it we could understand what it was that the lord in the parable praised, and how it came to pass that there was that in his servant which provoked his approbation. We know that there is such a thing as practical skill and talent leading to success in life, apart from principle; and we know, moreover, that very often most unprincipled men are exceptionally endowed with such talent Such knowledge is a part of the ethical lore which men learn by observation. It would not therefore have been surprising if Christ had left the truth in question unexpressed, to be supplied by the intelligence of His hearers. It is, however, on the

other hand, by no means incredible that our Lord did wind up the parabolic narrative with the observation, that "the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." It is, as Bengel remarks, a sublime sentence most worthy of the celestial mouth of Jesus Christ![2] It is a weighty truth expressed in choice language. The title bestowed on those who are not of this world is especially noteworthy. It does full justice to their superior dignity Children of the light! How much better at the worst to belong to the goodly company than to possess in the highest degree the talent which conducts to worldly success, and by the use thereof to gain a place among the chief men of the world! Children of the light, having spiritual insight into the relative worth and unworth of things, and therefore choosing the better part which shall not be taken away! Children of the light, walking in the sunshine of holiness, and having no fellowship with the works of darkness! Yet taking the children of the light at their best, how inferior they are in the talent for getting on as compared with the world's children! One may say, the more they are children of the light, the less of that talent they possess. On the other hand, it is the talent of the children of the world. The world is their portion, and to know the art of advancing their own interest in the struggle of life with their own kind is their study, and their frequent attainment. Thus understood, the apophthegm conveys no censure on the children of the light for not being more like the children of the world. The purpose is not to blame the former for the want of a certain quality, but to advert to the fact of the latter possessing it in a signal degree. "Praised him for his prudence; for his prudence, I say, for a prudent and skilful prosecution of self-interest is a notable characteristic of the men of the world; it is the thing which distinguishes them as compared with the children of light." If blame be intended, then we must give the saying another turn, and understand it thus: "The children of the world show more skill in the prosecution of their worldly interest (ε■ς τ■ν νενε■ν τ■ν ■αυτ■ν—in relation to worldly men and temporal interests) than the children of light exhibit in relation to their eternal interests." The objection to this view is, that it is true only in proportion as men are not children of the light. There are multitudes of so-called children of the light who are much more wise with regard to temporal than to eternal interests. But are they children of the light at all? Would Jesus have called them by that dignified name? Is not the true child of light one who is wise for eternity, and a fool for this world? And yet there are degrees of light: there are those who walk wholly in the day and worthily of their vocation, seeking in all things the higher goods of life, and measuring the value of all things by their bearing on the health of the spirit. There are others who walk in the moonlight, seeing dimly, groping after the summum bonum, aspiring to eternal life, candidates for initiation rather than epopts, and not well instructed as to what most tends to promote their eternal interest. We must suppose that Jesus has in view these specially. The advice which follows is such as suits them. If such are meant then we may see in the application to them of the epithet, 'children of the light,' an evidence at once of the charity and of the wisdom of Jesus—of His charity in conferring a title hardly deserved; of His wisdom in conveying through the use of the title an indirect admonition. "Children of light, I call you: such is your ideal position; make it a practical reality by acting on the advice I proceed to give to you."

[1] Luk 7:29-30.

[2] Sublimis est hæc sententia, cœlesti ore Iesu Christi dignissima. That advice is obviously expressed, and with great felicity, in terms suggested by the parable. The summum bonum is conceived of eschatologically as a state of felicity entered upon at death corresponding to the

provision made for his well-being by the steward after his dismissal from office. Death is referred to in very peculiar terms: that when ye fail, or when it, your worldly good, fails you—for it is difficult to decide between the two readings. The weight of diplomatic and critical authority is in favour of ■κλ■πη, but the other reading given in the received text seems to sympathise best with the parabolic representation. Both forms of expression are in accordance with usage, the verb being employed to denote death in the Septuagint, as in Gen 25:8, with reference to the decease of Abraham, and the corresponding adjective being applied to riches in this same Gospel.[1] Our own preference is decidedly for the old reading as the more impressive and poetical, as also more in keeping with the connection of thought. That when ye fail, when ye suffer the last eclipse and bankruptcy of life—how significant and pathetic the allusion!—how unmistakable, too, in this respect contrasting with the other form of expression, which does not shut us up to death as the only possible interpretation, for riches may fail before death overtakes us.

[1] θησαυρ■ν ■ν■κλειπτον: Luk 12:33.

Still more striking are the terms in which the future state is described. The abodes of the blessed are called the eternal tents. The expression is paradoxical, combining two ideas apparently incompatible—the idea of an unchanging home, with the idea of transitoriness inseparable from tent life. A tent is the lodging of a pilgrim and stranger; heaven is the everlasting dwelling-place, the. perennial house and home of the beatified. But in this very combination of apparently incongruous ideas lies the poetry and power of this remarkable phrase. It transfers the pathos of the pilgrim life of time into the life of eternity. It has been suggested with much probability that the expression is taken from the patriarchal history. "The tents of Abraham and Isaac under the oaks of Mamre are transported by the thought into that life to come which is represented by the image of a glorified Canaan. What is the future for poetry but the past idealised!"[1]

[1] Godet.

These tents have among their occupants men whose life on earth was hard and sorrowful, and who are now enjoying eternal comfort, even the Lazaruses to whom this world was a veritable vale of tears. Of these Jesus counsels His hearers who possess wealth to make therewith friends. He speaks as one who is confident that it will be worth while to follow this course; that it will prove to be true prudence. "I say unto you, make to yourselves friends with the mammon of unrighteousness. Mark my words—I assure you the line of action I recommend will turn out good policy. If you do those who want what ye possess a good turn now, they will be able and willing to do you a good turn hereafter. When ye get from death notice to quit they will receive you into the eternal tents where they dwell in peace and joy with Abraham. Your beneficiaries now, they will become hereafter your benefactors."[1]

[1] Schöttgen states that the Jews believed that the poor could receive the rich into heaven. Alford quotes a genial remark of Richard Baxter’s: "Is there joy in heaven at thy conversion, and shall there be none at thy glorification?" The form of the thought thus quaintly expressed is that naturally arising out of the parable. The essential truth is, that genuine beneficence has value with God, the Judge of all the earth. The statement that those whom we benefit now will receive us into heaven means, that God has regard to deeds of charity, done in the true spirit of charity, in determining men’s eternal destiny. The doctrine taught here is therefore substantially identical with that set forth in the parabolic representation of the last Judgment, in which those who are welcomed to the

abodes of the blessed are they who have done acts of kindness to Christ in the person of the poor and needy. It is a doctrine with which we Protestants are not quite at home, and which we are apt to regard with jealousy as endangering the supremacy of faith as the grace that saves. That we should wish to bring all Scripture statements into harmony with our dogmatic formulae is natural enough, but before setting ourselves to this task it will be well to impress upon our minds how very much teaching in the same line as that of this parable there is in the Scriptures. Going back to the Old Testament we find these beautiful words in the Book of Daniel: "Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity." The recognition of the principle on which Daniel's counsel was based in the New Testament is very pronounced. To the pious Cornelius it is declared by a Divine message: "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God." The Apostle Peter, who was sent to teach the devout proselyte the Christian faith, in his Epistle writes: "Charity covereth a multitude of sins." Paul bids Timothy "charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God.... that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal lite." Finally Christ Himself said to the inquirer after eternal life: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven."[1] Luther reckoned the Epistle of James a strawy production, because it appeared to him to contradict Paul's doctrine of justification alone; and we could imagine an over-zealous defender of that doctrine, in possession of a courage equal to Luther's, boldly calling in question the authenticity of the above-cited utterances, and pronouncing them one and all apocryphal in source and uncanonical in tendency. The Christian of soberer mind will incline rather to make room for the doctrine they teach in his creed, and to give earnest heed to it in his conduct, believing that so doing he will be attending to matters which make for salvation. For it is a mistake to imagine that the teaching of these texts, and of the counsel appended to our parable, is Ebionitic, making poverty a virtue, and charity towards the poor, in the purely external sense of almsgiving, a passport to heaven. The mere possession of riches is not represented as an evil, but only the unwise use of them.[2] And the wise use does not consist in making money in unscrupulous ways, and then compounding for the iniquity by charitable donations. Our Lord's teaching concerning money may have been abused to that effect; but what part of His teaching has not been abused? What He aimed at was to raise His disciples up to a spiritual view of the world, as not an end in itself, but only a means to an end. To those who had been slaves of the world He preached a higher life, that consisted not in the abundance of the things they possessed. But He did not merely set that higher life and earthly possessions over against each other. He taught that the lower goods could be used so as to increase one's spiritual wealth. He held this to be possible in every case. There was no man, in His view, however degraded, sordid, and even unrighteous his life had been, who could not redeem the past and insure the future by a wise, beneficent use of his means. The only hopeless character was that of the selfish man, who continued all his life to live only for himself, having no solicitude to make friends with the mammon of unrighteousness.

[1] These and other instances are enumerated in a most effective manner by M. Oilier of Lille in his excellent book, 'Méditations Chrétiennes sur des Paraboles,' 1880. It is a collection of sermons full of insight and eloquence.

[2] Godet well remarks, that the sin connected with mammon consists not, according to the parable, in being the stewards of God, but in forgetting that we are. This phrase, the mammon of unrighteousness, must therefore not be timidly interpreted. Many shades of meaning have been put upon it, largely with a view to avoid exegetical encouragement to licentious abuse of our Lord's words. Mammon, we are told, is called unrighteous because it is evil when it is made our chief good, however lawfully gotten;[1] or because it is deceitful, that is, of uncertain tenure;[2] or because there is no money which has not at some time 01 other been unrighteously used, although possibly not by the present possessor;[3] or because money represents the distinction of property—meum and tuum, which is itself the fruit of sin;[4] or because it has not been employed for charitable purposes, neglect of this duty being called ■δικ■α, as the practice of it was called δικαιοσ■νη.[5] Most commentators shrink from that which might appear the most natural interpretation: the mammon which you have gotten by unrighteousness. They tell us that with reference to such a case Christ would have counselled, not charity, but restitution. Nevertheless we hesitate not to say that the epithet applied to money may and ought to be understood in the last sense, not to the exclusion of the others, but with very emphatic inclusion of it among the possible meanings. Its importance consists in this, that it exhibits the extreme limit of unrighteousness, and so tests the value of the principle. Beneficence must have virtue indeed if it can redeem a life of unrighteousness; if even in the case of men who have gained wealth by fraud, there be a right use of wealth possible by which they can benefit not only others, but themselves in the highest sense. Why should we hesitate to say that Jesus did contemplate such an extreme case? Among His hearers and disciples were probably not a few publicans; men like Zacchæus, mentioned a little further on in this Gospel. What counsel was He to give them? To restore what they had gotten by false and unrighteous means? Certainly, where possible. But what was to be done in the many instances in which it was impossible? Surely the money which could not be restored should be put to the best possible use. Let the penitent publican do all the good to others he could, and so redeem the bad past as far as lay in his power; putting the poor and the needy in the place of those whom he had wronged, and to whom he could no longer give redress.[6]

[1] So Reuss.

[2] Kuinoel and others.

[3] Jerome, Melancthon, &c.

[4] Trench, Alford, &c.

[5] Lightfoot ('Hor. Heb.'); but with hesitation.

[6] The word mammon (properly mamon) in the Syriac means money. The idea that it was the name of a god was of mediæval origin. There is no suggestion in the text that mammon is essentially evil, though the concluding reflection in Luk 16:13, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon," may seem to suggest an antagonism between a good and an evil being. But it is impossible to serve two masters, whoever they be. We cannot love both God and earthly friends supremely, any more than God and earthly possessions. It would be better to replace the word mammon in out English version by money or wealth. The moral sentences which follow do not appear to us to be of great importance for the interpretation of the parable; but they are of some use as giving us additional insight into Christ's way of regarding wealth. He virtually applies to

money a series of epithets all tending to show how insignificant were the possessions of time in His view in comparison with the eternal riches. Wealth is the little, the unsubstantial, that which is really not ours, because we cannot retain it in the day of death; eternal life being the great boon, the true riches, that which is our own, because it abides with us for ever. The proper use, therefore, of the little that is fleeting is to use it with a view to the attainment of the much which endures.

One word more will finish what we have to say on this remarkable parable. The lesson taught here suggests an important theological inference. If kindness to the poo» have such value in the sight of God, it must be because God Himself is a Being who delights in loving-kindness. In teaching a morality of love Jesus virtually teaches a theology of grace. The two go together. Therefore, though the parable before us is ethical in its tendency rather than doctrinal, it may be legitimately reckoned among the parables of grace. The graciousness of the parable comes out in the quality of the ethics taught.

01.19. Chapter 8. Dives and Lazarus, and the Unmerciful Servant

Chapter 8.

Dives and Lazarus, and the Unmerciful Servant Or, Inhumanity and Implacability the Unpardonable Sins. The genius of an ethical system is revealed not only by what it loves, but by what it heartily hates, and regards as deadly unpardonable sin. In the teaching of Christ the unpardonable sins are Inhumanity and Implacability. It is the selfish worldling who cares for nothing but his own comfort that goes to the place of woe; it is the unforgiving man whom the Father in heaven does not forgive. So we learn from the two parables next to be considered, the last in the present division. The doctrine is altogether congenial to a gospel of love, and fitly crowns the goodly edifice of spiritual instruction set forth in the parables of grace. Where love is regarded as the central truth of God's being, and the supreme duty and virtue of man, there a loveless spirit must appear the thing above all things hateful and damnable. We feel, therefore, that we commit no offence against the law of congruity in including the parables of Dives and the Unmerciful Servant under the same class with those of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Lost Son, and treating them as contributions to Christ's doctrine of Grace. Without misgiving on this score we proceed to the exposition of these parables, taking first the more difficult, viz.: The Parable of Dives and Lazarus

Now there was a certain rich[1] man, and he was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day.[2] And a certain beggar, Lazarus by name, was laid at his gate[3] covered with ulcers, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs[4] that fell from the rich man's table: yea, even[5] the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died, and that he was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: and the rich man also died and was buried. And in Hades, lifting up his eyes, being in torments, he seeth Abraham from afar, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said: Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame. But Abraham said: Son, remember that thou receivedst thy good things in thy lifetime and Lazarus in like manner the evil things:[6] but now here[7] he is comforted, and thou art in anguish. And besides all this,[8] between us and you there is a great chasm[9] fixed, that they which would pass from hence to you may not be able,[10] and that none may cross over from thence to us. Then he said: I pray thee, therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house, for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. But Abraham saith, They have Moses and the prophets: let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham, but if one go to them from the dead, they will repent. But he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if one rise from the dead.—Luk 16:19-31.

[1] Bleek regards πλο■σιος as a predicate, and renders: There was a certain man who was rich.

[2] Dr. Field criticising the revised version, says: "The Revisers have done right in retaining the A. V. except that for 'faring' they might with advantage have substituted 'feasting.' But in the margin

they propose another rendering, 'living in mirth and splendour every day.' Here the luxurious living of the rich man is presented to us under two different aspects; mirth, which we may suppose to consist in eating and drinking; and splendour, which suggests elegance of house and furniture. But the Greek word ε■φρμιν■μενος only contains the former idea, that of merrymaking, which is qualified by the adverb λαμπρ■ς, laute, sumptuously."—'Otium Norvicense.'

[3] ■β■βλητο does not necessarily mean more than 'lay.'

[4] The correct reading is τ■ν πιπτ■ντων = the things falling. ψιχ■ων = 'crumbs,' has probably crept in from Mat 15:27. Godet, however, thinks it has dropped out by confusion of the two τ■ν and ought to be retained.

[5] ■λλ■ κα■, implying if not an aggravation of his sufferings, a heightened colouring in the description of them.

[6] Τ■ κακ■, the ills of life; not his evil things, as in the case of Dives Goebel, however, maintains that the pronoun is understood.

[7] ■δε: ■δε=this one, Lazarus, in T. R.

[8] This rendering answers to the reading ■π■ π■σι το■τοις. The reading approved by critics is ■ν π■σι το■τοις, literally, "in all these things."

[9] Χ■σμα. Trench remarks that when the A. V. was published the word 'chasm' did not exist in English. The R. V. retains 'gulf.'

[10] The word ■πως at the beginning of this clause suggests the idea that the chasm has been fixed for the purpose of preventing transit. In the interpretation of this parable much depends on the view taken of the connection between it and the preceding portion of the chapter in which it occurs. If the connection is supposed to be with the immediately preceding context, then the main drift of the parable will be found in the concluding verses, in which the importance of Moses and the prophets as means of grace is emphasised. If, on the other hand, these miscellaneous observations contained in Luk 16:14-18 be passed over as a kind of parenthesis interrupting the train of thought, and the present parable be connected with the one going before, then we shall discover the didactic significance not in the appendix, but in the main body of the story viewed as a fictitious history invented to illustrate the moral with which the parable of the unrighteous steward ends. We have no hesitation in deciding for the latter view. The imaginary narrative of the rich man and Lazarus is intended, as we think, to enforce the counsel to make friends with the mammon of unrighteousness by showing the disadvantage of not having such friends to facilitate admission into the eternal tents.[1] It is quite likely that Christ would illustrate such a striking counsel by some such startling story; highly probable that He meant to do so irrespective of the words which He was led to speak by the derision of the Pharisees among His audience; so that we may see in the introduction of the parable the resumption of the discourse at the point at which it had been broken off.[2] So far from finding the key to the interpretation of the parable in the sentences interpolated between it and the preceding one, we should rather be disposed to agree with those who think that some of these sentences at least, especially those respecting the perpetual validity of the law, have found a place here because of the turn of thought at the close of the parable. The sentences concerning the law do not explain the story which follows; that story rather explains the presence

of these sentences in the foregoing context. They come in at that point, because the story with its peculiar conclusion was to follow. We do not affirm this dogmatically; we simply throw it out as a hypothesis preferable to being led astray in our interpretation by the assumption of a rigid adherence to historical sequence on the part of the narrator.

[1] So Olshausen. He says that the connection between the two parables is unmistakable. As in the one an example is given how earthly goods may be used for the service of God, so in the other we have an example of one who uses his possessions only for his own enjoyment. In Lazarus, on the other hand, appears one who could have been of service to the rich man with reference to heaven. Here, therefore, again is beneficence, compassionate love, commended.

[2] So in effect Greswell. In none of the parables is the determination of the central viewpoint at once more needful and more difficult. The need arises out of the indefinite possibilities of didactic inference opened up by the scene being in part laid in the invisible world, concerning which it is of the utmost importance to draw no false conclusions. The difficulty springs from the fact that the parable itself is unusually undidactic in form. In this case the moralist retires far into the background, and only the artist comes to the front The artistic power displayed is not inferior to anything in the whole range of the parabolic literature. In its descriptive vividness, as in its delicacy and pathos, the touch of the Limner is inimitable. But the Great Master does not in express terms tell us this time what His picture means; we are left to draw the moral lesson for ourselves. And the diversity of judgment as to the doctrinal tendency of the parable shows that this is by no means an easy task. The question, What does this story teach? has been very diversely answered. Some have found in it a proclamation, in parabolic form, of the general doctrine of future rewards and punishments for the good and evil deeds of the present life, with sundry items of information concerning the states of the saved and the lost respectively, the most momentous being that the separation between the two classes is absolute and final—the dialogue between Abraham and Dives having for its chief aim to proclaim this fact. And it is quite conceivable that our Lord might have spoken a parable bearing on such a topic. But then in such a parable we should have expected to find the characters of those whose future lots were to be so different more clearly indicated than they are in the one before us, in which Dives, though rich and living luxuriously, is not represented as wicked, and Lazarus, though poor and spending a wretched existence, is not represented as pious. The description would be sufficient, only if the doctrine intended were, that to be rich is a crime and to be poor a virtue. And such, in fact, in the opinion of some, is the doctrinal import of the parable. Its burden is, Woe to the rich! blessed are the poor.[1] It is simply a vivid concrete representation of what is taught in the makarisms and woes with which Luke's version of the Sermon on the Mount begins.[2] Something more and different, it is admitted, is contained in the concluding part, which is regarded as a supplement appended at a later date to the original parable, to rectify its Ebionitism by making Dives be damned, not for his wealth, but for his neglect of Old Testament teaching,[3] or by giving the rich man the character of a Judaism remaining unbelieving in spite of the resurrection of Christ.[4] Those to whom the imputation of Ebionitic tendencies to our Lord is offensive, and who nevertheless discover in this part of His teaching the doctrine of future recompenses, find themselves constrained to purge out the evil taint by bringing out of the description of the two contrasted characters more than appears on the surface. The chief effort is directed to Lazarus with the view of transforming him from a merely poor and miserable wight into a saint. This is done by imputing to his name moral significance. In

the first place, importance is attached to the fact of a name being given to him, the only instance of the kind in the whole range of parabolic utterances. Then stress is laid on the composition of the name: it being equivalent to Eleazar, which means, God my help.[5] ■ Thus the name used descriptively as so often among the Jews, conveys the intimation that Lazarus was a man who put his trust in God, and bore all the ills of life in pious patience and hope. The exegetical process is most ingenious, and it may not be altogether fanciful; only it is not satisfactory to be obliged to rest our interpretation on what at the best is only a conjecture. For that the poor man who lay at the rich man's gate is named is accounted for very simply by the consideration that a name for him was necessary in the dialogue between Dives and Abraham.[6] And as for the significance of the name, even granting the correctness of the derivation vindicated, it may be descriptive of state rather than of character: Lazarus, one whom God helps, that is, who has no other helper: a forlorn man-forsaken mortal.[7] [1] So De Wette, who denies that the parable is the counterpart of the preceding one.

[2] So Weizsäcker, 'Untersuchungen,' p. 215, and the Tubingen school.

[3] So Pfleiderer, 'Paulinismus,' p. 449. Also Weizsäcker, p. 215.

[4] So Hilgenfeld, 'Einleitung,' p. 566, after Zeller.

[5] ■■■■■ ■■■■■

[6] So Hofmann.

[7] Another derivation of the word is ■■■■ ■■■■■■ = not-help. The dogmatic interpretation of the parable, as one setting forth the doctrine of recompense, undergoes modification in the hands of those who insist on a close connection between the parable and the immediately preceding context. The rich man now becomes the representative of Pharisaism, and the parable sets forth in pictorial style the judgment of God on that system. On this view Lazarus ceases to be an independent character exhibiting the bright side of the doctrine of recompense, and subsides into a mere foil to the principal figure. In the worldly state of Dives is represented that which is high among men,[1]. and from the reversal of his fortune in the state of the dead we learn the esteem in which the same is held of God. Lazarus is introduced into the scene on this side the grave to make the grandeur of the world all the more imposing, and he reappears in the scene laid in Hades to give the damnation of pride an aspect most deeply tragic. But the main object of the scene in the invisible world is to lead up to the sentiment concerning Moses and the prophets put into the mouth of Abraham. In that sentiment is contained a virtual censure of Pharisaism as a system whose whole tendency was to weaken the authority of the very law in which it placed its trust and boast; a tendency specially apparent in connection with the precept against adultery, to which reference is made in the eighteenth verse. Thus the parable is the judgment at once of Pharisaic pride and ostentatious worldliness, and of Pharisaic laxity; in one word, the judgment of Pharisaic hypocrisy under its twofold aspect of self-indulgence veiled by petty austerities, and of moral license disguised by a scrupulous regard to legal minutiae. Christ virtually says to the Pharisees: "Ye affect an austere life, but ye are in reality luxurious men: ye are very jealous in appearance for the honour of the law, but ye do your best to make the law void. In both respects ye are an abomination in the sight of God, and your damnation is certain and just."

[1] Luk 16:15 This interpretation is open to one very obvious criticism, viz. that one does not at all readily recognise in the description of Dives the picture of a Pharisee. As you read you incline rather to say: Behold a Sadducee delineated—by his wealth, his splendid style of living, his outer robe of purple-dyed wool, and his inner tunic of fine Egyptian linen,[1] pointed out unmistakably as one of the party who believed not in a hereafter, and therefore acted on the maxim: "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."[2] Accordingly Schleiermacher threw out the conjecture that Dives is Herod Antipas, taking the hint from the allusion to adultery in the verse immediately preceding the commencement of our parable. On this view the parable still remains the judgment of the Pharisees, saying to them in effect: "This is what comes of your teaching; it sends the great ones of the earth to hell; by your lax interpretations of the moral law ye destroy the chief means of grace for such, and remove the restraints which might keep them from perdition." The reference being to so exalted a personage it was convenient that this should be said by a parabolic representation rather than in plain terms.[3] The theory is ingenious. Still it confessedly leaves much unexplained; a much larger proportion of material to which no didactic significance is assigned, Schleiermacher acknowledges, than in any other parable.

[1] So are the words "purple and fine linen" to be distributed, the one referring to the upper, and the other to the under garment. To these, but in reverse order, reference is made in Mat 5:40, "If any man will take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also." Mr. Nicholson blames the authors of the revised New Testament for retaining this ambiguous and misleading rendering. He says: "The word rendered ’coat’ means ’shirt,’ a garment lying next the skin, reaching sometimes to the knee, sometimes to the ankle, kept close to the body by a girdle, and worn either by itself or with an outer robe—the ’cloke.’ Of these two the ordinary dress consisted, and were a man deprived of both, he would have nothing left... But the translation of the Authorised and Revised Versions suggests that he would have at least a shirt left.—’Our new New Testament,’ p. 39.

[2] Wetstein says: "Sadducaeum describi ex divitiis, victu, amictu et petitione patet; Pharisaii enim credebant animos esse superstites, jejunabant crebro, modestius vestiebantur, et pauperiores erant."

[3] ’Über die Schriften des Lukas,’ p. 152. In view of the unsatisfactoriness of all these dogmatic constructions, it is not surprising that some should have felt themselves driven in despair to take up the position that the parable has no doctrinal aim, and contains no definite doctrinal teaching, but is simply intended to startle men into serious thought and make them look below appearance to reality, and keep in mind the eternal future amid the enjoyments of the present.[1] It thus becomes a mere memento mori addressed to unbelieving men of all classes who do not live under the power of the world to come, but are Sadducees in heart whatever their professed creed. Of course, when the didactic drift is reduced to this vague generality, we can understand how a Sadducee might be selected to convey the lesson, even though it was addressed immediately to Pharisees. Unbelief is a leaven common to both Pharisees and Sadducees, and any one who lives a worldly life will serve the purpose of enforcing the moral: "Be wise in time." Dives is merely one of many possible illustrations of an important but much neglected commonplace.[2] [1] So Dr. Service in ’Salvation here and hereafter’; also Reuss.

[2] This is substantially the line of thought pursued by Trench. Vide his remarks, in loc.

We are very loth to come to the conclusion that such pointless generalities are all that we can extract from this remarkable portion of our Lord's teaching. As we remarked in another connection, it is characteristic of His parables, as compared with those of the Rabbis, that their lessons are not moral commonplaces, but specific truths, unfamiliar, and for the most part unwelcome. Of course moral commonplaces are implied—it being, as we have more than once remarked, part of the felicity of the parables that they suggest much more than they expressly teach. The parable before us is no exception. It implies and indirectly conveys many important moral lessons, such as that "the decision of the next world will often reverse the estimation wherein men are held in this; that God is no respecter of persons; that the heart must make its choice between the good things of this life, and those which the externals of this life do not affect."[1] It presupposes and recalls to mind truths more general still and not less momentous, such as that there is a future life after death in which men will receive the appropriate recompense of the deeds done in the life that now is. But it was not to teach such truths generally believed, if little laid to heart, that Christ spake in parables, but to express doctrine more original, more distinctively Christian, more peculiar to the kingdom of God. Thus in the parabolic representation of the Judgment in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew's Gospel the specific lesson is not that there will be such a Judgment, but the principle on which the Judgment will proceed, viz. the great law of charity. In like manner we come to the interpretation of the parable before us quite expecting to find that its distinctive lesson is not the general doctrine of retribution, but some specific information as to the ground of condemnation in harmony with Christ's whole teaching, though not in accordance with current opinion. The general doctrine of retribution was part of the current opinion of the time, formed indeed a prominent item in the Pharisaic creed, as the parabolic form of the present discourse implies; for a parable uses things familiar to illustrate things unfamiliar. But that the supreme virtue is love, and that the damning sin is selfish inhumanity, formed no part of the ethical system of the age, and it would not surprise us to find Christ speaking a parable to teach these truths.

[1] Farrar, 'The Life of Christ,' vol. ii. p. 128.

Just such we take to be the didactic significance of the imaginary history of the rich man and Lazarus. This 'parable,' for so we may continue to call it, though in strictness it is hardly entitled to the designation, has two dogmatic momenta: that inhumanity is a damning sin, and that it is a sin without excuse. The former is the burden of the first part of the parable (Luk 16:19-26); the latter of the concluding portion (Luk 16:27-31). This analysis, it is obvious, does not destroy the unity of the parable, because the second doctrine is clearly allied to the first, and forms its necessary complement. A sin is not damning unless it be inexcusable; when a valid plea in extenuation can be advanced judicial rigour is out of place. The only question that can be asked is, whether we have correctly indicated the doctrinal gist of the story in both its parts. That question shall be answered in the following exposition, in which we hope to make it appear that all details can be naturally accounted for by, and form together a harmonious picture around, these central truths which we place in the foreground. The first point calling for notice is the character of the rich man. Our construction of the parable requires that Dives should be, by clear implication if not by express statement, accused of inhumanity. Is the fact then so? Now what is expressly stated is, that Dives lived a life of princely splendour and luxury, attired as princes are attired, and faring as princes fare. It is not said that he was addicted to the vices which too often accompany fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness. It is not even alleged in so many words that he was hard-hearted

towards the poor. Had that been charged, we could understand the absence of all other charges, for the effect would simply be to accentuate the wickedness of an unsympathetic spirit. But if even this is not charged what becomes of our dogmatic construction? Before, however, we come to the conclusion that Dives is not represented as being the opposite of benevolent, we must make sure that we have taken into consideration all that is stated concerning him. Observe what follows: "There was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate." This is a fact of importance in the history of Dives. Lazarus enters on the stage not merely to present a striking contrast to the rich man's state, but as one with whom the latter had relations. Lazarus represents opportunity for the exercise of humanity. That is the chief if not the sole purpose for which he appears in the first scene. He comes before us a picture of want and woe, and says: "I was laid at this man's gate. He knew me; he could not pass from his house into the street without seeing my condition; yet as a leprous beggar I have lived, and as a beggar I will die." And Lazarus is not to be regarded as a solitary individual; he is one of a class who abound in the world, and are never far from the gates even of palaces. In no place in the world can the rich man say with truth, There are no poor and needy near me whom I can feed, and clothe, and cherish. To those who plead such an excuse for a selfish life it may ever be replied: Ye have the poor always with you. That is in effect what Christ meant to say by the introduction of Lazarus in the first part of the story. He reminds those whom He counsels to make friends with the mammon of unrighteousness that they will never lack abundant opportunities for doing so. By representing Lazarus as laid at the rich man's gate He affirms the existence of opportunities of the most obtrusive sort, forcing themselves on men's attention, and not to be escaped; not needing to be sought out, but seeking them out and compelling them to realise their responsibilities. When once it is understood that Lazarus is but a symbol for ample, urgent, inescapable opportunity, it is seen to be the obvious implication that Dives is one who neglects his opportunities. The assertion of opportunity is made for the very purpose of implying such neglect. It has indeed been asked by some, anxious to fasten on the parable an Ebionitic bias, if the rich man was inhuman, why was the poor man deposited by friends at his door?[1] And we willingly allow force to the question, so far as to admit that the natural probability of the parable requires us to think of Lazarus as getting something at the rich man's gate; at least a pittance sufficient to stave off starvation, and to make it worth while for his relatives to bring him thither. And we can afford to admit that he did get some crumbs from the great man's table, through the hands of servants; nay, possibly by the order of their master, who, being aware that an object of pity lay at his street gate, may have given instructions to that effect, not without a feeling of satisfaction and self-complacency.[2] To what does all this amount to? Simply to this—that Dives was not a monster of inhumanity. Christ had no intention of painting a monster; it was never His way to bring exaggerated and indiscriminate charges against those whose lives He disapproved, but rather to make generous admissions, even when dealing in stern condemnation. What He desired to do in the present instance was to hold up the picture of an average man of the world, living a self-centred life, coming utterly short of the true ideal, while not without such small virtues as men of the world ordinarily practise. If among these small virtues that of doling out little charities to the poor found a place, then, by all means, He would say, let this be conceded to Dives. He conceded as much to the Pharisees, whom, nevertheless, He pronounced great sinners, even in their very almsgiving. He could concede this to Dives, and yet represent him as one who neglected opportunities for the exercise of humanity.[3] Ah, not so easily was Christ's ideal of humanity to be realised! Not by doling out crumbs to beggars could one gain the

honourable name of a friend of man. He who would win that high degree must not only give alms in a small way, but bear the miseries of men as a burden on his heart, in the spirit of Him who, though rich, for our sakes became poor. He must behave towards the Lazaruses at his gate as the good Samaritan behaved towards the wounded man. He must act as that king of whom it is written, that he ate and drank and did judgment and justice, and especially that he judged the cause of the poor and needy.[4] He must gain the blessing of them that are ready to perish as Job gained it, who could protest that he had not withheld the poor from their desire, or caused the eyes of the widow to fail, or seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor whose loins had not been warmed with the fleece of his sheep, or any stranger to whom he had not opened his doors.[5] After all has been said that can be said in his behalf, Dives is obviously not a man of this heroic type: not a good Samaritan, not a benignant prince, not a generous, noble-hearted Job, not a man who knows anything of the passion for beneficence, of the 'enthusiasm of humanity;' but merely a commonplace man of the world, with vulgar, self-centred aims, and no virtues and humanities, save such as are conventional.

[1] So De Wette; vid. note 1, p. 377.

[2] The clause, κα■ ο■δε■ς ■διδο■ α■τ■, found in some cursive MSS. and versions, borrowed doubtless from Luk 15:16, is a gloss arising out of the feeling, that even a minimum of humanity is excluded by the intention of the parable. As such it is regarded as a correct comment by Meyer and Trench. In proof that the beggar received nothing, Goebel emphasises ■πιθυμ■ν, and interprets, desiring in vain. In a similar strain Trench writes, speaking of the crumbs: "Even these were not thrown to him, or not in measure sufficient to satisfy his hunger." Kuinoel and Hofmann, on the other hand, think it is implied that Lazarus did receive the usual beggar's portion.

[3] Kuinoel remarks, that though Dives gave crumbs to Lazarus, he did not thereby make himself out a humane man, or comply with the precepts of the law and the prophets as set forth in such texts as Deu 15:7-8; Isa 58:7; Pro 3:27.

[4] Jer 22:15-16.

[5] Job 31:16-22. The description given of the state of Lazarus quite answers to this view of the behaviour of the rich man. Whatever was done for the leprous beggar, left him as he was when he was first laid down at the rich man's gate. The very word ■β■βλητο, though it means strictly only 'lay,' might be adduced in proof of this, as implying on the part of those who brought him there and threw him down, the hard, unfeeling manner of men accustomed to misery, who had ceased to hope, and had experienced nothing at the hands of Dives to change their mood. Then the pathetic trait of the dogs licking the ulcers is very significant. Some take it as conveying the idea that the dogs showed themselves more humane than Dives, possibly their owner, cleaning and soothing the sores by their soft tongues, adducing this feature as one of the evidences that a charge of inhumanity against the rich man is intended.[1] Others take it as an aggravation of the poor man's misery, holding that the effect of the canine attentions would be the reverse of soothing.[2] We take it as expressing neither alleviation nor aggravation, but simply as giving vividness to the description of the sufferer's chronic condition. He lay there utterly helpless, so that the dogs approached him without fear, as if he were a dead carcase rather than a living being.[3] Such he was from the first, and such he continued to be till beneficent death came and rescued him from his misery, and the manner in which his death is spoken of completes the proof that he had

received no effectual attentions from his fellow-creatures during his lifetime. He died as he had lived—a beggar, and his carcase was disposed of as if it had been that of a beast; for so we understand the absence of all reference to his burial. Meyer infers therefrom, that the body as well as the soul of the beggar was carried by the angels to Paradise. Calvin, with better exegetical tact, suggests that nothing is said as to what happened to the body, because it was contemptuously, and without honour, thrown into a ditch.

[1] So Bleek, Hofmann.

[2] Bengel says the tongue of a dog would soothe a body slightly diseased (minus affecto), but would increase the pain of one covered with ulcers.

[3] So Maldonatus, Grotius, &c. In confirmation of the view now taken of the rich man’s character, it is legitimate to take into account the words put into the mouth of Abraham as descriptive of his earthly state in contrast to that of Lazarus, "Thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things." Various shades of meaning have been assigned to the words. Accentuating the verb in the former part of the sentence, some bring out of it the meaning, "Thou didst get in full, or beforehand, thy good things."[1] Others, emphasising the pronoun ’thy,’ render: "Thou receivedst the things on which thy heart was set, which alone thou accountedst good."[2] This much at least is implied—there was no communication of goods worth mentioning. Happiness was the lot of Dives, and misery of Lazarus, and the former kept all his happiness to himself, and took no pains to make his woe-stricken fellow-creature partaker of it.

[1] So Meyer and Godet.

[2] So Hofmann. On all these grounds we cannot doubt that it was the intention of our Lord to reproach Dives as one who regulated not his life by the law of love, and who utterly failed to act on the maxim of making for himself friends with the mammon of unrighteousness. But when we turn to Lazarus, and ask whether there is any indication in the first part of the parable of an intention to describe him as not only a poor, but also a pious man, we must answer in the negative. For reasons already indicated, we cannot attach any importance to the presence or the import of the name Lazarus. It may be assumed as certain, that had the design of the parable required that the beggar’s piety should be emphasised in the description of his earthly state, an epithet would have been introduced to indicate the fact unmistakably. But how, then, are we to account for the absence of such an epithet in view of the fact that Lazarus at death goes to heaven, if we are not to say, with the Tubingen critics, that his translation to bliss is the consolation for his earthly state of poverty? That is the second question we have to consider, and the answer we give to it yields, we think, a strong confirmation of our view as to the didactic drift of the parable. Lazarus, though devout,—for of course that is implied in his going to the bosom of Abraham,—is not represented as such, because the mention of the fact was not necessary to constitute him a legitimate object of charity, but was rather fitted to convey a fake impression as to the grounds on which the duties of humanity rest. If we are right in the view, that to hold up the neglect of these duties to reprobation is the aim of the parable, then to speak of the piety of Lazarus, however sincere, would have been misleading irrelevance. For it is not to the pious poor alone, but to all the destitute, suffering, and miserable, of whatever character, that we owe the offices of charity. As Christ came not to call the righteous, so we are not to pick out the godly from among the children of poverty and affliction as the recipients of our sympathy and succour. Character may make a difference as to our mode of

showing sympathy, but not as to the cherishing of the feeling of pity, the proper object of which is misery. It would therefore have been an impertinence in Dives to excuse his lack of compassion towards Lazarus by saying, "I did not know he was a saint." It was enough that he knew he was a sufferer. It is just because this is so that the parable is silent concerning the moral qualities of Lazarus. That silence is exactly what we should expect on our view as to She intention of the parable, and the fact is an argument in favour of that view. On the other hand, the same reason which prescribed silence concerning the good qualities of Lazarus on earth required that prominent mention should be made of the fact, that on his decease he went to Abraham’s bosom. The didactic intention fully explains both. It is not said that Lazarus lived piously, because not piety but want is the proper object of benevolence; it is said that when he died he was carried by angels to the bosom of Abraham, because he is needed there as an illustration of the advantage of having friends who can facilitate our admission into the eternal tents, For that is really the reason why the poor leper, who on earth lay at the rich man’s gate, goes to the regions of bliss, so far as our parable is concerned. In real life men go to heaven because they are good; in parables they may go there because the motive of the story requires them to be there. In saying this we do not of course mean to imply that it is beneficence to the pious poor alone that counts, in other words, that unless the objects of beneficence go to heaven the labour of the humane is in vain. The loving may be received into the eternal tents, when those who have been the recipients of their charity themselves fail to gain an entrance. But when the doctrine that beneficence has value in the sight of God, the Judge of men, is put in the form which it assumes in the previous parable, viz. that by beneficence men make for themselves friends to receive them into heaven, it is obviously necessary that these friends should themselves be conceived of as being there. It may be objected, that on this view the presence of Lazarus in paradise remains still unaccounted for, having a motive, indeed, but. no natural cause. This is true; but it is an unavoidable defect arising out of the fact that Lazarus has to perform two rôles with conflicting qualifications. On earth he represents the objects of compassion, who are the miserable, saintly or otherwise; in heaven he represents the friends who receive the benevolent into the eternal tents, who could not themselves be there unless they had been saintly as well as poor. The defect is no argument against our theory of the didactic significance of the parable, but is one inseparable from the parabolic style of instruction. It makes for our view, that by it we can account both for the silence concerning the piety of Lazarus on earth, and for his presence nevertheless in heaven. On the ordinary theory, according to which the parable teaches the general doctrine of eternal recompense, neither is explained; and so the presence of Lazarus in paradise remains at once without cause and without motive.

We pass now from the first scene to the second, from earth to Hades, the common receptacle of the dead. Sooner or later death overtakes all men, and so it came to pass that the beggar died, and the rich man also died and was buried. The beggar dies first, in accordance with the requirements of natural probability; for he suffers from a deadly disease which must soon cut him off, while the rich man is full of health and strength. Death brings an exchange of fortunes; the beggar formerly left to the tender mercies of dogs, is carried by angels to the bosom of Abraham; the rich man finds himself in a very different quarter of Hades, where torments are experienced. The latter fact is gently insinuated in a participial clause, partly from pity, partly because it is not the purpose of the speaker formally to teach the doctrine that there is a place of torments, which is assumed as a currently received truth, but to convey a hint as to the kind of people who go there.

But, however reluctantly, the word must be spoken. "Being in torments,"—where else could such an one as Dives be? Not surely in Paradise, the home of the loving; in the bosom of Abraham, the father of the faithful! The torments of the fires of Gehenna teach Dives a lesson, which, in the fulness of earthly felicity, he had never needed to learn—the value of a friend. "Oh for one able and willing to bring to me the faintest alleviation of this pain!" So the tormented man is represented as raising his eyes, and seeing in the distance, across the abyss that divides the two regions of Hades, Lazarus nestling in the bosom of the patriarch, and requesting that his former petitioner might be sent to distil a little water, drop by drop, with the tips of his fingers on his burning, parched tongue. Insignificant boon, corresponding to the morsels of food which was all that the beggar desired; but misery is thankful for small mercies. What a vastly greater benefit Dives might have gained through Lazarus, had he only turned his acquaintance with him to account in good time! Had he made of him a friend with his worldly possessions he might have been his companion in Paradise. But now, so far from attaining that felicity, he cannot even obtain the little favour he craves. All or nothing is the rule. So Abraham tells him in effect in the sequel of this Dialogue of the Dead, in words whose very gentleness and courtesy make them a message of despair rather than of comfort.[1] Two reasons are given for the refusal: the law of equity, and the impossibility of complying with the request. What was fitting had happened to both parties. The one had received his full share of felicity on earth and was now in sorrow; the other had drunk a full cup of misery and was now comforted. The rich man had done nothing for the poor man in bygone days, why should the poor man be asked to do anything for him now? It was fair that every one should have his turn. But even if Lazarus were willing to render the service it was not in his power. Between the two regions of Hades was fixed a great ravine impassable either way. The former reason is of the nature of an argumentum ad hominem, deriving a large part of its force from the very fact of its being addressed to a selfish man. One who had not troubled himself about Lazarus, could not but feel the point of the retort: why then should Lazarus trouble himself about you? It was but paying him back with his own coin, applying to him the lex talionis of the dispensation under which he had lived, and of which he had taken due advantage. Hence he makes no attempt to argue the matter with Abraham, as in the case of the request for his brethren, and this fact supplies another proof that we have rightly conceived the character of his life on earth, as that of a man who had lived for himself. Conscience makes him a coward, and he has no spirit left to say even this much: "I own I have no claim, but may I not receive this small service as a matter of grace?" To this question however, though not asked, Abraham replies in the second reason for refusal. Willingness on the part of Lazarus to go on an errand of mercy is not denied, it is rather tacitly conceded; what is asserted is the impossibility of intercommunication. The assertion provokes in us many questions: What is this dreadful chasm? Why is it fixed? For how long? Cannot it be bridged over? What is impossible to love or to penitence? Could not the one find its way to yonder side, and the other to the hither side? These questions the parable was not meant to answer, therefore they are not raised. Dives acquiesces in the reasoning, and presses his request no further. In any case it was not meet to put such questions in his mouth, not merely because they were not questions of the age, but specially because they were not questions for the like of him. He was of too low a moral type to feel the pressure of such problems. Had he been capable of that he would never have been where he was. And being where he was, he could not easily rise above his former moral level. That difficulty perhaps furnishes the best clue to the mystery of the fixed gulf. What is impossible to penitence, is it asked? But what if penitence itself be impossible? Difficult it certainly

is. The difficulty is implied in the very acquiescence of Dives in Abraham's reasoning. That reasoning is by no means exhaustive. It does not say the last word on the subject raised; it does not anticipate and dispose of all questions; at most it settles the matter in hand only from the lex talionis point of view. But it is conclusive for Dives because it is adapted to his moral tone. The first reason has irresistible force for him because his conscience tells him that he has been a selfish man; the second has equal cogency, because he is incapable of entertaining the thought of bridging the gulf by self-condemnation. The acquiescence of Dives in Abraham's reasoning thus does more than show, as we have said, that he was a man for whom self has been the chief end. It shows, moreover, that to escape from the perdition to which such a life surely conducts is difficult, not to say impossible. The loving and the beneficent make for themselves friends to receive them into the eternal tents. But the unloving and inhuman banish themselves to a realm of darkness and pain out of which they shall hardly be delivered, not because of any external barriers, but because of obstacles presented in their own hearts. The gulf which divides the two classes is as wide as the difference between selfishness and self-sacrifice, and is so fixed because these moral characteristics tend to permanence. In 'hell' are they who have loved themselves; in heaven are they who have loved others as themselves—how hard to go over from the one class to the other; to be transformed from a Dives into a good Samaritan!

[1] Brouwer, speaking of the decorum of Christ's parables, as exemplified in the one before us, contrasts the mild terms in which Abraham addressed Dives with the harsh language which is addressed to the lost in the parables of the Talmudists, such as: "O most foolish man that ever lived."—'De Parabolis Jesu Christi,' p. 91.

Before passing on to the closing section of the parable, we may here briefly remark that the phraseology employed by Christ in describing the place of the dead is mostly borrowed from the current dialect of the time. The 'bosom of Abraham' was a title for the abode of the blessed in common use among the Jews. The ministry of angels in conveying the spirits of the just thither had also its place in the popular belief.[1] Dialogues of the dead formed a part of the entertainment which the Rabbis provided for their pupils. Paradise, Abraham's bosom, Hades, Gehenna were not so closely shut that the voices of the blessed and the pains of the tormented could not penetrate from either region to the other, and also to the ears of the teachers who could report what they heard for the benefit of their disciples.[2] The Divine Artist who painted the startling picture before us, adopted a traditional theme, and dipped His brush in conventional colours, departing from use and wont only in the one particular of the fixed chasm; thereby making the separation wider than in the Rabbinical representation, according to which the two regions are divided only by a wall, or even by a hair's breadth;[3] a fact worthy of notice as showing that Jesus had no disposition to minimise the gravity of the outlook in the state beyond the grave. But, on the whole, the picture of the invisible world here presented is not to be taken as didactically significant. The one point of doctrinal instruction in the parable thus far, is that set forth likewise in the account of the last Judgment, viz. that men like Dives are excluded from the goodly fellowship of those who spent their lives on earth in deeds of love.

[1] Vide Lightfoot, 'Hor. Heb.'

[2] Hausrath, 'Zeitgeschichte,' ii. 278.

[3] "What is the distance between Paradise and Gehenna? According to Johanan, a wall; according to Acha, a palm-breadth; according to other Rabbis, only a finger-breadth." Midrash on Koheleth, quoted by Dr. Farrar in 'Mercy and Judgment,' p. 205. In the close of the parable, the additional but connected and subordinate lesson is taught, that for the life of selfishness there is no excuse on the score of ignorance. In making this the lesson of the concluding part, we assume that the request of Dives in behalf of his brethren is indirectly self-excuse. This may seem an ungenerous assumption, especially in view of the construction put on the request by enthusiastic advocates of 'the Eternal Hope' as an indication that Dives, under the purgatorial fires of the intermediate state, is undergoing rapid moral improvement. We have all respect for the motives of those who thus argue, and we have no wish to make Dives appear worse than he is. As in forming a judgment of his life on earth, we did not accuse him of refusing crumbs to Lazarus, so we are willing to give him full credit for the solicitude he manifests after his decease for his surviving brethren. And we gladly note, as one more index of the geniality of the parable, that no anxiety is evinced to rob Dives of this praise. Only we must add that it does not amount to much. The humanity of Dives in Hades is not charity, but only such love as even publicans and harlots practise; natural affection for an extended self, indicative therefore of continuity of character rather than of radical change. And we question whether in the intention of the speaker it be even this much; whether love for the extended self be not at bottom love for the unextended self. That is, we think Christ's aim in introducing this trait is not to show that unblessed spirits cherish natural affections, but to take away all ground of excuse from those who live the life that has exclusion from bliss for its penalty. The speaker's real purpose is to tell the living that they are without excuse if they so live as to forfeit bliss. But instead of doing this in abstract terms, he prefers to do it through the machinery of the parable, as in the case of the parable of the Lost Son, where the elder brother represents the Pharisees who blamed Christ for His sympathy with the leper. Therefore he makes Dives proffer a request which leads up to the declaration, that in Moses and the prophets men have sufficient means of grace to teach them how to live. The answer pointedly excludes all self-excuse on the score of defective aids to piety, and so implies self-excuse as the motive of this request. The secret thought of Dives is: Had I been warned it might have been otherwise. In like manner we cannot so far stretch our charity as to give Dives credit for the peculiar urgency he shows in behalf of his brethren. It is certainly a curious circumstance, that whilst abstaining from pressing his petition for himself, he ventures to expostulate with Abraham in pleading for his brethren, after the manner of Abraham himself in pleading for Sodom. We are not inclined to see in this a reflection of the spirit of Rabbinical dispute and Pharisaic impudence.[1] But neither can we see in it a trace of disinterested love. The repetition of the demand is meant merely to supply a motive for the utterance of the sentiment, that those who are not moved to piety by the means actually available, would not be moved by any means, however extraordinary. Doubtless the law of probability requires that this should be done in a natural way; but this remark cuts two ways. It may imply that Dives was particularly anxious for the welfare of his brethren; but it may also imply that he was very desirous to justify himself by some such reflection as this: Had only some one come from the dead, with the calm, clear light of eternity shining in his eyes, to inform me that the life beyond is no fable, that Paradise is a place or state of unspeakable bliss, and Gehenna a place or state of unspeakable woe, had I not then renounced my voluptuous, selfish ways, and entered on the path of piety and charity? If one had come to me from the dead I had surely repented, and so would not have come to this place of torment.

[1] So Godet. The didactic point then here is, that the selfish life is inexcusable, and therefore justly visited with penalties. But how does this appear? The reply of Abraham is: "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them." It is a reply addressed to a Jew, and exactly adapted to the actual religious practice in the synagogue, in which precisely the parts of the Old Testament named the law and the prophets (those only, not the Hagiographa) were regularly read.[1] It implies that these books were sufficient as a guide of life to all men of right dispositions, without any further extraordinary means of grace, and that when they failed, a better result could not be reached by any conceivable means. To the men of right mind a messenger from the dead was wholly unnecessary, and to the men of wrong mind he would be utterly useless. It was a reply not to be gainsaid by any Jew, the truth of the implied affirmations being sufficiently proved by the lives of the saints who lived under the old dispensation, and had not more than the law and the prophets for their rule of faith and practice, and many of them, such as Abraham himself, not even so much. One thing very noticeable about these books is the little prominence they give to the life to come. The fact of a future life is recognised, but so obscurely that Paul could truly speak of immortality as being brought to light through the Gospel. It is to miss the point of Abraham's reference to the Old Testament entirely to suppose that it means that the doctrine of immortality is there taught with sufficient clearness. It is nearer the mark to say, that what is meant is rather that the knowledge of that doctrine is not indispensable to the life of piety. Certainly the doctrine in question is not clearly set forth or strongly insisted on in the Hebrew Scriptures. And if the future life occupied a quite subordinate place in Old Testament teaching, we may safely assume that it occupied a still less prominent place in the thoughts and motives of Old Testament saints. They tested theories of life by their bearings on this world much more than by their bearings on the next. Hence their perplexities respecting the mysteries of human life, their querulous complainings, e. g. concerning the sufferings of the righteous. But in spite of their comparative ignorance of the life to come, and their consequent misreading of the riddles of the present life, we find no traces of dubiety as to the comparative merits of the two opposed schemes of life—the way of godliness and the way of the world. They might find difficulties in such facts of Providence as are pictured in this parable: a low-minded voluptuary, prosperous, rich, happy according to his taste, on the one hand; a saintly man in beggary, diseased, starved, homeless, on the other. They might, in view of such phenomena, sometimes ask, "Why doth the way of the wicked prosper?" But they never had any doubt whether it were better to be good or evil, to be righteous or to be wicked, to be a humane merciful man, or to be a sordid, selfish, heartless worldling. Nor did they hesitate to walk in the way of godliness in spite of all drawbacks. They chose the way that is everlasting; they could not do otherwise; the spirit of God in them would not permit them. They needed no messenger from the dead to convince them of the superiority of a life of justice, mercy, and piety over a life of unrighteousness, inhumanity, and sensuality. Far from that, they needed not to know that there was a life to come. The godly life appeared to them superior intrinsically, on its own merits, apart altogether from the question of duration. It was self-evident to them that in any case, whatever betide it is better to be a wise good man, doing justly, loving mercy, walking humbly with God, and holding all appetites and passions in strict subjection to conscience and reason, than to be clothed in purple and fine linen, and to fare sumptuously every day, doing nothing else worth speaking of. Even if they knew certainly that there was no hell to fear, they could not live as Dives lived; it would be hell enough to be compelled to attempt it.

[1] See Lightfoot.

It thus appears that the Jew had amply sufficient means of grace, and was therefore without excuse if he chose the wrong way of life. But it is not the Jew alone that is required to live the life of piety and charity. Christ taught that He should judge all the nations, and that the principle of judgment would be the law of charity. Are the Pagans also without excuse, though not having the law and the prophets? Yes; because the law of humanity is written on their hearts, and they need no book, any more than an Old Testament Jew needed a clear doctrine of immortality, to impose obligation to fulfil that law. This position obviously underlies the representation of the Judgment, and it is even not obscurely implied in the words put into the mouth of Abraham in this parable. For what is the meaning of the assertion, that if they believe not Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe though one rose from the dead? Simply this, that you cannot by any means compel faith in men morally indisposed to believe. That is, everything turns on moral disposition. In absence of that, neither Bible nor messenger from the dead will do me any good. I will find plausible reasons for disregarding even the most potent and miraculous aids to faith. A messenger from the dead! He would have a preliminary difficulty to deal with ere he delivered his message. He would find it hard to get himself recognised as a visitor from the other world. Instead of listening with awestruck hearts to what he had to say, men of unbelieving temper would begin to discuss whether the supposed visitant from the world of spirits could ever have been dead, or were not a mere phantasm; nay, refusing to treat the matter seriously, they would probably receive with shouts of merriment the very idea of one returning from the grave to preach to them of repentance and judgment to come. On the other hand, does a man of right disposition require a Bible, not to speak of a messenger from the dead, to tell him that he ought to love his neighbour? Let the Pagan who has no Bible consult his heart, and he will find that law written there. This is the one law for the neglect of which all men everywhere are without excuse. No need, in order to obligation to fulfil this law, of special supernatural inducements; no need of knowledge of the life to come; no need either of Moses, prophets, or gospels; the light within is enough. Those who have the benefit of such special means of grace, and yet neglect this law, are certainly blameworthy in a peculiar degree; but even those who have no such privileges are for the like neglect without excuse. Such in spirit is the teaching of our parable. It declares love to be the supreme duty, and it declares the disregard thereof to be, without exception, a deadly damning sin, because it is a duty which shines in the light of its own self-evidence. What Abraham said to Dives was what it was fitting to say to Jews. But so much could be said to them because it is fitting and fair to say to all: "Ye have the voices of conscience, hear them." The Unmerciful Servant

Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain man, a king, who would make a reckoning with his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, there was brought unto him one who was a debtor to the extent of ten thousand talents. And seeing he had not wherewith to pay, his lord commanded that he should be sold, and his wife, and his children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down and did obeisance to him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And the lord of that servant, being moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.[1] But that servant going out, found one of his fellow-servants who owed him a hundred denarii: and he laid hold on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay what thou owest. And his fellow-servant fell down and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee.[2] And he would not, but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay that which was due. His fellow-servants, therefore, seeing what was done, were exceedingly sorry, and came and told their lord all that was done. Then his lord called him unto

him, and said unto him, Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou besoughtest me: oughtest thou not also to have had mercy on thy fellow-servant, even as I had mercy on thee? And being wroth, his lord delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due to him. So shall also my Heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts.[3]—Mat 18:23-35.

[1] τ■ δ■νειον, literally, the loan.

[2] Most MSS. omit π■ντα. It may have crept in from Mat 18:26.

[3] τ■ παραπτ■ματα α■τ■ν (their trespasses) seems to be a gloss from Mat 6:15.

There is no difficulty in ascertaining the didactic drift of this parable. The moral it is intended to teach is indicated with perfect distinctness by our Lord Himself in the last sentence, in which He applies the narrative to the hearts of His hearers, the disciples. Even without that application we could easily deduce the lesson from the parable itself, viewed in connection with its surroundings. It forms the fitting conclusion of a conversation between Jesus and His disciples, arising out of their dispute as to who should be greatest in the kingdom of heaven. That dispute evinced the presence among them of the spirit of ambition, whose characteristic tendency it is, at once to be prone to do wrong, and to be very unforgiving towards wrong done by others. Jesus, therefore, fitly took occasion to warn His disciples against giving offences, especially to the weak, and to instruct them how to behave when they were the receivers, not the givers, of offences. The general tenor of the instructions given was—be meek and merciful, not prone to resentment, hard to appease, but good and ready to forgive. The counsel to cherish a spirit of love bent on overcoming evil with good found its culminating expression in the reply to Peter’s question, "How often must I forgive?" "Until seven times?" the disciple added, tentatively answering his own question, and in doing so showing how far the benignant spirit of his Master had already influenced him, raising him above the ideas current in rabbinical circles, which fixed the limit at three times.[1] But Jesus went as far beyond Peter as Peter went beyond the rabbis; nay, infinitely further, for He said, "Not till seven times, but until seventy times seven." That is, times without number; your forgivenesses must be as numerous as the implacable man’s revenges;[2] you must never weary pardoning offences. By this strong utterance Christ’s thought concerning forgiveness was raised to the high level at which parabolic speech becomes natural and needful: natural on the part of One who was conscious that His thoughts on such matters were not those of the world; needful to familiarise the minds of hearers with truths lofty and novel. Therefore Jesus spake at this time the parable of The Unmerciful Servant, the obvious aim of which is to expose the odiousness and criminality of an implacable temper in those who are citizens of the kingdom of heaven—a kingdom of grace in which they themselves occupy the position of forgiven men. Having this for its burden, it is emphatically a parable of grace, forming a worthy ending of Christ’s discourse in Capernaum and of His whole ministry of love in Galilee;[3] teaching His disciples that the kingdom of heaven was a kingdom of grace; a kingdom among whose blessings pardon occupied a foremost place; a kingdom, therefore, in connection with which ambitious disputes concerning places of distinction, and still more, vindictive passions, were unseemly and intolerable.

[1] Vide Lightfoot and Wetstein in loc.

[2] Some, not without probability, have found in our Lord’s words an allusion to the speech of Lamech in Gen 4:24 : "If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold."

[3] The final separation from Galilee is recorded in the commencement of the next chapter. A certain severity of tone is observable in the present parable as compared with the one last considered. "His lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due to him. So likewise shall My heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts" The reason is that Jesus speaks here to offending disciples, members of His own family circle whom He loves dearly, therefore rebukes and chastens faithfully; and, moreover, to future apostles, on whose behaviour the well-being of the Church about to be founded largely depends. He anticipates the time, no longer distant, when He shall be personally removed from the earth, and He is anxious to prepare His chosen companions for playing worthily the part of His representatives. This He knows they cannot do so long as the spirit of ambition and vainglory, which has recently manifested itself, animates their breasts. Therefore He subjects them to the wholesome discipline of pathetic example, heroic counsel, and stern warning, that by admiration, quickened sense of duty, and godly fear, they may become morally transformed by the renewing of their minds. Not merely the concluding parable, but the whole discourse on humility savours of this unwonted rigour: witness that saying, "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea;" or that still more stern saying concerning the cutting off an offending hand, or foot, or eye. In this homily on lowliness Jesus seems Himself to perform the part of a surgeon, operating with the sharp knife of rebuke on the diseased parts of the souls of His disciples. We shall best understand the parable with which the homily closes by regarding it from this point of view. This parable has for its specific aim not merely to inculcate the general duty of forgiveness, which is a part of natural ethics, but to inculcate that duty on men who are themselves forgiven of God, and living under a reign of grace. Hence the unforgiving man is in the first place represented as himself the object of pardoning mercy. And in this part of the parabolic representation we note the apparently exaggerated statement of the amount forgiven—ten thousand talents, equivalent to millions sterling.[1] The enormous sum is formally explained by conceiving of the offender as a farmer of revenue on a great scale, or as the satrap of a province, whose duty it is to remit the tribute of the country under his jurisdiction to the sovereign.[2] But this explanation only throws us back on the previous question: Why is such a magnate selected to represent the forgiven one who forgives not? A satisfactory answer to this question is necessary to vindicate the verisimilitude of the parable. Now the fitness of the representation appears in various ways. It is fitting, in the first place, as a statement of the magnitude of all men’s indebtedness to God as compared with the insignificant extent of the moral indebtedness of any one man to any other, represented by the hundred denarii. It is further fitting in some special respects more closely connected with the particular purpose of the parable. It suits the character in which the disciples are addressed, as men destined ere long to occupy princely position in the kingdom of God. It also suits the temper of those who are likely to be guilty of harsh, merciless dealing towards such as have done them wrong. Implacability is the sin of pride. But pride is high-minded, and just because it is so it is a great sinner against God. Therefore it is fit that the implacable man should be represented as occupying high station, and likewise as a great debtor to his lord. Once more, the vastness of the debt owed and forgiven is a just tribute to the gracious magnanimity of God, who ’abundantly pardons,’ and from whose mercy even the most wicked of men are not excluded.

[1] The exact amount will vary according to the particular talent meant; but the intention is not to state precisely the amount due, but to convey the idea of an immense sum, the payment of which was hopeless.

[2] Vide Trench, who gives illustrative examples, p. 153, note. The conduct of the lord toward his deeply-indebted servant is a second point in which the parable seems chargeable with exaggeration. At first it appears unduly severe, then after the debtor has presented his petition, unduly lenient. "Forasmuch," we read, "as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made." Yet after the debtor has pled for time, his lord suddenly changes his tone, and grants not time to pay, but a free remission. Is it credible, we are ready to inquire, that one who issued such an order would confer so great a favour; or, conversely, that one capable of such magnanimity would entertain thoughts of such pitiless rigour? And, without doubt, the parabolic representation does wear an aspect of double improbability. Nevertheless, here it is the improbable that happens. In the first place, as respects the truculent command, it faithfully reflects the attitude of the law of antiquity towards debt. The Roman law permitted a debtor (in the literal sense) to be so treated, and the law of Moses seems not to have been behind it in rigour;[1] indeed the rude practice of selling a man and his whole belongings for debt appears to have been a common feature in the judicial system of ancient nations. Therefore in issuing such an order the king was simply acting as the mouthpiece of the law apart altogether from personal feeling; and it is observable that no such feeling is imputed to him at this stage. He could not well do otherwise in the first place, whatever compassionate sentiments or purposes might be latent in his breast. On the other hand, in the free pardon of the debt we see the moral individuality of the monarch displaying itself. In the command is revealed the rigour of the ruler, in the remission of the debt the humanity of the man. A very unusual humanity truly, and most unlikely to be practised by men, whether kings or subjects, living under barbaric codes of law. But the improbability at this point is inevitable; for the humanity must be very unusual indeed which is to represent the mercy of God. For the Divine magnanimity passes all human example; His ways in forgiving rise above the ways of men high as heaven rises above earth.

[1] Vide Exo 22:3; Lev 25:39, Lev 25:47; Amo 2:6; Amo 8:6.

"For the love of God is broader Than the measures of man’s mind, And the heart of the Eternal Is most wonderfully kind."

Viewed with reference to the history of revelation, the rigour and benignity combined in the behaviour of the king represent the relation between law and gospel. The command, Sell the debtor and all he hath, that the debt may be paid, exhibits the legal attitude towards sin; the free forgiveness of the debt exhibits the grace that came in with Jesus Christ. The one prepared for the other; the rigour of the law for the grace of the gospel. That rigour brought the debtor to his knees, with a petition coming far short of the grace in store, asking only for time to pay, for a hired servant’s place; for men are unable to imagine and dare not hope for the good which God has prepared for them. The rigour was meant to lead up to the mercy through the way of repentance; it was but a means to an end, for had it been otherwise the more beneficent dispensation had never come.[1] The law was but a pedagogue to conduct to Christ.

[1] Euthymius Zigabenus expresses this thought. Speaking of the command to sell for the debt, he says, Ο■κ ■ξ ■μ■τητος δ■ το■το ■κ■λευσεν ■κ συμπαθε■ας, ■να ε■λαβηθε■ς ■κε■νος τ■ν τοια■την ■π■φασιν (■κελε■ση) κα■ τ■χη, τ■ς ■φ■σεως ε■ γ■ρ μ■ δι■ το■το τοια■την ■ξ■νεγκεν ■π■φασιν ο■κ ■ν ■κετε■σαντι τ■ χρε■ος ■φ■κεν. When Christ came the world entered into a state of objective grace, under which God imputeth not to men their trespasses; and it becomes all who have attained to the knowledge of this truth to imitate the Divine charity in their relations to their fellow-men. But the wranglings of His disciples gave Jesus too good ground for the apprehension that an implacable spirit might be by no means a rare phenomenon in the era of grace; therefore, having in the first part of the parable depicted the mercy of God, He proceeded in the second part to describe the unmercifulness of so-called Christian men. The picture drawn is unspeakably repulsive, and bears witness to the deep abhorrence with which the Speaker regarded an unforgiving spirit in one who confesses his own need, and has experienced the benefit of forgiveness. The great debtor goes forth from the presence of his benignant master, straightway meets a fellow-servant who owes a petty debt to himself, in the most truculent manner lays hold of him and demands immediate payment,[1] and on hearing from his debtor's lips the same appeal he had previously made to the king, refuses his request, unmoved by the august presence from which he has just come, by the memory of a recent benefit, and by the repetition of the words of his own prayer; and with brutal ferocity drags him to prison, there to lie till he has paid the paltry sum. Shall we say there is exaggeration here too? It were a comfort to be able to think so, and perhaps it may be said truly that Christ draws the picture in the darkest possible colours, that His disciples and all who bear His name might be scared into a holy fear of offending in such wise, and a godly jealousy lest they should bear the most distant resemblance to so odious a character. Yet we cannot flatter ourselves that the picture is a purely ideal one. It is not possible to conceive one conscious that his own moral debt is great, and believing in the forgiveness thereof, deliberately so acting, for, forgiven much, he will love much both God and his fellow, men. But it is only too possible to be under the objective reign of grace, and to take advantage of the benefits of the era of grace, not without a certain appreciation of their value, yet to regulate our relations to our brethren by the strict régime of law, aggravated by the superadded horrors of violent temper and brutal passion when the slightest opposition is offered to the immediate execution of our selfish will. How many members of Christian Churches may rise from the communiontable to go forth on the following day to the perpetration of such atrocities in connection with their secular business! The sin of merciless hardness is one which easily besets us all, and instead of asking, Is thy servant a dog, that he should do such a thing? we do well to ask, rather, Is it I?

[1] The act denoted by ■πνιγεν, seizing by the throat, though ferocious, was legal according to Roman law. The approved reading in the next clause, ε■ τι δφε■λεις—literally, "if you owe aught"—must be understood in sympathy with the truculent spirit displayed in that act. The ε■ τι, as Meyer remarks, is neither courteous nor problematical, but logical = if you owe you must pay. Unger puts it, "Conditio dicta pro causa." Grotius says, "Solet si sane non conditionem sed generalitatem significare."

Even those who might themselves be guilty of such conduct would readily condemn it in others, and hence the fellow-servants of the two who stand in the relation of debtor and creditor are fitly represented as interesting themselves in the case, and reporting it to the common lord in a spirit of compassion towards the sufferer. Their sympathies are roused simply by the spectacle of

excessive severity, without reference to the glaring inconsistency of the wrong-doer, of which they are not supposed to be aware. But that inconsistency is what arrests the attention of the king. Now for the first time he is angry, and he gives expression to his wrath in terms of unmitigated condemnation, followed up by a sentence of unqualified rigour. He calls the offender 'wicked,' using the epithet not with reference to his own great debt, but to stigmatise the mercilessness he had shown towards his brother who owed him a small debt—a mercilessness to be reprehended in any one, and utterly inexcusable in him, who had himself been forgiven so immensely greater a sum. And the sentence pronounced on this 'wicked' one is, that having shown no mercy, he should receive none. The pardon granted is revoked, and he is remitted to the custody of the roughest, most ruthless, gaolers, who will rather take pleasure in tormenting him than in mitigating the discomforts of his imprisonment, and will take good care that he do not get out till he have paid all that he owed.[1] [1] Most interpreters take the 'tormentors' in this general sense—gaolers of the rudest order. The language of the parable here, as throughout, is strong, but there is no occasion at this stage for any suggestion of exaggeration. Intensity of utterance, the characteristic of the whole parable, is discernible in this part also, but not extravagance. The words put into the mouth of the king find a response in every healthy conscience. Who will call in question the appropriateness of the epithet 'wicked'? Must we not rather acknowledge the moderation of judgment evinced in applying the term to the offender not quâ debtor, but quâ creditor? It is not easy to imagine how any man could amass such an amount of debt without culpability approaching to wickedness. But, with fine discrimination, the word is not brought in till the party characterised has been guilty of conduct whose unmitigated iniquity could be doubtful to no one having the slightest pretensions to moral discernment. Then, as to the sentence, it is doubtless inexorably stern, but it is undeniably equitable and just. The case described is one of those in which the public conscience would feel aggrieved were a severe sentence not pronounced, and a lenient punishment would appear little short of an outrage.

We are not surprised, therefore, to find our Lord expressing His deliberate approval of the sentence pronounced on the unmerciful servant, and solemnly assuring His disciples that after the like manner should they themselves be treated if they followed his bad example. Such is the import of the closing sentence: So shall also My heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts. Nothing could be more explicit than the declaration here made that a policy of severity will be pursued against all the unforgiving. And Christ's personal approval of that policy is equally pronounced. Specially worthy of notice in this view is the designation given to the Ruler and Judge of men. One not in sympathy with the rigour of Divine government might have said, So shall the Judge of all the earth do to you. Not so speaks Christ here. He gives to God, even in this sombre connection, the endearing title of Father. Not only so, He calls God My Father, as if to express in the most emphatic manner His perfect sympathy with the Divine mind. At other times He called God your Father, with reference to His disciples; but here He takes the Divine Father from them, as if to imply that between Him and them so acting there could be nothing in common, and appropriates Him to Himself, as if to say, "I and My Father are one in this matter." Obviously Jesus has no sense of incongruity between the Fatherhood of God and the strange work of stern judgment on the unmerciful. Neither was there room for such a feeling. Just because God is a Father, and because His inmost spirit is love, He must abhor a spirit so utterly alien from His own. It is only what we should expect, that under the government of a gracious God the spirit of mercilessness should have judgment without mercy. Some good men

think that it is due to the Divine love that we should cherish a hope of ultimate mercy even for the merciless in the long course of the ages. It may be so, though there is little either in the letter or in the spirit of this parable to encourage such a hope. On this dark subject we do not incline to dogmatise so freely as is usual on either side, but would be swift to hear and slow to speak. Whether the 'tormentors' and the imprisonment be æonian merely, or strictly everlasting, may, for aught we know, be a fair question; but it is one we had rather not discuss, especially in connection with a class of sinners who have so little claim on our sympathy.

01.20. Book 3. The Parables of Judgment

Book 3.

The Parables of Judgment

01.21. Chapter 1. The Children in the Market-place

Chapter 1.

The Children in the Market-place Or, the Judgment of Jesus on Jewish Contemporaries. The little similitude of the Children in the Market-place does not usually find a place in treatises on the parables. Nevertheless it seems to us fit and worthy to stand at the head of the division on which we now enter as an introduction to the study of those parables in which Christ appears as a Prophet, speaking words of warning and of doom to His contemporaries in Israel. For it sets forth the judgment of Jesus on that generation, the opinion which He entertained of their character; an opinion from which it is easy to see that they were in a bad way: blind, wanting spiritual insight,—incapable of appreciating goodness when it showed itself among them, not knowing the time of their merciful visitation; a generation saying now, "Not this Man, but the Rabbis," and likely to say ere long, to their own hurt, "Not this Man, but Barabbas." The whole section of the gospel history in which this parable occurs may be described as a chapter of moral criticism. Its contents are given in greatest fulness in the eleventh chapter of Matthew, wherein we find Jesus expressing His opinion, first of John the Baptist, then of the Jewish people of that time, and finally of Himself. Of John He says that he is a great prophet of moral law, yet less than the least in the kingdom of God; the reason of the latter part of the judgment being that the Baptist did not understand or appreciate the kingdom of heaven as a kingdom of grace. To him it was a kingdom of law, demanding of men righteousness, not a kingdom of mercy, offering itself to men’s acceptance as the summum bonum. Therefore Jesus Himself was a stumbling-block to him, for he expected Messiah to come with axe and fan, to judge, hew down, and sift; and lo, He had come in the spirit of love, patience, and pity. So he stood aloof from the new movement inaugurated by Jesus, wondering what it all might mean; a true man of God, yet outside the kingdom as a new historical phenomenon. Of Himself Jesus said, "I am despised and rejected by the wise and understanding ones, and received only by babes. Nevertheless those who despise Me cannot do without Me. I am the way to the knowledge of the Father. Nor does their contempt harm Me; for though men know Me not nor value Me, the Divine Father knoweth Me, and I know Him, and He loveth Me, and hath committed all things—the sovereignty of the future—into My hands. I can do without them, though they cannot do without Me." Of the Jewish people—that is, of those then living in Judaea who were under the influence of the spirit of the time, forming the great bulk of the nation—Jesus pronounced the opinion which is contained in our parable, which, as it stands in St Matthew’s Gospel, is as follows:

Whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the market-place who, calling unto their fellows,[1] say: We piped unto you, and ye danced not; we wailed, and ye mourned not. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say: He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say: Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners; and wisdom is justified[2] by her children?.[3]

[1] ■τα■ροις, the reading in T. R. retained in R. V. א. B., &c., have ■τ■ροις, which is adopted by Tischendorf, and Westcott and Hort. Alford thinks ■τ■ροις came into texts through mistake of the ear—a case of itacism, the words being pronounced the same way. But of course this cuts both ways. Lange adopts ■τ■ροις, and assigns to it a moral significance = a different set not in the mood to play, representing Jesus and John, who were too earnest to trifle.

[2] ■δικαι■θη, the aorist whose distinctive force is to be retained wherever possible. But we may regard the present as a case of the use of the gnomic aorist, indicating a law of the moral order analogous to the same use of the aorist to denote facts belonging to the physical order, as in Jas 1:11.

[3] τ■κνων, as in T. R. The R. V., Westcott and Hort, and Tischendorf adopt the reading ■ργων, found in א. B. Alford suggests that this reading may have been substituted for τ■χνων, which might easily have arisen from τ■κνων, by the change of κ into χ. Readings found in א. B. together are, on the grounds so ably stated by Westcott and Hort in the valuable introduction to their edition of the Greek Testament, always entitled to serious consideration; but we do not feel called upon in every case, and as a matter of course, to introduce such into our text.—Mat 11:16-19. The parable proper occupies only a single sentence, the remainder of the passage quoted giving its application, whence we learn that the opinion expressed by Jesus in the parable concerning His contemporaries had reference to the reception they had accorded to Himself and to John. But though very short, it is very significant. It hints that the contemporaries of Jesus and John, in judging these messengers of God, judged themselves; had shown themselves to be children. "To what shall I liken this generation?" asked the Divine Critic of His age, and His reply to His own question was: "They are like unto children." In one respect it was a mild judgment, but it was also very ominous. For it is a serious thing when men are like children, not in the good sense, but in the bad—not children, but childish. A generation like children in this evil sense is a generation in its spiritual dotage, or second childhood, in a state like that of the Hebrew Christians of after days so pathetically and graphically described by the writer of the Epistle addressed to them, as, "become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat."[1] When this state of senility is reached death is not far off. This condition of spiritual dotage had been reached by the generation to which our parable refers. Their senses were blinded by age so that they were unable to discern between good and evil. They were blind to true wisdom and goodness, and could not recognise these when they presented themselves to view under various forms, as in Jesus and John. They were blind to their own true interest, and could not discern the signs of the time, the weather signs portentous of the coming storm. They were on the wrong tracks, and had not the sense to allow themselves to be put right. There was no salvation for them in any of the guidances in which they put their trust—in Rabbinism, in Phariseeism, or in patriotism; yet they would follow these blind guides, and turned a deaf ear to the still voice of wisdom behind them, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it." That such was the spiritual state of Israel Jesus was fully aware when He likened His generation to children. We could imagine Him using the comparison for the express purpose of pointing out such a condition; it would have been natural to have employed it in this sense when speaking with reference to the unappreciative attitude of contemporaries towards either Himself or John separately. But on the present occasion He thought of Himself and John together, and of the marked difference in their whole manner of life between the two messengers of God to that time, and of the impartiality with which their fellow-countrymen had dealt out to both an equal measure

of disesteem, and other points of resemblance to children suggested themselves, for which He found a fit emblem in the scene from the market-place of children playing at marriages and funerals. The figures convey the idea that the men of that time—the generation of men under the influence of the characteristic Zeitgeist, and specially the more religious folk—the Pharisees—were merely playing at religion. While He and John were both consumed with earnest zeal about the things of the kingdom, each striving after his own mode to promote its interests, they were only amusing themselves with pious works. Then, further, the similitude suggests that the parties depicted were like children in the fickleness of their temper. They were changeable in their humour; fastidious, difficult to please, much given to peevish complaining and faultfinding, after the manner of self-willed children. As one might see children in the market-place playing at their games and quarrelling with each other, never all in the same humour at the same moment, one set wishing to play at marriages when another wanted to play at funerals; so could one with spiritual vision see that childish generation behaving itself with reference to Jesus and John. The two men were very diverse in their spirit and mode of life and method of working; and it might have been expected that if either was disliked the other would be a favourite. But no; they were both alike unpopular. When people saw John's austere garb and heard him preach repentance, they were in the mood to wish for something less severe. When they observed the genial way of Jesus, how He ate and drank and dressed as other men, and heard the gentle, pitiful words He addressed to the sinful, they turned away unsympathising, deeming that a sterner mood was called for. Both the great ones, full of love and originality, sinned against the law of the mean expressed in such proverbs as ne quid nimis, μηδ■ν ■γαν, and so incurred the penalty of being blamed by those, at all times the majority, to whom whatever was not characterised by tameness, half-and-halfness, and mediocrity was an offence.

[1] Heb 5:12.

Such is the general drift of the parable, and in a broad sketch of the Parabolic Teaching of Christ it might not be necessary to add anything more by way of interpretation. But in a systematic exposition such as we have on hand there are some particular points adverted to by the commentators of which some notice must be taken. The questions have been discussed: Who are the complainants and who the complained of? Who say "We piped, we wailed"? and who are they who danced not and mourned not? The settlement of these questions depends on another: Does Jesus, with wondrous condescension, as Bengel thinks, include Himself and John among the children?[1] If so, then they may be regarded either as the complainers or the complained of, the former alternative being that in favour with the older interpreters. According to this view those who call to their companions are Jesus and John, and their complaint, a just one, against their countrymen is that they had not responded to their call, and danced when they had piped, or wept when the Baptist mourned. It is in favour of this view that it assigns to Jesus and John the initiative, and puts their generation in the position simply of not sympathising with their work, in accordance with the historical state of the case. But against it is the consideration that it ascribes to the two prophets a rôle which was not characteristic of them, but which was eminently characteristic of the Pharisaic religionists of the time—that of complaining—and so mars the literary felicity of the parable. The prophets had a good right to complain; but it was not their way to complain. We therefore concur in the opinion held by many modern commentators, viz. that the children who were so unfortunate as never to be able to get other children to play with them were not the two

great ones of the time, but their small-souled critics.

[1] "Jesus non solum Judæos, sed etiam se et Joannem diversis modis comparat cum puerulis, mirabili, quod ad Jesus attinet, facilitate." Gnomon.

If then Jesus and John be among the children, they must represent the parties who would not dance and weep. But these, though all complained of, are not all complained of for the same reason. There are those whose fault is that they will not dance; and there are others whose fault is that they will not weep. Which of these two classes is represented by Jesus, and which by John? Diverse views have been expressed on these points. Some, e. g. Alford, think that the former class is represented by Jesus and the latter by John. On this view the cause of complaint is not that Christ and His followers were not of glad humour, and that John and his disciples were not of sad humour, but that the gladness of the one and the sadness of the other were not of the kind their contemporaries liked. This view appears so artificial that it is hardly worth while arguing against it; but it may be pointed out that the stress laid on the kind of joy or sorrow is not in keeping with the variation in the Evangelic reports of our Lord's words.[1] It can hardly be doubted that John represents the group who will not dance, and Jesus the group who will not mourn. The negatives have the force of emphatic positives. Ye danced not, means not, ye danced otherwise than we wished, but ye did the opposite of dancing—went to culpable excess in sadness. Ye mourned not, means not, ye gave no place to the element of sadness, but, on the contrary, indulged in a measure of mirthfulness and joy with which we could not possibly sympathise. The situation implied in the parable is thus that Jesus and John went to extremes in opposite directions, and so offended the taste of those who loved moderation in all things, and who deemed that the just, wise way of life in which gladness and sadness are duly blended. When men of this temper heard the Baptist preach with awful earnestness the necessity of repentance, they felt that he offended against the law of the mean by taking too gloomy a view of human conduct, and practising too rigid a way of life; and they said, He hath a devil; he is a monomaniac with a fixed idea in his brain—"Repent, repent, repent." When the same sort of man came into contact with the society of Jesus on any peculiarly significant, characteristic occasion, as at Matthew's farewell feast, they were shocked by the exuberant joy, and said, Surely these revellers forget the sadness that is in human existence. Such was the actual state of the case as we know from the gospel records, and it is to this state that Jesus alludes in the parable of the children in the market-place, when He makes one set of children, representing the bulk of Jewish religious society, complain of another set, representing Himself and John and his disciples, that they would not dance or mourn; if, that is to say, we are to assume that Jesus and John are among the children.

[1] Luk 7:32 : ■θρην■σαμεν ■μ■ν κα■ ο■κ ■κλα■σατε; Mat 11:17 : ■θρην■τ σαμεν κα■ ο■κ ■κ■ψασθε. But we must now say that we do not believe this assumption to be correct. The supposition is one which is due to a microscopic way of interpreting the parables against which we have steadily protested. The truth in this case, as in so many others, is hit by Olshausen, who finds in both classes of children—the complainants and the complained of—representatives of the fickle generation among whom Jesus and John lived. The drift of the parable is: This generation is like a company of peevish children with whom nothing goes right,—one half wishing this, the other that, so that activity with a fixed aim is impossible among them. Both sets of children are alike unreasonable; they are well-matched playmates, fellows in spirit as well as in years; and they are photographed together, caught in the act of play, to form a picture of the grown-up children of the

time, who behaved towards Jesus and John as unreasonably as the children in the market-place behaved towards each other. It is immaterial which of the two readings, ■τα■ροις or ■τ■ροις, we adopt; for even if with the critics we adopt the latter and emphasise its distinctive meaning so as to make it signify a different set of children, still it will remain true that the two sets were fellows; their differences superficial, their agreement radical. All the sects and societies of that time in Judaea were under the influence of one and the same spirit—the spirit of a decadent age approaching dissolution. The only party in which there was any life or light or hope for the future was the party of Jesus, in which for the present we may include that of John and his disciples; for John was Christ's forerunner, and when his work had its proper effect it issued in his disciples joining the society of Jesus. Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, were all in servile subjection to the old, the customary, the morally commonplace; and therefore they all instinctively agreed to hate the movement led by Jesus, characterised as it was by originality, poetry, passionate earnestness, and creative energy destined to make many things new. All alike were, under diverse guises, children of the world, and such wisdom as they could boast of was but worldly wisdom, which abhors enthusiasm, is incapable of making allowance for the faults real or seeming that accompany it, and devoid of the power to appreciate great characters; insomuch that it could commit the almost incredibly stupid mistakes of deeming such an one as the Baptist a madman, and such an one as Jesus a profligate, and of finally putting both to death as intolerable nuisances of whom it did well to rid itself.

Though Jesus and John are not included among the children the parable is so constructed as to exhibit them very clearly in their distinctive peculiarities, in the picture of the time This is effected by the simple device of representing the children not merely employed in play and quarrelling over their games, which would have sufficed as a picture of the Jewish people, but as playing at marriages and funerals; the former symbolising the joy of the company of Jesus; the latter the sadness of the Baptist's circle. And thus it appears that in a single sentence the Divine Artist has given us a photograph of His age, including among the figures of the tableau, though not in the foreground, the two greatest characters of the age—John and Himself. We see in this picture a fickle peevish generation behaving themselves in religion like the children of a village gathered together in the marketplace at the hour of play; not without a certain keen interest in religious and moral movements, taking note of them as they made their appearance, observing their characteristics, going out in crowds to hear and see the preacher of repentance in the wilderness, and watching with curious eye the strange, eccentric, and unconventional behaviour of the Prophet of Nazareth; fascinated yet repelled by both, hoping for a moment to find in them that which might satisfy the obscure uncomprehended cravings of their hearts, only to be immediately disappointed by traits of character and modes of action not to their taste. Behind the motley group in the forefront we perceive the two great ones whose appearance has created the stir and disturbance in the public mind. One is attired in a garment of camel's hair, gathered up with a leathern girdle, and wears a sad, austere countenance, as of one who feels it to be his vocation to be a standing protest against the iniquities of an evil time. The other wears no external badge of isolation or singularity, and in His face is a strange blending of sadness and gladness. All that His companion knows of the world's evil is known to Him, and is a constant burden to His spirit, but He knows also of a cure for it, and the predominant expression of His countenance is one of hope and joy and enthusiastic devotion to a Saviour's calling. These two are the rudiments of a new era. All else in Judaea is of the old era and doomed to perish, too hopelessly degenerate to be capable of

salvation, too blind to know the time of its gracious visitation, proved to be incurably bad by its treatment of those who could have led it in the way of peace.

"All else," we have said, not forgetful that in the worst of times there are always some exceptions to the general corruption. Such there were in Judaea in the time of Christ—contemporaries of the generation animadverted on in the parable, but not belonging to it; children of wisdom, though babes in respect of Rabbinic lore, and of no account with the sages of the age. To these, as to the tribunal of true wisdom, Jesus appealed from the harsh, unsympathetic judgment of the worldly wise. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they said, Behold a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners, and the quiet reply to such savage censure by the object of it was, Wisdom is justified by her children. The way in which the reflection is introduced has all the effect of humour. It is connected with the reference to the slanders of a prejudiced public by κα■, 'and,' conveying the idea that the two things are wont to go together; the censure of the blind and the approbation of the wise: "They say such things of John and Me, and of course we are justified by true wisdom." The censure of folly is the negative test of goodness, the praise of wisdom is the positive; where the one is the other is to be looked for. Thus viewed, the reflection with which the parable concludes is the statement of a moral axiom, and as such is properly rendered, "Wisdom is justified," though the tense is the aorist. Not that it would be difficult to put a good sense on the sentence viewed as a statement of historical fact with reference to Jesus and John. So taken it would suggest this train of thought: John came and was evil entreated; Jesus came and was likewise evil entreated. Both were rejected by their generation, though for superficially opposite reasons; yet in the case of both wisdom was justified of her children. The wisdom of God, the Sender of the two badly-received prophets and the wisdom of the sent were recognised by a small minority in an evil time, by those, viz. who were themselves the children of wisdom. But it is better to take the aorist, ■δικαι■θη, as the gnomic aorist, expressing, in the form of an historical fact, that which belongs to the usual course of things.

We are shut up to this interpretation of the tense if we adopt the reading 'works' (τεχν■ν) instead of 'children' (τ■κνων). Then the meaning will be: Men blame, but the result justifies those blamed; the issue will show that both John and I were in our right, both in different ways inspired by wisdom. Historical in form, the statement is in reality a prophecy. So taken, the saying contains an important truth often verified in history, that proscribed causes in the long run arc justified by their effects, and obtain general recognition as having their origin, not in folly, but in wisdom. That Christ should make such an appeal to the future is nowise unlikely, only it may be doubted whether this was all He had in view. It is probable He had the present and even the past in His thoughts when He uttered this pregnant saying, and it is not difficult to give such a wide sense to 'works' as to cover such a reference, and indeed make the two readings practically coincide. Among the works of wisdom we may reckon the children of wisdom, those who possess spiritual insight into the nature of moral phenomena. These see at the beginning what all see at the end—that movements which give rise to criticism are of God, and by their insight those movements are justified. But if we may reckon among the works of wisdom the few who at an early stage detect the character of spiritual movements, à fortiori we may reckon in the same category the chief agents in those movements whose conduct is the principal subject of criticism. And confining our view to them we may say: "Wisdom is justified by her works,"—meaning, wisdom is justified in all her diverse ways of working; in the two instances in question, in particular.

Thus understood, the saying is demonstrably true. Wisdom was indeed justified in the diverse modes of life and methods of work characteristic of Jesus and John respectively. John came neither eating nor drinking, and inculcating an ascetic habit; Jesus came both eating and drinking, and initiating His disciples into a life of liberty and joy; and wisdom revealed itself in both—God's wisdom in sending them such as they were, their wisdom in being what God meant them to be. Both had one end, and were devoted to that end, but their manner of life and action were very diverse; yet both were legitimate and wise, because they were adapted to the gifts, the opportunities, and the tasks of each respectively. Wisdom dictates that means correspond to ends, and that men be like their work, and this law of congruity was complied with in the case of Jesus and John. John standing at the threshold of the new era of grace was yet a man of the old era, and his vocation was that of a Hebrew prophet, viz. to show the people their transgressions. He was indeed the last of the prophets, and the harbinger of the new era, but that function demanded the same type of man. The work of a forerunner of Messiah involved rough tasks, and needed a stern will. He had to prepare the way of the Lord, levelling the hills of pride, rousing dormant consciences, and so preparing men for receiving the Redeemer when He came in the fulness of grace. It became one having such a vocation to live austerely, and by the very exaggerations of his self-denial to be a living protest against all forms of sensualism. His very dress served his vocation, giving emphasis to his ministry of repentance, speaking to the eye of the people, and telling them that this was another Elijah, a representative of moral law isolated from them, raised above them, and from Sinai's peak thundering down a stern "Thou shalt not" against the vice of the world below. The garment of camel's hair girt with a leathern girdle was thus a most legitimate piece of ritualism. It is very easy to criticise this man, and point out faults. His austerity is excessive, his aspect is grotesque, his speech uncourtly, his whole way so eccentric, that men, at a loss what to think of him, might very excusably solve the problem by the hypothesis of demoniacal possession. Nevertheless John, wanting these peculiarities—call them faults if you will—would not have done his work so well. They were at least proofs of his utter sincerity; proofs that he was a man possessed, not indeed, as the critics imagined, with an evil spirit, but with the sublime spirit of righteousness; so utterly possessed by the noble passion for right as to disturb the balance and mar the symmetry of his character, and make him appear, to a superficial view, a onesided, extreme, singular, even absurd man, unendurable except to those who sympathised with his work, and understood its requirements. The same law of congruity made it meet that Jesus should be as like other men as possible within the limits of the innocent; for thus only could He get close to them and win His way into their hearts with His gospel of mercy. He did well to come eating and drinking. Not eating and drinking riotously did He come, as He was slanderously reported to have done. His accommodations to existing customs sprang from love, not from laxity, and were the outward symbol of that sympathetic spirit which led Him to call Himself Son of man; and, having this end, they were accommodations in accordance with wisdom. The life of Jesus suited His vocation as one sent to preach a gospel to the poor, the fallen, the miserable; for it helped Him to win the confidence of those whom He sought to benefit. It becomes the Sanctifier to be in all possible respects like those whom he would sanctify; the more points of contact the better. This is the key to many features in Christ's conduct, and especially to that part of His public conduct which was so much blamed—His intercourse with the tax-gatherers, and the morally suspicious or disreputable class with whom they were associated. In that instance wisdom was justified by Christ's own lips in those beautiful apologies for loving the sinful which we had

occasion to expound in studying the parables of grace. And wisdom was further justified by her works—by the actual results. For Christ's open, genial bearing did win the confidence of many social outcasts; and the faith thus inspired exercised a redeeming influence upon their spirit, and led them to peace and purity. Wisdom was justified by children of folly transformed into children of wisdom, and as time went on, and the new movement unfolded itself, and its tendencies were revealed by its effects, the vindication grew more and more complete.

If the critics of Jesus had foreseen all that was to come out of His work they might possibly have abstained from faultfinding; for the world respects results, and recognises that which by these has fully vindicated its right to exist. But it is the misfortune of worldly wisdom that it has exclusive regard to results, and at the same time wants the prophetic prescience that can divine what these will be, and so is liable to be misled by present appearances into false and injurious judgments. In both respects it differs from true wisdom, which is not guided in its judgment solely by results seen of foreseen, but looks into the heart of things, and when it can recognise in conduct the expression of sincere conviction, the forth-putting of Divine force, does homage thereto irrespective of consequences. In this spirit the truly wise judge others; in this spirit they act themselves. They show their wisdom not by calculating consequences, but by being faithful in word and deed to the best impulses within them. So they play the hero; while worldly wisdom, in its anxiety to please all, to obviate immediate difficulties, to gain temporary advantages, stifles conviction, chills enthusiasm, and cuts itself off from the possibility of a heroic career permanently influential. But again, true wisdom has clear insight into the ultimate consequences of conduct. It has confidence in the moral order of the world, and knows that the final issues of all right action must be good. Worldly wisdom, in its blindness, can only infer from ascertained effects the quality of the cause. Genuine wisdom, from insight into the quality of the cause, can predict the nature of the effects. The one can only judge of the tree by its fruit; the other can judge of the fruit by the tree. The people of Judæa, unhappily for themselves, did not even possess the former and easier of these faculties of moral judgment. They persisted in entertaining a poor opinion of Jesus and His work even after it had attained to the measure of development manifested in the Apostolic Church. They were still unconvinced of their own sin, and of Christ's righteousness. And so there remained for them nothing but a fearful prospect of the wrath to the uttermost that came upon them in the first Christian century, from which Jesus and John would gladly have saved them.

01.22. Chapter 2. The Barren Fig-Tree

Chapter 2.

The Barren Fig-Tree Or, the Withdrawal of Israel's Privilege in Favour of the Gentiles Foreshadowed.

JESUS spake this parable: A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard; and he came seeking fruit on it, and found not any. And he said unto the vinedresser, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and I find it not: cut it down; why doth it also[1] make the land useless?[2] And he answering saith unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it, and if it bear fruit next year,[3] well; but if not, thou shalt cut it down.—Luk 13:6-9.

[1] The omission of this word in the A. V. is a grave fault, as it is essential to the meaning. The R. V. corrects the error.

[2] καταργε■ The rendering 'cumbereth' in A. V. retained in R. V. is objectionable as too vague, not to mention that the verb cumber is used in another place of the same Gospel for a wholly different Greek word (Luk 10:40). The same word should certainly not be used in both places. The idea intended by καταργε■ seems to be that the land is rendered ■ργ■ς = ■εργ■ς.

[3] In the T. R. ε■ς τ■ μ■λλον comes after ε■ δ■ μ■γε. The rendering 'henceforth' in the R. V., replacing the 'after that' of the A. V., is too general, ■τος is understood after μ■λλον. So Bengel, Meyer, and Hofmann. Also Dr. Field, who, criticising the R. V., remarks: "Here ■τος occurs in the preceding verse, but even without that the idiom is well established. Plutarch frequently uses it of magistrates designate" ('Otium Norvicense,' Part III). The correct rendering of the phrase was given early in last century by the Cambridge scholar, Jeremiah Markland, to whom reference is made by Dr. Field, and also by Bos in 'Ellipses Græcæ' under the word ■τος.

If it be assumed that the conception and. delivery of this parabolic speech sprang out of the incidents previously narrated, its judicial character is self-evident. In that case the obvious purpose of the parable is to enforce the warning: "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;" to intimate, that is to say, that the judgment of the Jewish nation was impending. But even if, as is most likely, the connection between the parable and what goes before is subjective only, in the mind of the writer, rather than in the actual course of events, the sombre and threatening nature of the utterance is still very apparent. The unfruitful tree, which we may safely assume to be Israel, is about to be cut down. It is on its last trial, the issue of which, judging from the past, is far from hopeful. There is, indeed, mercy in the petition that it may have a last trial—another year of grace. This circumstance, however, throws no shadow of doubt on the judicial character of the parable; or, if it does, then we must conclude that it is a mistake to speak of a separate class of parables of judgment. For none of our Lord's parabolic sayings are so purely judicial as to show no trace of the grace that dwelt in Him. The grace is visible enough here in the intercession of the vinedresser. Nevertheless, judgment preponderates. The very intercession is ominous. The vinedresser shows His mercifulness by deprecating immediate cutting down, but the careful specification of

conditions, and the limitation of the period within which experiments are to be made, intimate that peril is imminent. The object of judgment, already hinted at, is Israel—that would be so obvious to the hearers that it was quite unnecessary to explain it; and what is threatened is exclusion from the kingdom of God, forfeiture of privilege as the elect people. As in most parables belonging to the present group, the threatening against Israel is accompanied by hints at the replacing of the chosen people by other recipients of Divine favour. The most obvious hint is contained in the words: Why also rendereth it the land useless? The owner regards the occupation of the land by an unproductive tree as a serious evil, and one reason of his desire to cut down the tree is that another fertile tree may be planted in its room. It thus appears that in one aspect a parable of judgment, the present parable,—and a similar remark may be made with reference to all belonging to the same group,—is in another aspect a parable of grace. A parable of judgment as towards Israel, it is a parable of grace as towards the Gentiles, intimating God's purpose to put them in the place of an unfruitful elect people. In this fact, doubtless, lay the attraction of this parable for the third Evangelist, who has alone recorded it. The doom of Israel by itself was an unpleasant subject of contemplation to a Christian mind; and had there been nothing but that to be found in the parable, Luke might have kept it out of his gospel. But his quick Pauline eye detected much more in it than that. He found there, to his comfort, a hint that Israel's doom was to be the opportunity of the Gentiles; that the sunset of Israel's day of grace was to be the sunrise of a day of grace for the outside nations. The parable before us is one of those parts of our Lord's teaching in which is latent Pauline universalism. This element is its specialty, and only when we keep it steadily in view can we do full justice to all the features of the representation, or enter sympathetically into the spirit of either the speaker or the narrator. We understand the story of the unfruitful fig-tree only when we see in it an anticipation of Paul's apologetic for his Gentile Gospel, as apparently liable to the objection of setting aside the election of Israel, in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters of his Epistle to the Romans. So at least we read the story, and we hope to justify the reading by the exposition following. The lesson of the parable then being, on our view, not merely the doom of Israel, but that doom as accompanied by the in-bringing of the Gentiles, let us see how the details fit into the hypothesis. The first point claiming attention is the subject of the parabolic narration—a fig-tree in a vineyard. That requires explanation. A fig-tree is not the thing we look for in a vineyard. The peculiarity has not escaped the notice of commentators, and they have tried to account for it. Some point out that a fig-tree does not conflict with the prohibition in Deu 22:9—Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers seeds, lest the fruit of thy seed which thou hast sown, and the fruit of thy vineyard, be defiled, inasmuch as trees are not referred to in the passage.[1] Others conversant with the present practice in the East tell us that a fig-tree in a vineyard is by no means an uncommon phenomenon.[2] One who writes with authority on all that relates to the Natural History of the Bible, states that the corners and irregular pieces of ground in a vineyard are generally occupied by a fig-tree.[3] Such observations prove that a fig-tree in a vineyard is not contrary either to law or to usage; but they do not explain why our Lord selected a fig-tree instead of a vine, as we should have expected, to be the vehicle of instruction. However legal or usual the presence of a fig-tree in a vineyard may be, it is not, as in the case of a vine, a matter of course, and Christ must have had a reason for introducing it, and the reason can only be found in the didactic significance of the emblem. What, then, was the reason? On our view of the drift of the parable it is not difficult to answer the question. The fig-tree is chosen to represent Israel as a tacit yet effective protest against the notion of her possessing a prescriptive right to occupy in

perpetuity the place she held in God’s favour. The supposition is directed against the pride and self-importance of an elect race, prone to think that Israel and God’s kingdom were synonymous, or as intimately and essentially related to each other as are vineyard and vine. To have used the vine as an emblem of Israel might have seemed to concede this claim, but by selecting the fig-tree as an emblem Christ said to his countrymen in effect, "Ye have no natural or necessary place in the sphere within which God’s grace manifests itself, like a vine in a vineyard, without which the vineyard can hardly be conceived: Ye are but a fig-tree in the vineyard, legitimately, suitably enough there, yet there by accident, or by free choice of the owner, and there only so long as ye serve the purpose for which he put you there." Much the same thing indeed could be said even of a vine. For while vines are necessary to the idea of a vineyard, this of that particular vine is not, and the introduction of any individual plant is a matter of choice, and its continuance depends on its fruit-bearing qualities; for no owner of a vineyard recognises a prescriptive right in a vine to remain in its place even when it has proved unfruitful. But what may be said even of a vine may be said à fortiori of a fig-tree, and to select a fig-tree as the emblem of Israel was a way of. provoking reflections of this kind in a people not by any means inclined thereto. The Jewish people would not of their own accord think of themselves as a fig-tree in a vineyard. They would rather think of themselves as God’s vine, which He brought from Egypt and planted in the goodly land of promise; and they would flatter themselves that as God had taken so much pains to elect them, and as they had been so long in possession, they would continue in the vineyard for ever. It was because the Jews cherished such thoughts that necessity was laid on Paul to reconcile his Gentile Gospel, not only with ethical interests and with the claims of the Mosaic law, but with the election of Israel. They had the same thoughts in our Lord’s time, and it was to provide an antidote to such self-deception and self-flattery that He called Israel a fig-tree in a vineyard; so by a single word accomplishing the same end which Paul sought to serve by an elaborate process of argument, designed to show that in election God is free, that therefore it confers no prescriptive rights, that what God freely began He may freely end, so far as human claims are concerned; and that Israel, so far from having any prescriptive right, had justly forfeited her privilege as the elect people by her utter failure to realise the Divine purpose in her election.[4]

[1] So Meyer.

[2] Vide Stanley, ’Sinai and Palestine,’ p. 421.

[3] Tristram, ’The Natural History of the Bible,’ p. 352. Godet remarks that the soil of a vineyard is very good for fruit-trees, as if the point of the parable were to teach that God had done all for Israel that He could (so Arnot). This is not the moral lesson of the parable, and the observation concerning the goodness of the soil, besides being irrelevant to the didactic scope, leaves the selection of a fig-tree as emblem unexplained. The land was good for any fruit-tree; why then name this one in particular?

[4] Such is the scope of Rom. ix., x. Chap. xi. qualifies the severity of the previous argument by showing that the cancelling of Israel’s election is not absolute or final.

All this is hinted by one short parable, and even by the single word fig-tree;[1] all this, and yet more, for the comparison of Israel to a fig-tree suggests forcibly the thought that God’s vineyard is a much more comprehensive category than the chosen race. Doubtless it was intended to suggest this thought, and when we keep this fact in view we can have no difficulty in answering the

question: If Israel be the fig-tree, what is the vineyard? The question has puzzled commentators and received various and even curious answers. Some say the vineyard in this instance must mean the world.[2] One expositor, unable to accept this view, and at a loss to suggest any other, on the assumption that the fig-tree denotes Israel, in despair makes the tree represent individual Israelites, the vineyard being Israel collectively.[3] The truth is, that the vineyard is the kingdom of God, the sphere within which God manifests Himself in grace; always in idea and Divine purpose distinguishable from and wider than the Jewish people, and now on the eve of becoming a much more comprehensive thing in reality through the calling of the Gentiles,[4] after which it would become apparent to all that the place of Israel. in the kingdom was as that of a fig-tree in the corner of a vineyard, small at the best, and by no means secure.

[1] Bengel had a glimpse of this, as appears from his suggestive remark: σμκν, arborem cui per se nil loci est in vineâ.

[2] So Euthymius Zig. Trench, Oostersee, Arnot [3] Stier in 'Die Reden Jesu.'

[4] So Hofmann and Goebel. The vineyard, says Hofmann, is "die Anstalt des Heils." By no means secure, for the fig-tree has been unfruitful: that is the outstanding fact in its history. "Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this tree, and find not any." The three years signify the time sufficient for ascertaining the tree's fruit-bearing qualities, after the lapse of which one may infer incurable barrenness.[1] Possibly, as has been suggested, the number of years has been fixed with reference to the precept in the law directing that the fruit of young trees should for three years not be eaten, but be reckoned uncircumcised.[2] There is little reason to believe that Jesus meant to refer to the years of His own personal ministry, though this view, in favour with many, certainly helps to remove the appearance of harshness in limiting the trial to so short a period, as in that case the meaning would be, that during a time of special means of grace Israel should have been exceptionally fruitful. Similar service is rendered by the suggestion that the three years represent the three epochs of the judges, the kings, and the high priests; each year in the parable signifying a period of many centuries in the history. Certainly the time of trial does seem short, and in so far conveys an unfavourable impression as to God's patience towards Israel, not justified by the actual facts; for Jehovah had borne long with the unfruitfulness of His chosen people. But the time is made short because the purpose is not to emphasise the Divine patience, but to give prominence to the thought that fruit is the thing looked for, the reason of the fig-tree's presence in the vineyard. It belonged to the didactic drift of the parable to emphasise this point, for it tended to justify the threatened excision of Israel. Hence is explained the limitation of the period of trial to the barely sufficient number of years. The same bias comes out in the use of the present ■ρχομαι, in speaking of the owner's quest for fruit "I am coming," he says: he is continually on the outlook for fruit, and on its becoming apparent to him that a particular tree is not likely to be fruit-bearing, he has but one thought concerning it, viz. to cut it down or remove it, and plant another in its place. The point meant to be insisted on obviously is not the patience of God, but His impatience with a spiritually unfruitful people, even though it were an elect people. Christ would teach His countrymen, presuming on their privilege, that election was only a means to an end, and that if the end were not attained it would be sternly cancelled.

[1] So Godet.

[2] Lev 19:23. So Hofmann. The restriction of the intercession of the vinedresser for a prolongation of the experiment to a single year indicates Christ's own sympathy with this Divine rigour. He is the vinedresser, and His ministry of grace and truth is the means whereby it is faintly hoped Israel may yet, at the eleventh hour, be made spiritually fruitful. But, full of grace though He be, He neither expects nor desires an indefinite extension of Israel's day of grace. He knows that though God is long-suffering, yet His patience, as exhibited in the history of His dealings with men, is exhaustible; and that in Israel's case it is now all but worn out. And He sympathises with the Divine impatience with chronic and incurable sterility. For though He preaches with enthusiasm a gospel of grace, He does so with the aim of producing in the recipients of the good tidings holiness, and in the conviction that belief in the gospel is the most efficient cause of holiness. A kingdom of God must be a kingdom of righteousness, and if Jesus presented it to view as a kingdom of grace, it was because He believed that was the most direct way of reaching the ideal. It was made a kingdom of grace to begin with, that it might become a kingdom of righteousness to end with. In this respect there is absolute agreement between Christ and Paul. The Herald of the kingdom, not less energetically than the apostle of the Gentiles, repudiates the idea that men might sin with impunity because grace abounded. The intercession put into the mouth of the vinedresser is a solemn act of repudiation, similar in import to Paul's protest in the sixth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. "Let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it; and if it bear fruit next year, well; and if not, thou shalt cut it down." What words could more clearly or forcibly declare that grace is meant to lead to holy living, and that when it fails to do that it will be and ought to be exchanged for judicial rigour? The words of the vinedresser naturally make no reference to what may follow the cutting down of the unfruitful tree. And yet from the respect which he shows for the owner's urgent demand for fruit, as well as from that demand itself, it is easy to infer what is to be expected. The place of the barren tree will be filled by another tree in the hope of its proving fruitful. The owner of the vineyard must have fruit, and if he cannot get it from one quarter, he will provide that it be forthcoming from another. The thought suggested by the stress laid throughout on fertility is distinctly expressed by the words put into the mouth of the proprietor, "Why maketh it the land useless?" That the tree occupied unprofitably soil which might otherwise be productive is held to be sufficient condemnation. Some interpreters, ancient and modern, put a pregnant sense on the verb καταργε■, so as to make it cover not only the idea of profitless occupation, but that of injuring the land by intercepting the sun's rays, and sucking out of it its nutritive juices.[1] This heaping of accusations on the devoted tree arises out of a latent feeling that the owner's tone appears unduly severe, and stands in need of vindication. A strong case must be made out against the tree, that the owner may be cleared from the charge of unreasonableness. Therefore three sins are imputed to it, over and above that of unfruitfulness—it occupies space, it shuts out the sun, it impoverishes the soil. But this looks very like a repetition of the sin of Job's theorising friends, that of playing the part of special pleaders for God. The interpreters, missing the point of the parable, have been decidedly too hard upon the poor fig-tree. For, after all, it is a young tree, and cannot do very great harm by its leaves casting shade, or by its roots sucking moisture out of the land. No doubt the nation of Israel, which it represented, was an old tree, and did serious harm by its hypocritical profession of piety, causing the name of God to be blasphemed among the Gentiles, as Paul solemnly declared. But the parable is not so constructed as to bring out these facts, and we are not entitled to foist them into it. The fig-tree of the parable is a young tree of comparatively small dimensions and short roots. It has just lived long enough to show that it is not likely to be fruitful,

and therefore uselessly occupies a place in the vineyard. And the point of the parable is, that that alone is sufficient to justify removal. To accumulate charges against the tree is simply to teach by implication that the one reason of profitless occupancy is not enough, and to obscure the moral lesson, which is that the supreme motive of Providence in its dealings with men is a regard to fruitfulness. The attempt to make out a strong case only issues in making out a weak case. The true interest of the interpreter, therefore, is to concentrate attention on the one point, and to set forth as the lesson of the parable, that as soon as it has been definitely ascertained that a tree planted in the Divine vineyard is barren, and therefore idly occupies the ground, it ought to be removed and another planted in its room.[2] That is just what an unfruitful tree does to land. The land is as good as non-existent which is occupied by a barren tree. In the history of nations a long time is allowed for the ascertainment of the fact; but it holds good, nevertheless, that such is the principle on which nations are dealt with by Providence, and, in particular, that such is the principle on which the people of Israel were dealt with.

[1] So Gregory the Great, and, almost as a matter of course, after him Trench; also Bengel, who thus pithily sums up the case against the tree:—"Non modo nil prodest, sed etiam laticem avertit, quem e terra sucturae erant vites, et soles interpellat, et spatium occupat." To the same effect Maldonatus.

[2] The Vulgate renders κμταργε■ by occupat. Trench pronounces the rendering inadequate; in our view it hits the meaning intended exactly. The fact that κμταργε■ν is a favourite Pauline word might tempt us to put a Pauline sense on a word which occurs here only outside of Paul’s Epistles, or to suppose that Luke, the Pauline evangelist, must have understood it in a Pauline sense. But even if we were to yield to this impulse, it would not conduct to a sense widely different from that assigned to the word in our exposition. A prevalent Pauline sense of the term is "to make void." The means proposed by the vinedresser for the cure of barrenness are characteristic. They are means of grace; such means as from the gospel records we know to have been employed by Christ to win His countrymen to repentance and true piety. "I shall dig about it, and dung it." These processes began with the ministry of John the Baptist, and were carried on faithfully and lovingly by Jesus till the hour when He uttered the pathetic lament over Jerusalem, because she had defeated all His efforts to save her.[1] The doctrine of the Kingdom was the chief ingredient in the fertilising matter laid at the roots of the barren tree. That doctrine way supremely well fitted to regenerate Israel, and cause her to bring forth fruit to God, in place of mere foliage and wood. Yet it signally failed to do so; the Jewish people, as a whole, treated the good tidings with contempt, and became worse rather than better. And it is a melancholy reflection, that this is apt to be the case with a people after it has attained a certain stage of spiritual decay. The goodness of God leadeth it not to repentance; it rather despises the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering. This fact in the spiritual world has its analogue in the physical world. It is a well-known fact, that both in the animal and in the vegetable kingdom fertility is frequently better promoted by starving than by fattening.[2] A barren tree, gone to leaf and wood, is rendered fertile, not by dunging, but by cutting the roots. Severe treatment restores to fruit-bearing more readily than generous gardening. Poor populations are more prolific than well-to-do classes. It is a remarkable law this, according to which impoverishment is the condition of abundant reproduction, and nature is compelled to make an effort at self-preservation, by having its continued existence threatened. The law, ever active alike in the physical and in the spiritual spheres, was exemplified

in Israel. The manuring process utterly failed, and there was nothing left but to try the cutting process. This process was tried when Israel was cut off, and the Gentiles were put in her place. Then means of grace gave place to measures of severity, to which Paul applied the expressive name of ■ποτομ■α.[3] According to the apostle, these measures were means of grace under a different guise. They were only a new way towards the old end—that of making Israel in truth a people of God. Such is the drift of the last part of the great argument by which Paul seeks to reconcile his gospel with the election of Israel. God, he says, hath not totally or finally cast off His people. He has only adopted a new method of accomplishing the purpose of the election.[4] It is a comforting doctrine, whether we have regard to the case of Israel or to the dark, judicial side of God's dealings with men generally. It is a doctrine not taught in our parable. The cutting down spoken of there is final and irretrievable. For if a tree be felled with the axe it cannot grow again. The fact reminds us of the relativity and partiality of many individual Scripture statements, and of the need for combining mutually complementary texts in order to a just, full, and balanced view of Bible teaching on matters of fundamental moment.

[1] Qui vinitor eximia imago est ejus qui ■δ■ν τ■ν π■λιν ■π■κλαυσεν ■π α■τ■ν. Unger.

[2] Vide Doubleday's 'Law of Population.'

[3] Rom 11:22.

[4] Vide remarks on this topic in connection with the parable of the Great Supper, at p. 338.

01.23. Chapter 3. The Two Sons

Chapter 3.

The Two Sons Or, Israel’s leaders charged with the vice of insincerity.

During the conflicts of the Passion-week Jesus spake the following parable, one of the three directed one after the other against the ecclesiastical leaders of the Jewish people, now become His relentless adversaries: But what think ye? A man had two sons; and coming to the first, he said, Son, go work to-day in the vineyard. And he answered and said, I go, sir; and went not. And coming to the second, he said likewise. And he answered and said, I will not; but afterwards, repenting, he went. Which of the two did the will of his father? They say the second. Jesus saith to them, Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and the harlots believed him; and ye, when ye saw it, did not even afterwards repent, that ye might believe him.—St. Mat 21:28-32.[1]

[1] We give the parable as it stands in the text of the Vatican Codex, and as given in Westcott and Hort; the order in which the two sons are named being the inverse of that in the T. R. For remarks in vindication of this order, see the exposition. This parable, like that of the Children in the Market-place, is also a parable of moral criticism, associated here as in the earlier instance with the name of the Baptist. It arose naturally out of the preceding discussion in which Jesus, put upon His defence, with controversial tact made use of John to put to silence His opponents. John’s career was finished; his name belonged to history; and public opinion had pronounced on him its final verdict, to the effect that he was a true prophet of God, entitled to speak in God’s name to his fellow-countrymen. This judgment the religious heads of the people could not afford to gainsay, and as prudent men of the world they bowed to it But they did not recognise the claims of the Baptist while he lived and carried on his work. Then they found fault with him, not less than with Jesus, though on different grounds. Of this fact Jesus, interrogated concerning His prophetic authority, takes care to remind them now, putting them in an awkward dilemma by asking the question: "The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven or from men?" The effect of the question was to rob their doubt or unbelief in regard to Himself of all moral weight. It meant: "You bow to the opinion of the public now, concerning John, but you know how you thought and spoke of him not long ago. Your adverse opinion against a man does not count for much. He may be a genuine messenger of God, and yet be evil spoken of by you. I do not think it worth while to answer your question about my authority. If ever you recognise it, it will be after the world has done so, for your way is not to lead but to follow opinion."

Having first used John in self-defence, Jesus next proceeded to turn him into a weapon of attack against His foes by relating in parabolic form the treatment which His fellow-prophet received at their hands. The parable and its interpretation amount to a charge of insincerity against the Pharisaic class, as manifested in their behaviour towards the Baptist Animadversion on this Pharisaic vice was natural in the circumstances; for the opponents of Jesus had just shown

themselves guilty of it by their evasive answer to His question concerning John's baptism and its source. "We know not," replied they, because it was inconvenient to give a more distinct answer. Had they spoken according to the thoughts of their own hearts they would have given one answer; had they followed their inclination to echo the voice of the nation they would have returned an opposite answer. They in fact said both yes and no to the assertion that John was a prophet; yes, by their deference to the vox populi; no, by their deepest sympathies. The design of the parable is to declare that what these men did then they had been doing all along—assuming a yes-and-no attitude towards the Baptist's public vocation and ministry, seeming to approve his general aim yet utterly out of sympathy with his spirit. The parabolic discourse seems to charge a twofold insincerity against the parties animadverted on; one of the past, and one of the present They had said yes and no while John exercised his ministry, approving of his way so far as it was a way of legal righteousness, disapproving of his spirit; they say yes and no still, saying with the general public, 'John is a prophet,' and so appearing at length to believe in him: yet all the while disliking his moral temper as much as ever, so retaining their secret conviction altogether unrepented of.

Insincerity, then, deep, habitual, incurable, is the vice with which the Pharisaic character is here branded. It is a much more serious charge than that brought in the earlier parable of moral criticism. There the fault animadverted on is simply childish caprice and whimsicality, which can be pleased with nothing, and regards with equal dislike the most diverse moral tendencies. There also the censure is mitigated by the employment of children as an emblem of the objects of censure, for who is much surprised at the peccadilloes of children, however naughty? Here the emblem of an evil generation is a son grown to man's estate, who may be expected to realise the responsibilities and to address himself seriously to the duties of life. And what is charged against this son is that he recognises his responsibilities in word or sentiment only, not in deed, and so trifles with and wrongs those to whom he owes relative duties. Yet the vices exposed in the two parables are more closely connected than at first appears. The child of the earlier parable is the father of the young man of the later. The child's fault is playing at religion; the man's fault is still that of playing at religion, only in a theatrical, hypocritical sense. The two parables, while linked together by the common reference to John in the interpretation, have this difference, that, whereas in the earlier both John and Jesus are alluded to in the interpretation, in the latter John alone comes in. This is easily explained by the difference in the didactic drift. The earlier parable, having for its aim to convict the contemporaries of Jesus and John of unreasonable caprice, naturally employs for this purpose both prophets, so diverse in their way of life and work, yet equally disapproved of by the men of that generation. The present parable, being intended to establish a charge of insincerity, could not with effect refer to the behaviour of the parties censured towards Jesus. For they had never even pretended or seemed to side with Him. From the first they had regarded Him and His ways with surprise and distrust, which as time went on deepened into disgust, hostility, and hatred. He and they lay too far apart, not only in spirit but in fundamental principles. They might be wrong and He right, but their dissent could not convict them of insincerity, but only of spiritual blindness. Reference to the case of John, on the other hand, was peculiarly apposite in connection with an attempt to establish such a charge. For John and the Pharisees and Scribes had much in common. Their 'way'—using the term as it is sometimes used in the New Testament, in the sense of a religion[1]—and John's was essentially the same. John came neither eating nor drinking—that is, practising ascetic fasting[2]—observing the rules regarding purification,[3] and teaching his disciples forms of prayer;[4] just as the Pharisees did,

who fasted oft, scrupulously attended to ceremonial washing, and said many prayers. The watchword of both parties was righteousness, and their professed aim to keep the law in all its parts. This agreement in principle and aim is what is referred to in the expression, "John came unto you in the way of righteousness."[5] The phrase is not employed to express the common-place truth that John was a righteous man. It means: "John came in your own way; the way you loved and professed to walk in, the good old way as you might think it, comparing it with mine which might appear to you a new way involving objectionable innovations: neglect of fasting and ablutions, Sabbath desecrations, and the like." The implied assertion is that they had no excuse for not believing in John such as they might plausibly allege for not believing in Himself. If they disbelieved in John it could not be on account of his principles or his practice; it must be solely on account of the earnestness with which he proclaimed his principles, and insisted on their being carried out in conduct.[6] [1] Vide Acts 9:2; Acts 19:9, &c.

[2] Mat 9:14; Mat 11:18.

[3] John 3:25.

[4] Luk 11:1.

[5] Mat 21:32.

[6] So Olshausen. Trench refers in general terms to his view, without naming him, and explains its import without saying whether he approves it or not. "An emphasis," he remarks, "has been sometimes laid" on the words, 'in the way of righteousness.'" This is a most unsatisfactory way of disposing of a view which is either a conceit, or the key to the interpretation of the parable. We have no doubt at all that it if the latter.

Yes! the earnestness of John was his one grand offence in the eyes of his contemporaries. He came in their own way of righteousness and that they approved of, but he came with such consuming earnestness that, zealots though they were, they were repelled and shocked. The man seemed out of his senses: possessed, so to speak, with a demoniac zeal for holiness. Such zeal was unwholesome, and also uncomfortable, for it attached supreme importance to moral law, while scrupulously attentive to ritual. It rebuked vice in kings; yea, even in Pharisaic zealots themselves. So they condemned the Baptist, and in doing so convicted themselves of insincerity; exhibited themselves playing the part of the son in the parable, saying to his father bidding him go work in the vineyard, "I go, sir," and after all not going. They said, "I go, sir," by agreeing with John's general aim, and busying themselves about righteousness. They "went not," by disapproving of John's spirit of downright moral earnestness and behaving as moral triflers, attending seriously to minutiae, neglecting the great matters of the law.

It would have been possible to represent the religionists of Judaea in this light, in parabolic form, without introducing a second son. The parable might have run, "A certain man had a son, and he said to him, 'Go, my son, work to-day in my vineyard;' and he said, 'I go, sir, and went not;'" and the interpretation: "John summoned you to walk in the way of legal piety, and ye affected great zeal for that way; nevertheless ye walked not in it." But the introduction of a second figure serves several good purposes. The picturesque interest of the parable is immensely increased by contrast. The character which it is the chief object of the speaker to describe is more exactly defined and estimated by comparison with another type, also faulty but not so criminal. Then by

this device it is made possible to present to view the whole behaviour of the Pharisaic class towards John, from the days of his appearing in the desert till now. They are exhibited not only as giving a hypocritical response to the Baptist's summons, but as persisting in their first mood when the course of events seemed to demand a change of mind. When the class represented by the publicans and the harlots had responded to John's call and repented, and when by general consent he had been accepted as a prophet, their inmost thoughts remained unaltered. For prudential reasons they might have changed their tone, and ceased to complain of the Baptist's extreme and unreasonable temper as an excuse for keeping aloof from his movement, but they had not changed their heart. Finally the use of comparison gave a natural occasion for the question by which the auditors were drawn unwittingly into self-condemnation. In these remarks we have virtually assumed that one of the two sons—the one who represents the degraded classes—is introduced as a mere foil to the other, that representing the religious leaders of the people. If this assumption be correct, then we should expect to find the latter first mentioned in the parable. The principal character naturally takes precedence of the foil; the main object of censure of the figure introduced merely to give point to the censure. For this reason we have without much hesitation adopted the order in which the two sons are named in the Vatican text. Our chief feeling indeed is one of surprise that there should have been any considerable variation in the manuscript readings of the passage. The difficulty is not so much to decide which is the more probable reading, as to account for the variations from the Vatican text which exist, that, viz. of Codex Bezae which puts the son who represents the publicans first, but retains the Vatican reading in the answer to Christ's question, "Which did the will of his father?" and that of the Textus Receptus, which puts the same son first, and gives the answer as that order naturally demands, the first.[1] Yet on reflection we see several things which might mislead copyists and tempt them to try their hand at 'rectifying' what we regard as the true text. In the first place it might easily be assumed that the father wanted only one son to go to work in the vineyard, in which case the first asked must refuse in order to supply a motive for asking the second Then the solemn manner in which the interpretation commences with a verily I say unto you, might be supposed to imply that Christ was not merely confirming a right answer, but correcting a wrong one given impudently in flagrant contradiction to common sense: the answer, viz. that the son who said, I go, sir, and went not, did the will of the father. This idea would account for the text of Codex Bezae, which places first the son who said, I go not, and afterwards went, yet puts into the mouth of the audience the reply to Christ's query who did the will of his father—the second. A third misleading element probably was the expression, go before you (προ■γουαι), applied by Christ to the publicans and harlots with reference to the Pharisees; which might be interpreted thoughtlessly as applying to the order in which the two sons were named in the parable. Finally, in a similar way the word afterwards (■στερον), in the clause ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterwards, might react upon the arrangement by misleading copyists into the notion that the representative of the class to whom these words refer must come second. When once under these influences the order had been fixed as in the Textus Receptus, the change of the answer given by the audience from the second into the first was almost a matter of course, as a rectification to bring the whole passage into harmony with itself.[2] [1] This reading is found in א CLX.

[2] Tregelles (on the printed text of the 'Greek Testament,' pp. 106-8) suggests as the meaning of ■ ■στερος in Codex Bezae, Mat 21:31, "the man who afterwards repented," which would reconcile the answer with this son occupying the first place in the parable. But this view was not likely to

occur to copyists or at least to satisfy them. The adoption of πρ■τος along with that order was ultimately certain. Vide on the whole passage the notes of Westcott and Hort.

While these considerations seem to explain the deviations from the Vatican text as errors not unnatural on the part of mechanical copyists, that text itself is recommended by all the probabilities of the case. It was natural that the Pharisees should be mentioned first, not merely as the more important class socially, but because they are the direct object of animadversion. It has indeed been suggested that the Vatican order had its origin in the fact, that the current interpretation of the parable made it refer to Jews and Gentiles.[1] But the suggestion is gratuitous, because the order in question is equally congruous to the narrower reference. Whether we apply the parable to Pharisees and publicans on the one hand, or to Jews and Gentiles on the other, it was most fitting that the son who answered insincerely should take precedence of the son who answered rudely. And that this was the actual order seems to be certified by the fact that it is in this order the parties are spoken of in the interpretation. "John came unto you," said Jesus to the men whose conduct He was criticising, "in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not, but the publicans and harlots believed him." It only remains to add, that the order which we defend corresponds to that in which the same parties are introduced in the parable of the Great Supper.

[1] So Trench.

If the introduction of a second son representing the lowest class of society as a foil to the first representing the higher orders added greatly to the literary and moral value of the parable, it also very manifestly enhanced immeasurably its offensiveness. To tell the proud self-satisfied zealots for righteousness that the moral scum of society was nearer the kingdom of God than they, was to offer them a mortal and unpardonable insult. Publicans and harlots! Why the phrase was proverbial to denote all that was vile, loathsome, and alien to the feelings of the pure, the respectable, and the patriotic. The analogous phrase in Corea, another Judaea in exclusiveness, is "pig-stickers and harlots."[1] In either case the words are so unsavoury as to be unfit to be spoken to polite ears. Barely to use the phrase was a sin against conventional good taste. But to speak of such people, and to add, "bad as they are in their moral rudeness and licentiousness, they are better than you, for they have repented, and that you, with not less need, have not done;" what a deadly offence, surely provocative of bitter resentment and murderous intents!

[1] Vide ’History of Corea, Ancient and Modern,’ p. 311, by the Rev. John Ross.

Even so, Jesus knew it; and yet He felt constrained to speak this parable and its interpretation. The truth must be spoken, however it might offend, because it concerned more than those to whom it was first addressed. For while mercilessly severe as towards them, this utterance is full of precious truth as regards the kingdom of God, and the depraved members of the human family. It tells us what we have already learned, but what we cannot hear too often, that the kingdom of God is open to all comers irrespective of their moral antecedents; that there is hope even for the most depraved; nay, that so far from their case being desperate, there are great possibilities of good in them. In telling us so much, it implicitly tells us more: viz. that the kingdom of God is not for Jews only but for mankind. For a kingdom that can go so low as publicans and harlots, must be prepared eventually to go to the ends of the earth in quest of citizens. In this parable, as in so many others, there is latent Christian universalism: a parable of judgment in its bearing towards the insincere and hollow-hearted, it is a parable of grace in. its bearing towards the sinful

everywhere, whom it makes welcome to all its privileges on the one condition of repentance.

01.24. Chapter 4. The Wicked Husbandmen

Chapter 4.

The Wicked Husbandmen Or, the Iniquity of Israel's Leaders Exposed and Their Doom Declared. In continuance of His prophetic discourse, Jesus addressed to His captious hearers another parable of judgment, saying:

Hear another parable: There was a man, a householder, who planted a vineyard, and set a hedge about it, and dug in it a winepress, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went abroad. And when the fruit season drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen to receive its fruits.[1] And the husbandmen took his servants and beat one, and killed another, and stoned (to death) another. Again he sent other servants more than the first,[2] and they did unto them likewise. But afterwards he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But the husbandmen, when they saw the son, said among themselves; This is the heir; come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance. And laying hold of him, they cast him out of the vineyard and slew him. When therefore the lord of the vineyard shall have come, what will he do to those husbandmen? They say unto Him, He will miserably destroy those miserable men,[3] The play of words in the Greek has been variously done into English by commentators. The attempt of the R. V. adopted above is good enough. and will let out the vineyard to other husbandmen who shall render him the fruits in their seasons.—Mat 21:33-41 (Mark 12:1-9; Luk 20:9-17).

[1] Or his, the α■το■ may refer either to the vineyard or to the owner.

[2] πλε■ονας might refer to quality as well as to number, and is so understood by some. Vide Exposition.

[3] Κακο■ς κακ■ς ■πολ■σει. The abrupt, imperative manner in which the parable is introduced betrays the emotion of the Speaker. He is aware what deep offence the words last spoken have given, and proceeds to reveal His knowledge by foreshadowing His own fate. He is aware also that insincerity never stands alone, that when pressed by moral earnestness to cease trifling and become real it resents the demand as an impertinence; and He proceeds with stern resolution, and at all hazards, to show the triflers the truculent side of their character. Yet again He regards the inquiry concerning His authority as a mere affectation, one more manifestation of the Pharisaic vice of insincerity; and He proceeds to show how little His interrogators and their predecessors cared for authority insisting in God's name on anything being done which they did not feel inclined to do. The parable rises to the sublime height of that sacred passion of prophetic indignation which animated the soul of Jesus during the days immediately preceding His crucifixion. It is by no means a pleasant parable to read, the tragic history to which it relates appearing too clearly through the parabolic veil. But the fault is not the Speaker's, it is that of those whose conduct and doom He describes. It may be a question whether the parabolic form is of much use in such a case; whether when it comes to speaking so plainly as is done here, it were not better to speak more plainly still, and to describe in undisguised, unfigurative terms the repulsive facts of the past,

and the not less repulsive events about to happen; as Stephen did in after days, whose speech before the Sanhedrim, as has been remarked, is but the commentary and development of the parable before us.[1] One unavoidable result of the adoption of the parabolic form is improbability in the fictitious narrative; for who ever heard of husbandmen, even in the worst governed countries, behaving as these vinedressers? The parable is true to Israel's history, but it is not true to natural probability; and for the reason stated in connection with the parable of the Great Supper, to which the same observation applies, viz. that the conduct animadverted on is itself thoroughly unnatural. But why speak in parables when by the nature of the case probability is excluded? Is it that men whose self-complacency will prevent them from seeing the drift of the story may be led on to condemn themselves? We can hardly lay much stress on that, especially when we consider that in the narratives of Mark and Luke the answer to the question, What shall be done to these men? is not ascribed to the audience.[2] Or is it that the Speaker shrinks from referring to Himself without disguise as the Son of God? There is more force in this consideration, for such delicacy and reserve was characteristic of the Son of man, and suitable to the state of humiliation. But perhaps the true explanation is that in this instance Jesus did not so much invent a new parable as use an old one whose words were familiar to Jewish ears, and its meaning generally understood—that, viz., contained in Isaiah's song of the vineyard.[3] At most, our parable is but an old theme worked up with new variations. Every one who heard it knew what the vineyard with its hedge, winepress, and tower signified, and who the vinedressers were, and who the servants sent for the fruits. These phrases belonged to the established religious dialect of Israel as much as the words pastor, flock, lambs of the flock, Zion, &c., do to ours, used by us all without consciousness that we are speaking in figures. In adopting this form of presentation, therefore, Jesus was not so much speaking in parables as using the recognised authority of written prophecy against His opponents, a most appropriate procedure when the question at issue respected His personal authority. It was saying in effect, Let me take Isaiah's familiar parable of the vineyard and expand it a little that I may show you how it stands with you as regards this matter of authority, that we may see whether ye have as much respect for the ascertained will of God as ye pretend, so that ye should be sure to submit to Me if only ye were satisfied that I was an accredited messenger of God.

[1] Sabatier, 'L'Apôtre Paul.'

[2] Mark 12:9; Luk 20:16.

[3] Isa 5:1. The parable, it will be observed, does more than show what amount of respect the parties to whom it was addressed had for prophetic authority. It shows that disregard for authority going counter to inclination had been a characteristic of Israel's leaders and representative men all through her history. This does not indeed appear from the mere structure of the parable, for the events described might all fall within the compass of a single fruit season, the servants being sent one after another to demand the produce due in one and the same year, for anything that is said to the contrary; though the number of messengers sent seems hardly compatible with the brief period of a single fruit season, and suggests as the more natural hypothesis a succession of seasons, when the demand for fruit was renewed as the time came round. But the self-evident interpretation of the parable as referring to the prophets under the servants, makes it certain that the intention of the Speaker was to characterise the behaviour of Israel throughout her long history towards God's messengers. And this broadening of the charge of iniquitous dealing so as to include the

misbehaviour of the past, was well fitted to serve Christ's purpose to bring home such a charge to the consciences of His hearers. It raised a strong presumption against these hypocritical inquirers after His authority to show that they belonged to a race whose habit it had all along been to treat authority with contempt, except when it chimed in with their own wishes. In the parable of the Children in the Market-place Jesus had spoken of this generation. He now speaks of all the generations of Israel's headmen as one generation morally, with rebellion in its blood, the original sin transmitted from sire to son. The fact as to the past representatives of this moral generation was indubitable, and the onus probandi lay on the present representatives to show that they were free from;the taint. The likelihood was all the other way, viz. that they would consummate the iniquity of their fathers by committing a greater offence of the kind denounced than any previously committed, and so, filling up the measure of their sin, serve themselves heir to their guilt, and bear its bitter penalty. That this would be the actual fact it is the aim of the latter part of the parable to declare, the reference being to the approaching crucifixion of Jesus, the Christ, and the Son of God, and the subsequent ruin which overtook the Jewish nation. A very noticeable feature in the parable is the dark picture it presents of the behaviour of the vinedressers towards the servants sent to demand the fruit. The most violent acts are selected as typical. One is flayed by stripes, another is slain, by the sword, a third is put to death by stoning[1]—the three instances forming an ascending series of atrocities. So in Matthew's version, and similarly in Mark and Luke, the conduct of the criminals advances from bad to worse, though the stages are not so distinctly marked.[2] In this description Christ's audience would not recognise their own likeness; for as yet they had been guilty of nothing so truculent, though they were on the point of committing even greater atrocities. They had not treated the 'servant' of their time, John the Baptist, in so barbarous a fashion. He had indeed been beheaded, but not by them. All they had done was to look on him as a madman, and so excuse themselves for disregarding his summons to repentance. The triflers had not found John's ministry sufficiently provoking or formidable to carry their opposition beyond depreciatory speech and cold neglect The implied allegation of the parable is that they would have gone greater lengths had they been forced to it by circumstances. The direct assertion is that their predecessors had gone greater lengths; had actually beaten, insulted, and killed their prophets. They had also committed offences of a less aggravated character. They too had manifested their hostility to the prophetic order under the minor forms of evil speaking, mockery, and ridicule. The drunkards of Ephraim mocked Isaiah's reiterated warnings and expostulations by comparing him to a teacher of children, with his everlasting tsav-la-tsav, tsav-la-tsav, kav-la-kav, kav-la-kav.[3] But they had often shown themselves capable of worse things than banter and blasphemy; even of down-right brutality, as in the case of Zechariah stoned to death in the court of the house of the Lord.[4] And acts of this more aggravated character are singled out for mention to show what the spirit of religious insincerity tends to and culminates in. This is what ultimately comes of that temper which begins by saying politely, "I go, sir," and not going. Press insincerity a little, and the politeness gives place to rudeness; press it still more, and rudeness in word gives place to rudeness in act; press it still further, and minor indignities, such as smiting with the hand, spitting, pulling off the hair, give place to more serious forms of violence, such as the inflicting of wounds with lethal weapons; press it yet further, and violence culminates in murder. Behold the polite but false-hearted gentleman, transformed by degrees into a ruffian. Who could have believed it? yet how natural it all is. "Is thy servant a dog?" asked Hazael of the prophet, quite sincerely possibly, and yet he did all the atrocious acts specified. History supplies ample material for illustrating the

strange transformation, and proving the humbling truth that refinement and savagery do not lie far apart in human nature. The most startling example is supplied in the case of the very men to whom this parable was addressed. In their ordinary relations with their fellow-men, the religious heads of Israel were, without doubt, courteous and gentle, pleasant, if not sincere, in speech, and duly attentive to all social proprieties. Yet these same men were responsible for all the indignities, iniquities, and brutalities of the crucifixion and its accompaniments.

[1] Vide Lightfoot, 'Horæ Hebraicæ.'

[2] Especially is this true of Luke, whose version is somewhat toned down throughout.

[3] Isa 28:10. Vide remarks on this passage at p. 23.

[4] 2Ch 24:21.

Another significant feature in the parable is the particularity with which the details connected with the construction of the vineyard are specified. For the general purpose of the story it might have been enough to have said, A certain householder planted a vineyard, and let it out to husbandmen. The introduction of the processes of hedging, digging a winepress, hewing out a place for a vat,[1] and building a tower, is not a mere affair of word-painting for picturesque effect; considering the circumstances and the mood of the Speaker, such merely literary play was very unlikely. The design is to signalise the contrast between the spirit of the owner and that of the men to whom the vineyard was entrusted. The owner has an eye to fruit; the details depicting the construction of the vineyard all point towards fruit as the chief end, and they are enumerated for no other reason. There is a hedge that the vines may not be spoiled by wild beasts; a press and vat that the grapes may be squeezed and the juice preserved; a tower that the ripe fruit may not be stolen. The didactic significance of these particulars is not, as in the original form of the allegory in Isaiah, that all has been done that could be done for the vineyard, so as to make the owner free from blame, but that all has been done with one object in view, viz. the production of fruit. In keeping with this emphasising of fruitfulness as the reason of the existence of the vineyard fully equipped for the purpose, is the reiterated persistent demand for the fruit when the season came round, as also the intimation of the owner's purpose, on conclusively ascertaining that no fruit was to be forthcoming, to entrust his vineyard to other husbandmen, who should render the fruits in their seasons.[2] On the other hand, what was the temper of the vinedressers? Was it that of men who wished to keep the fruit to themselves instead of giving it to the owner? No; but rather that of men who never thought of fruit, but only of the honour and privilege of being entrusted with the keeping of the vineyard. They were triflers—men utterly devoid of earnestness, and the practical purpose of the property committed to their charge they habitually forgot. The hedge and the press and the tower might as well not have been there. When the servants came for the fruit they were simply surprised. "Fruit, did you say? we have occupied the position of vinedressers, and duly drawn our wages; what more do you want?" Such was the actual fact in regard to the spiritual heads of Israel. They had been entrusted with a valuable institution; an elect nation furnished with good laws, and meant to be a holy nation, a people to God's praise. And speaking generally they had lost sight of the end of Israel's calling, and had made no use of the means provided for its attainment. They had occupied their position for their own glory; taken pay and done no work. They had neglected the vineyard, so that it brought forth no grapes, or at least only wild grapes. In a word, they had committed the sin to which privileged classes have ever been prone, that of

thinking only of privilege and forgetting duty. All through Israel's history her spiritual guides, priests, scribes, and elders, not to speak of her princes, had been saying, "I go, sir," without going, professing to keep a vineyard which they did not keep.[3]

[1] Mark speaks of a ■πολ■νιον, which signifies the vat for receiving the juice running into it from the press above.

[2] In the following similitude of the Rejected Stone, these 'others' are called a 'nation,' which seems to point to the rejection of Israel, and the call of the Gentiles; the nation being the true, spiritual Israel of God in every land. (So Olshausen.) Keim ('Jesu von Nazara,' iii. 119) thinks that a reference to the Gentiles is not in keeping with the scope of the parable which animadverts on the sin, not of Israel, but of her rulers; and that the 'others' are Messiah's faithful followers in Israel.

[3] The view above given excludes the idea that the vinedressers were engaged on the metayer system of paying rent with part of the produce. On our view there was no produce. The sin of the husbandmen was not dishonesty, but neglect

Nothing is more remarkable in the history of Israel than the constant co-existence within her pale of two entirely opposite classes of men—that of the moral triflers, too numerously represented among those exercising official influence, and that of the men of consuming zeal for righteousness, that is, the prophets. It is strange indeed that a people so prone to baseness should have so many noble men, who made it their duty to remonstrate with it for its baseness, and summon it to a better life. The parable accentuates this fact in order to show the enormity of Israel's guilt and the justness of her doom. In the versions of Matthew and Mark the multitude of servants sent is very expressly alluded to. After stating, by way of sample, how these were treated, the first Evangelist adds, "Again he sent other servants, more than the first." Mark in like manner uses the significant phrase, "and many others." Luke's version is defective at this point, making mention only of three, and giving no hints that more were sent. There can be no doubt as to which account is most in keeping with the didactic drift of the parable. It has been suggested that the expression πλε■ονας in Matthew refers not to number but to quality, and that the purpose is to set forth an enhancement of Israel's guilt, by exhibiting her as treating with indignity a higher order of prophets sent subsequently to those first spoken of. On this view the parable would specify three stages or degrees of criminality: first, evil treatment of a certain number of servants; second, similar treatment of servants of higher grade; third, the same misconduct towards one who was not a servant, but a son. Now, it is perfectly true that the word πλε■ονας might mean, not more in the numerical sense, but more respectable, of higher rank. Nor is the objection to this view insuperable that no such distinction as is implied existed between the earlier and later Old Testament prophets,[2] for the reference might be to John the Baptist,[1] or even to John and Jesus together; for the latter, though referred to as the son, might also be referred to as one of the prophets, and on a level with John, as in the earlier parable of the Children in the Marketplace. The contemporaries of Jesus sinned against Him as a prophet, as well as in His higher capacity as the Messiah, and they committed the one offence earlier than the other. But the interpretation in question, nevertheless, is not to be approved. It is uncertain at the best, and it is not required by the didactic drift of the parable. To aggravate Israel's guilt, it was enough to refer to the number of her prophets without insisting on any distinction between them as to rank or importance, which, though real, might not be apparent to the parties concerned; as indeed, if John, or even Jesus, be

referred to, it was not, for their contemporaries did not see in them greater prophets than Elijah, or Isaiah, or Jeremiah. They thought they paid them very great respect in putting them on a level with the great prophets of the olden time.

[1] So Goebel, who, like Bengel, Campbell, &c., takes πλε■ονας as an adjective of quality.

[2] So Morrison. The last point in the parable is the mission of the son, in connection with which the guilt of the vinedressers reaches its highest measure. In the narratives of Mark and Luke the value set upon this son by the owner, his father, is emphasised. Luke represents the father as calling him 'beloved'; Mark adds that he was an only son. These particulars are not added to enhance the criminality of the occupants of the vineyard, but to show the intensity of the owner's desire for fruit. He has found by many experiments that the tenants are utterly regardless of his claims, but before arriving at the conclusion that to bring them to their senses is hopeless, he resolves to try once more, in the most effective way possible, by the mission of his son. He is aware of the risk run; for the probability is that the men who have habitually treated his messengers with disrespect will not be restrained by any feeling of reverence from repeating their misbehaviour towards his son, and in case they do, his sorrow will be great for the loss of a beloved and only son. Nevertheless, there is a possibility, and he will run the risk, so anxious is he to bring them to reason. But the result, as was to be expected, is unhappy. The mission of the son only brings a new opportunity of outrage, and a temptation to more audacious and complete acts of rebellion than any hitherto perpetrated. Seeing this last messenger, and discovering somehow that he is not a servant but a son, the vinedressers say to each other, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and seize his inheritance;" and forthwith proceed to carry the nefarious scheme into effect, casting him out of the vineyard as a place he had no right to enter, and putting him ruthlessly to death.[1] Their calculation is that they will be no longer troubled with messages about fruit; they will now enjoy their position without molestation, and be practically not tenants, but landlords. Their presumption is based upon long experience of impunity in connection with their habitual insubordination. They make the natural and common mistake of imagining that because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily it will never be executed at all; and so their heart is fully set in them to do evil.[2] But the truth is that they have only exhausted the patience of their employer, and his resources for bringing them to repentance, and filled up the measure of their iniquity by committing an unpardonable offence; and in accordance with the laws by which the moral order of the world is regulated, condign punishment must speedily overtake them. This, accordingly, is what is announced in the closing sentence of the parable, in which it is declared that he who has sent so many messengers will at length come himself, and inflict on the criminals a punishment closely answering to their offence—consisting in their ejection from the vineyard which they thought to make their own, and their utter destruction.

[1] In Mark the act of murder precedes the casting out.

[2] Ecc 8:11. The representation is in accordance with the facts of Israel's subsequent history, however improbable it may appear in the parable. Certainly it does strike one as strange that the owner of a vineyard should act as represented—coming to judge and visit with doom unfaithful servants, acts which seem appropriate not to a landowner, but to a king. On this account this part of the parable has been regarded as an allegorising addition by the evangelists.[1] But if we are to be guided by such considerations then the authenticity of the whole parable must be called in

question. For everything in it is improbable: the behaviour of the vinedressers, the long patience of the owner under a series of unparalleled outrages, not less than the ultimate judicial rigour with which the offenders are visited by the same person, he being merely a landowner and not a king. Throughout, the natural probabilities of the story are sacrificed to the requirements of its moral interpretation.

[1] So Weiss, 'Das Markus-Evangelium.' The account given in the parable of the mission of the son has an important bearing on two topics, viz. the personal self-consciousness of Christ, and the knowledge possessed by the Jews of His peculiar claims. The son is described as the only and well-beloved son of his father, and it is natural to suppose that as that son represents the Speaker, He claims for Himself all that he ascribes to the former. In that case this text must be associated with the remarkable one in the eleventh chapter of Matthew as vindicating for Jesus a unique position in relation to God. The vinedressers are represented as knowing the son and heir. Is it implied that the men to whom the parable is addressed knew the Speaker to be the Christ, the Son of the living God? In that case Jesus virtually charges them with being on the point of putting to death one whom they admitted to be Divine, or at least invested with Messianic dignity. But probably all that is strictly implied is that they might have known who the Speaker was, and would have known had their hearts been pure. In asking Him as to His authority they affected not to know who He was, and perhaps it was not a mere affectation, for prejudice and passion had blinded their eyes. But they were not on that account without blame, for they had resisted evidence and crushed down rising conviction. Had they been sincere and single-minded, their hearts would have yielded to the force of truth, and hailed Jesus as their king. They were not, therefore, sinning in ignorance simply against the Son of man, they were sinning against light, and dangerously near the mortal sin of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. Hence the severity of tone in the sentences appended to our parable concerning the Rejected Stone, which might be regarded as forming another parable. Availing Himself of a well-known text in a psalm, Jesus happily describes His own fortunes and those of His hearers in terms borrowed from the art of house-building. The men who have just been compared to vinedressers now become builders, and the heir cast out of the vineyard and murdered is now a stone thrown aside as useless. But the new figure enables the Speaker to give a glimpse of what is to happen to Himself after evil men have wrought their worst. The text from the psalm declares that the stone which the builders refused is to become the head of the corner. The reference is to despised Israel, restored to her former glory, by God's grace, a marvel to all beholders. But Jesus, appropriating the prophecy to Himself, thereby intimates to His hearers that in killing Him they will not be done with Him: He will be raised to a place of power, an object of admiration to friends, a source of dismay to foes. Woe, then to the builders who had scornfully rejected Him. Then their case would not be that of men stumbling against a stone, as many had done in ignorance, sinning against the Son of man to their hurt and loss, but not unpardonably. It would be that of men on whom a great stone falls, descending in judgment to grind them to powder.

01.25. Chapter 5. The Wedding-Feast and the Wedding-Robe

Chapter 5.

The Wedding-Feast and the Wedding-Robe Or, the Doom of Despisers and Abusers of Grace.

Jesus, we are told by the Evangelist, spake again to the people in parables, saying: The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a certain king who made a marriage feast for his son. And he sent forth his servants to call the called[1] to the feast, and they would not come. Again he sent forth other servants, saying. Tell the invited: Behold, I have made ready my dinner,[2] my oxen and my fed beasts are slain, and all things are ready, come to the feast. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his merchandise; and the rest laid hold on his servants, and entreated them shamefully, and killed them. But the king was wroth,[3] and he sent his armies[4] and destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding[5] is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Go ye therefore unto the thoroughfares,[6] and as many as ye shall find bid to the marriage feast.—And those servants going out into the roads, gathered together all as many[7] as they found, both bad and good; and the wedding chamber[8] was Jilted with guests. But when the king came in to behold the guests he saw there a man not clad with a wedding garment. And he saith unto him, Friend, how earnest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then the king said to the ministers,[9] Bind him hand and foot and cast him out into the outer darkness; there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few chosen.—St. Mat 22:1-14.

[1] καλ■σαι το■ς κεκλημ■νους.

[2] ■ριστον, the midday meal, "with which the series of marriage festivities would begin."—Meyer.

[3] The ■κο■σας of the T. R. is omitted in the best MSS.

[4] Some texts have the singular τ■ στρ■τευμα, a reading probably due to a feeling that armies were not needed for such an expedition, or to the knowledge that the Romans used only one army against Jerusalem. So Fritsche. There is a certain tone of exaggeration in the expression, or perhaps we should rather say vagueness and inexactitude.

[5] ■ γ■μος, the plural in Mat 22:2 refers to the festivities connected with the wedding.

[6] τ■ς διεξ■δους τ■ν ■δ■ν, literally the outlets of the ways, exitus viarum, Vulg. The word δι■ξοδος occurs only once in the N. T., and it is impossible to determine with certainty what is meant by the expression in the text. It may either signify the roads leading out from the town into the country, or the crossings of such, or the streets leading into open places and squares in the town. The general idea is: places where men an likely to be found, whether in town or in country.

[7] ■σους. Westcott and Hort adopt the reading ο■ς.

[8] ■ νυμφ■ν, the reading of S. B. L.; ■ γ■μος in T. R.

[9] διακ■νοις. The manner in which this parable is introduced does not imply any strict view as to the connection with what goes before, and it is not likely to have come in just at this point. It may be too much to say that it occupies an impossible position;[1] but it certainly does seem to interrupt the course of the history as indicated in the narratives of. the other Synoptical Evangelists. From internal evidence, however, it is manifest that the parable belongs to the last days of our Lord's life, and is to be regarded as one of the memorable utterances of the Passion week.[2] In its first part it has a close affinity with the preceding parable of the vinedressers, presenting a gloomy picture of similar misconduct visited with similar doom. That parable exposes Israel's neglect of covenanted duty; this her contempt of God's grace. The two are mutually complementary, and present together a full view of Israel's sin. The parable now to be considered bears a still more obvious resemblance to one already studied under the second division, that of the Great Supper in the fourteenth chapter of Luke. The common features are so numerous and striking as to have led many to regard the two as one parable differently reported by the first and third Evangelists.[3] The opinion is one which can hardly fail to suggest itself, and yet it is based on a very superficial, outward view of the narratives. Without doubt the theme is one and the same, but it is a theme twice handled by the same artist, and for diverse purposes. If the essence or soul of a parable lie in its didactic drift, then these two parables are broadly distinct, while in several circumstances or features strikingly like. The earlier of the two is a parable of grace, having for its aim to show what sort of men care for and shall enjoy the blessings of the kingdom; the later is a parable of judgment, having for its aim to show the doom of those who in any way despise, abuse, or undervalue these blessings. There is indeed both grace and judgment in each parable, but in very different proportions, and with differently-placed emphasis. The host in the earlier parable declares that the first invited shall not taste of his feast; that is the amount of the judicial element, and even this comes in not so much as a threatening of punishment, but rather as an indirect intimation that they are not the kind of men for whom the joys of the kingdom are designed, these being reserved for the hungry. In the later parable the host shows his grace by inviting and re-inviting to his feast, and even humbling himself to extol the entertainment in prospect with a view to excite desire; but all this takes place only to enhance the culpability of those who after all refuse to come, and to justify the severity with which they are visited.

[1] So Keim.

[2] Keim admits that the materials out of which the parable is constructed (by the Evangelist) suit that late period.

[3] This opinion is held, among others, by Calvin and Maldonatus. The difference just indicated in the didactic drift of the two parables explains at once their resemblances and their points of contrast. Common to both are a feast, a refusal from the first invited, and a subsequent invitation to a lower class. These resemblances arise out of the fact that the two parables deal in different ways and to different intents with the grace of the kingdom; the one showing who are its chosen objects, the other the danger of despising it. A feast is a most appropriate emblem of the kingdom as a kingdom of grace, likely to be employed as often as there was occasion to speak of that topic. The refusal of the first invited shows the tendency of preoccupation to produce indifference, and supplies a motive for inviting persons not at first contemplated as guests, though more likely from their circumstances to welcome the benefit put within their reach. That final invitation thus brought about, for the first time brings into light the true genius of grace, accrediting it with a benignant will

to make its blessings free to all, and if possible freest to those who most urgently need them. On the other hand, the parables differ in these respects, that in the earlier the feast is given by a private individual, in the later by a king to his subjects, and on a very important occasion—the marriage of his son; in the one the invitation to the first invited is not repeated after it has been refused, in the other it is repeated with such descriptive accompaniments as are fitted to awaken desire; in the one the first invited are simply indifferent, in the other they not only show indifference, but some of them at least proceed to deeds of violence, and these are visited with violent penalties. All these variations are accounted for by the simple consideration that the later parable is a parable of judgment. The feast is one given by a king on a solemn occasion, because such a feast gives scope for a kind of offences and of punishments which could have no place in connection with a private feast. It is a feast possessing political significance, presence at which is a mark of loyalty, absence from which indicates a spirit of disaffection which is sure to manifest itself in deeds of rebellion, making vengeance inevitable. The invitation is repeated to make the king's patience conspicuous, to bring more fully into the light the latent hostility of his subjects, and to exhibit their persistent refusal as utterly inexcusable. Acts of violence are ascribed to some of the invited because such enormities were the actual reply of Israel's representatives to God's overtures of love, and the mention of them prepares the hearer for sympathising with the doom pronounced against them. That doom is inexorably severe, but it is only an exact anticipation of the fact, and a parable setting forth the judgment of Heaven on contempt of grace could not, if it aimed at adequate statement, say less. In all these respects the variations are only such as we should expect from any expert in the use of the parabolic style. And the method of variation is also what we should expect such an one to employ in such a case; that is, the adaptation of an old theme to a new case, rather than the invention of an entirely new theme. The common theme forms the link of connection between two parables, both of which relate to grace; the variations in the later form from the earlier point it out as a parable setting forth the judgment of grace despised. What is common gives emphasis to what is peculiar, and bids us mark what it is that is judged. Why should we hesitate to ascribe such skilful variation for so important a purpose to the Great Master rather than to the Evangelist? Why refuse to Christ the use of a method which seems not to have been unknown even to the Rabbis?[1]

[1] Wünsche cites no less than three parables from the Talmud more or less like the one we are considering. The first is of a king who asks guests to a feast, not telling them when it was to be, but bidding them prepare for it by bathing, washing their garments, &c. Those anxious to be present watch at the door of the palace for the symptoms of the feast approaching; the easy-minded go about their business and are taken by surprise, and come in every-day attire to be rejected. The moral is—Watch, for ye know not the day of death. The second is of a king who invited to a feast and bade the guests bring each a seat. The guests brought all sorts of things—carpets, stools, pieces of wood, &c. The king ordered that each should sit on what he had brought. Those who brought poor seats complained: Were these seats for a palace? The king replied, they had themselves to blame. Moral—we shall fare as we deserve. The third is of a king who distributed costly robes among his servants; the wise folded them up and took care of them, the foolish wore them. The garments were demanded back; the wise render up their trust with approbation; the foolish had to send the garments to the washing, and were put in prison. The garment is the soul given to man by God, pure, and to be rendered back pure. 'Neue Beiträge zur Erlauterung der Evangelien aus Talmud und Midrasch,' p. 252. For the first of these parables vide also Meuschen,

'Nov. Test, ex Talmud illustratum.'

One point in the variation of the later from the earlier parable we have purposely overlooked in the foregoing remarks; that, viz., relating to the guest without a wedding robe. In Luke's parable there is nothing but welcome for the poor without exception, while in Matthew's, judicial rigour is exercised even on one of them who is found unsuitably attired. At this point the difference between the two parables in didactic scope becomes specially apparent. We feel that such a feature would altogether mar the beauty of the former, whose aim throughout, and in every phrase, is to emphasise the graciousness of the kingdom. In the case of the latter, on the other hand, the wedding-robe scene, however unwelcome, is in keeping with the general tenor of the story. It, too, is a story of grace indeed, but of grace unworthily met, and manifesting itself in judicial severity against those who commit the wrong. And just because it is a parable of judgment, there must be judgment whenever it is called for. There must be no partiality. If the first invited are to be punished because they sin against grace in one way, the guests invited in the second place must be punished if they sin against grace in another way. The relevancy of the wedding-robe scene in a parable of judgment vindicating grace against injury can be legitimately denied only if it be impossible for the recipients of grace to commit any offence against it, which, as we shall see, is far enough from being the case. The lesson taught in the second scene is thoroughly germane to the lesson taught in the first. The first shows the judgment of those who despise and reject grace, the second the judgment of those who receive it, but in a disrespectful manner. The only question that can reasonably be raised is whether it is likely that Christ would combine the two lessons in one parable, and speak them at the same time and to the same audience. That is a question affecting the literary rather than the doctrinal character of the parable. It may plausibly be alleged that literary tact would dictate that only one of these lessons should be taught at one time, so as to insure that it should receive due attention; and as no such want of tact may be ascribed to Christ, it may hence be inferred that the combination is due to the Evangelist: another instance of Matthew's habit of joining together sayings of kindred doctrinal import. If such were the case, we should have to admit that the joining has been very well done. But it is so well done, the dovetailing is so complete, and the parable is so manifestly a doctrinal unity, that we are constrained to doubt the alleged want of tact, and the inference founded on it. Why should not Christ have joined these two lessons together? Each gives point to the other, rather than weakens its force. The second, taken along with the first, says, that so determined is God that His grace shall not be scorned, that even those who receive it shall be punished for disrespect. The first, taken along with the second, says, if God be so severe towards those who despise His grace, let those who receive it, but not with due reverence, beware. The two together vindicate the Divine impartiality, and form a complete doctrine on the subject to which they relate. With these preliminary observations we proceed to consider in detail the two parts of the parable in which these distinct lessons are taught.

I. The judgment of grace despised set forth in the first scene (Mat 22:1-9) The emblem selected to represent the grace of the Kingdom is a fit one. It is that of a marriage-feast. The term γ■μους might indeed mean any great feast resembling a wed ding-feast in magnitude and importance; as, for example, a feast celebrating the event of an heir to an estate arriving at his majority, or of a king delivering his kingdom into the hands of his son.[1] But the proper sense of the word is a marriage feast, and we can have the less hesitation in ascribing to it this meaning here, that the

same emblem was employed by Jesus at other times to denote the kingdom of heaven, especially on the memorable occasion when He was interrogated concerning the neglect of fasting by His disciples. No fitter emblem could be found at once to exhibit in brightest lustre the benignity of God, and to test the spirit of men. It suggests the most intimate union possible between the Head of the Church and the members, that of wedlock; for the guests are also the Bride. And if men refuse an invitation to a marriage-feast, what favour are they likely to accept?—what more certain indication of ill-will can there be than such refusal?

[1] In Esther (Est 9:22) the word γ■μοι is used for the feast by which the Jews commemorated their deliverance from the plot of Haman. Kuinoel thinks the occasion referred to in the text is that of the delivery of the kingdom into the hands of the son. Meyer, on the other hand, contends that γ■μοι is never used for anything else than a marriage-feast.

Those who are invited to the wedding-feast are represented as persons already invited. The servants are sent forth to call το■ς κεκλημ■νους. This term connects the New Testament history of Israel with that of the Old Testament, and denotes the position in which the chosen race were placed by the ministry of the prophets. For the prophets performed a double function. They were on the one hand servants of moral law, demanding in God's name the fruit of genuine righteousness; and on the other servants of the promise or purpose of grace, preaching under various forms a Messianic Hope, an ideal bliss to come in the end of the days. Through this eloquent ministry of the Better Hope the people of Israel were called to participation in the Messianic wedding-feast. But they were merely called; while the fulfilment of Messianic prophecy tarried, it could not be ascertained how the offered privilege would be received. Their attitude towards the prophetic ministry of righteousness could be, and was, ascertained at once. Throughout her whole history the chosen people showed plainly that the Divine demand for righteousness was one she did not mean to comply with; and the damning verdict of the record is endorsed in the preceding parable of the Vinedressers. But all the while she might flatter herself that she was welcoming the Messianic Hope, and looking with eager expectancy for the advent of the era when all the glowing ideals of the prophets should be realised. Whether that was so indeed could only be tested when the era of fulfilment arrived, and the parable before us describes the result of the experiment. The test is supposed to apply not merely to the generation who witnessed the fulfilment, but to all the generations going before to whom the Messianic prophecies had been addressed. Here, as in the last parable, the moral solidarity of all the generations of Israel is recognised, and the spirit of the past is judged from the behaviour of the present. It is assumed that former generations would have acted as the one then living, if placed in the same circumstances. Therefore the servants are represented as calling the called, though the called of the prophetic era were distinct from the called of the era of fulfilment. The 'servants' are Jesus and His disciples. The call covers the period of Christ's personal ministry, and its substance is—The kingdom of heaven in all the fulness of grace is here; come, and participate in its joys. The Baptist we do not include among the servants, because he was a minister of law rather than of grace; like all the prophets doubtless performing a function in relation to the Messianic Hope, still belonging inspirit and tendency to the era of expectation rather than to the era of fulfilment. He had his place in the last parable as one of the many messengers whom God sent to demand fruit; but he has no place in this, except as one of those through whom the first preparatory call was addressed to Israel. On the other hand, we have no hesitation in including Jesus among the servants who are

sent forth to invite the guests to the feast, long expected, now at hand, Though He be the son whose marriage is about to be celebrated, yet is He also a servant, the chief of the callers to the feast. There may be an incongruity in this union of two such opposite characters in the same person, but it is not greater than that resulting from the same parties being at once bride and guests. However incongruous, both combinations are matters of fact; nor do they mar the propriety of the parabolic narrative, for neither is allowed to appear therein. So far as the parable is concerned, the son and the servant are distinct, as are also the bride and the guests, though in reality the two in either case are one. The result of the invitation to the feast, briefly told, is that the invited are not inclined to come. In these mild, simple terms does Jesus describe the reception He had met with at the hands of His countrymen, as the Herald of the kingdom of grace. The account stands in striking contrast with the view presented in the last parable of the reception given to the last messenger of the owner of the vineyard, his son and heir. How is this contrast to be explained? Partly by the consideration that the two parables contemplate the history of Israel from different positions, the one looking on it from the Old Testament view point, and the other from the New. In the one case, what is done to the last messenger forms the climax of a long series of iniquities, and is therefore drawn in as dark colours as possible, and made the ground of Israel's doom. In the other the New Testament history of Israel ceases to be the background and comes into the foreground, and so resolves itself into several distinct scenes, in which, in accordance with fact, she gets a second chance after her misbehaviour towards the 'son' of the former parable, before being visited with her final doom. This second chance coincides with the ministry of the apostles, after Christ's death and final departure from the earth. And as Israel was to get this second chance, a signal proof of the patience of God, and clearing His final severity of all appearance of undue rigour, it was fitting that her misbehaviour towards the first callers should be described in mitigated terms, to leave room, as it were, for a further day of grace. Had the first callers in this parable been treated as the heir was treated in the last, the proper sequel had been not a second invitation, but judgment.[1] But this explanation does not go to the root of the matter. It amounts to this, that the structure of the parable required the facts as to the reception given to the first callers to be understated, implying of course that the facts were worse than represented. The true key to the solution of the difficulty is to bear in mind the different capacities in which Jesus acts in the two parables. In the Vinedressers He, like all His predecessors, is a prophet of moral law, demanding in God's name true righteousness. In the Wedding Feast He is a minister of grace preaching the gospel of the kingdom. Now His reception in these two 'distinct capacities was respectively as represented. It was as a prophet of duty that He was maltreated by His countrymen. He provoked them to wrath by His exposure of their sham sanctities in punctilious performance of ritual ablutions, fastings, prayers, tithe-paying, &c., accompanied by scandalous neglect of the great matters of the law. The key to the crucifixion is utterances by the Prophet of Nazareth such as those collected together in the great antipharisaic discourse in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew. On the other hand, the reception given to Jesus as the Minister of grace was just that indicated in our parable. He invited His countrymen to a great feast and they would not come. They did not hate Him or visit Him with violence for His invitations. They simply were not attracted by what He offered, and turned heedless away, as from an idle dreamer. At times the boon He held up to view for a moment appeared tempting,—a kingdom and a kingship of this world, real and worth having; but the deluded soon discovered that they were mistaken, to their disappointment and disgust. In this indifference towards the Minister of grace the people of Israel

were far less culpable than in their hostility to the Prophet of law. For righteousness was a thing familiar to them. It was their own watchword and 'way.' But the kingdom of heaven, as Jesus presented it, was a new phenomenon, strange puzzling even to honest minds, even to the Baptist himself. Shyness, doubt, misunderstanding for a time were pardonable, and were so regarded by Jesus. He did not denounce those who stood in doubt of this new movement He only said, "Blessed is he that is not offended in Me." The parable before us is in full sympathy with that considerate, gentle utterance. Of those to whom the Author of the parable preached the gospel of the kingdom it is said simply they were not willing to come. And their unwillingness is, by implication, treated as a pardonable misunderstanding when the king is represented as sending forth other servants to renew the invitations, with instructions to appraise the feast, so as to awaken desire. It is a notable instance of the 'sweet reasonableness' of Christ, as well as a faithful reflection of the patience of God.

[1] The above is, in effect, Goebel's view. The 'other servants,' who receive this new commission, are of course the apostles, whom Jesus had chosen to carry on His work after He left the world, and of whose agency He could not but think much at this time when His own end was so near. The kingdom of heaven was not to disappear when He personally left the world; it would go on its course in spite of all that men might do to Himself, not to say in consequence thereof, and the preaching of His companions whom He had sought to embue with His spirit, would give Israel another opportunity of receiving thankfully the things freely bestowed by God. Very notable, in connection with the mission of the apostles, is the special direction given to the second set of 'callers': "Say to those invited, 'Behold, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and fed beasts slain, and all things ready; come to the feast.'" The second callers' are not merely to invite to, they are to commend the feast, with a view to create desire. The fact suggests a contrast between the ministry of Christ and that of His apostles. The apostles differed from their Master in two respects. They were more aggressive or urgent in their manner of preaching, and they preached a more developed gospel. Jesus went forth into the world and said quietly The kingdom is come. Nor did He explain fully or elaborately wherein the kingdom consisted, and what blessings it brought; at most He conveyed only hints of these by aphorism or parable, or by kind words and deeds to sinful and sorrowful men. He did not strive, or cry, nor did any one hear His voice in the streets. He did not aim at teaching the multitude the mysteries of the kingdom, but spoke these into the ear of a select few. These privileged ones, on the other hand, when the time arrived for commencing their apostolic career, did not appear before the world as imitators of their Master. They did not affect His calm, lofty tone, they did not speak in parables, they did not select from the crowd- a band of disciples to be taught an esoteric doctrine. They became street preachers in temper and style, they spoke from the house-top, they addressed the crowd, they proclaimed a more explicit, definite, common-place gospel of forgiveness and salvation from wrath, talked as it were of oxen and fed beasts and the other accompaniments of a feast, with an eloquence less dignified but more fitted to impress the million with a sense of the riches of Divine grace.[1]

[1] Beyond this general idea no significance is to be attached to the ταμοι and σιτιστ■. Theophylact makes the ταμοι signify the Old Testament, and the σιτιστ■ the New. The interpretation in the latter case he justifies by the consideration that loaves are offered on the altar which are properly failed σιτιστ■, as made from wheat. And what was to be the result of this new aggressive declamatory ministry? Surely it will be more satisfactory than that of the first servants,

to which all but a few simple folks turned a deaf ear? Alas, no! The result of this second effort was to be worse rather than better. The majority were to imitate the indifference of their predecessors, and the rest were to be guilty of insolence and violence towards the King’s messengers. Such is the picture presented in the words of our parable. "They went away, taking no heed; one to his own field, another to his merchandise, and the rest laid hold of his servants, and treated them shamefully and killed them." It is in a few words a correct description of the treatment received by the apostles at the hands of the Jews. The bulk of the people, preoccupied with secular affairs, finding their satisfaction in possessions, or in the pursuit of gain,[1] took no interest in the spiritual goods which the preachers of the gospel brought within their reach. The heads of the nation, whom we may assume to be represented by ’the others’ in the parable, persecuted the missionaries of the new religion, fearing evil consequences from its progress to the established civil and religious order. So we learn from the familiar narratives of the Acts of the Apostles. That Christ should predict so distinctly beforehand what was to happen cannot appear surprising, as it scarcely needed prophetic prescience to enable Him to do so. He had but to reason from what happened to the Master to what would happen to disciples. For though it be true that the indignities which He suffered at the hands of men came upon Him rather as a prophet of law than as a minister of grace, yet His experience contained ominous indications of the antagonism which might be provoked even by the bringer of good tidings when he involuntarily offended against the prejudices of his hearers. How significant in this connection the incidents in the synagogue of Nazareth recorded by the Evangelist Luke.[2] Jesus discourses on the acceptable year of the Lord in ’words of grace’ which excite general admiration; yet in a few minutes after His life is endangered by one or two historical references, which wound the self-love of villagers animated by the bigoted exclusive spirit of their race. That sudden ebullition of patriotic wrath was prophetic of the fate which awaited the heralds of the new era of grace at the hands of Jewish pride. For, however acceptable the good tidings might be in themselves, it would be impossible to publish them without in some way giving offence. And as time went on offences would increase. If the Nazarenes persecuted their fellow-townsman, the Jewish people were sure to persecute more bitterly His followers while engaged in their apostolic calling, and that on account precisely of those characteristics by which their ministry was distinguished from His; its greater aggressiveness, and its more explicit style of announcement. More energetic action would provoke more violent reaction, and a more developed and intelligible gospel would provoke more emphatic contradiction. When the gospel of the kingdom, set forth in enigmatic aphorisms, took the form of a gospel of salvation by a crucified man, offences would not be wanting! It was a matter of course, therefore, that the second class of servants should be insulted, assaulted, imprisoned, and even put in danger of their lives. And it was natural that, in a parable setting forth the judgment of Israel for her contempt of grace, allusion should be made to these prospective experiences to make it clear that, on every ground, the guilty nation was ripe for doom. For a people not only persistently negligent of duty, and practising habitual violence against those who reminded it of its obligations, but equally insensible to God’s overtures of mercy, and equally insolent towards the ministers of reconciliation, what could be hoped? Even Paul, patriot though he was, capable of wishing himself accursed for his countrymen’s sake, was forced to despair, and to describe Israel as a people which despising the riches of God’s grace, forbearance, and long-suffering, and misunderstanding their meaning with a hardened, impenitent heart, treasured up for itself wrath in the day of wrath and of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.[3]

[1] The words τ■ς τ■ν ■δι■ν suggest the idea of landed property.

[2] Luk 4:16

[3] Rom 2:4-5. This wrath the parable proceeds to describe in these terms: "But the king was angry; and sending his armies, he destroyed those murderers and burned their city."[1] The words foreshadow the ruin of the Jewish state and the holy city, a generation later, by the might of imperial Rome, employed by Providence to punish Israel for her sins. It is startling to find so distinct an anticipation of the event in a parable spoken so long beforehand. But Christ says here only what he repeated with equal distinctness in the discourse on the last things in a subsequent chapter of the same Gospel;[2] even as in the description of the fate awaiting the apostles He but briefly hints what, on various occasions, He had already said to His disciples by way of forewarning,[3] and was to say again in the farewell discourse.[4]

[1] Mat 22:7.

[2] Mat 24:1-51.

[3] Mat 10:1-42; Mat 16:1-28.

[4] John 16:1-33. The concluding sentence of the first part of the parable intimates the king’s resolve to transfer his favour from those who had been guilty of such grievous misconduct to such as were more likely to value them. This purpose, while an act of grace towards those next to be called, is an act of judgment towards the first invited. It is the natural sequel of the dread visitation spoken of just before. Israel, ruined as a nation, is at the same time to be cast off as a people; as no longer worthy of the prerogatives and privileges of the elect race. Of these indeed she had never been worthy, but in view of her contempt of God’s grace, and judicial blindness in regard to her spiritual opportunities, her demerit might be spoken of with an emphasis that in other circumstances might appear excessive. By such behaviour as the parable depicts, the Jewish people, as Paul declared in the synagogue of Antioch, judged themselves unworthy of eternal life, and justified the transference of despised privilege to the Gentiles.[1] Of this transference our parable speaks in very general terms. "Go ye," says the king to his servants, "to the outlets of the ways, and call to the marriage feast whomsoever ye find." We have already alluded to the vagueness of the expression employed to denote the quarters where the new guests are to be found. Much difference of opinion prevails as to its meaning, and many interpreters express their views in a tone of dogmatism which is altogether unwarrantable. Some are sure that the reference is to the streets or squares of a city,[2] others pronounce with great confidence in favour of the country roads, or crossings of the highways.[3] One asserts that the city in which the new guests are to be sought is the same as that which is to be burned;[4] another informs us that it is another city, that of the king; "not Jerusalem, but God’s world."[5] There is nothing in the text to justify such confidence, or to help us to a certain conclusion. The expression is vague; perhaps it is purposely so; it may have been selected to embrace in its scope the localities visited in the two missions to the poor in Luke’s parable—the streets and lanes, and likewise the highways and hedges. The single mission to the poor in Matthew’s parable is another point in which it differs from Luke’s. Both have a double mission; but Matthew’s is to the first called, while Luke’s is to those called in the second place. This difference is to be accounted for in the same way as all the rest; viz. by the consideration that the parable before us is a parable of judgment. Its aim is not to set forth with

distinctness and emphasis God's purpose of grace to the outlying peoples, but to justify the withdrawal of His grace from the chosen race. Therefore the calling of those without is referred to only in indefinite terms: even as in the close of the parable of the Vinedressers, where it is said that the kingdom of God should be taken from Israel, and given to a nation (■θνει) yielding the fruits thereof.[6] We shall best reflect the spirit of the parable by allowing the terms to remain indefinite, and not binding them down to any particular reference. If the Speaker had meant to fix the reference down either to town or country, to the Jewish or the Gentile world, He could easily have done so, as in the parable of the Supper, where one set of phrases are employed clearly referring to the town, and then another as clearly referring to the country. Good, or at least plausible, arguments have been advanced by respectable authorities on both sides of the question, and that fact suggests that the wisest course may be to be on both sides. The phrase, the outlets of the ways, has a suggestive vagueness about it which stimulates the imagination, and craves room and scope and largeness of interpretation, so that it may embrace at once the outcasts of Israel and the Pagans. The king's dining-hall was ample, and the servants were to bring as many as they could find, and there are plenty of servants about a king's palace to search for guests in all directions, in town or country. This, accordingly, the servants seem to have done; for it is written that they went out into the ways (■δο■ς), the peculiar expression in their directions not being repeated in the record of the execution.[7]

[1] Acts 13:46.

[2] Kypke, Kuinoel, Trench, &c.

[3] Fritsche after Fischer, De Wette, Meyer, Goebel.

[4] Trench.

[5] Alford.

[6] Mat 21:43.

[7] Farrar ('Life of Christ') finds in this a delicate "reference to the imperfect work of human, agents," the words within inverted commas being quoted from 'Lightfoot on Revision,' p. 68. We would rather find in the change of expression a tacit admission that the phrase first used, while suitable enough in the mouth of the king giving general instructions, was too vague to be used with propriety in describing what was actually done.

II. The judgment of grace abused The tenth verse appropriately introduces the new tableau of the guest without a wedding-robe. That a fresh start in the narration, with a distinct didactic aim, is being made is apparent from the simple fact that the messengers who go out to collect guests from the highways are spoken of as those servants (ο■ δο■λοι ■κε■νοι). If the verse had been merely the conclusion of the preceding narrative, the servants would have been the appropriate expression.[1] But that the story is about to take a new turn is chiefly indicated by the significant expression employed to characterise the guests gathered together by this mission. Those servants, we read, going forth, collected together all whom they found, both bad and good. We must not, with Bengel, minimise the force of the phrase, as if it were a proverbial expression signifying 'indiscriminately.' It is intended to emphasise the fact that the invitation was indiscriminate with special reference to the moral character or reputation of the parties, and that

with an obvious regard to the scene which follows in the wedding-chamber. The terms applied to the guests are all the more significant when compared with those employed in the corresponding parable in Luke. There what is accentuated is the abject poverty of the guests. It is the children of misery and want that are invited; the desperately needy, the very beggars on the highway, when it is found that there is still room. Here, on the other hand, there is no reference to poverty; a fact overlooked by many commentators, with the result that unnecessary difficulty is introduced into the part of the parable relating to the wedding-robe. How unreasonable, it is argued, to visit with severe penalties the want of such a robe on the part of a poor man, who was not in possession of one or able to purchase one; and to get over the difficulty it is deemed necessary to assume that the guests must have been furnished with wedding-attire out of the royal wardrobes. We shall come to that question by and by; meantime, let it be noted that there is not a word about poverty in the text. The guests are not a crowd of paupers and beggars; they are a congregation of men and women got together without reference to their moral antecedents. In the esteem of society some of them might be good, and some bad; but of such distinctions the servants took no account. They invited all they met without question or hesitation as to character or antecedents; although it might be evident at a glance from dress, features, and bearing, that some were suspicious enough. Doubtless, among the invited would be some poor,—probably the majority were of that class; but of that fact no note is taken. What is remarked on is that the guests were a motley crew as to character; some respectable, others disreputable: ragged not in their outward attire, but in their name and fame, like the Corinthian Church of after days, of which Paul remarked: "Such were some of you":[2] drunkards, adulterers, thieves, and the like.

[1] So Goebel.

[2] 1Co 6:11. When we realise distinctly the import of the phrase "bad and good," we are prepared for some such offence as is reported in the sequel. In such a crowd, swept together from street and highway, rudeness, irreverence, insensibility to the claims of the royal presence and the solemn occasion might be looked for. These guests have not been accustomed to appear in such a place, and it will be strange indeed if they comport themselves, without exception, as becomes a palace and a royal marriage. We should rather expect irreverence to be the rule, and decorum the exception. Yet in the parable only one of the guests appears guilty of rudeness. Why is this? Because if the parable at this point had followed natural probability, there would have been a risk of guests being few, a great difficulty in getting the feast-chamber filled. The chamber was filled with guests because the messengers invited all regardless of antecedents; but it might have been emptied again, if the scrutiny had complied with the requirements of probability. Many were called, but few might have been allowed to remain. To avoid this result, and to keep the chamber full, the number of offenders is reduced to one.[1] One was enough to suggest the fact, and illustrate the principle of scrutiny. In consequence of this restriction, the representation of the parable, as has been remarked, is not in keeping with the concluding apophthegm:[2] ' "Many are called, but few are chosen"—all being chosen but one. The incongruity cannot be helped, for the feast must go on with a number of guests answering to the importance of the occasion. Therefore one guest is selected to represent a class.

[1] One or two interpreters have found the explanation in the supposition that Christ had Judas Iscariot in view. Even Olshausen speaks of this prosaic hypothesis as possible.

[2] D’Eichthal, ’Les Evangiles. When we consider how far short the parabolic statement at this point comes of natural likelihood, we see that it cannot have been the intention of Christ to represent the king as entering the chamber with the express purpose of scrutinising the guests. He enters not to scrutinise but to welcome; any other supposition would give to his appearance among his guests an ungracious aspect, altogether out of keeping with the occasion. The discovery of a man without a wedding-robe is an accident, an unpleasant incident not looked for beforehand, though a thing which cannot be overlooked once it has been observed. Had the intention been to make the king enter for the purpose of a scrutiny, it would have been necessary either greatly to multiply the numbers, to give the scrutiny an aspect at once of reality and of probability, or to make the concluding aphorism run, Many are called, but not all are chosen. But now, what is the offence of which the solitary representative of the disapproved is guilty? We can have no difficulty in answering the question if we bear in mind the composition of the multitude collected in the marriage-chamber. Answers very wide of the mark have been returned by commentators approaching the subject from the dogmatic, instead of the natural and historical, point of view. The sin of the offending guest, we are told variously, is self-righteousness,[1] disloyalty,[2] intrusion into a feast to which he has not been invited.[3] All these views are connected with a theory as to the wedding-garment being the gift of the king. The guest was self-righteous, because he preferred his own garment to that offered him from the royal wardrobe; he was disloyal, because he refused the garment which etiquette required all guests to receive and wear, in mere rudeness and wantonness; he was an intruder, because had he been invited he would doubtless have been offered a wedding-robe, and of course would have put it on. These suggestions are all out of keeping with the circumstances. Self-righteousness is not the sin which besets people such as those guests swept indiscriminately from street and road. As little is disloyalty to be imputed without urgent reason to men who have so far shown loyalty by coming to the feast in response to the invitation. And as for the idea that the offending guest was an uninvited intruder, it is simply absurd. Merely to hear of the feast, even at second-hand, was to be invited, for the commission to the servants was to bring as many as they could find. "Let him that heareth say come, and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."

[1] Arndt, Alford.

[2] Arnot.

[3] Baumgarten-Crusius. Of what kind of fault were those guests likely to be guilty? Surely of unmannerliness, coming without decoration, not from want of loyal feeling, or from conceit, or because they had no suitable apparel, but from pure want of thought and refined feeling. The moral fault answering to this is an unethical license, taking advantage of God’s goodness, without taking pains to cultivate the virtue that becomes those who are admitted into close relations with the Divine Being. This is one of two forms under which men may sin against grace. It is the form under which those can so sin who accept God’s invitations; the other being that under which those offend who decline the invitations. Paul speaks of both offences in his Epistle to the Romans. The one, that of the refusers of God’s invitations, he calls despising God’s grace, which he charges upon the self-righteous Jews;[1] the other he calls sinning because grace abounds,[2] which is the sin of what we might describe as unregenerate faith.

[1] Rom 2:4.

[2] Rom 6:1. That Jesus should take occasion to enter a protest against this sin, the licentious abuse of grace, as well as against the other offence, proud contempt of grace, cannot appear surprising. For though He ever gave great prominence to the gracious character of the kingdom, He was always zealous likewise for its righteousness. He set forth the kingdom as a kingdom of grace to begin with, because He wished it to be a kingdom of righteousness to end with. He deemed the proclamation of free grace the best way to produce holiness. If He offered the grace of God to the chief of sinners, it was because He believed that such might become the chief of saints; on the principle that much forgiveness breeds much love. The lesson of the wedding-robe is thus in keeping with the general spirit of His teaching. And let it be observed that this is not the only parable in which a zealous regard to the interests of holiness is manifested. The same zeal comes out, not so obtrusively perhaps, but not less unmistakably, in the parables of the Fig-tree and the Vinedressers. The barren tree is removed because it unprofitably occupies the ground, which implies that any tree which is planted in its place is put there for the purpose of bringing forth fruit. Then in the sentences appended to the Vinedressers, it is stated that the kingdom of God is to be taken from the Jews and given to a nation producing the fruits thereof. The broad lesson then of the sub-parable of the Wedding-robe is that the recipients of Divine grace must live worthily of their privilege. The wedding-robe represents Christian holiness, and the demand is that all believers in the gospel shall sedulously cultivate it. This being so, it is useless to discuss, as a matter of life and death, the question whether, according to ancient custom, the wedding-robe was a gift of the king. The point is of no consequence to the didactic significance of the parable, but merely a curious question of Biblical archaeology. So far as we can judge from the extracts cited by commentators from works relating to Oriental customs, we should say that a probable case has been made out in favour of the alleged custom. But that is not enough to justify us in making that custom the hinge of the interpretation. Had the didactic significance of the wedding-robe turned on its being a gift, the fact that it was presented to each guest to be worn on the occasion would have been mentioned.[1] It will not do to say that the custom was so familiar to Christ's audience that the point might be taken for granted. Facts are not specified or omitted in parables according to the ignorance or the knowledge of hearers, but according as they do or do not bear on the purpose of the story. Thus the parable of Dives passes over the piety of Lazarus, not because it might be assumed as known but because the mention of it would have been an irrelevance. Similarly here: suppose it were not a matter of inference merely, but a certainty that the wedding-garment was a robe similar to the kaftan presented now in the East by kings to persons appearing before them, the absence of all allusion to the custom must be held to be conclusive evidence that it is irrelevant to the lesson intended to be taught. The silence means that the Speaker wishes to accentuate the duty of each guest seeing to it that he appeared at the feast in proper attire. In short, as has been remarked, prominence is given to the ethical view-point which emphasises man's responsibility, rather than the religious which represents all as depending on God.[2] To prove ever so cogently that the wedding-garment came from the king's stores does not invalidate this statement, but only confirms it.[3] [1] So Meyer and Neander ('Life of Christ'), Bleek, &c.

[2] De Wette.

[3] While a circumstance of such didactic importance as that the wedding-garment was a loan from the king could not properly be omitted, it is otherwise with the circumstance that the guests gathered from the highways were allowed an opportunity to make a change of raiment somehow.

That might be taken for granted as a matter of course. Storr, while pointing this out, yet concurs in the opinion that it is not necessary to determine whence the wedding-garment was to be procured; the intention being to teach merely the general lesson that the soul must be clothed anew with righteousness, not the method of procuring the necessary vesture (’De Parabolis Christi,’ translated in the ’Biblical Cabinet,’ vol. ix.). The conclusion to which these observations point is, that. there is no foundation in the parable for the good old Protestant interpretation, according to ’which the wedding-garment is the righteousness of God given to faith. Vestis est justitia Christ, says the devout and scholarly Bengel, and we should gladly agree with him; but we feel that the idea of an objective righteousness given to faith lies outside the scope of this parable, and, indeed, except in the most general form, is not to be found in the whole system of truth contained in the records of our Lord’s teaching.[1] That idea is distinctively Pauline. It is the form under which he presents to view the summum bonum, or the gift of grace. The equivalent in Christ’s teaching is the kingdom of God. These two ideas are not opposed to each other; on the contrary, they are intimately related, and in full sympathy with each other. Still their relation is one of co-ordination, not of subordination. The righteousness of God is not, as is implied in Bengel’s interpretation of the wedding-garment, a detail under the general head of the kingdom of God. It is another name for the same thing. The doctrine of Christ and that of Paul are essentially one. In both, man’s relation to God is represented as based upon grace. That view is implied in this parable; but it is important to note at what point it comes in. The grace of the kingdom is set forth by the selection of a wedding-feast to be its emblem. The wedding-robe represents the holiness of the kingdom which ought to accompany and flow from the reception of grace. Its equivalent in the Pauline system is not the righteousness of faith, which answers to the feast in the parable, but those parts of the Apostle’s teaching in which he insists on holiness as the outcome of faith in God’s grace, and so guards his doctrine against objections springing out of concern for ethical interests. The passages in Paul’s writings which come nearest in import to the sub-parable of the Wedding-garment are those in his Epistle to the Romans where he protests against the impious idea that we may sin because grace abounds,[2] and warns the Gentile believers to beware lest through spiritual shortcomings the same fate befall them—the wild olive branches, which had overtaken the natural branches, the elect people of Israel.[3]

[1] The nearest approach to it in the Synoptical Gospels is in the expressions, "The kingdom of God, and His righteousness" (Mat 6:33); and "Justified rather than the other" (Luk 18:14).

[2] Rom 6:1.

[3] Rom 11:16-22. We may here, at the conclusion of the discussion as to the wedding-garment, note that in the ’Clementine Homilies,’ viii. 22, the garment is supposed to be Baptism: ■νδυμα γ■μου, ■περ ■στ■ν β■πτισμα. (In the same place the διεξ■δοι τ■ν ■δ■ν are identified with the Gentile world, ■κ■λευσεν ■μ■ν, ε■ς τ■ς■ διεξ■δους τ■ν ■δ■ν ■λθο■σιν, ■ ■στ■ν πρ■ς ■μ■ς.) The Fathers generally made the wedding-robe holiness. Thus Origen Calls it τ■ ■φασμα τ■ς ■ρετης.

We pass now to the sequel of the scene. The king saith to the offending guest: "Friend, how camest thou hither not having a wedding-garment?" The guilty one made no reply; in the expressive language of the parable he was muzzled. His speechlessness was the product of confusion in the august presence of the king. Till that moment the habit of irreverence had

prevailed; for he had not realised had never even thought, what it was to be confronted with royalty. But when the king actually appears, fixes his eye on him and speaks to him, he is confounded and struck dumb. Thus may the manner of the man be most naturally explained. It is unnecessary to ascribe to him any deliberate intention to insult by any act of rudeness or disloyalty. His offence was one of thoughtlessness, as was likely to be the case in a man of his class. The severity of his punishment naturally tempts us to make his fault appear as aggravated as possible by laying stress on every word that can be supposed to imply deliberate purpose,[1] and by imagining circumstances fitted to deprive him of all excuse, such as that the missing article of apparel was simply an inexpensive badge or symbol which the poorest could have procured for himself.[2] But instead of thus striving to magnify the offender's criminality, it is better to direct attention to the solemn truth that even sins of thoughtlessness are no light matters in those who bear the Christian name, and profess to believe in God's grace. In this connection it is important to remember that it is this class of sins the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews seems to have in view when he exhorts his readers to follow peace with all men, and holiness as an indispensable condition of seeing God. For he goes on immediately to refer to Esau as the type of those who through neglect of holiness fall short of the grace of God. The sin of Esau was heedlessness. He was dying of hunger, and what was a birthright to a starving man? When appetite was satisfied he regretted his rash, thoughtless act, for he had not deliberately despised his birthright. The writer of the Epistle would have his brethren understand that through nothing worse than such moral rudeness might Christians miss salvation. And that is the lesson taught in our parable. We see here a man who falls from the king's grace not through self-righteous pride, or bold disloyalty, or deliberate disrespect, but by the rude behaviour of one who has never been accustomed to restraint, and who without thought carries his unmannerly ways into the royal presence.

[1] Thus Trench points out that the particle of negation in the king's question is not ο■, as in the previous verse, but μ■. μ■ ■χων ■νδυμα γ■μομ not having (and knowing that thou hadst not) a wedding-garment.

[2] So Arnot, who refers in illustration to the bride's favour given to guests at marriages in this country. The doom of one guilty of such an offence, as described in the parable, appears unduly severe. Enough for such an one, we are inclined to think, that he be unceremoniously turned out of a company in which he is not fit to appear. Was it worth while, one is apt to ask, for the king to get angry over the unmannerliness of this clown who had strayed into the marriage-hall, or to issue such peremptory instructions as to how his ministers should deal with him? Was not such wrath and such preciseness undignified in a royal person? Certainly, on first thought, it does seem so. At the very least the king's action seems to stand in need of apology, and the apology that comes readiest is that the king's temper has been so ruffled by the contempt of the first invited that he is naturally very jealous of any fresh manifestations of irreverence, and prone to resentment when such appear. And such an explanation of the king's behaviour is quite legitimate, for we are not bound to vindicate the actions of characters in parables from all charges of infirmity. In studying the parable of the Great Feast in Luke's Gospel we saw that the motive of the host for filling his dining-hall with beggars from the highways was by no means an elevated one. Even so here we may imagine the king to be simply giving way to one of those sudden ebullitions of anger in which eastern rulers so frequently indulge, under whose influence they issue the most ruthless orders on comparatively slight provocation. In this way we should at all events justify the parabolic

representation as in accord with natural probability. But the royal wrath and the order in which it issues have more than picturesque significance. They convey the thought that a heedless life on the part of a believer in Divine grace may be attended with fatal consequences; the same thought which Paul sought to impress on the Corinthians, and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews on Jewish Christians, by reminding them of the melancholy fate which overtook the people of Israel in the wilderness, notwithstanding that they had participated in the grace of Jehovah in connection with the Exodus.[1] The passages in which these solemn warnings are given are the best possible commentary on the command of the king. They refer to historical facts which prove that what seem very pardonable sins of unbelief, murmuring, and hankering after forbidden enjoyments, may be mercilessly punished, leaving no room for repentance, even though it be sought carefully and with tears. Christ, ever faithful, and truly desirous of the salvation of all His followers, draws His picture in accordance with the facts of experience, at the risk of seeming to make God appear a harsh tyrant, and Himself less pitiful than we love to think Him. For if, as we have no reason to doubt, the concluding reflections of the parable were spoken by Him, then He must be understood as acquiescing in the rigour of Providence. "There shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth," says He, in reference to the ejected guest; suggesting the picture of a poor wight lying in darkness bound and helpless, lamenting his exclusion from joy, and the folly which occasioned it. "Many are called, but few chosen," He adds, to suggest that the sad fate of the one may befall many, the number of the heedless being at all times great.

[1] 1Co 10:1-33; Heb 3:1-19.

01.26. Chapter 6. The Unfaithful Upper Servant

Chapter 6.

The Unfaithful Upper Servant Or, the Judgment of Degenerate Ministers of the Kingdom. In the two parables which remain to be considered ere we bring these studies to a close, judgment appears active within the kingdom of grace. In the second scene of the last parable we already see the judicial activity of Christ beginning to manifest itself in this sphere. But the sub-parable of the Wedding-robe is only a prelude to the judgment of the house of God. There is judged a class who never realised the responsibilities of those who receive God’s gracious favour, who entered the kingdom in the rudeness of nature, untouched by any regenerative influence. But in the parables now to be studied we witness the judgment not of the unregenerate, but of the degenerate, who made a fair start, but have undergone a demoralising process, and declined from their initial spiritual condition as believers. They begin by recognising the claims of holiness, but they do not persevere in this mind. In every process of declension or degeneracy time enters as an element. The phenomena resulting can appear only after the movement with which they are associated has lasted for a while. Perseverance in holiness in the individual and in the community is tested by the occurrence of a period of trial. The parable first considered, that of the Sower, taught us this. Jesus speaks there of those who receive the word with joy, but when tribulation cometh are offended. It is not surprising, therefore, that the parables before us are found connected in the record with an eschatological discourse, in which the consummation of the kingdom, while represented as an event to be looked for at any moment, is at the same time spoken of as an event likely to be deferred so long as to involve a great trial of faith and patience. The virtue specially called for by such a situation is watchfulness. Were the near advent of the consummation certain, watching would not be needed; being possible, yet not certain, that habit is at once necessary and difficult. For delay brings temptation to relax zeal, and yielding to the temptation exposes to the risk of surprise. The discourse on the last things, accordingly, contains frequent exhortations to watchfulness. "Watch, therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour," comes in at intervals like a solemn refrain. And the lesson is enforced not merely by repetition of the counsel, but by the use of figurative representations exhibiting vividly the need of watching, and the danger of neglecting it. We find a whole group of parabolic sayings embedded in the eschatological discourse, all having for their moral: "Watch, for you may be thrown off your guard by delay, and be surprised by the sudden (for sudden it will be) coming of the long expected." In Matthew’s version of the sermon there are three: the Goodman and the Thief, the Unfaithful Upper Servant, and the Ten Virgins. The second of the three is given by Luke in a different connection, prefaced by another parable, that of the Waiting Servants who expect their absent lord with loins girt and lights burning, which was probably spoken at the same time as the others.[1] Mark gives a fifth, that of the Porter; its peculiarity being that the duty of watching, which in the other parables is enjoined on all the servants, is assigned in the distribution of offices to a particular functionary.[2] It is possible, however, that this is not a distinct parable, but an amalgam of the Waiting Servants and the Talents, the watching porter representing the lesson taught in the former, and the

assignment of tasks to the servants individually representing the distribution of talents in the latter.[3] Omitting it, there remain four parabolic utterances bearing on the same theme, and all, there is little doubt, spoken at the same time; a sufficient index of the prominent place which the subject of watching occupied in Christ's thoughts in His last days, in its bearing on the spiritual welfare of His disciples.

[1] Luk 12:35-37.

[2] Mark 13:34.

[3] So Weiss, 'Das Markus-Evangelium.' Of these four parables only two, those of the Unfaithful Upper Servant, and the Ten Virgins, call for detailed study. The two others merely inculcate in a general manner the duty of watching; these show the evil tendency of delay to demoralise character in different ways, and the doom of such as yield to the baleful influence. The Waiting Servants and the Goodman and the Thief may be regarded as introductory to the parable which is first to engage our attention, as indeed they appear in Luke's narrative. In the former the coming of the Son of man is compared to the return of an householder from a marriage-feast to his own home at an unseasonable hour of the night, when, in the ordinary course, all the inmates would be asleep. But on such an occasion, when their master is expected, dutiful servants will not retire to rest, but will patiently wait for His arrival, at whatever hour it may take place, with garments tucked up in readiness for service, and with the lights burning brightly in the chambers. Such an attitude Jesus desired His disciples habitually to maintain. "Let your loins be girt about," He said, "and your lamps burning, and be ye yourselves like unto men who wait for their lord." He indicated how difficult He deemed it to carry into effect the counsel by appending to the parable the reflection: "Blessed are those servants whom their lord, when he cometh, shall find watching; verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and shall come and serve them." When our Lord used this epithet 'blessed,' He always meant to represent the thing spoken of as high and rare. 'Rare virtue,' He here exclaims in effect, in reference to the conduct of the waiting servants. So rare does He reckon it, that He represents the master as not expecting it; counting rather on finding the house dark and his servants in bed, with hardly one left to open the door when he knocks. Finding the facts otherwise, observing the cheery appearance of lights in the windows, sure indication that the household is on the outlook, he is so delighted that, instead of accepting service from his dutiful slaves, he is rather in the mood to turn servant to them, and supply them with refreshment, and so reward rare virtue with equally rare felicity and honour. The scene next changes from servants waiting for their absent lord to a householder whose house is in danger of being broken into by thieves. In this instance we are told, not what the man does or ought to do, but what he would do in a supposed case. If he knew when the thief would come he would watch to protect himself against the risk of having his property carried off. If only he, like the waiting servants, knew the day, it would not matter what the hour was, he would gladly keep awake through all the watches of the night to avoid the threatened danger. But he does not know the day any more than the hour; for while it is for the interest of an absent master that his servants should know at least the day of his return, it is the thief's interest, on the contrary, that his victim should be ignorant as to the day, as well as the hour, of his attack. Therefore the good-man of the house cannot help himself; he must go to bed and take his risk; for it is physically impossible to do without sleep, and watch night and day all his life long. He acts so from necessity, not because he is indifferent; not even trusting to his poverty as a sufficient protection. A poor man he is, for he

lives in a mud house, which can be dug through,[1] so that a barred door is no sufficient defence. But even poverty does not lull him into security; for the little he has is valuable to him, and it would be valuable also to a thief, probably poorer than himself, and tempted by want to steal. The moral is: Let disciples do always what the good man of the house would do if he could, or does on occasion. They have need; for the end is apt to come thief-like, tarrying long, as if it would never arrive, then overtaking men by surprise. They can; for though they know neither the day nor the hour, watching in the moral sense is possible at all times; there is no necessity in the spiritual sphere for being at the mercy of the thief.

[1] The term employed to denote the mode by which the thief gets in is διορυγ■ναι.

Such urgent exhortations to watchfulness, spoken doubtless with great earnestness of tone, must have fallen with startling effect on the ears of hearers. We can readily believe, therefore, that Peter, speaking for the twelve, asked such a question as is put into his mouth by the third Evangelist. The question is vaguely expressed,—"Speakest Thou this parable?" he said, though two had been uttered,—and without any indication of motive. Peter doubtless had in view the whole discourse about watching, and his question probably arose out of a feeling of surprise at the severe tone pervading it His thought fully expressed was probably something like this: "Master, you seem to consider watchfulness very difficult, as well as very needful. Whom have you specially in view when you speak thus? Do you think that we, your chosen companions, need to be particularly exhorted after this fashion, or are you not speaking to us at all, but merely addressing general exhortations to the crowd?" Probably Peter's feeling was that he and his brethren did not need to be spoken to so, but were superior to the vulgar vice of heedlessness. In that case there was indicated in his question the same spirit of self-confidence which revealed itself on the night before the Passion in connection with the declaration of Jesus, "All ye shall be offended in Me this night." If, as is probable, the putting of the question formed an incident in the delivery of the eschatological discourse during Passion Week, we have two characteristic manifestations of Peter's infirmity occurring within a few days of each other, in one of which he asks, with a tone of injured virtue, "Speakest Thou thus to us?" and in the other declares, "Though all shall be offended in Thee, I will never be offended." In the light of this juxtaposition we can better understand the stern tone of Christ's reply, which must have sounded almost as harsh to Peter's ear as the word which foretold his fall—"Verily I say unto thee, that this night thou shalt deny Me thrice." Taking the two together, the announcement of the impending fall and the parable of the Unfaithful Upper Servant, they convey this lesson: The demoralising effect on character of a sudden crisis overtaking an inexperienced disciple is bad enough, but that produced by long delay is still worse. The one leads to humiliating denials of the Lord, the other may lead to shameless profligacy: habitual denial in life, more culpable far than the momentary denials of the tongue. The parable which teaches this lesson is as follows: Who then is the faithful and wise servant whom his lord set over his household to give them their food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say to you, that he will place him over all his goods. But if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord tarrieth, and shall begin to beat his fellow-servants, and shall eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he expecteth not, and in an hour when he knoweth not, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.—Mat 24:45-51.[1]

[1] The version of the parable in Luke is nearly the same as in Matthew. For τροφ■ν, Mat 24:45, Luke has σιτομ■τριον. Instead of "to eat and drink with the drunken," Luke reads, "to eat and to drink and to be drunken." For ■ποκριν■ν Luke has ■π■στων. Luke adds a reflection on the difference as to the amount of penalty between those who know their lord's will and those who know it not. The reply of Jesus to Peter's question is indirect but clear. Without saying in express terms, "I mean you as well as others, nay, you very specially," by selecting an upper servant as the subject of the parable He shows that the duty of watching is one to which men called to be apostles are specially summoned, and the neglect of which in their case involves peculiar dangers. In its main drift the parable is the judgment of ministers of the kingdom demoralised even to profligacy by the delay of the second advent, From the parable thus viewed two inferences may be confidently drawn: that Christ must have expected His kingdom to pass through a lengthened history before reaching its consummation; and that He regarded perseverance in grace through a protracted period as exceedingly difficult for the individual and for the community. Only in the light of these inferences can the salient features of the representation be understood and appreciated.

First we notice the black picture of the upper servant's misconduct during his lord's absence. He becomes a brutal tyrant and a drunken profligate, a man utterly unworthy of his trust, and absolutely indifferent to his master's interests, whatever he may pretend; whose proper place in character, as in penalty, is among the faithless[1] and the hypocritical.[2] Consider what this means in the spiritual sphere. A profligate clergy lording it over God's heritage, dissolute in life, sceptical in reference to the future glory of the kingdom and all great Christian verities,[3] and guilty of grossest hypocrisy in combining the exercise of sacred functions with a total lack of personal faith and holiness. It takes a long time to develop such a deplorable state of matters. Not at the beginning of a religious movement, not in its creative epoch, do such scandalous phenomena make their appearance; but when the spiritual force has to a large extent spent itself, and its effects have taken their place among the institutions of the world, as at the conversion of the Roman empire under Constantine, and the 'establishment' of Christianity as the religion of the State. When He drew the dark picture Christ must have been looking far beyond the apostolic age; for any one of ordinary sagacity, not to speak of prophetic prescience, might understand that the degeneracy depicted could not appear then in a form intense and extensive enough to make it worth while to construct a parable concerning it. The delay of the master's coming must have meant for Him a lengthened period, during which the kingdom was to pass through a secular process of development, in the course of which hideous forms of evil, as well as new forms of good, would manifest themselves. It is true that in the parable only a single instance of degeneracy is mentioned, which might occur even in the best of times, even in the earliest or apostolic age. It is true also that the case is put hypothetically. If the servant act thus and thus he will be treated accordingly. But parabolic speech suggests more than it says, and it is due to its dignity and gravity to assume that a more serious state of things than a solitary, exceptional instance of depravity would amount to is signified, even a widespread declension; and further, that such declension is not only possible, but probable or even certain.

[1] τ■ν ■π■στων, Luk 12:46.

[2] τ■ν ■ποκριτ■ν, Mat 24:51.

[3] ■πιστος may mean either faithless or unbelieving.

If this be so, then the second inference above stated is abundantly justified, viz. that Jesus must have had a profound sense of the difficulty of persevering in grace through a protracted period. But this more plainly appears from the manner in which fidelity is spoken of in the opening sentences of the parable. Who, it is asked, is the faithful and wise servant who, being appointed to a place of trust and responsibility in his master's house, shall act as is expected of him? as ii. such a person were hardly to be found. Who is he? where is he? what would one not give to see him? That such a one is pronounced blessed signifies the same thing; for, as already stated, this word as used by Christ always denotes something high, exceptional, rare. Applied to conduct, it signifies virtue arduous, heroic, and therefore uncommon. Applied to state, it signifies felicity out of the common course. "Blessed is that servant" means he is a rare man, a hero, one among a thousand. It means further, great shall be his reward, and of this accordingly the parable goes on next to speak. "Verily I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods." Having proved himself trusty, he shall be rewarded with unlimited trust, and promoted to a position next to his lord, which can be occupied by one only, the first man in the house, the prime minister in the state.

It may appear strange that our Lord took so sombre and discouraging a view of the capabilities of the average disciple to persevere in faith and fidelity amidst the temptations arising out of the mere lapse of time, not to speak of other more positive forms of trial. But it is not necessary to suppose that He meant to represent time in itself as a source of trial. Time is a mere abstraction, and the lapse of time tries men simply by affording scope for the play of influences within or without hostile to their spiritual interest. The real thought underlying the parabolic representation is: the difficulty of persistence in spiritual life throughout a curriculum of trial such as the lapse of years and ages inevitably brings, one of the sorest temptations involved being the disappointment of early hopes for the speedy consummation of devout desires. Even when thus put the doctrine is hard enough, and were it to be found only in this parable, we might well doubt the correctness of our interpretation. But it pervades our Lord's teaching, and we do not need to go beyond the discourses of the Passion Week to meet with words of kindred import to that now under consideration. In the very same discourse of which our parable forms a part we read, "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved,"[1] a statement implying that endurance is hard, and therefore rare, at least in times when wickedness is rampant. Then on the Passion eve Jesus said to the eleven, "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations," so gratefully acknowledging a fidelity which had been far from easy; and to indicate still further His sense of the heroic character of their behaviour, He added, "And I appoint unto you a kingdom."[2] Ye have done nobly, and noble shall be your reward—such is the import of the pathetic utterance. It is in full sympathy with the didactic drift of our parable, though it implies a more genial appreciation of the behaviour of Peter and his fellow-disciples than that which seems to be insinuated in the latter.

[1] Mat 24:12.

[2] Luk 22:28-29. The punishment awaiting the wicked servant is dreadful. His lord, coming on a day when he expects him not, and at an unknown hour, will cut him asunder. Whatever the word διχοτομ■σει may signify in the spiritual sphere, it is to be interpreted literally when we seek to determine the exact character of the parabolic representation. It means in plain terms to cut the body into two, as by a saw or other instrument, a barbaric and revolting mode of putting to death practised among the Hebrews and other nations of antiquity.[1] For classical references vide

Wetstein. One is inclined to wonder that Christ did not shrink from using a word suggestive of such horrible associations. But doubtless He did shrink, and forced Himself nevertheless to employ the term, with an eye to moral effect. The strong word served several good purposes. It conveyed, in the first place, as has been happily pointed out by Bengel, the idea of a punishment congruous to the character of the criminal on whom it is inflicted, that, viz., of a hypocrite. "A hypocrite divides soul and body in the worship of God; wherefore his soul and his body are divided in eternal destruction." Then, secondly, the Dantesque expression adequately indicates the intense abhorrence with which Jesus regarded conduct on the part of professed followers by which the house of God was turned into a house of Belial. Finally, it was well fitted to scare and terrify the twelve disciples to whom the parable was first spoken, and so effectually prevent them from being guilty of misconduct pronounced worthy of such punishment. In this connection it is important to point out that Christ's strongest, harshest words occur in speeches addressed to His disciples. It is in the discourse on Humility that we find the millstone suspended by the neck; it is in the parable of the Unmerciful Servant that mention is made of the tormentors; it is in the parable of the Wicked Upper Servant that the horrible punishment of cutting in two is alluded to: the audience in all three instances being the twelve. The purpose is plain: strong language is used to render hated sin impossible. With the punishment of the unfaithful one, the parable as given in Matthew ends. Luke appends a reflection intended to meet a feeling naturally arising out of the parabolic representation. Declension into faithlessness is difficult to resist, and its penalty is rigorous: such is the drift of the whole. "Who then can be saved?" is the question which suggests itself to every sincere disciple. Such despair is dangerous; for nothing is more demoralising than to be told at once that virtue is next to impossible, and that the want of it will be inexorably punished. Jesus hastened to obviate the evil effect by making a distinction between those who sin with full knowledge of their Lord's will, and those who sin in comparative ignorance thereof. A milder word also is employed to denote the penalty in either case. Stripes take the place of cutting asunder. The stronger word denotes the inherent turpitude of the offence, the weaker is used out of compassionate regard to the infirmity of human nature, which often causes men not wicked in will to fall grievously before the assaults of temptation, whereof the denial of his beloved Master by Peter is an instructive example.

[1] Vide 1Sa 15:33; 2Sa 12:31; Heb 11:37.

01.27. Chapter 7. The Ten Virgins

Chapter 7.

The Ten Virgins Or, the Judgment of Foolish Citizens of the Kingdom

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, who took their lamps,[1] and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were foolish, and five were wise.[2] For the foolish, when they took their lamps, took no oil with themselves. But the wise took oil in their vessels with their own lamps. Now while the bridegroom tarried, they all nodded[3] and slept. But at midnight is raised a cry, Behold the bridegroom; come ye forth to meet him.[4] Then arose all those virgins, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil, for our lamps are going out. But the wise answered, saying, Lest there be not enough for us and you, go rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.[5] And while they were going away to buy, the bridegroom came; and the virgins that were ready[6] went in with him to the marriage-feast, and the door was shut. Afterwards came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch, therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour.—Mat 25:1-13.

[1] λαμπ■δος, properly torches. Probably the ’lamps’ consisted of a short wooden stem held in the hand, with a dish at the top in which was a piece of cloth dipped in oil or pitch. Lightfoot (’Hor. Heb.’) gives from the Talmud an account of torches used at marriages among the Ishmaelites answering to this description. They carry before the bride "decem baculos ligneos, in uniuscujusque summitate vasculum instar se utellæ habentes, in quo est segmentum panni cum oleo et pice." The number ten is noticeable.

[2] Such is the order in the chief uncials, and adopted by Tischendorf, Westcott and Hort, and the R. V.

[3] ■ν■σταξαν. The nodding was transient, the initial stage, hence the aorist; the sleeping was continuous, hence ■κ■θευδον, the imperfect. Nodded is a familiar word, but it has the merit of stating exactly what happened, and conveys the idea that as the night advanced the virgins were overtaken with drowsiness.

[4] ε■ς ■π■ντησιν: literally, "unto meeting:" a familiar and important ceremony.

[5] μ■ποτε ο■κ, which Goebel renders ’never,’ making the refusal unnecessarily peremptory. The rendering above given is Campbell’s, after the Vulgate.

[6] α■ ■τοιμοι = the ready ones, viz. the wise virgins. The last of the parables is one of the most beautiful and touching. The arts have been made to minister to its illustration: poetry, painting, and the drama have combined to give it an exceptional hold on the Christian imagination. The weird pathos of the story is unspeakable. The occasion is so happy, the agents so interesting, the issue so tragic. It is a wedding that is on hand; the characters brought on the stage are virgins, young, bright, and fair; the fate of some of them is so hard—exclusion from the marriage festivities at

which they so longed to be present, and for so slight a cause—a little too late. One's heart is sore for those five witless, luckless girls. A parable like this one would rather silently read than expound; for exposition is almost certain to mean turning poetry into prose. For another reason one shrinks from the interpreter's task in the present instance. No parable has been so completely taken possession of by allegorising theology. The natural story has been buried beneath a heap of spiritual meanings which have been accumulating from the patristic period till now. To every word—virgin, bridegroom, lamp, oil—has been assigned its emblematic significance. A comparatively sober Catholic commentator counts fifteen parts which have their spiritual equivalents, not reckoning among these the part in which the foolish virgins are represented as going to buy, which he regards as a mere ornament.[1] To go against the exegetical tradition of well-nigh two thousand years is not only audacious, but almost profane. And yet there is no parable in which preliminary discussion of the story apart from the moral interpretation seems more urgently needed. Convinced of this, we must decline to ask such questions as what does the oil signify, until we have formed a clear idea of what persons whose oil-supply had run out would be likely to do at an ordinary wedding. The result of our inquiry may be to place us in the undesirable position of an almost solitary dissenter. Yet what can one do but state honestly the opinions which, after much reflection, commend themselves to his mind?

[1] Maldonatus. The situation, or course of events, is by no means clear. The movement of the narrative is rapid, many details are omitted, only the salient points necessary to the moral lesson being given; and, as has been remarked, the information supplied by travellers and writers on antiquities concerning Jewish customs do not afford much help towards filling up the picture.[1] Such information carries us little beyond the generality of a torchlight procession, which was not peculiar to Judaea, but formed a feature in the marriage customs also of Greece and Rome.[2] We read of ten virgin-companions of the bride, whose function it was[3] to go forth with lamps to meet the bridegroom. But from what point did the torchlight night journey start? and how are we to conceive its progress? To these queries no less than four distinct answers are given by the commentators. They may be briefly stated thus:—

[1] So Fritsche and Bengel.

[2] Vide Wetstein for references to classic usage.

[3] α■τινες, Mat 25:1, implies that the clause following describes the kind of virgins meant. They are bridesmaids.

1. The virgins set out from their own homes with lamps in hand, arrive one after the other at the bride's home, there wait for the announcement of the bridegroom's approach, whereupon they prepare to accompany him, with his bride, to his house, where the nuptial festivities are celebrated.[1]

2. The virgins meet at the bride's home, their rendezvous. How or when they get there is a matter of indifference to the parable. There they wait till the approach of the bridegroom is announced; then, for the first time, they proceed to light their lamps, that with these they may go forth to meet the bridegroom and conduct him to the bride's house, where, and not in his own house, the marriage takes place.[2]

3. The virgins, assembled at the bride's house, set out with their lights to meet the bridegroom without waiting for the announcement of his approach, expecting him to come at a certain time. When they have gone a certain length on the way it becomes apparent to them that he is not coming so soon as was expected, and, weary with the journey, they turn aside to some halting-place—an inn, a private dwelling, or the roadside—to rest, and are soon overpowered with sleep, from which they are aroused by the cry, The bridegroom is at hand; whereupon they join his party and return with them to the bride's house.[3]

4. The virgins join the procession of the bridegroom and the bride coming from the house of the latter and going to the house of the former; meeting the bridal party at some convenient point on the road at which they have gathered.[4] [1] Bornemann in 'Studien und Kritiken, 1843, Ewald, Greswell.

[2] Goebel.

[3] Bleek, Meyer, &c.

[4] Trench Arnot, Lange. The difference which chiefly concerns us in these four hypotheses is that between the second and all the rest. That view implies that the foolish virgins had no oil at all, while all the others imply that they took with them from their homes oil enough to last for the time which they expected to elapse before the arrival of the bridegroom. On the one view their folly consisted in never thinking of oil, and merely taking the empty lamps; on the other it consisted in taking only as much as was usually sufficient, and making no provision for the possible case of the delayed arrival of the bridegroom. The author of the second hypothesis insists, in support of it, on the reflexive pronoun ■αυτ■ν after λαμπ■δας in Mat 25:1, and before ■λαιον in Mat 25:3. The foolish virgins took their own lamps, but they took not their own oil; for that, or for the light, that oil gives, they trusted to others; it would be enough to be in the company of those who had light-giving lamps. The expression, "Our lamps are going out," in Mat 25:8, he thinks does not mean the oil in our lamps is exhausted, but simply implies that wicks had been kindled in oilless lamps, which of course were no sooner lighted than they began to go out. Against the more common view he argues that it makes the wise far too wise, for how should they be able to guess that the arrival of the bridegroom might possibly be delayed a considerable time? Moreover, he contends that in any case there was no need for an extra supply of oil. The lamps were not needed till the arrival of the bridegroom was announced, and the procession of virgins to meet him went only a short distance, and lasted only a short time. The idea of the virgins setting out in a haphazard way, without any announcement, to meet the bridegroom, is altogether unlikely, and the halt on the road for rest absurd, and contrary to all notions of propriety. The argument is ingenious, and in some points, especially the last referred to, cogent; but the hypothesis in question has its assailable points also. If some of the other views make the wise too wise, it in turn makes the foolish too foolish. It is surely possible to be as foolish as the moral of the parable requires without being so foolish as to take lamps without ever thinking of oil! In fact, the folly of the foolish virgins on this view has no relation to the moral lesson. Suppose the bridegroom had not tarried, the foolish virgins would have been equally at fault. But the point of the parable is to illustrate the effect of delay, or of the unexpected, in testing forethought, which is the chief part of wisdom. Besides, on this view it is difficult to see why the foolish virgins trimmed, that is to say, lighted, their lamps. They knew they had brought no oil, they knew why they had neglected to do

so, viz. because they reckoned it enough that their companions should have lamps that gave light. Why did they not continue to be of this mind, and join the procession with lamps unlit? Were they so foolish as not to know that a wick without oil to feed the flame would not continue to burn? One other objection may justly be taken to the hypothesis in question. It seems intended to obviate the difficulty in the spiritual interpretation arising from the fact of the foolish having oil—faith, hope, love, yet after all failing to attain salvation. The hard problem is solved by the simple method of degrading the foolish virgins into mere formalists. They have their own lamps,[1] and probably are very conscious of the fact; but they have not that without which lamps of religious profession are of no use, viz. the oil of grace.

[1] Greswell, adopting the reading ■ν το■ς ■γγε■οις ■αυτ■ν μετ■ τ■ν λαμπ■δων in Mat 25:4, makes a point of the fact that the vessels for extra supply of oil were the property of the virgins, while the lamps are not said to be. "Though their lamps might have been received from any other quarter, the vessels in question must have been provided for themselves. The original provision of the lamps, with their ordinary supply of oil, conveying as it did the privilege of an invited guest, or being an evidence thereof, might be due to a cause independent of themselves; but the provision of vessels, at the same time, was a precaution which emanated from the wise virgins themselves." On the whole it appears certain that the general tenor of the story and its didactic purport demand that we should suppose that all the virgins alike were furnished with a certain amount of oil, such as would have sufficed for ordinary circumstances, and that the distinction of the wise virgins and the proof of their wisdom consisted in their taking with them an extra supply in vessels used for that purpose, whether attached to the torch handle or carried separately. In all other particulars we are willing to adopt the second hypothesis and to conceive of the circumstances thus: The virgins come from their own homes to that of the bride with lamps burning, there rest waiting for the announcement of the bridegroom, their lamps still burning or blown out. When the cry is raised, they all rise and trim their lamps, the wise pouring in more oil, the foolish lighting theirs as they were, to discover soon that the oil was exhausted. The procession goes forth to meet the bridegroom, to conduct him to the bride’s house, where the marriage takes place. Usually the marriage-feast was celebrated in the house of the bridegroom,[1] but the practice does not appear to have been uniform, exceptions occurring in the sacred history, as in the cases of Jacob and Samson,[2] and reasons readily suggest themselves why the parabolic representation should follow the exceptions rather than the rule.

[1] This fact may account for the reading of D in Mat 25:1, which adds to the text κα■ τ■ς ν■μφης = to meet the bridegroom and the bride.

[2] Gen 29:22; Jdg 14:10.

Having settled one question respecting the oil, in finding that the folly of the foolish virgins consisted not in bringing no oil, but in not bringing enough, we have now to deal with another more difficult and delicate, viz. was the oil indispensable? Would the foolish virgins have been excluded from the feast supposing they had joined the procession and arrived in good time, simply on the ground that they carried lamps which gave no light? This question the commentators do not so much as ask themselves, yet with one consent they virtually answer it in the affirmative. They come to the parable with the foregone conclusion, that the oil, like the wedding garment, signifies some necessary grace, faith, love, &c., without which no man can see the Lord, and of course they

find themselves shut up to the conclusion that the foolish virgins were placed in the fatal dilemma of being obliged on the one hand to procure oil somehow, and on the other to make themselves too late for the feast by their endeavour to obtain the needed article. It is an extreme instance of exegesis dominated by homiletic preoccupation. The bondage is so complete that it may appear almost an impiety to claim the liberty to hold a different opinion. And yet there are good reasons for doubting the soundness of the exegetical tradition at this point. One is the endless diversity of opinion as to the emblematic significance of the oil. Every interpreter has his own conjecture. The oil is faith, charity, almsgiving, desire for the praise of God rather than the praise of men; good works in general, the Holy Spirit, diligence in the culture of grace, religious joy. In short, it is anything you please; each conjecture is purely arbitrary, one is as legitimate as another, and the multiplicity of opinions justifies the inference that they are all alike illegitimate. Another reason for doubt is the fact that in the parable the ground of exclusion is not want of oil, but lateness.[1] They that were ready went in with the bridegroom to the marriage-feast. They were ready by being present, while the others were away in quest of oil. Had these absent ones been present and gone on with their sisters, they would, for anything that appears to the contrary, have been admitted also. But the chief consideration that weighs with us is that drawn from the natural probabilities of the case. Suppose it were the story of an ordinary wedding, not intended to convey any spiritual lesson. A number of young women are about to set out on a torchlight procession in the evening to escort the bridegroom. Some of them have mislaid their torches, and cannot find them in the hurry when the cry is raised The bridegroom is at hand! or, as in the parable before us, their torches are rendered useless for want of oil. What are they to do? Run the risk of making themselves too late by searching for their torches or going in quest of oil, or fall into the procession? Of course they go on with their companions, and of course they are admitted to the feast with the rest. For though the carrying of a lighted torch is a part of the festive ceremonial, and belongs to the conventional proprieties of the occasion, it is not the essential element The essential element is the welcoming of the bridegroom; the carrying of lights is an accident due to the fact that the procession takes place by night. If this be a correct representation of what would happen in natural life, and all that we learn from those conversant with Eastern customs confirms it,[2] then it was simply a second act of folly on the part of the foolish virgins to disqualify themselves for showing honour to the bridegroom, and to make themselves late for the feast by going away to buy oil, so turning an accessory into an essential, and imperilling substantial interests by scrupulous regard to ceremony. Had they been wise they would have gone on as they were, and so gained an admission to the festive hall.

[1] Weiss, ’Das Matthäus-Evangelium,’ says that the want of oil does not, any more than the sleep, cause exclusion from the feast. It mocks, he adds, every allegorising interpretation.

[2] The passage cited from Ward’s ’View of the Hindoos’ by Trench, ana after him by Morrison, is quite in accordance with our view. Ward mentions that, at a certain marriage ceremony which he witnessed, the bridegroom, coming from a distance, kept the party waiting for him several hours. Then, his arrival being announced in words similar to those in the parable, all lighted their lamps, and ran to join the procession. Some, however, lost their lamps. What then? The author says—"It was too late to seek them, and the cavalcade moved forward," not saying, but implying, that those who had lost their lamps did not waste time in seeking them, but went on without them (vide vol. ii. p. 171).

According to this view the foolish virgins act in character from first to last. They are fools all through. They are foolish first in taking only a limited supply of oil, assuming that the usual will happen; while the wise with characteristic forethought make provision for the unusual, that is, for the possible case of unexpected delay. They are foolish next in going away at an unseasonable hour to purchase oil instead of taking their place in the marriage procession as they were, a little put to shame by their dark lamps, nevertheless making sure their part in the main events of the occasion, the welcoming of the bridegroom, and admission to the wedding feast. Such consistency of character commends itself as intrinsically probable. The only serious objection to the hypothesis is the fact that the suggestion to go and buy oil comes from the wise virgins. How, it may be asked, could they advise their sisters to do a foolish thing? Does not the very fact of their giving such advice imply that to procure a supply of oil was indispensable to admission? Now it is not necessary in order to meet this difficulty to adopt the suggestion of Augustine, that the advice of the wise was only an exemplification of that mockery of wisdom at the calamity of folly spoken of in the book of Proverbs.[1] There is certainly not a little in the circumstances to give plausibility to this view. The hour was midnight, and the bridegroom was at hand, what likelihood of being able to get oil at all when the shops of those who sold were shut, and their owners in bed? What chance of getting it at least in time, however near the houses of the vendors might be? To say in such circumstances, Go and buy, was very like heartlessly advising to do the impossible. But the conduct of the wise can be explained without ascribing to them cruelty. Sudden emergencies bring into play a certain element of selfishness. Then it is every one for himself. The sharp loud cry is raised, Behold, the bridegroom is at hand! Excitement and hurry pervade the house, each one is engrossed with her own business, and when help is sought by the shiftless from the shifty it is declined with the best answer that occurs at the moment. In natural life one might say to another, "Go and buy for yourself," without expecting the advice to be taken seriously, yet without intending to mock. Objectively the advice of the wise virgins to the foolish was a mockery; subjectively it was nothing more than a declinature to be burdened with their neighbours' affairs.

[1] Augustine's words are, Non consulentium, sed irridentium, est ista responsio (Serm. xciii. 8); similarly in Epist. cxl. 31.

If the foregoing view be correct, the oil, hitherto regarded as a symbol of grace, under one aspect or another, ought rather to be reckoned a symbol of the means of grace; and the action of the virgins who went to buy oil will represent the superstitious importance attached to such means by a certain class of religionists to the peril of their spiritual interests. Taking together the two acts of tolly committed by the foolish virgins, the neglect to take a sufficient supply of oil, and the unseasonable attempt to provide what was lacking, the resulting character is marked by two salient features—lack of forethought and superstitious regard to form, or, to express it otherwise, vain regard to appearance. That is to say, folly reveals itself in this parable under the same guise as in another parable, in which a contrast is drawn between the foolish and the wise, that, viz. with which the Sermon on the Mount concludes; and the fact confirms us in the belief that the view we venture to take is correct. The foolish builder is a man who thinks not of the future, and who has regard only to appearances; while the wise builder keeps in view the uncertainties and dangers of the future, and is not content with mere appearance. The characteristic differences come out in connection with the cardinal question of the foundation. The one builder, the wise one, makes the foundation of his house a matter of serious consideration; the other begins to build without ever

thinking of a foundation, and therein shows his folly. His mistake does not consist, as is often imagined, in making a bad choice of a foundation; but in acting as if a foundation were a matter of no consequence, beginning to build anywhere, on the loose sand, on the banks, or even in the bed of a river, dried up by summer heat. This appears very clearly from Luke's report of our Lord's words.[1] He that heareth and doeth is there compared to a man who "built a house and digged deep and laid a foundation[2] upon the rock;" and he that heareth and doeth not to a man that, "without a foundation,[3] built a house upon the earth." That is, the one takes great pains with the foundation of his house—digs below the surface, and goes deep in digging—digs till he reaches the rock; the other takes no pains about a foundation, provides none indeed, but begins at once to build at haphazard on the surface of the ground. It is thus not a case of choosing well between two possible foundations, one good, the other bad; but rather a case of attending to or neglecting the foundation. And the question to be considered by the expositor or preacher is not what are the two foundations represented respectively by the rock and the sand, but what are the qualities of character implied in attending to or neglecting the foundation of a house. The rock and the sand have no independent significance, the one didactically important point is the contrast of character brought out by the difference indicated in the respective ways of disposing of the question of a foundation.

[1] Luk 6:46-49.

[2] θεμ■λιον, without the article, implying that a foundation is not, as usual, a matter of course.

[3] χωρ■ς θεμελ■ου In what respects, then, do the characters of the two builders, behaving as represented, stand in contrast? Obviously in two respects. First, the wise builder has a prudent regard to the future. He anticipates the coming of storms, and aims at being well provided against these. The foolish builder, on the other hand, thinks only of the present. It is sunshine to-day, and he recks not of to-morrow and the storms it may bring. Then, secondly, the wise builder looks not merely to appearance. The question with him is not what will look well, but what will stand. The foolish builder, on the contrary, cares for appearance alone. A house without a foundation looks as well as one having a foundation; it may even be made to look better. These distinctions have their counterpart in the spiritual sphere, which form the salient characteristics of two classes of men both professing religion. There are those who have forethought, and those who have none; those who think of the trial which the future may bring, those who think only of to-day and its bright sunshine. The one class count the cost when they meditate becoming disciples of Christ; the other receive the word with joy, leaving out of view the 'tribulations' they are likely to encounter in the career on which they are entering. Again, the one class look to what is not seen by men in religious character, the hidden foundation of inward disposition; while the other consider only what can be seen by men, the outward act. The outward acts of both may be the same, but the motives are entirely different. The motive of the one is love of goodness; that of the other, vanity. Both pray, but a man of the one class prays in secret, his desire being not to be known as a praying man, but to get the favour he asks of Heaven; a man of the other class prays by preference at the corner of the street, desiring chiefly to get credit for a devotional spirit. Both practise beneficence; but the one from love or pity, and with modesty; the other not so much sympathising with the poor, as seeking a reputation for philanthropy.

Such are the distinctive attributes of the wise and the foolish, the genuine and the counterfeit, in religion. The marks of the one are forethought and sincerity, or depth; the marks of the other thoughtlessness and insincerity, or superficiality. The two sets of attributes always keep company. Sincerity implies forethought, and forethought sincerity; and in like manner the two other attributes imply each other. The man who has regard only to appearances would never profess religion at all, if he considered the future. He acts from impulse, imitation, and fashion, and the use of religion as a support in trial is not in all his thoughts. Hence it was that Christ so often presented the difficulties of the spiritual life to those who offered themselves as disciples. It was His way of ridding Himself of counterfeit discipleship originating in by-ends or thoughtless sentiment, and of securing that His circle of followers should include only men whose religion was an affair not of sentiment alone, but of reason and conscience, of reason looking well before, and of conscience realising moral responsibility. The parable of the two builders shows us the respective fates of these two classes. Looking to appearances it would be difficult to say which was to be preferred; perhaps the verdict would be in favour of the counterfeit, for they make appearances their study, and it is not wonderful if they excel in their own line. But the elements judge infallibly and ruthlessly, The rains descend, the floods rush, and the winds blow, and the house built on a rock stands, "it fell not;" but the house built on the sand "fell, and great was the fall of it. The elements are trials of all sorts, by providential calamities, by religious doubts, by sinful desires, by tribulations connected with profession of religion. Such trials the man of forethought and sincerity stands; before them the man whose piety is imitative and impulsive goes down.

Such are the lessons to be learnt from the parable of the Wise and Foolish Builders, and they seem to us fitted to throw light on the parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins. It is to be presumed that wisdom and folly have fixed characteristics in Christ’s teaching, so that if we have correctly determined their respective attributes in any one place, we may expect to find them reappearing in all other places where they are spoken of. They do reappear in the parable of the virgins if we decide to regard the going to buy oil as an act of folly, not otherwise. On that assumption we have in the parable two characteristic acts of the foolish virgins close of kin to each other. There is the initial act of taking an inadequate supply of oil, wherein is revealed characteristic want of forethought. As the foolish builder did not anticipate storms, but acted as if the usual good weather were to last always, and without exception; so the foolish virgins did not anticipate delay, but acted as if the usual at marriages was sure to happen, the prompt arrival of the bridegroom at the appointed time. Then there was the further act of folly consequent on discovering the evil result of the first, that, viz., of going away to buy oil, instead of doing without it, and joining the procession so as to insure admission to the feast. This act corresponds in general character to that of the foolish builder in having regard only to appearances, and so neglecting to provide a foundation. It is the act of persons to whom custom is an inviolable law. These foolish virgins must be in the fashion, must attend to all the usual ceremonies, must have their lighted lamps as well as the rest. The accidental though interesting accompaniment of the bridal procession is to their custom-ridden minds the essence of the matter, it would look so ill to meet and escort the bridegroom with dark lamps in their hand. The two acts of folly are obviously of kindred character, so that those who do the one are likely to do the other; they both denote enslavement to the usual, which is a characteristic mark of the morally commonplace, in contrast to the wise, who show their wisdom by the ability to anticipate the unusual as possible, and to disregard custom when it stands in the way of the attainment of a great end. The parable affords no scope for the display of the

latter phase of wisdom, for the wise virgins having oil enough were in a position to follow the usual custom, and of course did it; for to set aside even the least commandment of fashion unnecessarily is no part of wisdom. But it is true, nevertheless, that the wise are distinguished by freedom as well as by forethought in reference to the usual. They are incapable of being enslaved by superstitious regard for that which is only of secondary importance, a means to an end, an affair of decorum rather than of principle. Such freedom belongs to wisdom both in social life and in religion. On the other hand, the lack of such freedom is a sure mark of the weak and unwise. They are superstitiously devoted to the fashion of their time in religion as in other spheres. Means of grace, forms of worship, take the place of absolutely binding laws in their minds, and so become hindrances rather than helps in the Divine life. They understand not that "as ceremonies, such as men have devised, are but temporal; so may and ought they to be changed when they rather foster superstition than edify the Church using the same."[1] They think all change impious, and the very thought converts the risk into a baleful reality.

[1] 'Old Scotch Confession of Faith,' ch. xxi.

It may appear strange, if the going to buy oil was an act of folly, that Jesus did not distinctly indicate the fact But was it not enough to say, once for all, "five were foolish"? The omission to characterise the second act as foolish is a significant recognition of the persistency of character, more instructive than the repetition of the epithet foolish. It signifies: "Take care to possess the spirit of wisdom, for remember the spirit that is in you will dominate all your conduct. Ye cannot be foolish to-day, and wise to-morrow; foolish in this action, wise in the next. Character tends to fixity, and to get the benefit of wisdom at any time ye must be under its guidance at all times." A great, solemn truth, to be seriously pondered by all, and too often overlooked. As now explained, the present parable obviously points to a species of degeneracy to be manifested in the Church in the course of ages very different from that spoken of in the parable last considered. There the evil foretold is a hideous combination of hypocrisy, tyranny, and sensuality; here the evil hinted at is religious superstition. The two evils manifested themselves together in the Church, the one among the clergy, the other among the illiterate. The latter is the less evil, and its doom accordingly is milder. The foolish virgins are simply shut out from the feast, the unfaithful upper servant is cut in two. The lesser doom is serious enough, and it is one to which all are exposed who resemble the foolish virgins in their religious character. The slaves of use and wont are ever in peril of their souls, ever exposed to the risk of exclusion from the joys in store for those prepared to receive the Bridegroom at His coming at each crisis in the Church's history. So were the Pharisees excluded from the society of Jesus, which was a veritable wedding party. So were the Hebrew Christians, clinging to venerable Jewish customs and ordinances, in danger of forfeiting all share in the blessings of the Kingdom of Grace. As their faithful Teacher warned them, there was a risk of their being carried by the strong current of old custom away from Christ, as a boat is carried down a river past the landing-place on the opposite shore.[1] While they went to buy at the Jewish synagogue the Bridegroom might come, and the door be shut.

[1] Heb 2:1, μ■ ποτε παραρυ■μεν, "lest haply we drift away."—R. V. The slumber of the virgins is a feature in the parable which cannot fail to attract the attention of all thoughtful readers. To the allegorising interpretation which strives to discover a spiritual equivalent for every feature in a parable, this slumber denotes the negligence which overtakes all more or less with reference to the eternal, venial and remedial in the case of the wise, fatal in the case of the foolish; or, the

common sleep of death. To others, unable to acquiesce in either of these suggestions, and averse from the allegorising method of exegesis, the introduction of this feature appears simply a device for bringing about a situation involving a surprise which brings disaster to the unprepared. The foolish have to sleep, because had they kept awake they would have observed that their oil was getting done, and have provided a fresh supply in good time. The wise have to keep their foolish sisters company in slumber, that they may escape the charge of unkindness in allowing the sleepers to sleep on till it was too late to attend to the necessary preparations.[1] The truth lies between these extremes. The sleep of the virgins is not of such grave significance as the allegorisers imagine, and on the other hand it is something more than a mere device for bringing about a situation necessary to the moral of the parable. It is a meagre view which sees in the delay of the bridegroom, only a contrivance to make room for slumber, and in the slumber in turn only a contrivance to give occasion for a surprise. The delay of the bridegroom represents a spiritual fact; the protracted endurance of the period of development, and the consequent indefinite postponement of the consummation of the kingdom. And the sleep of the virgins represents the natural inevitable occupation with the present which ensues when through long delay hope or expectation of a future good has been all but extinguished. The relevancy of the parable requires that the sleep should have some such counterpart in the spiritual sphere; for if the fact were otherwise we should have a situation described to which there is no parallel in religious experience. The sleeping scene, therefore, besides being thoroughly true to the natural, has an important didactic significance. It teaches that there is a certain sleep of the mind with regard to the future and the eternal which is unavoidable, in itself perfectly harmless, yet fraught with danger to such as are not ever ready for any event, so that the most sudden crisis cannot overtake them unawares. The inevitableness of this sleep is very happily brought out in the delineation of the scene. The word all itself implies it; the universality suggests the idea of necessity. Then the way in which sleep comes on is significant. They grow drowsy, then begin to nod, then fall into deep slumber. The sleep is involuntary, the virgins do not go to bed with deliberate intent to sleep, they are overtaken with sleep while maintaining an attitude of waiting, like the disciples in the garden, like weary sentinels on the battle-field, like devout worshippers in church. Fatigue, advancing night, the demands of nature, prevail over all wakeful influences. Yet these are by no means wanting. For the virgins, one and all, are full of the excitement of the occasion. To see them one would say that though the bridegroom should tarry till daybreak sleep will be impossible till he arrive and the wedding festivities are over. That is not said, but it goes without being said; it is enough to remember that the occasion is a marriage, and that the actors in the drama are young maidens. The innocence of the sleep follows of course from its being unavoidable, but it is also taught by implication when in the sequel the wise virgins are represented as having time to trim their lamps between their awaking and the arrival of the bridegroom. Sleep in their case does not interfere with the efficient performance of all needful offices. Yet that this sleep, though innocent, may be dangerous appears from what befalls the hapless maidens. They awake and discover that neglected tasks have to be attended to when there is no time for their performance.

[1] So in effect Storr, 'De Parabolis Christi.' The parabolic representation at this point is characterised in a conspicuous degree by that felicity on which we have often had occasion to remark. It suggests more lessons than it is expressly designed to teach. It illustrates, for example, the 'sweet reasonableness' of Christ's teaching, in so far as it exhibits an ideal of waiting, not too exacting for human nature under the conditions of this present life. When Christ requires of His

disciples to watch, as He does in the closing sentence of this parable, He does not demand exclusive preoccupation of mind with the future. The watching required, we learn from the parable, is such as is compatible with a very complete engrossment with the present. It signifies timely preparation, ordering life on a right principle deliberately adopted once for all. It involves not continuous straining of the attention towards the eternal, but fixed intention active even when we are unconscious. The tension of the mind may innocently and must naturally vary, it is enough that its intention is ever the same, enough that we live under the power of the future and the eternal even when not thinking of it. This is quite possible. All know what it is to sleep under the power of the thought of having to rise at a particular hour in the morning. The slumber is light; there is a certain semi-consciousness all through the night. The slightest whisper, the calling of one's name ever so gently, suffices to awaken him; nay, in some mysterious way the latent thought of the engagement in prospect, the journey to be undertaken, suffices of itself to perform the part of an alarum clock, and to rouse the sleeper at the appointed time. So wise virgins sleep, as those who lie down with the thought in their minds that at any moment they may hear the thrilling call: "Behold the Bridegroom! come ye forth to meet Him."

Christ's ideal of watching, though eminently and characteristically reasonable, is too high for many. In the parable one half of the virgins fail to realise it, but in real life the proportion of defaulters is much larger. The number of those who understand the art of watching, providing for the uncertain future, for the unusual, for the eternal, while living healthily and heartily in the present, is small. The multitude are the slaves of the usual; the wise man who can anticipate the unusual and prepare for it is one among a thousand. How many accidents by land and sea are due to the rarity of such wise forethought! Railway accidents happen because they are exceptional, and officials get accustomed to their not happening. Sailors on the outlook observe something before them, but take no alarm. They think it is a cloud when it is an iceberg, for icebergs are not usually met with at that time of the year. Their mind is asleep under the soporific influence of the usual, though their physical senses are awake. The same cause works disastrously in the spiritual sphere. Here it is specially difficult to expect the unexpected, and specially dangerous to lack the power to do so, and many there be who fail. The young Christian does not expect the difficulties and delays connected with the fulfilment of his hopes which he is destined to encounter, and when they occur he is scandalised and becomes an apostate. Or he is not prepared to find the life of the spirit passing through phases markedly different from each other, and he clings to the initial stage and remains a babe, superstitiously attached to forms which, once means of grace, degenerate into mere fetishes. So also does it fare oftentimes with religious communities. They lack the wisdom to anticipate and provide for changes in the course of development. These when they come find them enslaved by the past, and unprepared to meet the new situation, and the inevitable result is decay and death. In parabolic language, the doom of those who are guilty of such folly is that the door is shut not to be opened again to them when they arrive too late and seek admission. Taking the parable as a story of natural life, this feature seems arbitrary. Children ask their parents the hard question, "Why could he not open the door?" and learned interpreters ask the same question ana acknowledge themselves unable to answer.[1] When the representation is viewed in connection with the final judgment it becomes too awful to speak of, and very difficult to construe with other Scriptural teaching. A recent writer remarks that the exclusion of the belated virgins allegorically interpreted leads to the wholly unbiblical thought that even the most earnest desire for salvation is in vain when the hour of decision has struck.

"The irreparabile damnum of the ’too late’ in this sense is not a Biblical doctrine."[2] When one thinks of the penitent thief, he is conscious that the difficulty is not imaginary. Then one cannot but remember the supplement in the Pauline teaching to the doctrine of exclusion taught in the parable of the Great Supper. "None of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper," says the parable, The Jews are cast out pro tempore, and the Gentiles brought in to provoke the former to jealousy, that they may also at length be brought in, says the Apostle Paul. Applying Paul’s doctrine to the present parable in the case of the Jews, it would imply that that people, prevented by their prejudices from taking part in the bridal procession, would nevertheless gain admittance to the feast when arriving late they cried, "Lord, Lord, open to us." Without doubt the judgment of exclusion in its temporal application is not in this parable, any more than in the parable of the Supper, absolute. It merely indicates tendency. It is not on that account trivial. Even the temporal losses entailed by the lack of the wisdom commended in this parable are grave enough to justify serious solicitude. Leaving the eternal reference out of account, that wisdom is highly to be prized. In view of eternity its value is unspeakable.

[1] Reuss speaks of the virgins going to buy oil and their exclusion as features introduced with a view to the application. In natural life they could have got oil in the house of the bride, and they would have been admitted though late.

[2] Weiss, ’Das Matthäus-Evangelium.’ The End

02.00. The Training Of The Twelve

The Training Of The Twelve by

A. B. Bruce Foreword by D. Stuart Briscoe

Alexander Balmain Bruce, a man as Scottish as his name, was born on a Perthshire farm and educated in an Edinburgh college. He ministered in Scottish country parishes and taught in a Glasgow seminary. For over forty years he devoted himself to the ministry of the Christian gospel, first as a pastor, and then as a distinguished Professor of Apologetics and New Testament Exegesis. He started writing during his pastorates and his best known book The Training of the Twelve was published in 1871. In keeping with the nineteenth century's love of ponderous and descriptive titles the book was subtitled, "Passages out of the Gospels Exhibiting the Twelve Disciples of Jesus Under Discipline for the Apostleship." For over a hundred years The Training of the Twelve has been highly regarded and widely received. No less an authority than Dr. W. H. Griffith Thomas called the book, "One of the great Christian classics of the nineteenth century," and Dr. Wilbur Smith, America's number one evangelical bibliophile remarked "There is nothing quite as important on the life of our Lord as related to the training of the twelve apostles as this book. . . ."

Now, this "nineteenth century classic" can expand its already rich and blessed ministry. Although over one-hundred years old, Dr. Bruce's work speaks powerfully and effectively to the contemporary Christian generation. In recent years there has been a re-discovery of the importance of Paul's teaching in Eph 4:1-32 concerning the pastor/teacher's responsibility to "equip the saints for the work of the ministry." Many churches for long years had been ignorant of, or chose to ignore such biblical teaching, and, accordingly, a few of God's people were over-worked while the majority were under-employed. While a handful of gifts were exercised to the full, thousands of gifted people did not even know they were gifted. As a result, the potential ministry of the Church of Christ was drastically curtailed. Dr. Bruce would have felt right at home with the present emphasis on training people to minister, and his book has much to offer as a resource for such training as it shows the Master training His special team.

Seeing the church as the Body of Christ is another healthy contemporary emphasis. It serves to deliver people from the mistaken idea that the church is something people attend and introduces them to the biblical concept that the church is something people are. For Christians to see themselves as the Body of Christ and to order their lives in loving response to each other as fellow members, committed to mutual nurture, is potentially revolutionary. This book carefully documents the struggles and the successes of the first group of people who endeavored so to love each other that they became recognizable as Christ's disciples.

Much has been written recently about personal Christian growth. Some of the material leans more heavily on social sciences than theological or biblical teaching and savors more of self-improvement than spiritual growth. Dr. Bruce's work will greatly benefit many modern readers

because his studies carefully examine how the disciples grew as a result of their relationship with the Master. The contemporary church needs to remember that the invaluable information gleaned from the social scientist about human behavior must never be seen as a substitute for a personal relationship with the living Lord Jesus similar to that enjoyed by the twelve as they walked the highways and byways together. How they heard His word, studied His reactions, fulfilled His commands and responded to His promises is faithfully recorded for us in Scripture and beautifully applied to our situations in this book.

Personally, I have found The Training of the Twelve of immense value for reasons other than those listed above. When preaching through the Gospels I have constantly referred to this book and found it to be an excellent commentary. In addition, I have often sat down and read chapters for no other reason than I needed the nourishment that comes to me only from the devotional application of Scripture to my own soul. Few expositors have done more for me than A. B. Bruce in this regard.

Perhaps the best recommendation that I can give the book, however, is to tell you that although I have many hundreds of books in my growing library, all carefully cataloged and filed, shelved and ordered, I have just realized that The Training of the Twelve has never been officially included in my library! The reason is simple. Ever since I purchased my copy, years ago, it has stayed either on my desk or at my elbow with a handful of other books which I need to refer to constantly. I just haven’t been able to part with it long enough to let my secretary put it in its proper place! On second thought, it is in its proper place right where I can get hold of it quickly. I hope your copy will find such a place in your life and experience.

D. STUART BRISCOE Preface to the Second Edition On receiving notice from the publisher that a second edition of The Training of the Twelve which first appeared in 1871, was called for, I was obliged to consider the question what alterations should be made on a work which, though written with care, was too obviously, to my maturer judgment, stamped with imperfection. Two alternatives suggested themselves to my mind. One was to recast the whole, so as to give it a more critical and scientific character, and make it bear more directly on current controversies respecting the origin of Christianity. The other was to allow the book to remain substantially as it was, retaining its popular form, and limiting alterations to details susceptible of improvement without change of plan. After a little hesitation, I decided for the latter course, for the following reasons. From expressions of opinion that reached me from many and very diverse quarters, I had come to be convinced that the book was appreciated and found useful, and I thence concluded that, notwithstanding its faults, it might continue to be of service in its primitive shape. Then, considering how difficult in all things it is to serve two masters or accomplish at once two ends, I saw that the adoption of the former of the two alternative courses was tantamount to writing a new book, which could be done, if necessary, independently of the present publication. I confess to having a vague plan of such a work in my head, which may or may not be carried into effect. The Tübingen school of critics, with whose works English readers are now becoming acquainted through translations, maintain that catholic Christianity was the result of a compromise or reconciliation between two radically opposed tendencies, represented respectively by the original apostles and by Paul, the two tendencies being Judaistic exclusiveness on the one hand, and Pauline universalism on the other. The twelve said: Christianity for Jews, and all who are willing to become Jews by compliance with Jewish custom; Paul said: Christianity for the whole world, and for all on the same terms. Now the

material dealt with in The Training of the Twelve, must, from the nature of the case, have some bearing on this conflict hypothesis of Dr. Baur and his friends. The question arises, What was to be expected of the men that were with Jesus? and the consideration of this question would form an important division of such a controversial work as I have in view. Another chapter might consider the part assigned to Peter in the Acts of the Apostles (alleged by the same school of critics to be a part invented for him by the writer for an apologetic purpose), seeking especially to determine whether it was a likely part for him to play-likely in view of his idiosyncrasies, or the training he had received. Another appropriate topic would be the character of the Apostle John, as portrayed in the synoptical Gospels, in its bearing on the questions of the authorship of the fourth Gospel, and the hostility to Paul and his universalism alleged to be manifested in the Book of Revelation. In such a work there would further fall to be considered the materials bearing on the same theme in other parts of the New Testament, especially those to be found in the Epistle to the Galatians. Finally, there might not inappropriately be found a place in such a work for a discussion of the question, How far do the synoptical Gospels-the principal sources of information regarding the teaching and public actions of Christ-bear traces of the influence of controversial or conciliatory tendencies? e.g., what ground is there for the assertion that the mission of the seventy is an invention in the interest of Pauline universalism intended to throw the original apostles into the shade? In the present work I have not attempted to develop the argument here outlined, but have merely indicated the places at which the different points of the argument might come in, and the way in which they might be used. The conflict hypothesis was not absent from my mind in writing the book at first; but I was neither so well acquainted with the literature relating thereto, nor so sensible of its importance, as I am now. In preparing this new edition for the press, I have not lost sight of any hints from friendly critics which might tend to make it more acceptable and useful. In particular, I have kept steadily in view retrenchment of the homiletic element, though I am sensible that I may still have retained too much for some tastes, but I hope not too much for the generality of readers. I have had to remember, that while some friends called for condensation, others have complained that the matter was too closely packed. I have also had occasion to observe in my reading of books on the Gospel history that it is possible to be so brief and sketchy as to miss not only the latent connections of thought, but even the thoughts themselves. The changes have not all been in the direction of retrenchment. While not a few paragraphs have been cancelled or reduced in bulk, other new ones have been added, and in one or two instances whole pages have been rewritten. Among the more important additions may be mentioned a note at the end of the chapter relating to the farewell discourse, giving an analysis of the discourse into its component parts; and a concluding paragraph at the end of the work summing up the instructions which the twelve had received from Jesus during the time they had been with Him. Besides these, a feature of this edition is a series of footnotes referring to some of the principal recent publications, British and foreign, whose contents relate more or less to the Gospel history, such as the works of Keim, Pfleiderer, Golani, Farrar, Sanday, and Supernatural Religion. The notes referring to Mr. Sanday's work bear on the important question, how far we have in John's Gospel a reliable record of the words spoken by Jesus to His disciples on the eve of His passion.

Besides the index of passages discussed which appeared in the first edition, this edition contains a carefully-prepared table of contents at the end, which it is hoped will add to the utility of the work. To make the bearing of the contents on the training of the disciples more apparent, I have in several instances changed the titles of chapters, or supplied alternative titles. With these

explanations, I send forth this new edition, with grateful feelings for the kind reception which the work has already received, and in the hope that by the divine blessing it may continue to be of use as an attempt to illustrate an interesting and important theme.

A. B. BRUCE

02.01. Beginnings

Beginnings

John 1:29-51 The section of the Gospel history above indicated, possesses the interest peculiar to the beginnings of all things that have grown to greatness. Here are exhibited to our view the infant church in its cradle, the petty sources of the River of Life, the earliest blossoms of Christian faith, the humble origin of the mighty empire of the Lord Jesus Christ.

All beginnings are more or less obscure in appearance, but none were ever more obscure than those of Christianity. What an insignificant event in the history of the church, not to say of the world, this first meeting of Jesus of Nazareth with five humble men, Andrew, Peter, Philip, Nathanael, and another unnamed! It actually seems almost too trivial to find a place even in the evangelic narrative. For we have here to do not with any formal solemn call to the great office of the apostleship, or even with the commencement of an uninterrupted how do discipleship, but at the utmost with the beginnings of an acquaintance with and of faith in Jesus on the part of certain individuals who subsequently became constant attendants on His person, and ultimately apostles of His religion. Accordingly we find no mention made in the three first Gospels of the events here recorded.

Far from being surprised at the silence of the synoptical evangelists, one is rather tempted to wonder how it came to pass that John, the author of the fourth Gospel, after the lapse of so many years, thought it worth while to relate incidents so minute, especially in such close proximity to the sublime sentences with which his Gospel begins. But we are kept from such incredulous wonder by the reflection, that facts objectively insignificant may be very important to the feelings of those whom they personally concern. What if John were himself one of the five who on the present occasion became acquainted with Jesus? That would make a wide difference between him and the other evangelists, who could know of the incidents here related, if they knew of them at all, only at second hand. In the case supposed, it would not be surprising that to his latest hour John remembered with emotion the first time he saw the Incarnate Word, and deemed the minutest memorials of that time unspeakably precious. First meetings are sacred as well as last ones, especially such as are followed by a momentous history, and accompanied, as is apt to be the case, with omens prophetic of the future. Such omens were not wanting in connection with the first meeting between Jesus and the five disciples. Did not the Baptist then first give to Jesus the name “Lamb of God,” so exactly descriptive of His earthly mission and destiny? Was not Nathanael’s doubting question, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” an ominous indication of a conflict with unbelief awaiting the Messiah? And what a happy omen of an opening era of wonders to be wrought by divine grace and power was contained in the promise of Jesus to the pious, though at first doubting, Israelite: “Henceforth ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man”! That John, the writer of the fourth Gospel, really was the fifth unnamed disciple, may be regarded as certain. It is his way throughout his Gospel, when alluding to himself, to use a periphrasis, or to leave, as here, a blank where his name should be.

One of the two disciples who heard the Baptist call Jesus the Lamb of God was the evangelist himself, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, being the other. The impressions produced on our minds by these little anecdotes of the infancy of the Gospel must be feeble, indeed, as compared with the emotions awakened by the memory of them in the breast of the aged apostle by whom they are recorded. It would not, however, be creditable either to our intelligence or to our piety if we could peruse this page of the evangelic history unmoved, as if it were utterly devoid of interest. We should address ourselves to the study of the simple story with somewhat of the feeling with which men make pilgrimages to sacred places; for indeed the ground is holy. The scene of the occurrences in which we are concerned was in the region of Peraea, on the banks of the Jordan, at the lower part of its course. The persons who make their appearance on the scene were all natives of Galilee, and their presence here is due to the fame of the remarkable man whose office it was to be the forerunner of the Christ. John, surnamed the Baptist, who had spent his youth in the desert as a hermit, living on locusts and wild honey, and clad in a garment of camel's hair, had come forth from his retreat, and appeared among men as a prophet of God. The burden of his prophecy was, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." In a short time many were attracted from all quarters to see and hear him. Of those who flocked to his preaching, the greater number went as they came; but not a few were deeply impressed, and, confessing their sins, underwent the rite of baptism in the waters of the Jordan. Of those who were baptized, a select number formed themselves into a circle of disciples around the person of the Baptist, among whom were at least two, and most probably the whole, of the five men mentioned by the evangelist. Previous converse with the Baptist had awakened in these disciples a desire to see Jesus, and prepared them for believing in Him. In his communications to the people around him John made frequent allusions to One who should come after himself. He spoke of this coming One in language fitted to awaken great expectations. He called himself, with reference to the coming One, a mere voice in the wilderness, crying, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." At another time he said, "I baptize with water; but there standeth One among you whom ye know not: He it is who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose." This great One was none other than the Messiah, the Son of God, the King of Israel.

Such discourses were likely to result, and by the man of God who uttered them they were intended to result, in the disciples of the Baptist leaving him and going over to Jesus. And we see here the process of transition actually commencing. We do not affirm that the persons here named finally quitted the Baptist's company at this time, to become henceforth regular followers of Jesus. But an acquaintance now begins which will end in that. The bride is introduced to the Bridegroom, and the marriage will come in due season; not to the chagrin but to the joy of the Bridegroom's friend.

How easily and artlessly does the mystic bride, as represented by these five disciples, become acquainted with her heavenly Bridegroom! The account of their meeting is idyllic in its simplicity, and would only be spoiled by a commentary. There is no need of formal introduction: they all introduce each other. Even John and Andrew were not formally introduced to Jesus by the Baptist; they rather introduced themselves. The exclamation of the desert prophet on seeing Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" repeated next day in an abbreviated form, was the involuntary utterance of one absorbed in his own thoughts, rather than the deliberate speech of one who was directing his disciples to leave himself and go over to Him of whom he spake. The two disciples, on the other hand, in going away after the personage whose

presence had been so impressively announced, were not obeying an order given by their old master, but were simply following the dictates of feelings which had been awakened in their breasts by all they had heard him say of Jesus, both on the present and on former occasions. They needed no injunction to seek the acquaintance of one in whom they felt so keenly interested: all they needed was to know that this was He. They were as anxious to see the Messianic King as the world is to see the face of a secular prince.

It is natural that we should scan the evangelical narrative for indications of character with reference to those who, in the way so quaintly described, for the first time met Jesus. Little is said of the five disciples, but there is enough to show that they were all pious men. What they found in their new friend indicates what they wanted to find. They evidently belonged to the select band who waited for the consolation of Israel, and anxiously looked for Him who should fulfil God's promises and realize the hopes of all devout souls. Besides this general indication of character supplied in their common confession of faith, a few facts are stated respecting these first believers in Jesus tending to make us a little better acquainted with them. Two of them certainly, all of them probably, had been disciples of the Baptist. This fact is decisive as to their moral earnestness. From such a quarter none but spiritually earnest men were likely to come. For if the followers of John were at all like himself, they were men who hungered and thirsted after real righteousness, being sick of the righteousness then in vogue; they said Amen in their hearts to the preacher's withering exposure of the hollowness of current religious profession and of the worthlessness of fashionable good works, and sighed for a sanctity other than that of pharisaic superstition and ostentation; their conscience acknowledged the truth of the prophetic oracle, "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away;" and they prayed fervently for the reviving of true religion, for the coming of the divine kingdom, for the advent of the Messianic King with fan in His hand to separate chaff from wheat, and to put right all things which were wrong. Such, without doubt, were the sentiments of those who had the honor to be the first disciples of Christ.

Simon, best known of all the twelve under the name of Peter, is introduced to us here, through the prophetic insight of Jesus, on the good side of his character as the man of rock. When this disciple was brought by his brother Andrew into the presence of his future Master, Jesus, we are told, "beheld him and said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas"-Cephas meaning in Syriac, as the evangelist explains, the same which Petros signifies in Greek. The penetrating glance of Christ discerned in this disciple latent capacities of faith and devotion, the rudiments of ultimate strength and power.

What manner of man Philip was the evangelist does not directly tell us, but merely whence he came. From the present passage, and from other notices in the Gospels, the conclusion has been drawn that he was characteristically deliberate, slow in arriving at decision; and for proof of this view, reference has been made to the "phlegmatic circumstantiality" with which he described to Nathanael the person of Him with whom he had just become acquainted. But these words of Philip, and all that we elsewhere read of him, rather suggest to us the idea of the earnest inquirer after truth, who has thoroughly searched the Scriptures and made himself acquainted with the Messiah of promise and prophecy, and to whom the knowledge of God is the summum bonum. In the solicitude manifested by this disciple to win his friend Nathanael over to the same faith we recognize that generous sympathetic spirit, characteristic of earnest inquirers, which afterwards

revealed itself in him when he became the bearer of the request of devout Greeks for permission to see Jesus. The notices concerning Nathanael, Philip's acquaintance, are more detailed and more interesting than in the case of any other of the five; and it is not a little surprising that we should be told so much in this place about one concerning whom we otherwise know almost nothing. It is even not quite certain that he belonged to the circle of the twelve, though the probability is, that he is to be identified with the Bartholomew of the synoptical catalogues-his full name in that case being Nathanael the son of Tolmai. It is strongly in favor of this supposition that the name Bartholomew comes immediately after Philip in the lists of the apostles. Be this as it may, we know on the best authority that Nathanael was a man of great moral excellence. No sooner had Jesus seen him than He exclaimed, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" The words suggest the idea of one whose heart was pure; in whom was no doublemindedness, impure motive, pride, or unholy passion: a man of gentle, meditative spirit, in whose mind heaven lay reflected like the blue sky in a still lake on a calm summer day. He was a man much addicted to habits of devotion: he had been engaged in spiritual exercises under cover of a fig-tree just before he met with Jesus. So we are justified in concluding, from the deep impression made on his mind by the words of Jesus, "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee." Nathanael appears to have understood these words as meaning, "I saw into thy heart, and knew how thou wast occupied, and therefore I pronounced thee an Israelite indeed." He accepted the statement made to him by Jesus as an evidence of preternatural knowledge, and therefore he forthwith made the confession, "Rabbi! Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel"-the King of that sacred commonwealth whereof you say I am a citizen.

It is remarkable that this man, so highly endowed with the moral dispositions necessary for seeing God, should have been the only one of all the five disciples who manifested any hesitancy about receiving Jesus as the Christ. When Philip told him that he had found the Messiah in Jesus of Nazareth, he asked incredulously, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" One hardly expects such prejudice in one so meek and amiable; and yet, on reflection, we perceive it to be quite characteristic. Nathanael's prejudice against Nazareth sprung not from pride, as in the case of the people of Judea who despised the Galileans in general, but from humility. He was a Galilean himself, and as much an object of Jewish contempt as were the Nazarenes. His inward thought was, "Surely the Messiah can never come from among a poor despised people such as we are-from Nazareth or any other Galilean town or village!" He timidly allowed his mind to be biased by a current opinion originating in feelings with which he had no sympathy; a fault common to men whose piety, though pure and sincere, defers too much to human authority, and who thus become the slaves of sentiments utterly unworthy of them.

While Nathanael was not free from prejudices, he showed his guilelessness in being willing to have them removed. He came and saw. This openness to conviction is the mark of moral integrity. The guileless man dogmatizes not, but investigates, and therefore always comes right in the end. The man of bad, dishonest heart, on the contrary, does not come and see. Deeming it his interest to remain in his present mind, he studiously avoids looking at aught which does not tend to confirm his foregone conclusions. He may, indeed, profess a desire for inquiry, like certain Israelites of whom we read in this same Gospel, of another stamp than Nathanael, but sharing with him the prejudice against Galilee. "Search and look," said these Israelites not without guile, in reply to the ingenuous question of the honest but timid Nicodemus: "Doth our law judge any man before it hear

him, and know what he doeth?" "Search and look," said they, appealing to observation and inviting inquiry; but they added: "For out of Galilee ariseth no prophet"-a dictum which at once prohibited inquiry in effect, and intimated that it was unnecessary. "Search and look; but we tell you beforehand you cannot arrive at any other conclusion than ours; nay, we warn you, you had better not."

Such were the characters of the men who first believed in Jesus. What, now, was the amount and value of their belief? On first view the faith of the five disciples, leaving out of account the brief hesitation of Nathanael, seems unnaturally sudden and mature. They believe in Jesus on a moment's notice, and they express their faith in terms which seem appropriate only to advanced Christian intelligence. In the present section of John's Gospel we find Jesus called not merely the Christ, the Messiah, the King of Israel, but the Son of God and the Lamb of God-names expressive to us of the cardinal doctrines of Christianity, the Incarnation and the Atonement. The haste and maturity which seem to characterize the faith of the five disciples are only superficial appearances. As to the former: these men believed that Messiah was to come some time; and they wished much it might be then, for they felt He was greatly needed. They were men who waited for the consolation of Israel, and they were prepared at any moment to witness the advent of the Comforter. Then the Baptist had told them that the Christ was come, and that He was to be found in the person of Him whom he had baptized, and whose baptism had been accompanied with such remarkable signs from heaven; and what the Baptist said they implicitly believed. Finally, the impression produced on their minds by the bearing of Jesus when they met, tended to confirm John's testimony, being altogether worthy of the Christ. The appearance of maturity in the faith of the five brethren is equally superficial. As to the name Lamb of God, it was given to Jesus by John, not by them. It was, so to speak, the baptismal name which the preacher of repentance had learned by reflection, or by special revelation, to give to the Christ. What the name signified even he but dimly comprehended, the very repetition of it showing him to be but a learner striving to get up his lesson; and we know that what John understood only in part, the men whom he introduced to the acquaintance of Jesus, now and for long after, understood not at all. The title Son of God was given to Jesus by one of the five disciples as well as by the Baptist, a title which even the apostles in after years found sufficient to express their mature belief respecting the Person of their Lord. But it does not follow that the name was used by them at the beginning with the same fulness of meaning as at the end. It was a name which could be used in a sense coming far short of that which it is capable of conveying, and which it did convey in apostolic preaching-merely as one of the Old Testament titles of Messiah, a synonyme for Christ. It was doubtless in this rudimentary sense that Nathanael applied the designation to Him, whom he also called the King of Israel. The faith of these brethren was, therefore, just such as we should expect in beginners. In substance it amounted to this, that they recognized in Jesus the Divine Prophet, King, Son of Old Testament prophecy; and its value lay not in its maturity, or accuracy, but in this, that however imperfect, it brought them into contact and close fellowship with Him, in whose company they were to see greater things than when they first believed, one truth after another assuming its place in the firmament of their minds, like the stars appearing in the evening sky as daylight fades away.

02.02. Fishers Of Men

Fishers of Men Mat 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20; Luk 5:1-11. The twelve arrived at their final intimate relation to Jesus only by degrees, three stages in the history of their fellowship with Him being distinguishable. In the first stage they were simply believers in Him as the Christ, and His occasional companions at convenient, particularly festive, seasons. Of this earliest stage in the intercourse of the disciples with their Master we have some memorials in the four first chapters of John's Gospel, which tell how some of them first became acquainted with Jesus, and represent them as accompanying Him at a marriage in Cana, at a passover in Jerusalem, on a visit to the scene of the Baptist's ministry, and on the return journey through Samaria from the south to Galilee. In the second stage, fellowship with Christ assumed the form of an uninterrupted attendance on His person, involving entire, or at least habitual abandonment of secular occupations. The present narratives bring under our view certain of the disciples entering on this second stage of discipleship. Of the four persons here named, we recognize three, Peter, Andrew, and John, as old acquaintances, who have already passed through the first stage of discipleship. One of them, James the brother of John, we meet with for the first time; a fact which suggests the remark, that in some cases the first and second stages may have been blended together-professions of faith in Jesus as the Christ being immediately followed by the renunciation of secular callings for the purpose of joining His company. Such cases, however, were probably exceptional and few. The twelve entered on the last and highest stage of discipleship when they were chosen by their Master from the mass of His followers, and formed into a select band, to be trained for the great work of the apostleship. This important event probably did not take place till all the members of the apostolic circle had been for some time about the person of Jesus. From the evangelic records it appears that Jesus began at a very early period of His ministry to gather round Him a company of disciples, with a view to the preparation of an agency for carrying on the work of the divine kingdom. The two pairs of brothers received their call at the commencement of the first Galilean ministry, in which the first act was the selection of Capernaum by the seaside as the centre of operations and ordinary place of abode. And when we think what they were called unto, we see that the call could not come too soon. The twelve were to be Christ's witnesses in the world after He Himself had left it; it was to be their peculiar duty to give to the world a faithful account of their Master's words and deeds, a just image of His character, a true reflection of His spirit. This service obviously could be rendered only by persons who had been, as nearly as possible, eye-witnesses and servants of the Incarnate Word from the beginning. While, therefore, except in the cases of Peter, James, John, Andrew, and Matthew, we have no particulars in the Gospels respecting the calls of those who afterwards became apostles, we must assume that they all occurred in the first year of the Saviour's public ministry. That these calls were given with conscious reference to an ulterior end, even the apostleship, appears from the remarkable terms in which the earliest of them was expressed. "Follow Me," said Jesus to the fishermen of Bethsaida, "and I will make you fishers of men." These words (whose originality stamps them as a genuine saying of Jesus) show that the great Founder of the faith desired not only to have disciples, but to have about Him men whom He might train to make disciples of others: to cast the

net of divine truth into the sea of the world, and to land on the shores of the divine kingdom a great multitude of believing souls. Both from His words and from His actions we can see that He attached supreme importance to that part of His work which consisted in training the twelve. In the intercessory prayer, e.g., He speaks of the training He had given these men as if it had been the principal part of His own earthly ministry. And such, in one sense, it really was. The careful, painstaking education of the disciples secured that the Teacher's influence on the world should be permanent; that His kingdom should be founded on the rock of deep and indestructible convictions in the minds of the few, not on the shifting sands of superficial evanescent impressions on the minds of the many. Regarding that kingdom, as our Lord Himself has taught us in one of His parables to do, as a thing introduced into the world like a seed cast into the ground and left to grow according to natural laws, we may say that, but for the twelve, the doctrine, the works, and the image of Jesus might have perished from human remembrance, nothing remaining but a vague mythical tradition, of no historical value, and of little practical influence.

Those on whom so much depended, it plainly behoved to possess very extraordinary qualifications. The mirrors must be finely polished that are designed to reflect the image of Christ! The apostles of the Christian religion must be men of rare spiritual endowment. It is a catholic religion, intended for all nations; therefore its apostles must be free from Jewish narrowness, and have sympathies wide as the world. It is a spiritual religion, destined ere long to antiquate Jewish ceremonialism; therefore its apostles must be emancipated in conscience from the yoke of ordinances. It is a religion, once more, which is to proclaim the Cross, previously an instrument of cruelty and badge of infamy, as the hope of the world's redemption, and the symbol of all that is noble and heroic in conduct; therefore its heralds must be superior to all conventional notions of human and divine dignity, capable of glorying in the cross of Christ, and willing to bear a cross themselves. The apostolic character, in short, must combine freedom of conscience, enlargement of heart, enlightenment of mind, and all in the superlative degree. The humble fishermen of Galilee had much to learn before they could satisfy these high requirements; so much, that the time of their apprenticeship for their apostolic work, even reckoning it from the very commencement of Christ's ministry, seems all too short. They were indeed godly men, who had already shown the sincerity of their piety by forsaking all for their Master's sake. But at the time of their call they were exceedingly ignorant, narrow-minded, superstitious, full of Jewish prejudices, misconceptions, and animosities. They had much to unlearn of what was bad, as well as much to learn of what was good, and they were slow both to learn and to unlearn. Old beliefs already in possession of their minds made the communication of new religious ideas a difficult task. Men of good honest heart, the soil of their spiritual nature was fitted to produce an abundant harvest; but it was stiff, and needed much laborious tillage before it would yield its fruit. Then, once more, they were poor men, of humble birth, low station, mean occupations, who had never felt the stimulating influence of a liberal education, or of social intercourse with persons of cultivated minds.

We shall meet with abundant evidence of the crude spiritual condition of the twelve, even long after the period when they were called to follow Jesus, as we proceed with the studies on which we have entered. Meantime we may discover significant indications of the religious immaturity of at least one of the disciples-Simon, son of Jonas-in Luke's account of the incidents connected with his call. Pressed by the multitude who had assembled on the shore of the lake to hear Him preach, Jesus, we read, entered into a ship (one of two lying near at hand), which happened to be

Simon's, and requesting him to thrust out a little from the land, sat down, and taught the people from the vessel. Having finished speaking, Jesus said unto the owner of the boat, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught." Their previous efforts to catch fish had been unsuccessful; but Simon and his brother did as Jesus directed, and were rewarded by an extraordinary take, which appeared to them and their fishing companions, James and John, nothing short of miraculous. Simon, the most impressible and the most demonstrative of the four, gave utterance to his feelings of astonishment by characteristic words and gestures. He fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" This exclamation opens a window into the inner man of him who uttered it through which we can see his spiritual state. We observe in Peter at this time that mixture of good and evil, of grace and nature, which so frequently reappears in his character in the subsequent history. Among the good elements discernible are reverential awe in presence of Divine Power, a prompt calling to mind of sin betraying tenderness of conscience, and an unfeigned self-humiliation on account of unmerited favor. Valuable features of character these; but they did not exist in Peter without alloy. Along with them were associated superstitious dread of the supernatural and a slavish fear of God. The presence of the former element is implied in the reassuring exhortation addressed to the disciple by Jesus, "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." Slavish fear of God is even more manifest in his own words, "Depart from me, O Lord." Powerfully impressed with the super-human knowledge revealed in connection with the great draught of fishes, he regards Jesus for the moment as a supernatural being, and as such dreads Him as one whom it is not safe to be near, especially for a poor sinful mortal like himself. This state of mind shows how utterly unfit Peter is, as yet, to be an apostle of a Gospel which magnifies the grace of God even to the chief of sinners. His piety, sufficiently strong and decided, is not of a Christian type; it is legal, one might almost say pagan, in spirit. With all their imperfections, which were both numerous and great, these humble fishermen of Galilee had, at the very outset of their career, one grand distinguishing virtue, which, though it may co-exist with many defects, is the cardinal virtue of Christian ethics, and the certain forerunner of ultimate high attainment. They were animated by a devotion to Jesus and to the divine kingdom which made them capable of any sacrifice. Believing Him who bade them follow Him to the Christ, come to set up God's kingdom on earth, they "straightway" left their nets and joined his company, to be thenceforth His constant companions in all His wanderings. The act was acknowledged by Jesus Himself to be meritorious; and we cannot, without injustice, seek to disparage it by ascribing it to idleness, discontent, or ambition as its motive. The Gospel narrative shows that the four brethren were not idle, but hard-working, industrious men. Neither were they discontented, if for no other reason than that they had no cause for discontent. The family of James and John at least seems to have been in circumstances of comfort; for Mark relates that, when called by Jesus, they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after Him. But ambition, had it no place among their motives? Well, we must admit that the twelve, and especially James and John, were by no means free from ambitious passions, as we shall see hereafter. But to whatever extent ambition may have influenced their conduct at a later period, it was not the motive which determined them to leave their nets. Ambition needs a temptation: it does not join a cause which is obscure and struggling, and whose success is doubtful; it strikes in when success is assured, and when the movement it patronizes is on the eve of its glorification. The cause of Jesus had not got to that stage yet.

One charge only can be brought against those men, and it can be brought with truth, and without doing their memory any harm. They were enthusiasts: their hearts were fired, and, as an unbelieving world might say, their heads were turned by a dream about a divine kingdom to be set up in Israel, with Jesus of Nazareth for its king. That dream possessed them, and imperiously ruled over their minds and shaped their destinies, compelling them, like Abraham, to leave their kindred and their country, and to go forth on what might well appear beforehand to be a fool's errand. Well for the world that they were possessed by the idea of the kingdom! For it was no fool's errand on which they went forth, leaving their nets behind. The kingdom they sought turned out to be as real as the land of Canaan, though not such altogether as they had imagined. The fishermen of Galilee did become fishers of men on a most extensive scale, and, by the help of God, gathered many souls into the church of such as should be saved. In a sense they are casting their nets into the sea of the world still, and, by their testimony to Jesus in Gospel and Epistle, are bringing multitudes to become disciples of Him among whose first followers they had the happiness to be numbered. The four, the twelve, forsook all and followed their Master. Did the "all" in any case include wife and children? It did in at least one instance-that of Peter; for the Gospels tell how Peter's mother-in-law was healed of a fever by the miraculous power of Christ. From a passage in Paul's first epistle to the Corinthian church, it appears that Peter was not the only one among the apostles who was married. From the same passage we further learn, that forsaking of wives for Christ's sake did not mean literal desertion. Peter the apostle led his wife about with him, and Peter the disciple may sometimes have done the same. The likelihood is that the married disciples, like married soldiers, took their wives with them or left them at home, as circumstances might require or admit. Women, even married women, did sometimes follow Jesus; and the wife of Simon, or of any other married disciple, may occasionally have been among the number. At an advanced period in the history we find the mother of James and John in Christ's company far from home; and where mothers were, wives, if they wished, might also be. The infant church, in its original nomadic or itinerant state, seems to have been a motley band of pilgrims, in which all sorts of people as to sex, social position, and moral character were united, the bond of union being ardent attachment to the person of Jesus. This church itinerant was not a regularly organized society, of which it was necessary to be a constant member in order to true discipleship. Except in the case of the twelve, following Jesus from place to place was optional, not compulsory; and in most cases it was probably also only occasional. It was the natural consequence of faith, when the object of faith, the centre of the circle, was Himself in motion. Believers would naturally desire to see as many of Christ's works and hear as many of His words as possible. When the object of faith left the earth, and His presence became spiritual, all occasion for such nomadic discipleship was done away. To be present with Him thereafter, men needed only to forsake their sins.

02.03. Matthew the Publican

Matthew the Publican Mat 9:9-13; Mark 2:15-17; Luk 5:27-32. The call of Matthew signally illustrates a very prominent feature in the public action of Jesus, viz., His utter disregard of the maxims of worldly wisdom. A publican disciple, much more a publican apostle, could not fail to be a stumbling-block to Jewish prejudice, and therefore to be, for the time at least, a source of weakness rather than of strength. Yet, while perfectly aware of this fact, Jesus invited to the intimate fellowship of disciplehood one who had pursued the occupation of a tax-gatherer, and at a later period selected him to be one of the twelve. His procedure in this case is all the more remarkable when contrasted with the manner in which He treated others having outward advantages to recommend them to favorable notice, and who showed their readiness to follow by volunteering to become disciples; of whom we have a sample in the scribe who came and said, “Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest.” This man, whose social position and professional attainments seemed to point him out as a very desirable acquisition, the “Master” deliberately scared away by a gloomy picture of his own destitute condition, saying, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head.” The eye of Jesus was single as well as omniscient: He looked on the heart, and had respect solely to spiritual fitness. He had no faith in any discipleship based on misapprehensions and by-ends; and, on the other hand, He had no fear of the drawbacks arising out of the external connections or past history of true believers, but was entirely indifferent to men’s antecedents. Confident in the power of truth, He chose the base things of the world in preference to things held in esteem, assured that they would conquer at the last. Aware that both He and His disciples would be despised and rejected of men for a season, He went calmly on His way, choosing for His companions and agents “whom He would,” undisturbed by the gainsaying of His generation-like one who knew that His work concerned all nations and all time. The publican disciple bears two names in the Gospel history. In the first Gospel he is called Matthew, while in the second and third Gospels he is called Levi. That the same person is intended, may, we think, be regarded as a matter of certainty. It is hardly conceivable that two publicans should have been called to be disciples at the same place and time, and with all accompanying circumstances, and these so remarkable, precisely similar. We need not be surprised that the identity has not been notified, as the fact of the two names belonging to one individual would be so familiar to the first readers of the Gospels as to make such a piece of information superfluous.

It is not improbable that Levi was the name of this disciple before the time of his call, and that Matthew was his name as a disciple-the new name thus becoming a symbol and memorial of the more important change in heart and life. Similar emblematic changes of name were of frequent occurrence in the beginning of the Gospel. Simon son of Jonas was transformed into Peter, Saul of Tarsus became Paul, and Joses the Cypriot got from the apostles the beautiful Christian name of Barnabas (son of consolation or prophecy), by his philanthropy, and magnanimity, and spiritual wisdom, well deserved.

Matthew seems to have been employed as a collector of revenue, at the time when he was called, in the town of Capernaum, which Jesus had adopted as His place of abode. For it was while Jesus was at home “in His own city,” as Capernaum came to be called, that the palsied man was brought to Him to be healed; and from all the evangelists we learn that it was on His way out from the house where that miracle was wrought that He saw Matthew, and spoke to him the word, “Follow Me.” The inference to be drawn from these facts is plain, and it is also important, as helping to explain the apparent abruptness of the call, and the promptitude with which it was responded to. Jesus and His new disciple being fellow-townsmen, had opportunities of seeing each other before. The time of Matthew’s call cannot be precisely determined, but there is good reason for placing it before the Sermon on the Mount, of which Matthew’s Gospel contains the most complete report. The fact just stated is of itself strong evidence in favor of this chronological arrangement, for so full an account of the sermon was not likely to emanate from one who did not hear it. An examination of the third Gospel converts probability into something like certainty. Luke prefixes to his abbreviated account of the sermon a notice of the constitution of the apostolic society, and represents Jesus as proceeding “with them”-the twelve, whose names he has just given-to the scene where the sermon was delivered. Of course the act of constitution must have been preceded by the separate acts of calling, and by Matthew’s call in particular, which accordingly is related by the third evangelist in an earlier part of his Gospel. It is true the position of the call in Luke’s narrative in itself proves nothing, as Matthew relates his own call after the sermon; and as, moreover, neither one nor other systematically adheres to the chronological principle of arrangement in the construction of his story. We base our conclusion on the assumption, that when any of the evangelists professes to give the order of sequence, his statement may be relied on; and on the observations, that Luke does manifestly commit himself to a chronological datum in making the ordination of the twelve antecedent to the preaching of the Sermon on the Mount, and that Matthew’s arrangement in the early part of his Gospel is as manifestly unchronological, his matter being massed on the topical principle- Mat 5:1-48, Mat 6:1-34, Mat 7:1-29 showing Jesus as a great ethical teacher; Mat 8:1-34 and Mat 9:1-38, as a worker of miracles; Mat 10:1-42 as a master, choosing, instructing, and sending forth on an evangelistic mission the twelve disciples; Mat 11:1-30 as a critic of His contemporaries and assertor of His own prerogatives; Mat 12:1-50, as exposed to the contradictions of unbelief; and Mat 13:1-58, as teaching the doctrines of the kingdom by parables.

Passing from these subordinate points to the call itself, we observe that the narratives of the event are very brief and fragmentary. There is no intimation of any previous acquaintance such as might prepare Matthew to comply with the invitation addressed to him by Jesus. It is not to be inferred, however, that no such acquaintance existed, as we can see from the case of the four fishermen, whose call is narrated with equal abruptness in the synoptical Gospels, while we know from John’s Gospel that three of them at least were previously acquainted with Jesus. The truth is, that, in regard to both calls, the evangelists concerned themselves only about the crisis, passing over in silence all preparatory stages, and not deeming it necessary to inform intelligent readers that, of course, neither the publican nor any other disciple blindly followed one of whom he knew nothing merely because asked or commanded to follow. The fact already ascertained, that Matthew, while a publican, resided in Capernaum, makes it absolutely certain that he knew of Jesus before he was called. No man could live in that town in those days without hearing of “mighty works” done in and around it. Heaven had been opened right above Capernaum, in view of all, and the angels

had been thronging down upon the Son of man. Lepers were cleansed, and demoniacs dispossessed; blind men received their sight, and palsied men the use of their limbs; one woman was cured of a chronic malady, and another, daughter of a distinguished citizen-Jairus, ruler of the synagogue-was brought back to life from the dead. These things were done publicly, made a great noise, and were much remarked on. The evangelists relate how the people “were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth He even the unclean spirits, and they do obey Him;” how they glorified God, saying, “We never saw it on this fashion,” or, “we have seen strange things today.” Matthew himself concludes his account of the raising of Jairus’ daughter with the remark: “The fame hereof went abroad into all that land.”

We do not affirm that all these miracles were wrought before the time of the publican’s call, but some of them certainly were. Comparing one Gospel with another, to determine the historical sequence, we conclude that the greatest of all these mighty works, the last mentioned, though narrated by Matthew after his call, really occurred before it. Think, then, what a powerful effect that marvelous deed would have in preparing the tax-gatherer for recognizing, in the solemnly uttered word, “Follow me,” the command of One who was Lord both of the dead and of the living, and for yielding to His bidding, prompt, unhesitating obedience! In crediting Matthew with some previous knowledge of Christ, we make his conversion to discipleship appear reasonable without diminishing its moral value. It was not a matter of course that he should become a follower of Jesus merely because he had heard of, or even seen, His wonderful works. Miracles of themselves could make no man a believer, otherwise all the people of Capernaum should have believed. How different was the actual fact, we learn from the complaints afterwards made by Jesus concerning those towns along the shores of the Lake of Gennesareth, wherein most of His mighty works were done, and of Capernaum in particular. Of this city He said bitterly: “Thou, Capernaum, shalt thou be exalted unto heaven? thou shalt go down unto Hades: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. Christ’s complaint against the inhabitants of these favored cities was that they did not repent, that is, make the kingdom of heaven their chief good and chief end. They wondered sufficiently at His miracles, and talked abundantly of them, and ran after Him to see more works of the same kind, and enjoy anew the sensation of amazement; but after a while they relapsed into their old stupidity and listlessness, and remained morally as they had been before He came among them, not children of the kingdom, but children of this world.

It was not so with the collector of customs. He not merely wondered and talked, but he “repented.” Whether he had more to repent of than his neighbors, we cannot tell. It is true that he belonged to a class of men who, seen through the colored medium of popular prejudice, were all bad alike, and many of whom were really guilty of fraud and extortion; but he may have been an exception. His farewell feast shows that he possessed means, but we must not take for granted that they were dishonestly earned. This only we may safely say, that if the publican disciple had been covetous, the spirit of greed was now exorcised; if he had ever been guilty of oppressing the poor, he now abhorred such work. He had grown weary of collecting revenue from a reluctant population, and was glad to follow One who had come to take burdens off instead of laying them on, to remit debts instead of exacting them with rigor. And so it came to pass that the voice of Jesus acted on his heart like a spell: “He left all, rose up, and followed Him.” This great decision, according to the

account of all the evangelists, was followed shortly after by a feast in Matthew's house at which Jesus was present. From Luke we learn that this entertainment had all the character of a great occasion, and that it was given in honor of Jesus. The honor, however, was such as few would value, for the other guests were peculiar. "There was a great company of publicans, and of others that sat down with them;" and among the "others" were some who either were or were esteemed, in a superlative degree, "sinners." This feast was, as we judge, not less rich in moral significance than in the viands set on the board. For the host himself it was, without doubt, a jubilee feast commemorative of his emancipation from drudgery and uncongenial society and sin, or, at all events, temptation to sin, and of his entrance on the free, blessed life of fellowship with Jesus. It was a kind of poem, saying for Matthew what Doddridge's familiar lines say for many another, perhaps not so well- "Oh happy day, that fixed my choice On Thee, my Saviour, and my God!

Well may this glowing heart rejoice, And tell its raptures all abroad!

'Tis done; the great transaction's done;

I am my Lord's and He is mine;

He drew me, and I followed on, Charmed to confess the voice divine." The feast was also, as already said, an act of homage to Jesus. Matthew made his splendid feast in honor of his new master, as Mary of Bethany shed her precious ointment. It is the way of those to whom much grace is shown and given, to manifest their grateful love in deeds bearing the stamp of what a Greek philosopher called magnificence, and churls call extravagance; and whoever might blame such acts of devotion, Jesus always accepted them with pleasure. The ex-publican's feast seems further to have had the character of a farewell entertainment to his fellow-publicans. He and they were to go different ways henceforth, and he would part with his old comrades in peace.

Once more: we can believe that Matthew meant his feast to be the means of introducing his friends and neighbors to the acquaintance of Jesus, seeking with the characteristic zeal of a young disciple to induce others to take the step which he had resolved on himself, or at least hoping that some sinners present might be drawn from evil ways into the paths of righteousness. And who can tell but it was at this very festive gathering, or on some similar occasion, that the gracious impressions were produced whose final outcome was that affecting display of gratitude unutterable at that other feast in Simon's house, to which neither publicans nor sinners were admitted?

Matthew's feast was thus, looked at from within, a very joyous, innocent, and even edifying one. But, alas! looked at from without, like stained windows, it wore a different aspect: it was, indeed, nothing short of scandalous. Certain Pharisees observed the company assemble or disperse, noted their character, and made, after their wont, sinister reflections. Opportunity offering itself, they asked the disciples of Jesus the at once complimentary and censorious question: "Why eateth your master with publicans and sinners?" The interrogants were for the most part local members of the pharisaic sect, for Luke calls them "their scribes and Pharisees," which implies that Capernaum was important enough to be honored with the presence of men representing that religious party. It is by no means unlikely, however, that among the unfriendly spectators were some Pharisees all the way from Jerusalem, the seat of ecclesiastical government, already on the track of the Prophet of Nazareth, watching His doings, as they watched those of the Baptist before

Him. The news of Christ's wondrous works soon spread over all the land, and attracted spectators from all quarters-from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and Peraea, as well as Galilee: and we may be sure that the scribes and Pharisees of the holy city were not the last to go and see, for we must own they performed the duty of religious espionage with exemplary diligence. The presence of ill-affected men belonging to the pharisaic order was almost a standing feature in Christ's public ministry. But it never disconcerted Him. He went calmly on His way doing His work; and when His conduct was called in question, He was ever ready with a conclusive answer. Among the most striking of His answers or apologies to them who examined Him, were those in which He vindicated Himself for mixing with publicans and sinners. They are three in number, spoken on as many occasions: the first in connection with Matthew's feast; the second in the house of Simon the Pharisee; and the third on an occasion not minutely defined, when certain scribes and Pharisees brought against Him the grave charge, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." These apologies for loving the unloved and the morally unlovely are full of truth and grace, poetry and pathos, and not without a touch of quiet, quaint satire directed against the sanctimonious fault-finders. The first may be distinguished as the professional argument, and is to this effect: "I frequent the haunts of sinners, because I am a physician, and they are sick and need healing. Where should a physician be but among his patients? where oftenest, but among those most grievously afflicted?" The second may be described as the political argument, its drift being this: "It is good policy to be the friend of sinners who have much to be forgiven; for when they are restored to the paths of virtue and piety, how great is their love! See that penitent woman, weeping for sorrow and also for joy, and bathing her Saviour's feet with her tears. Those tears are refreshing to my heart, as a spring of water in the arid desert of pharisaic frigidity and formalism." The third may be denominated the argument from natural instinct, and runs thus: "I receive sinners, and eat with them, and seek by these means their moral restoration, for the same reason which moves the shepherd to go after a lost sheep, leaving his unstrayed flock in the wilderness, viz. because it is natural to seek the lost, and to have more joy in finding things lost than in possessing things which never have been lost. Men who understand not this feeling are solitary in the universe; for angels in heaven, fathers, housewives, shepherds, all who have human hearts on earth, understand it well, and act on it every day." In all these reasonings Jesus argued with His accusers on their own premises, accepting their estimate of themselves, and of the class with whom they deemed it discreditable to associate, as righteous and sinful respectively. But He took care, at the same time, to let it appear that His judgment concerning the two parties did not coincide with that of His interrogators. This He did on the occasion of Matthew's feast, by bidding them go study the text, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice;" meaning by the quotation to insinuate, that while very religious, the Pharisees were also very inhuman, full of pride, prejudice, harshness, and hatred; and to proclaim the truth, that this character was in God's sight far more detestable than that of those who were addicted to the coarse vices of the multitude, not to speak of those who were "sinners" mainly in the pharisaic imagination, and within inverted commas. Our Lord's last words to the persons who called His conduct in question at this time were not merely apologetic, but judicial. "I came not," He said, "to call the righteous, but sinners;" intimating a purpose to let the self-righteous alone and to call to repentance and to the joys of the kingdom those who were not too self-satisfied to care for the benefits offered, and to whom the gospel feast would be a real entertainment. The word, in truth, contained a significant hint of an approaching religious revolution in which the last should become first and the first last; Jewish outcasts, Gentile dogs,

made partakers of the joys of the kingdom and the “righteous” shut out. It was one of the pregnant sayings by which Jesus made known to those who could understand, that His religion was an universal one, a religion for humanity, a gospel for mankind, because a gospel for sinners. And what this saying declared in word, the conduct it apologized for proclaimed yet more expressively by deed. It was an ominous thing that loving sympathy for “publicans and sinners”-the pharisaic instinct discerned it to be so, and rightly took the alarm. It meant death to privileged monopolies of grace and to Jewish pride and exclusivism-all men equal in God’s sight, and welcome to salvation on the same terms. In fact it was a virtual announcement of the Pauline programme of an universalistic gospel, which the twelve are supposed by a certain school of theologians to have opposed as determinedly as the Pharisees themselves. Strange that the men who had been with Jesus were so obtuse as not to understand, even at the last, what was involved in their Master’s fellowship with the low and the lost! Was Buddha more fortunate in his disciples than Jesus in His? Buddha said, “My law is a law of grace for all,” directing the saying immediately against Brahminical caste prejudice; and his followers understood that it meant, Buddhism a missionary religion, a religion even for Sudras, and therefore for all mankind!

02.04. The Twelve

The Twelve Mat 10:1-4; Mark 3:13-19; Luk 6:12-16; Acts 1:13. The selection by Jesus of the twelve from the band of disciples who had gradually gathered around His person is an important landmark in the Gospel history. It divides the ministry of our Lord into two portions, nearly equal, probably, as to duration, but unequal as to the extent and importance of the work done in each respectively. In the earlier period Jesus labored single-handed; His miraculous deeds were confined for the most part to a limited area, and His teaching was in the main of an elementary character. But by the time when the twelve were chosen, the work of the kingdom had assumed such dimensions as to require organization and division of labor; and the teaching of Jesus was beginning to be of a deeper and more elaborate nature, and His gracious activities were taking on ever-widening range.

It is probable that the selection of a limited number to be His close and constant companions had become a necessity to Christ, in consequence of His very success in gaining disciples. His followers, we imagine, had grown so numerous as to be an incumbrance and an impediment to his movements, especially in the long journeys which mark the later part of His ministry. It was impossible that all who believed could continue henceforth to follow Him, in the literal sense, whithersoever He might go: the greater number could now only be occasional followers. But it was His wish that certain selected men should be with Him at all times and in all places-His travelling companions in all His wanderings, witnessing all His work, and ministering to His daily needs. And so, in the quaint words of Mark, “Jesus calleth unto Him whom He would, and they came unto Him, and He made twelve, that they should be with Him.”

These twelve, however, as we know , were to be something more than travelling companions or menial servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. They were to be, in the mean time, students of Christian doctrine, and occasional fellow-laborers in the work of the kingdom, and eventually Christ’s chosen trained agents for propagating the faith after He Himself had left the earth. From the time of their being chosen, indeed, the twelve entered on a regular apprenticeship for the great office of apostleship, in the course of which they were to learn, in the privacy of an intimate daily fellowship with their Master, what they should be, do, believe, and teach, as His witnesses and ambassadors to the world. Henceforth the training of these men was to be a constant and prominent part of Christ’s personal work. He was to make it His business to tell them in darkness what they should afterwards speak in the daylight, and to whisper in their ear what in after years they should preach upon the housetops. The time when this election was made, though not absolutely determined, is fixed in relation to certain leading events in the Gospel history. John speaks of the twelve as an organized company at the period of the feeding of the five thousand, and of the discourse on the bread of life in the synagogue of Capernaum, delivered shortly after that miracle. From this fact we learn that the twelve were chosen at least one year before the crucifixion; for the miracle of the feeding took place, according to the fourth evangelist, shortly before a Passover season. From the words spoken by Jesus to the men whom He had chosen, in justification of His seeming doubt of their fidelity after the multitude had deserted Him, “Did I not choose you the twelve, and one of you

is a devil?" we conclude that the choice was then not quite a recent event. The twelve had been long enough together to give the false disciple opportunity to show his real character.

Turning now to the synoptical evangelists, we find them fixing the position of the election with reference to two other most important events. Matthew speaks for the first time of the twelve as a distinct body in connection with their mission in Galilee. He does not, however, say that they were chosen immediately before, and with direct reference to, that mission. He speaks rather as if the apostolic fraternity had been previously in existence, his words being, "When He had called unto Him His twelve disciples." Luke, on the other hand, gives a formal record of the election, as a preface to his account of the Sermon on the Mount, so speaking as to create the impression that the one event immediately preceded the other. Finally, Mark's narrative confirms the view suggested by these observations on Matthew and Luke, viz. that the twelve were called just before the Sermon the Mount was delivered, and some considerable time before they were sent forth on their preaching and healing mission. There we read: "Jesus goeth up into the mountain (to(o!roj), and calleth unto Him whom He would"-the ascent referred to evidently being that which Jesus made just before preaching His great discourse. Mark continues: "And He ordained twelve, that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out devils." Here allusion is made to an intention on Christ's part to send forth His disciples on a mission, but the intention is not represented as immediately realized. Nor can it be said that immediate realization is implied, though not expressed; for the evangelist gives an account of the mission as actually carried out several chapters further on in his Gospel, commencing with the words, "And He calleth unto Him the twelve, and began to send them forth."

It may be regarded, then, as tolerably certain, that the calling of the twelve was a prelude to the preaching of the great sermon on the kingdom, in the founding of which they were afterwards to take so distinguished a part. At what precise period in the ministry of our Lord the sermon itself is to be placed, we cannot so confidently determine. Our opinion, however, is, that the Sermon on the Mount was delivered towards the close of Christ's first lengthened ministry in Galilee, during the time which intervened between the two visits to Jerusalem on festive occasions mentioned in the second and fifth chapters of John's Gospel. The number of the apostolic company is significant, and was doubtless a matter of choice, not less than was the composition of the selected band. A larger number of eligible men could easily have been found in a circle of disciples which afterwards supplied not fewer than seventy auxiliaries for evangelistic work; and a smaller number might have served all the present or prospective purposes of the apostleship. The number twelve was recommended by obvious symbolic reasons. It happily expressed in figures what Jesus claimed to be, and what He had come to do, and thus furnished a support to the faith and a stimulus to the devotion of His followers. It significantly hinted that Jesus was the divine Messianic King of Israel, come to set up the kingdom whose advent was foretold by prophets in glowing language, suggested by the palmy days of Israel's history, when the theocratic community existed in its integrity, and all the tribes of the chosen nation were united under the royal house of David. That the number twelve was designed to bear such a mystic meaning, we know from Christ's own words to the apostles on a later occasion, when, describing to them the rewards awaiting them in the kingdom for past services and sacrifices, He said, "Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

It is possible that the apostles were only too well aware of the mystic significance of their number, and found in it an encouragement to the fond delusive hope that the coming kingdom should be not only a spiritual realization of the promises, but a literal restoration of Israel to political integrity and independence. The risk of such misapprehension was one of the drawbacks connected with the particular number twelve, but it was not deemed by Jesus a sufficient reason for fixing on another. His method of procedure in this, as in all things, was to abide by that which in itself was true and right, and then to correct misapprehensions as they arose. From the number of the apostolic band, we pass to the persons composing it. Seven of the twelve-the first seven in the catalogues of Mark and Luke, assuming the identity of Bartholomew and Nathanael-are persons already known to us. With two of the remaining five-the first and the last-we shall become well acquainted as we proceed in the history. Thomas called Didymus, or the Twin, will come before us as a man of warm heart but melancholy temperament, ready to die with his Lord, but slow to believe in His resurrection. Judas Iscariot is known to all the world as the Traitor. He appears for the first time, in these catalogues of the apostles, with the infamous title branded on his brow, “Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him.” The presence of a man capable of treachery among the elect disciples is a mystery which we shall not now attempt to penetrate. We merely make this historical remark about Judas here, that he seems to have been the only one among the twelve who was not a Galilean. He is surnamed, from his native place apparently, the man of Kerioth; and from the Book of Joshua we learn that there was a town of that name in the southern border of the tribe of Judah. The three names which remain are exceedingly obscure. On grounds familiar to Bible scholars, it has often been attempted to identify James of Alphaeus with James the brother or kinsman of the Lord. The next on the lists of Matthew and Mark has been supposed by many to have been a brother of this James, and therefore another brother of Jesus. This opinion is based on the fact, that in place of the Lebbaeus or Thaddaeus of the two first Gospels, we find in Luke’s catalogues the name Judas “of James.” The ellipsis in this designation has been filled up with the word brother, and it is assumed that the James alluded to is James the son of Alphaeus. However tempting these results may be, we can scarcely regard them as ascertained, and must content ourselves with stating that among the twelve was a second James, besides the brother of John and son of Zebedee, and also a second Judas, who appears again as an interlocutor in the farewell conversation between Jesus and His disciples on the night before His crucifixion, carefully distinguished by the evangelist from the traitor by the parenthetical remark “not Iscariot.” This Judas, being the same with Lebbaeus Thaddaeus, has been called the three-named disciple. The disciple whom we have reserved to the last place, like the one who stands at the head of all the lists, was a Simon. This second Simon is as obscure as the first is celebrated, for he is nowhere mentioned in the Gospel history, except in the catalogues; yet, little known as he is, the epithet attached to his name conveys a piece of curious and interesting information. He is called the Kananite (not Canaanite), which is a political, not a geographical designation, as appears from the Greek word substituted in the place of this Hebrew one by Luke, who calls the disciple we now speak of Simon Zelotes; that is, in English, Simon the Zealot. This epithet Zelotes connects Simon unmistakably with the famous party which rose in rebellion under Judas in the days of the taxing, some twenty years before Christ’s ministry began, when Judea and Samaria were brought under the direct government of Rome, and the census of the population was taken with a view to subsequent taxation. How singular a phenomenon is this ex-zealot among the disciples of Jesus! No two men could differ more widely in their spirit, ends, and means, than Judas of Galilee and

Jesus of Nazareth. The one was a political malcontent; the other would have the conquered bow to the yoke, and give to Caesar Caesar's due. The former aimed at restoring the kingdom to Israel, adopting for his watchword, "We have no Lord or Master but God;" the latter aimed at founding a kingdom not national, but universal, not "of this world," but purely spiritual. The means employed by the two actors were as diverse as their ends. One had recourse to the carnal weapons of war, the sword and the dagger; the other relied solely on the gentle but omnipotent force of truth.

What led Simon to leave Judas for Jesus we know not; but he made a happy exchange for himself, as the party he forsook were destined in after years to bring ruin on themselves and on their country by their fanatical, reckless, and unavailing patriotism. Though the insurrection of Judas was crushed, the fire of discontent still smouldered in the breasts of his adherents; and at length it burst out into the blaze of a new rebellion, which brought on a death-struggle with the gigantic power of Rome, and ended in the destruction of the Jewish capital, and the dispersion of the Jewish people. The choice of this disciple to be an apostle supplies another illustration of Christ's disregard of prudential wisdom. An ex-zealot was not a safe man to make an apostle of, for he might be the means of rendering Jesus and His followers objects of political suspicion. But the Author of our faith was willing to take the risk. He expected to gain many disciples from the dangerous classes as well as from the despised, and He would have them, too, represented among the twelve.

It gives one a pleasant surprise to think of Simon the zealot and Matthew the publican, men coming from so opposite quarters, meeting together in close fellowship in the little band of twelve. In the persons of these two disciples extremes meet-the tax-gatherer and the tax-hater: the unpatriotic Jew, who degraded himself by becoming a servant of the alien ruler; and the Jewish patriot, who chafed under the foreign yoke, and sighed for emancipation. This union of opposites was not accidental, but was designed by Jesus as a prophecy of the future. He wished the twelve to be the church in miniature or germ; and therefore He chose them so as to intimate that, as among them distinctions of publican and zealot were unknown, so in the church of the future there should be neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, bond nor free, but only Christ-all to each, and in each of the all.

These were the names of the twelve as given in the catalogues. As to the order in which they are arranged, on closely inspecting the lists we observe that they contain three groups of four, in each of which the same names are always found, though the order of arrangement varies. The first group includes those best known, the second the next best, and the third those least known of all, or, in the case of the traitor, known only too well. Peter, the most prominent character among the twelve, stands at the head of all the lists, and Judas Iscariot at the foot, carefully designated, as already observed, the traitor. The apostolic roll, taking the order given in Matthew, and borrowing characteristic epithets from the Gospel history at large, is as follows:

FIRST GROUP Simon Peter . . . . The man of rock.

Andrew . . . . Peter's brother.

James and John . . . . Sons of Zebedee, and sons of thunder.

SECOND GROUP Philip . . . . The earnest inquirer.

Bartholomew, or Nathanael . . . . The guileless Israelite.

Thomas . . . . The melancholy.

Matthew . . . . The publican (so called by himself only).

THIRD GROUP James (the son) of Alphaeus . . . . (James the Less? Mark 15:40.) Lebbaeus, Thaddaeus, Judas of James, ... The three-named disciple.

Simon . . . . The Zealot.

Judas, the man of Kerioth . . . . The Traitor.

Such were the men whom Jesus chose to be with Him while He was on this earth, and to carry on His work after He left it. Such were the men whom the church celebrates as the “glorious company of the apostles.” The praise is merited; but the glory of the twelve was not of this world. In a worldly point of view they were a very insignificant company indeed-a band of poor illiterate Galilean provincials, utterly devoid of social consequence, not likely to be chosen by one having supreme regard to prudential considerations. Why did Jesus choose such men? Was He guided by feelings of antagonism to those possessing social advantages, or of partiality for men of His own class? No; His choice was made in true wisdom. If He chose Galileans mainly, it was not from provincial prejudice against those of the south; if, as some think, He chose two or even four of his own kindred, it was not from nepotism; if He chose rude, unlearned, humble men, it was not because He was animated by any petty jealousy of knowledge, culture, or good birth. If any rabbi, rich man, or ruler had been willing to yield himself unreservedly to the service of the kingdom, no objection would have been taken to him on account of his acquirements, possessions, or titles. The case of Saul of Tarsus, the pupil of Gamaliel, proves the truth of this statement. Even Gamaliel himself would not have been objected to, could he have stooped to become a disciple of the unlearned Nazarene. But, alas! neither he nor any of his order would condescend so far, and therefore the despised One did not get an opportunity of showing His willingness to accept as disciples and choose for apostles such as they were. The truth is, that Jesus was obliged to be content with fishermen, and publicans, and quondam zealots, for apostles. They were the best that could be had. Those who deemed themselves better were too proud to become disciples, and thereby they excluded themselves from what all the world now sees to be the high honor of being the chosen princes of the kingdom. The civil and religious aristocracy boasted of their unbelief. The citizens of Jerusalem did feel for a moment interested in the zealous youth who had purged the temple with a whip of small cords; but their faith was superficial, and their attitude patronizing, and therefore Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew what was in them. A few of good position were sincere sympathizers, but they were not so decided in their attachment as to be eligible for apostles. Nicodemus was barely able to speak a timid apologetic word in Christ’s behalf, and Joseph of Arimathea was a disciple “secretly,” for fear of the Jews. These were hardly the persons to send forth as missionaries of the cross-men so fettered by social ties and party connections, and so enslaved by the fear of man. The apostles of Christianity must be made of sterner stuff. And so Jesus was obliged to fall back on the rustic, but simple, sincere, and energetic men of Galilee. And He was quite content with His choice, and devoutly thanked His Father for giving Him even such as they. Learning, rank, wealth, refinement, freely given up to his service, He would not have despised; but He preferred devoted men who had none of these

advantages to undevoted men who had them all. And with good reason; for it mattered little, except in the eyes of contemporary prejudice, what the social position or even the previous history of the twelve had been, provided they were spiritually qualified for the work to which they were called. What tells ultimately is, not what is without a man, but what is within. John Bunyan was a man of low birth, low occupation, and, up till his conversion, of low habits; but he was by nature a man of genius, and by grace a man of God, and he would have made-he was, in fact-a most effective apostle. But it may be objected that all the twelve were by no means gifted like Bunyan; some of them, if one may judge from the obscurity which envelops their names, and the silence of history regarding them, having been undistinguished either by high endowment or by a great career, and in fact, to speak plainly, all but useless. As this objection virtually impugns the wisdom of Christ's choice, it is necessary to examine how far it is according to truth. We submit the following considerations with this view:

1. That some of the apostles were comparatively obscure, inferior men, cannot be denied; but even the obscurest of them may have been most useful as witnesses for Him with whom they had companied from the beginning. It does not take a great man to make a good witness, and to be witnesses of Christian facts was the main business of the apostles. That even the humblest of them rendered important service in that capacity we need not doubt, though nothing is said of them in the apostolic annals. It was not to be expected that a history so fragmentary and so brief as that given by Luke should mention any but the principal actors, especially when we reflect how few of the characters that appear on the stage at any particular crisis in human affairs are prominently noticed even in histories which go elaborately into detail. The purpose of history is served by recording the words and deeds of the representative men, and many are allowed to drop into oblivion who did nobly in their day. The less distinguished members of the apostolic band are entitled to the benefit of this reflection.

2. Three eminent men, or even two (Peter and John), out of twelve, is a good proportion; there being few societies in which superior excellence bears such a high ratio to respectable mediocrity. Perhaps the number of "Pillars" was as great as was desirable. Far from regretting that all were not Peters and Johns, it is rather a matter to be thankful for, that there were diversities of gifts among the first preachers of the gospel. As a general rule, it is not good when all are leaders. Little men are needed as well as great men; for human nature is one-sided, and little men have their peculiar virtues and gifts, and can do some things better than their more celebrated brethren.

3. We must remember how little we know concerning any of the apostles. It is the fashion of biographers in our day, writing for a morbidly or idly curious public, to enter into the minutest particulars of outward event or personal peculiarity regarding their heroes. Of this fond idolatrous minuteness there is no trace in the evangelic histories. The writers of the Gospels were not afflicted with the biographic mania. Moreover, the apostles were not their theme. Christ was their hero; and their sole desire was to tell what they knew of Him. They gazed steadfastly at the Sun of Righteousness, and in His effulgence they lost sight of the attendant stars. Whether they were stars of the first magnitude, or of the second, or of the third, made little difference.

02.05. Hearing and Seeing

Hearing and Seeing

Luk 1:1-4; Mat 13:16-17; Luk 10:23-24; Mat 5:1-48; Mat 6:1-34; Mat 7:1-29; Luk 6:17-49; Mat 13:1-52; Mat 8:16-17; Mark 4:33-34. In the training of the twelve for the work of the apostleship, hearing and seeing the words and works of Christ necessarily occupied an important place. Eye and ear witnessing of the facts of an unparalleled life was an indispensable preparation for future witness-bearing. The apostles could secure credence for their wondrous tale only by being able to preface it with the protestation: “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.” None would believe their report, save those who, at the very least, were satisfied that it emanated from men who had been with Jesus. Hence the third evangelist, himself not an apostle, but only a companion of apostles, presents his Gospel with all confidence to his friend Theophilus as a genuine history, and no mere collection of fables, because its contents were attested by men who “from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word.” In the early period of their discipleship hearing and seeing seem to have been the main occupation of the twelve. They were then like children born into a new world, whose first and by no means least important course of lessons consists in the use of their senses in observing the wonderful objects by which they are surrounded. The things which the twelve saw and heard were wonderful enough. The great Actor in the stupendous drama was careful to impress on His followers the magnitude of their privilege. “Blessed,” said He to them on one occasion, “are the eyes which see the things that ye see: for I tell you, that many prophets and kings desired to see the things which ye see, and saw them not; and to hear the things which ye hear, and heard them not.” Yet certain generations of Israel had seen very remarkable things: one had seen the wonders of the Exodus, and the sublimities connected with the lawgiving at Sinai; another, the miracles wrought by Elijah and Elisha; and successive generations had been privileged to listen to the not less wonderful oracles of God, spoken by David, Solomon, Isaiah, and the rest of the prophets. But the things witnessed by the twelve eclipsed the wonders of all bygone ages; for a greater than Moses, or Elijah, or David, or Solomon, or Isaiah, was here, and the promise to Nathanael was being fulfilled. Heaven had been opened, and the angels of God-the spirits of wisdom, and power, and love-were ascending and descending on the Son of man.

We may here take a rapid survey of the mirabilia which it was the peculiar privilege of the twelve to see and hear, more or less during the whole period of their discipleship, and specially just after their election. These may be comprehended under two heads: the Doctrine of the Kingdom, and the Philanthropic Work of the Kingdom.

1. Before the ministry of Jesus commenced, His forerunner had appeared in the wilderness of Judea, preaching, and saying, “Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;” and some time after their election the twelve disciples were sent forth among the towns and villages of Galilee to repeat the Baptist’s message. But Jesus Himself did something more than proclaim the advent of the kingdom. He expounded the nature of the divine kingdom, described the character of its

citizens, and discriminated between genuine and spurious members of the holy commonwealth. This He did partly in what is familiarly called the Sermon on the Mount, preached shortly after the election of the apostles; and partly in certain parables uttered about the same period. In the great discourse delivered on the mountain-top, the qualifications for citizenship in the kingdom of heaven were set forth, first positively, and then comparatively. The positive truth was summed up in seven golden sentences called the Beatitudes, in which the felicity of the kingdom was represented as altogether independent of the outward conditions with which worldly happiness is associated. The blessed, according to the preacher, were the poor, the hungry, the mournful, the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peaceable, the sufferers for righteousness' sake. Such were blessed themselves, and a source of blessing to the human race: the salt of the earth, the light of the world raised above others in spirit and character, to draw them upwards, and lead them to glorify God.

Next, with more detail, Jesus exhibited the righteousness of the kingdom, and of its true citizens, in contrast to that which prevailed. "Except your righteousness," He went on to say with solemn emphasis, "shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven;" and then He illustrated and enforced the general proposition by a detailed description of the counterfeit in its moral and religious aspects: in its mode of interpreting the moral law, and its manner of performing the duties of piety, such as prayer, alms, and fasting. In the one aspect He characterized pharisaic righteousness as superficial and technical; in the other as ostentatious, self-complacent, and censorious. In contrast thereto, He described the ethics of the kingdom as a pure stream of life, having charity for its fountainhead; a morality of the heart, not merely of outward conduct; a morality also broad and catholic, overleaping all arbitrary barriers erected by legal pedantry and natural selfishness. The religion of the kingdom He set forth as humble, retiring, devoted in singleness of heart to God and things supernal; having faith in God as a benignant gracious Father for its root, and contentment, cheerfulness, and freedom from secular cares for its fruits; and, finally, as reserved in its bearing towards the profane, yet averse to severity in judging, yea, to judging at all, leaving men to be judged by God. The discourse, of which we have given a hasty outline, made a powerful impression on the audience. "The people," we read, "were astonished at His doctrine; for He taught them as one having authority (the authority of wisdom and truth), and not as the scribes," who had merely the authority of office. It is not probable that either the multitude or the twelve understood the sermon; for it was both deep and lofty, and their minds were pre-occupied with very different ideas of the coming kingdom. Yet the drift of all that had been said was clear and simple. The kingdom whereof Jesus was both King and Lawgiver was not to be a kingdom of this world: it was not to be here or there in space, but within the heart of man; it was not be the monopoly of any class or nation, but open to all possessed of the requisite spiritual endowments on equal terms. It is nowhere said, indeed, in the sermon, that ritual qualifications, such as circumcision, were not indispensable for admission into the kingdom. But circumcision is ignored here, as it was ignored the teaching of Jesus. It is treated as something simply out of place, which cannot be dove-tailed into the scheme of doctrine set forth; an incongruity the very mention of which would create a sense of the grotesque. How truly it was so any one can satisfy himself by just imagining for a moment that among the Beatitudes had been found one running thus: Blessed are the circumcised, for no uncircumcised ones shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. This significant silence concerning the seal of the national covenant could not fail to have its effect on the minds of the disciples, as a hint at eventual antiquation. The

weighty truths thus taught first in the didactic form of an ethical discourse, Jesus sought at other times to popularize by means of parables. In the course of His ministry He uttered many parabolic sayings, the parable being with Him a favorite form of instruction. Of the thirty parables preserved in the Gospels, the larger number were of an occasional character, and are best understood when viewed in connection with the circumstances which called them forth. But there is a special group of eight which appear to have been spoken about the same period, and to have been designed to serve one object, viz. to exhibit in simple pictures the outstanding features of the kingdom of heaven in its nature and progress, and in its relations to diverse classes of men. One of these, the parable of the sower, apparently the first spoken, shows the different reception given to the word of the kingdom by various classes of hearers, and the varied issues in their life. Two-the parables of the tares and of the net cast into the sea-describe the mixture of good and evil that should exist in the kingdom till the end, when the grand final separation would take place. Another pair of short parables-those of the treasure hid in a field and of the precious pearl-set forth the incomparable importance of the kingdom, and of citizenship therein. Other two-the grain of mustard seed, and the leaven hid in three measures of meal-explain how the kingdom advances from small beginnings to a great ending. An eighth parable, found in Mark's Gospel only, teaches that growth in the divine kingdom proceeds by stages, analogous to the blade, the ear, and the full corn in the ear, in the growth of grain.

These parables, or the greater number of them, were spoken in the hearing of a miscellaneous audience; and from a reply of Jesus to a question put by the disciples, it might appear that they were intended mainly for the ignorant populace. The question was, "Why speakest Thou unto them in parables?" and the reply, "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given;" which seems to imply, that in the case of the twelve such elementary views of truth-such children's sermons, so to speak-might be dispensed with. Jesus meant no more, however, than that for them the parables were not so important as for common hearers, being only one of several means of grace through which they were to become eventually scribes instructed in the kingdom, acquainted with all its mysteries, and able, like a wise householder, to bring out of their treasures things new and old; while for the multitude the parables were indispensable, as affording their only chance of getting a little glimpse into the mysteries of the kingdom. That the twelve were not above parables yet appears from the fact that they asked and received explanations of them in private from their Master: of all, probably, though the interpretations of two only, the parables of the sower and the tares, are preserved in the Gospels. They were still only children; the parables were pretty pictures to them, but of what they could not tell. Even after they had received private expositions of their meaning, they were probably not much wiser than before, though they professed to be satisfied. Their profession was doubtless sincere: they spake as they felt; but they spake as children, they understood as children, they thought as children, and they had much to learn yet of these divine mysteries. When the children had grown to spiritual manhood, and fully understood these mysteries, they highly valued the happiness they had enjoyed in former years, in being privileged to hear the parables of Jesus. We have an interesting memorial of the deep impression produced on their minds by these simple pictures of the kingdom, in the reflection with, which the first evangelist closes his account of Christ's parabolic teaching. "All these things," he remarks, "spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables, . . . that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world."

The quotation (from Psa 78:1-72) significantly diverges both from the Hebrew original and from the Septuagint version. Matthew has consciously adapted the words so as to express the absolute originality of the teaching in which he found their fulfilment. While the Psalmist uttered dark sayings from the ancient times of Israel's history, Jesus in the parables had spoken things that had been hidden from the creation. Nor was this an exaggeration on the part of the evangelist. Even the use of the parable as a vehicle of instruction was all but new, and the truths expressed in the parables were altogether new. They were indeed the eternal verities of the divine kingdom, but till the days of Jesus they had remained unannounced. Earthly things had always been fit to emblem forth heavenly things; but, till the great Teacher appeared, no one had ever thought of linking them together, so that the one should become a mirror of the other, revealing the deep things of God to the common eye: even as no one before Isaac Newton had thought of connecting the fall of an apple with the revolution of the heavenly bodies, though apples had fallen to the ground from the creation of the world.

2. The things which the disciples had the happiness to see in connection with the philanthropic work of the kingdom were, if possible, still more marvellous than those which they heard in Christ's company. They were eye-witnesses of the events which Jesus bade the messengers of John report to their master in prison as unquestionable evidence that He was the Christ who should come. In their presence, as spectators, blind men received their sight, lame men walked, lepers were cleansed, the deaf recovered hearing, dead persons were raised to life again. The performance of such wonderful works was for a time Christ's daily occupation. He went about in Galilee and other districts, "doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil." The "miracles" recorded in detail in the Gospels give no idea whatever of the extent to which these wondrous operations were carried on. The leper cleansed on the descent from the mountain, when the great sermon was preached, the palsied servant of the Roman centurion restored to health and strength, Peter's mother-in-law cured of a fever, the demoniac dispossessed in the synagogue of Capernaum, the widow's son brought back to life while he was being carried out to burial-these, and the like, are but a few samples selected out of an innumerable multitude of deeds not less remarkable, whether regarded as mere miracles or as acts of kindness. The truth of this statement appears from paragraphs of frequent recurrence in the Gospels, which relate not individual miracles, but an indefinite number of them taken en masse. Of such paragraphs take as an example the following, cursorily rehearsing the works done by Jesus at the close of a busy day: "And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto Him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils; and all the city was gathered together at the door. And He healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils." This was what happened on a single Sabbath evening in Capernaum, shortly after the Sermon on the Mount was preached; and such scenes appear to have been common at this time: for we read a little farther on in the same Gospel, that "Jesus spake unto His disciples, that a small ship should wait on Him because of the multitude, lest they should throng Him; for He had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon Him for to touch Him, as many as had plagues." And yet again Mark tells how "they went into an house, and the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread." The inference suggested by such passages as to the vast extent of Christ's labors among the suffering, is borne out by the impressions these made on the minds both of friends and foes. The ill-affected were so struck by what they saw, that they found it necessary to get up a theory to account for the mighty influence exerted by Jesus in curing physical, and especially psychical

maladies. “This fellow,” they said, “doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub the prince of devils.” It was a lame theory, as Jesus showed; but it was at least conclusive evidence that devils were cast out, and in great numbers. The thoughts of the well-affected concerning the works of Jesus were various, but all which have been recorded involve a testimony to His vast activity and extraordinary zeal. Some, apparently relatives, deemed him mad, fancying that enthusiasm had disturbed His mind, and compassionately sought to save Him from doing Himself harm through excessive solicitude to do good to others. The sentiments of the people who received benefit were more devout. “They marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men;” and they were naturally not inclined to criticise an “enthusiasm of humanity” whereof they were themselves the objects. The contemporaneous impressions of the twelve concerning their Master’s deeds are not recorded; but of their subsequent reflections as apostles we have an interesting sample in the observations appended by the first evangelist to his account of the transactions of that Sabbath evening in Capernaum already alluded to. The devout Matthew, according to his custom, saw in these wondrous works Old Testament Scripture fulfilled; and the passage whose fulfilment he found therein was that touching oracle of Isaiah, “Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;” which, departing from the Septuagint, he made apt to his purpose by rendering, “Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.” The Greek translators interpreted the text as referring to men’s spiritual maladies-their sins; but Matthew deemed it neither a misapplication nor a degradation of the words to find in them a prophecy of Messiah’s deep sympathy with such as suffered from any disease, whether spiritual or mental, or merely physical. He knew not how better to express the intense compassion of his Lord towards all sufferers, than by representing Him in prophetic language as taking their sicknesses on Himself. Nor did he wrong the prophet’s thought by this application of it. He but laid the foundation of an à fortiori inference to a still more intense sympathy on the Saviour’s part with the spiritually diseased. For surely He who so cared for men’s bodies would care yet more for their souls. Surely it might safely be anticipated, that He who was so conspicuous as a healer of bodily disease would become yet more famous as a Saviour from sin. The works which the twelve were privileged to see were verily worth seeing, and altogether worthy of the Messianic King. They served to demonstrate that the King and the kingdom were not only coming, but come; for what could more certainly betoken their presence, than mercy dropping like the “gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath”? John, indeed, seems to have thought otherwise, when he sent to inquire of Jesus if He were the Christ who was to come. He desiderated, we imagine, a work of judgment on the impenitent as a more reliable proof of Messiah’s advent than these miracles of mercy. The prophetic infirmity of querulousness and the prison air had got the better of his judgment and his heart, and he was in the truculent humor of Jonah, who was displeased with God, not because He was too stern, but rather because He was too gracious, too ready to forgive. The least in the kingdom of heaven is incapable now of being offended with these works of our Lord on account of their mercifulness. The offence in our day lies in a different direction. Men stumble at the miraculousness of the things seen by the disciples and recorded by the evangelists. Mercy, say they, is God-like, but miracles are impossible; and they think they do well to be sceptical. An exception is made, indeed, in favor of some of the healing miracles, because it is not deemed impossible that they might fall within the course of nature, and so cease to belong to the category of the miraculous. “Moral therapeutics” might account for them-a department of medical science which Mr. Matthew Arnold thinks has not been at all sufficiently studied yet. All other miracles

besides those wrought by moral therapeutics are pronounced fabulous. But why not extend the dominion of the moral over the physical, and say without qualification: Mercy is God-like, therefore such works as those wrought by Jesus were matters of course? So they appeared to the writers of the Gospels. What they wondered at was not the supernaturalness of Christ's healing operations, but the unfathomable depth of divine compassion which they revealed. There is no trace of the love of the marvellous either in the Gospels or in the Epistles. The disciples may have experienced such a feeling when the era of wonders first burst on their astonished view, but they had lost it entirely by the time the New Testament books began to be written. Throughout the New Testament miracles are spoken of in a sober, almost matter-of-fact, tone. How is this to be explained? The explanation is that the apostles had seen too many miracles while with Jesus to be excited about them. Their sense of wonder had been deadened by being sated. But though they ceased to marvel at the power of their Lord, they never ceased to wonder at His grace. The love of Christ remained for them throughout life a thing passing knowledge; and the longer they lived, the more cordially did they acknowledge the truth of their Master's words: "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see."

02.06. Lessons On Prayer

Lessons On Prayer Mat 6:5-13; Mat 7:7-11; Luk 11:1-13; Luk 18:1-5.

It would have been matter for surprise if, among the manifold subjects on which Jesus gave instruction to His disciples, prayer had not occupied a prominent place. Prayer is a necessity of spiritual life, and all who earnestly try to pray soon feel the need of teaching how to do it. And what theme more likely to engage the thoughts of a Master who was Himself emphatically a man of prayer, spending occasionally whole nights in prayerful communion with His heavenly Father?

We find, accordingly, that prayer was a subject on which Jesus often spoke in the hearing of His disciples. In the Sermon on the Mount, for example, He devoted a paragraph to that topic, in which He cautioned His hearers against pharisaic ostentation and heathenish repetition, and recited a form of devotion as a model of simplicity, comprehensiveness, and brevity. At other times He directed attention to the necessity, in order to acceptable and prevailing prayer, of perseverance, concord, strong faith, and large expectation. The passage cited from the eleventh chapter of Luke's Gospel gives an account of what may be regarded as the most complete and comprehensive of all the lessons communicated by Jesus to His disciples on the important subject to which it relates. The circumstances in which this lesson was given are interesting. The lesson on prayer was itself an answer to prayer. A disciple, in all probability one of the twelve, after hearing Jesus pray, made the request: "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." The request and its occasion taken together convey to us incidentally two pieces of information. From the latter we learn that Jesus, besides praying much alone, also prayed in company with His disciples, practising family prayer as the head of a household, as well as secret prayer in personal fellowship with God His Father. From the former we learn that the social prayers of Jesus were most impressive. Disciples hearing them were made painfully conscious of their own incapacity, and after the Amen were ready instinctively to proffer the request, "Lord, teach us to pray," as if ashamed any more to attempt the exercise in their own feeble, vague, stammering words. When this lesson was given we know not, for Luke introduces his narrative of it in the most indefinite manner, without noting either time or place. The reference to John in the past tense might seem to indicate a date subsequent to his death; but the mode of expression would be sufficiently explained by the supposition that the disciple who made the request had previously been a disciple of the Baptist. Nor can any certain inference be drawn from the contents of the lesson. It is a lesson which might have been given to the twelve at any time during their disciplehood, so far as their spiritual necessities were concerned. It is a lesson for children, for spiritual minors, for Christians in the crude stage of the divine life, afflicted with confusion of mind, dumbness, dejection, unable to pray for want of clear thought, apt words, and above all, of faith that knows how to wait in hope; and it meets the wants of such by suggesting topics, supplying forms of language, and furnishing their weak faith with the props of cogent arguments for perseverance. Now such was the state of the twelve during all the time they were with Jesus; till He ascended to heaven, and power descended from heaven on them, bringing with it a loosed tongue and an enlarged heart. During the whole period of their discipleship, they needed prompting in prayer

such as a mother gives her child, and exhortations to perseverance in the habit of praying, even as do the humblest followers of Christ. Far from being exempt from such infirmities, the twelve may even have experienced them in a superlative degree. The heights correspond to the depths in religious experience. Men who are destined to be apostles must, as disciples, know more than most of the chaotic, speechless condition, and of the great, irksome, but most salutary business of Waiting on God for light, and truth, and grace, earnestly desired but long withheld.

It was well for the church that her first ministers needed this lesson on prayer; for the time comes in the case of most, if not all, who are spiritually earnest, when its teaching is very seasonable. In the spring of the divine life, the beautiful blossom-time of piety, Christians may be able to pray with fluency and fervor, unembarrassed by want of words, thoughts, and feelings of a certain kind. But that happy stage soon passes, and is succeeded by one in which prayer often becomes a helpless struggle, an inarticulate groan, a silent, distressed, despondent waiting on God, on the part of men who are tempted to doubt whether God be indeed the hearer of prayer, whether prayer be not altogether idle and useless. The three wants contemplated and provided for in this lesson-the want of ideas, of words, and of faith-are as common as they are grievous. How long it takes most to fill even the simple petitions of the Lord's Prayer with definite meanings! the second petition, e.g., "Thy kingdom come," which can be presented with perfect intelligence only by such as have formed for themselves a clear conception of the ideal spiritual republic or commonwealth. How difficult, and therefore how rare, to find out acceptable words for precious thoughts slowly reached! How many, who have never got any thing on which their hearts were set without needing to ask for it often, and to wait for it long (no uncommon experience), have been tempted by the delay to give up asking in despair! And no wonder; for delay is hard to bear in all cases, especially in connection with spiritual blessings, which are in fact, and are by Christ here assumed to be, the principal object of a Christian man's desires. Devout souls would not be utterly confounded by delay, or even refusal, in connection with mere temporal goods; for they know that such things as health, wealth, wife, children, home, position, are not unconditionally good, and that it may be well sometimes not to obtain them, or not easily and too soon. But it is most confounding to desire with all one's heart the Holy Ghost, and yet seem to be denied the priceless boon; to pray for light , and to get instead deeper darkness; for faith, and to be tormented with doubts which shake cherished convictions to their foundations; for sanctity, and to have the mud of corruption stirred up by temptation from the bottom of the well of eternal life in the heart. Yet all this, as every experienced Christian knows, is part of the discipline through which scholars in Christ's school have to pass ere the desire of their heart be fulfilled. The lesson on prayer taught by Christ, in answer to request, consists of two parts, in one of which thoughts and words are put into the mouths of immature disciples, while the other provides aids to faith in God as the answerer of prayer. There is first a form of prayer, and then an argument enforcing perseverance in prayer. The form of prayer commonly called the Lord's Prayer, which appears in the Sermon on the Mount as a sample of the right kind of prayer, is given here as a summary of the general heads under which all special petitions may be comprehended. We may call this form the alphabet of all possible prayer. It embraces the elements of all spiritual desire, summed up in a few choice sentences, for the benefit of those who may not be able to bring their struggling aspirations to birth in articulate language. It contains in all six petitions, of which three-the first three, as was meet-refer to God's glory, and the remaining three to man's good. We are taught to pray, first for the advent of the divine kingdom, in the form of universal reverence for the divine name, and universal obedience to

the divine will; and then, in the second place, for daily bread, pardon, and protection from evil for ourselves. The whole is addressed to God as Father, and is supposed to proceed from such as realize their fellowship one with another as members of a divine family, and therefore say, “Our Father.” The prayer does not end, as our prayers now commonly do, with the formula, “for Christ’s sake;” nor could it, consistently with the supposition that it proceeded from Jesus. No prayer given by Him for the present use of His disciples, before His death, could have such an ending, because the plea it contains was not intelligible to them previous to that event. The twelve did not yet know what Christ’s sake (sache) meant, nor would they till after their Lord had ascended, and the Spirit had descended and revealed to them the true meaning of the facts of Christ’s earthly history. Hence we find Jesus, on the eve of His passion, telling His disciples that up to that time they had asked nothing in His name, and representing the use of His name as a plea to be heard, as one of the privileges awaiting them in the future. “Hitherto,” He said, “have ye asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.” And in another part of His discourse: “Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.” To what extent the disciples afterwards made use of this beautifully simple yet profoundly significant form, we do not know; but it may be assumed that they were in the habit of repeating it as the disciples of the Baptist might repeat the forms taught them by their master. There is, however, no reason to think that the “Lord’s Prayer,” though of permanent value as a part of Christ’s teaching, was designed to be a stereotyped, binding method of addressing the Father in heaven. It was meant to be an aid to inexperienced disciples, not a rule imposed upon apostles. Even after they had attained to spiritual maturity, the twelve might use this form if they pleased, and possibly they did occasionally use it; but Jesus expected that by the time they came to be teachers in the church they should have outgrown the need of it as an aid to devotion. Filled with the Spirit, enlarged in heart, mature in spiritual understanding, they should then be able to pray as their Lord had prayed when He was with them; and while the six petitions of the model prayer would still enter into all their supplications at the throne of grace, they would do so only as the alphabet of a language enters into the most extended and eloquent utterances of a speaker, who never thinks of the letters of which the words he utters are composed. In maintaining the provisional, pro tempore character of the Lord’s Prayer, so far as the twelve were concerned, we lay no stress on the fact already adverted to, that it does not end with the phrase, “for Christ’s sake.” That defect could easily be supplied afterwards mentally or orally, and therefore was no valid reason for disuse. The same remark applies to our use of the prayer in question. To allow this form to fall into desuetude merely because the customary concluding plea is wanting, is as weak on one side as the too frequent repetition of it is on the other. The Lord’s Prayer is neither a piece of Deism unworthy of a Christian, nor a magic charm like the “Pater noster” of Roman Catholic devotion. The most advanced believer will often find relief and rest to his spirit in falling back on its simple, sublime sentences, while mentally realizing the manifold particulars which each of them includes; and he is but a tyro in the art of praying, and in the divine life generally, whose devotions consist exclusively, or even mainly, in repeating the words which Jesus put into the mouths of immature disciples. The view now advocated regarding the purpose of the Lord’s Prayer is in harmony with the spirit of Christ’s whole teaching. Liturgical forms and religious methodism in general were much more congenial to the strict ascetic school of the Baptist than to the free school of Jesus. Our Lord evidently attached little importance to forms of prayer, any more than to fixed periodic fasts, else He would not have waited till He was asked for a form, but would have made systematic provision

for the wants of His followers, even as the Baptist did, by, so to speak, compiling a book of devotion or composing a liturgy. It is evident, even from the present instructions on the subject of praying, that Jesus considered the form He supplied of quite subordinate importance: a mere temporary remedy for a minor evil, the want of utterance, till the greater evil, the want of faith, should be cured; for the larger portion of the lesson is devoted to the purpose of supplying an antidote to unbelief. The second part of this lesson on prayer is intended to convey the same moral as that which is prefixed to the parable of the unjust judge-“that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” The supposed cause of fainting is also the same, even delay on the part of God in answering our prayers. This is not, indeed, made so obvious in the earlier lesson as in the later. The parable of the ungenerous neighbor is not adapted to convey the idea of long delay: for the favor asked, if granted at all, must be granted in a very few minutes. But the lapse of time between the presenting and the granting of our requests is implied and presupposed as a matter of course. It is by delay that God seems to say to us what the ungenerous neighbor said to his friend, and that we are tempted to think that we pray to no purpose.

Both the parables spoken by Christ to inculcate perseverance in prayer seek to effect their purpose by showing the power of importunity in the most unpromising circumstances. The characters appealed to are both bad-one in ungenerous, and the other unjust; and from neither is any thing to be gained except by working on his selfishness. And the point of the parable in either case is, that importunity has a power of annoyance which enables it to gain its object.

It is important again to observe what is supposed to be the leading subject of prayer in connection with the argument now to be considered. The thing upon which Christ assumes His disciples to have set their hearts is personal sanctification. This appears from the concluding sentence of the discourse: “How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him!” Jesus takes for granted that the persons to whom He addresses Himself here seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Therefore, though He inserted a petition for daily bread in the form of prayer, He drops that object out of view in the latter part of His discourse; both because it is by hypothesis not the chief object of desire, and also because, for all who truly give God’s kingdom the first place in their regards, food and raiment are thrown into the bargain. To such as do not desire the Holy Spirit above all things, Jesus has nothing to say. He does not encourage them to hope that they shall receive any thing of the Lord; least of all, the righteousness of the kingdom, personal sanctification. He regards the prayers of a double- minded man, who has two chief ends in view, as a hollow mockery-mere words, which never reach Heaven’s ear. The supposed cause of fainting being delay, and the supposed object of desire being the Holy Spirit, the spiritual situation contemplated in the argument is definitely determined. The Teacher’s aim is to succor and encourage those who feel that the work of grace goes slowly on within them, and wonder why it does so, and sadly sigh because it does so. Such we conceive to have been the state of the twelve when this lesson was given them. They had been made painfully conscious of incapacity to perform aright their devotional duties, and they took that incapacity to be an index of their general spiritual condition, and were much depressed in consequence. The argument by which Jesus sought to inspire His discouraged disciples with hope and confidence as to the ultimate fulfilment of their desires, is characterized by boldness, geniality, wisdom, and logical force. Its boldness is evinced in the choice of illustrations. Jesus has such confidence in the goodness of His cause, that He states the case as disadvantageously for Himself as possible, by

selecting for illustration not good samples of men, but persons rather below than above the ordinary standard of human virtue. A man who, on being applied to at any hour of the night by a neighbor for help in a real emergency, such as that supposed in the parable, or in a case of sudden sickness, should put him off with such an answer as this, “Trouble me not, the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee,” would justly incur the contempt of his acquaintances, and become a byword among them for all that is ungenerous and heartless. The same readiness to take an extreme case is observable in the second argument, drawn from the conduct of fathers towards their children. “If a son shall ask bread of any of you”-so it begins. Jesus does not care what father may be selected; He is willing to take any one they please: He will take the very worst as readily as the best; nay, more readily, for the argument turns not on the goodness of the parent, but rather on his want of goodness, as it aims to show that no special goodness is required to keep all parents from doing what would be an outrage on natural affection, and revolting to the feelings of all mankind. The genial, kindly character of the argument is manifest from the insight and sympathy displayed therein. Jesus divines what hard thoughts men think of God under the burden of unfulfilled desire; how they doubt His goodness, and deem Him indifferent, heartless, unjust. He shows His intimate knowledge of their secret imaginations by the cases He puts; for the unkind friend and unnatural father, and we may add, the unjust judge, are pictures not indeed of what God is, or of what He would have us believe God to be, but certainly of what even pious men sometimes think Him to be. And He cannot only divine, but sympathize. He does not, like Job’s friends, find fault with those who harbor doubting and apparently profane thoughts, nor chide them for impatience, distrust, and despondency. He deals with them as men compassed with infirmity, and needing sympathy, counsel, and help. And in supplying these, He comes down to their level of feeling, and tries to show that, even if things were as they seem, there is no cause for despair. He argues from their own thoughts of God, that they should still hope in Him. “Suppose,” He says in effect, “God to be what you fancy, indifferent and heartless, still pray on; see, in the case I put, what perseverance can effect. Ask as the man who wanted loaves asked, and ye shall also receive from Him who seems at present deaf to your petitions. Appearances, I grant, may be very unfavorable, but they cannot be more so in your case than in that of the petitioner in the parable; and yet you observe how he fared through not being too easily disheartened.”

Jesus displays His wisdom in dealing with the doubts of His disciples, by avoiding all elaborate explanations of the causes or reasons of delay in the answering of prayer, and using only arguments adapted to the capacity of persons weak in faith and in spiritual understanding. He does not attempt to show why sanctification is a slow, tedious work, not a momentary act: why the Spirit is given gradually and in limited measure, not at once and without measure. He simply urges His hearers to persevere in seeking the Holy Spirit, assuring them that, in spite of trying delay, their desires will be fulfilled in the end. He teaches them no philosophy of waiting on God, but only tells them that they shall not wait in vain. This method the Teacher followed not from necessity, but from choice. For though no attempt was made at explaining divine delays in providence and grace, it was not because explanation was impossible. There were many things which Christ might have said to His disciples at this time if they could have borne them; some of which they afterwards said themselves, when the Spirit of Truth had come, and guided them into all truth, and made them acquainted with the secret of God’s way. He might have pointed out to them, e.g., that the delays of which they complained were according to the analogy of nature, in which gradual growth is the

universal law; that time was needed for the production of the ripe fruits of the Spirit, just in the same way as for the production of the ripe fruits of the field or of the orchard; that it was not to be wondered at if the spiritual fruits were peculiarly slow in ripening, as it was a law of growth that the higher the product in the scale of being, the slower the process by which it is produced; that a momentary sanctification, though not impossible, would be as much a miracle in the sense of a departure from law, as was the immediate transformation of water into wine at the marriage in Cana; that if instantaneous sanctification were the rule instead of the rare exception, the kingdom of grace would become too like the imaginary worlds of children's dreams, in which trees, fruits, and palaces spring into being full-grown, ripe, and furnished, in a moment as by enchantment, and too unlike the real, actual world with which men are conversant, in which delay, growth, and fixed law are invariable characteristics.

Jesus might further have sought to reconcile His disciples to delay by descanting on the virtue of patience. Much could be said on that topic. It could be shown that a character cannot be perfect in which the virtue of patience has no place, and that the gradual method of sanctification is best adapted for its development, as affording abundant scope for its exercise. It might be pointed out how much the ultimate enjoyment of any good thing is enhanced by its having to be waited for; how in proportion to the trial is the triumph of faith; how, in the quaint words of one who was taught wisdom in this matter by his own experience, and by the times in which he lived, "It is fit we see and feel the shaping and sewing of every piece of the wedding garment, and the framing and moulding and fitting of the crown of glory for the head of the citizen of heaven;" how "the repeated sense and frequent experience of grace in the ups and downs in the way, the falls and risings again of the traveller, the revolutions and changes of the spiritual condition, the new moon, the darkened moon, the full moon in the Spirit's ebbing and flowing, raiseth in the heart of saints on their way to the country a sweet smell of the fairest rose and lily of Sharon;" how, "as travellers at night talk of their foul ways, and of the praises of their guide, and battle being ended, soldiers number their wounds, extol the valor, skill, and courage of their leader and captain," so "it is meet that the glorified soldiers may take loads of experience of free grace to heaven with them, and there speak of their way and their country, and the praises of Him that hath redeemed them out of all nations, tongues, and languages."

Such considerations, however just, would have been wasted on men in the spiritual condition of the disciples. Children have no sympathy with growth in any world, whether of nature or of grace. Nothing pleases them but that an acorn should become an oak at once, and that immediately after the blossom should come the ripe fruit. Then it is idle to speak of the uses of patience to the inexperienced; for the moral value of the discipline of trial cannot be appreciated till the trial is past. Therefore, as before stated, Jesus abstained entirely from reflections of the kind suggested, and adopted a simple, popular style of reasoning which even a child could understand. The reasoning of Jesus, while very simple, is very cogent and conclusive. The first argument-that contained in the parable of the ungenerous neighbor-is fitted to inspire hope in God, even in the darkest hour, when He appears indifferent to our cry, or positively unwilling to help, and so to induce us to persevere in asking. "As the man who wanted the loaves knocked on louder and louder, with an importunity that knew no shame, and would take no refusal, and thereby gained his object, the selfish friend being glad at last to get up and serve him out of sheer regard to his own comfort, it being simply impossible to sleep with such a noise; so (such is the drift of the argument), so continue thou

knocking at the door of heaven, and thou shalt obtain thy desire if it were only to be rid of thee. See in this parable what a power importunity has, even at a most unpromising time-midnight-and with a most unpromising person, who prefers his own comfort to a neighbor's good: ask, therefore, persistently, and it shall be given unto you also; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." At one point, indeed, this most pathetic and sympathetic argument seems to be weak. The petitioner in the parable had the selfish friend in his power by being able to annoy him and keep him from sleeping. Now, the tried desponding disciple whom Jesus would comfort may rejoin: "What power have I to annoy God, who dwelleth on high, far beyond my reach, in imperturbable felicity? 'Oh that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His seat! But, behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: on the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him: He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him.'" The objection is one which can hardly fail to occur to the subtle spirit of despondency, and it must be admitted that it is not frivolous. There is really a failure of the analogy at this point. We can annoy a man, like the ungenerous neighbor in bed, or the unjust judge, but we cannot annoy God. The parable does not suggest the true explanation of divine delay, or of the ultimate success of importunity. It merely proves, by a homely instance, that delay, apparent refusal, from whatever cause it may arise, is not necessarily final, and therefore can be no good reason for giving up asking. This is a real if not a great service rendered. But the doubting disciple, besides discovering with characteristic acuteness what the parable fails to prove, may not be able to extract any comfort from what it does prove. What is he to do then? Fall back on the strong asseveration with which Jesus follows up the parable: "And I say unto you." Here, doubter, is an oracular dictum from One who can speak with authority; One who has been in the bosom of the eternal God, and has come forth to reveal His inmost heart to men groping in the darkness of nature after Him, if haply they might find Him. When He addresses you in such emphatic, solemn terms as these, "I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you," you may take the matter on His word, at least pro tempore. Even those who doubt the reasonableness of prayer, because of the constancy of nature's laws and the unchangeableness of divine purposes, might take Christ's word for it that prayer is not vain, even in relation to daily bread, not to speak of higher matters, until they arrive at greater certainty on the subject than they can at present pretend to. Such may, if they choose, despise the parable as childish, or as conveying crude anthropopathic ideas of the Divine Being, but they cannot despise the deliberate declarations of One whom even they regard as the wisest and best of men. The second argument employed by Jesus to urge perseverance in prayer is of the nature of a reductio ad absurdum, ending with a conclusion ___à fortiori. "If," it is reasoned, "God refused to hear His children's prayers, or, worse still, if He mocked them by giving them something bearing a superficial resemblance to the things asked, only to cause bitter disappointment when the deception was discovered, then were He not only as bad as, but far worse than, even the most depraved of mankind. For, take fathers at random, which of them, if a son were to ask bread, would give him a stone? or if he asked a fish, would give him a serpent? or if he asked an egg, would offer him a scorpion? The very supposition is monstrous. Human nature is largely vitiated by moral evil; there is, in particular, an evil spirit of selfishness in the heart which comes into conflict with the generous affections, and leads men ofttimes to do base and unnatural things. But men taken at the average are not diabolic; and nothing short of a diabolic spirit of mischief could prompt a father to mock a child's misery, or deliberately to give him things fraught with deadly harm. If,

then, earthly parents, though evil in many of their dispositions, give good, and, so far as they know, only good, gifts to their children, and would shrink with horror from any other mode of treatment, is it to be credited that the Divine Being, that Providence, can do what only devils would think of doing? On the contrary, what is only barely possible for man is for God altogether impossible, and what all but monsters of iniquity will not fail to do God will do much more. He will most surely give good gifts, and only good gifts, to His asking children; most especially will He give His best gift, which His true children desire above all things, even the Holy Spirit, the enlightener and the sanctifier. Therefore again I say unto you: Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened."

Yet it is implied in the very fact that Christ puts such cases as a stone given for bread, a serpent for a fish, or a scorpion for an egg, that God seems at least sometimes so to treat His children. The time came when the twelve thought they had been so treated in reference to the very subject in which they were most deeply interested, after their own personal sanctification, viz., the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. But their experience illustrates the general truth, that when the Hearer of prayer seems to deal unnaturally with His servants, it is because they have made a mistake about the nature of good, and have not known what they asked. They have asked for a stone, thinking it bread, and hence the true bread seems a stone; for a shadow, thinking it a substance, and hence the substance seems a shadow. The kingdom for which the twelve prayed was a shadow, hence their disappointment and despair when Jesus was put to death: the egg of hope, which their fond imagination had been hatching, brought forth the scorpion of the cross, and they fancied that God had mocked and deceived them. But they lived to see that God was true and good, and that they had deceived themselves, and that all which Christ had told them had been fulfilled. And all who wait on God ultimately make a similar discovery, and unite in testifying that "the Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him." For these reasons should all men pray, and not faint. Prayer is rational, even if the Divine Being were like men in the average, not indisposed to do good when self-interest does not stand in the way-the creed of heathenism. It is still more manifestly rational if, as Christ taught and Christians believe, God be better than the best of men-the one supremely good Being-the Father in heaven. Only in either of two cases would prayer really be irrational: if God were no living being at all-the creed of atheists, with whom Christ holds no argument; or if He were a being capable of doing things from which even bad men would start back in horror, i.e., a being of diabolic nature-the creed, it is to be hoped, of no human being.

Chapter 40

02.07. Lessons in Religious Liberty

Lessons in Religious Liberty; or, The Nature of True Holiness Section I - Fasting Mat 9:14-17; Mark 2:16-22; Luk 5:33-39.

We have learnt in the last chapter how Jesus taught His disciples to pray, and we are now to learn in the present chapter how He taught them to live.

Christ's ratio vivendi was characteristically simple; its main features being a disregard of minute mechanical rules, and a habit of falling back in all things on the great principles of morality and piety. The practical carrying out of this rule of life led to considerable divergence from prevailing custom. In three respects especially, according to the Gospel records, were our Lord and His disciples chargeable, and actually charged, with the offence of nonconformity. They departed from existing practice in the matters of fasting, ceremonial purifications as prescribed by the elders, and Sabbath sanctification. The first they neglected for the most part, the second altogether; the third they did not neglect, but their mode of observing the weekly rest was in spirit totally, and in detail widely, diverse from that which was in vogue.

These divergences from established custom are historically interesting as the small beginnings of a great moral and religious revolution. For in teaching His disciples these new habits, Jesus was inaugurating a process of spiritual emancipation which was to issue in the complete deliverance of the apostles, and through them of the Christian church, from the burdensome yoke of Mosaic ordinances, and from the still more galling bondage of a "vain conversation received by tradition from the fathers." The divergences in question have much biographical interest also in connection with the religious experience of the twelve. For it is a solemn crisis in any man's life when he first departs in the most minute particulars from the religious opinions and practices of his age. The first steps in the process of change are generally the most difficult, the most perilous, and the most decisive. In these respects, learning spiritual freedom is like learning to swim. Every expert in the aquatic art remembers the troubles he experienced in connection with his first attempts-how hard he found it to make arms and legs keep stroke; how he floundered and plunged; how fearful he was lest he should go beyond his depth and sink to the bottom. At these early fears he may now smile, yet were they not altogether groundless; for the tyro does run some risk of drowning though the bathing-place be but a small pool or dam built by schoolboys on a burn flowing through an inland dell, remote from broad rivers and the great sea.

It is well both for young swimmers and for apprentices in religious freedom when they make their first essays in the company of an experienced friend, who can rescue them should they be in danger. Such a friend the twelve had in Christ, whose presence was not only a safeguard against all inward spiritual risks, but a shield from all assaults which might come upon them from without. Such assaults were to be expected. Nonconformity invariably gives offence to many, and exposes the offending party to interrogation at least, and often to something more serious. Custom is a god to the multitude, and no one can withhold homage from the idol with impunity. The twelve accordingly did in fact incur the usual penalties connected with singularity. Their conduct was

called in question, and censured, in every instance of departure from use and wont. Had they been left to themselves, they would have made a poor defence of the actions impugned; for they did not understand the principles on which the new practice was based, but simply did as they were directed. But in Jesus they had a friend who did understand those principles, and who was ever ready to assign good reasons for all He did Himself, and for all He taught His followers to do. The reasons with which he defended the twelve against the upholders of prevailing usage were specially good and telling; and they constitute, taken together, an apology for nonconformity not less remarkable than that which He made for graciously receiving publicans and sinners, consisting, like it, of three lines of defence corresponding to the charges which had to be met. That apology we propose to consider in the present chapter under three divisions, in the first of which we take up the subject of fasting. From Matthew's account we learn that the conduct of Christ's disciples in neglecting fasting was animadverted on by the disciples of John the Baptist. "Then," we read, "came to Him the disciples of John"-those, that is, who happened to be in the neighborhood-"saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but Thy disciples fast not?" From this question we learn incidentally that in the matter of fasting the school of the Baptist and the sect of the Pharisees were agreed in their general practice. As Jesus told the Pharisees at a later date, John came in their own "way" of legal righteousness." But it was a case of extremes meeting; for no two religious parties could be more remote in some respects than the two just named. But the difference lay rather in the motives than in the external acts of their religious life. Both did the same things-fasted, practised ceremonial ablutions, made many prayers-only they did them with a different mind. John and his disciples performed their religious duties in simplicity, godly sincerity, and moral earnestness; the Pharisees, as a class, did all their works ostentatiously, hypocritically, and as matters of mechanical routine. From the same question we further learn that the disciples of John, as well as the Pharisees, were very zealous in the practice of fasting. They fasted oft, much (pukna(, Luke; polla(, Matthew). This statement we otherwise know to be strictly true of such Pharisees as made great pretensions to piety. Besides the annual fast on the great day of atonement appointed by the law of Moses, and the four fasts which had become customary in the time of the Prophet Zechariah, in the fourth, fifth, seventh, and tenth months of the Jewish year, the stricter sort of Jews fasted twice every week, viz., on Mondays and Thursdays. This bi-weekly fast is alluded to in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. It is not to be assumed, of course, that the practice of the Baptist's disciples coincided in this respect with that of the strictest sect of the pharisaic party. Their system of fasting may have been organized on an independent plan, involving different arrangements as to times and occasions. The one fact known, which rests on the certain basis of their own testimony, is that, like the Pharisees, John's disciples fasted often, if not on precisely the same days and for the same reasons.

It does not clearly appear what feelings prompted the question put by John's disciples to Jesus. It is not impossible that party spirit was at work, for rivalry and jealousy were not unknown, even in the environment of the forerunner. In that case, the reference to pharisaic practice might be explained by a desire to overwhelm the disciples of Jesus by numbers, and put them, as it were, in a hopeless minority on the question. It is more likely, however, that the uppermost feeling in the mind of the interrogators was one of surprise, that in respect of fasting they should approach nearer to a sect whose adherents were stigmatized by their own master as a "generation of vipers," than to the followers of One for whom that master cherished and expressed the deepest veneration. In that case, the object of the question was to obtain information and instruction. It

accords with this view that the query was addressed to Jesus. Had disputation been aimed at, the questioners would more naturally have applied to the disciples.

If John's followers came seeking instruction, they were not disappointed. Jesus made a reply to their question, remarkable at once for originality, point, and pathos, setting forth in lively parabolic style the great principles by which the conduct of His disciples could be vindicated, and by which He desired the conduct of all who bore His name to be regulated. Of this reply it is to be observed, in the first place, that it is of a purely defensive character. Jesus does not blame John's disciples for fasting, but contents Himself with defending His own disciples for abstaining from fasting. He does not feel called on to disparage the one party in order to justify the other, but takes up the position of one who virtually says: "To fast may be right for you, the followers of John: not to fast is equally right for my followers." How grateful to Christ's feelings it must have been that He could assume this tolerant attitude on a question in which the name of John was mixed up! For He had a deep respect for the forerunner and his work, and ever spoke of him in most generous terms of appreciation; now calling him a burning and a shining lamp, and at another time declaring him not only a prophet but something more. And we may remark in passing, that John reciprocated these kindly feelings, and had no sympathy with the petty jealousies in which his disciples sometimes indulged. The two great ones, both of them censured for different reasons by their degenerate contemporaries, ever spoke of each other to their disciples and to the public in terms of affectionate respect; the lesser light magnanimously confessing his inferiority, the greater magnifying the worth of His humble fellow-servant. What a refreshing contrast was thus presented to the mean passions of envy, prejudice, and detraction so prevalent in other quarters, under whose malign influence men of whom better things might have been expected spoke of John as a madman, and of Jesus as immoral and profane!

Passing from the manner to the matter of the reply, we notice that, for the purpose of vindicating His disciples, Jesus availed Himself of a metaphor suggested by a memorable word uttered concerning Himself at an earlier period by the master of those who now examined Him. To certain disciples who complained that men were leaving him and going to Jesus, John had said in effect: "Jesus is the Bridegroom, I am but the Bridegroom's friend; therefore it is right that men should leave me and join Jesus." Jesus now takes up the Baptist's words, and turns them to account for the purpose of defending the way of life pursued by His disciples. His reply, freely paraphrased, is to this effect: "I am the Bridegroom, as your master said; it is right that the children of the bride-chamber come to me; and it is also right that, when they have come, they should adapt their mode of life to their altered circumstances. Therefore they do well not to fast, for fasting is the expression of sadness, and how should they be sad in my company? As well might men be sad at a marriage festival. The days will come when the children of the bride-chamber shall be sad, for the Bridegroom will not always be with them; and at the dark hour of His departure it will be natural and seasonable for them to fast, for then they shall be in a fasting mood-weeping, lamenting, sorrowful, and disconsolate." The principle underlying this graphic representation is, that fasting should not be a matter of fixed mechanical rule, but should have reference to the state of mind; or, more definitely, that men should fast when they are sad, or in a state of mind akin to sadness-absorbed, pre-occupied-as at some great solemn crisis in the life of an individual or a community, such as that in the history of Peter, when he was exercised on the great question of the admission of the Gentiles to the church, or such as that in the history of the Christian

community at Antioch, when they were about to ordain the first missionaries to the heathen world. Christ's doctrine, clearly and distinctly indicated here, is that fasting in any other circumstances is forced, unnatural, unreal; a thing which men may be made to do as a matter of form, but which they do not with their heart and soul. "Can ye make the children of the bride-chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them?" He asked, virtually asserting that it was impossible. By this rule the disciples of our Lord were justified, and yet John's were not condemned. It was admitted to be natural for them to fast, as they were mournful, melancholy, unsatisfied. They had not found Him who was the Desire of all nations, the Hope of the future, the Bridegroom of the soul. They only knew that all was wrong; and in their querulous, despairing mood they took pleasure in fasting, and wearing coarse raiment, and frequenting lonely, desolate regions, living as hermits, a practical protest against an ungodly age. The message that the kingdom was at hand had indeed been preached to them also; but as proclaimed by John the announcement was awful news, not good news, and made them anxious and dispirited, not glad. Men in such a mood could not do otherwise than fast; though whether they did well to continue in that mood after the Bridegroom had come, and had been announced to them as such by their own master, is another matter. Their grief was wilful, idle, causeless, when He had appeared who was to take away the sin of the world.

Jesus had yet more to say in reply to the questions addressed to Him. Things new and unusual need manifold apology, and therefore to the beautiful similitude of the children of the bride-chamber He added two other equally suggestive parables: those, viz., of the new patch on the old garment, and the new wine in old skins. The design of these parables is much the same as that of the first part of His reply, viz., to enforce the law of congruity in relation to fasting and similar matters; that is, to show that in all voluntary religious service, where we are free to regulate our own conduct, the outward act should be made to correspond with the inward condition of mind, and that no attempt should be made to force particular acts or habits on men without reference to that correspondence. "In natural things," He meant to say, "we observe this law of congruity. No man putteth a piece of unfulled cloth on an old garment. Neither do men put new wine into old skins, and that not merely out of regard to propriety, but to avoid bad consequences. For if the rule of congruity be neglected, the patched garment will be torn by the contraction of the new cloth; and the old skin bottles will burst under the fermenting force of the new liquor, and the wine will be spilled and lost." The old cloth and old bottles in these metaphors represent old ascetic fashions in religion; the new cloth and the new wine represent the new joyful life in Christ, not possessed by those who tenaciously adhered to the old fashions. The parables were applied primarily to Christ's own age, but they admit of application to all transition epochs; indeed, they find new illustration in almost every generation. The force of these homely parables as arguments in vindication of departure from current usage in matters of religion may be evaded in either of two ways. First, their relevancy may be denied; i.e., it may be denied that religious beliefs are of such a nature as to demand congenial modes of expression, under penalties if the demand is not complied with. This position is usually assumed virtually or openly by the patrons of use and wont. Conservative minds have for the most part a very inadequate conception of the vital force of belief. Their own belief, their spiritual life altogether, is often a feeble thing, and they imagine tameness or pliancy must be an attribute of other men's faith also. Nothing but dire experience will convince them that they are mistaken; and when the proof comes in the shape of an irrepressible revolutionary outburst, they are stupefied with amazement. Such men learn nothing from the history of previous generations; for they persist in thinking that their own case will be an exception. Hence the vis

inertiae of established custom evermore insists on adherence to what is old, till the new wine proves its power by producing an explosion needlessly wasteful, by which both wine and bottles often perish, and energies which might have quietly wrought out a beneficent reformation are perverted into blind powers of indiscriminate destruction.

Or, in the second place, the relevancy of these metaphors being admitted in general terms, it may be denied that a new wine (to borrow the form of expression from the second, more suggestive metaphor) has come into existence. This was virtually the attitude assumed by the Pharisees towards Christ. “What have you brought?” they asked Him in effect, “to your disciples, that they cannot live as others do, but must needs invent new religious habits for themselves? This new life of which you boast is either a vain pretence, or an illegitimate, spurious thing, not worthy of toleration, and the waste of which would be no matter for regret.” Similar was the attitude assumed towards Luther by the opponents of the Reformation. They said to him in effect: “If this new revelation of yours, that sinners are justified by faith alone, were true, we admit that it would involve very considerable modification in religious opinion, and many alterations in religious practice. But we deny the truth of your doctrine, we regard the peace and comfort you find in it as a hallucination; and therefore we insist that you return to the time-honored faith, and then you will have no difficulty in acquiescing in the long-established practice.” The same thing happens to a greater or less extent every generation; for new wine is always in course of being produced by the eternal vine of truth, demanding in some particulars of belief and practice new bottles for its preservation, and receiving for answer an order to be content with the old ones.

Without going the length of denunciation or direct attempt at suppression, those who stand by the old often oppose the new by the milder method of disparagement. They eulogize the venerable past, and contrast it with the present, to the disadvantage of the latter. “The old wine is vastly superior to the new: how mellow, mild, fragrant, wholesome, the one! how harsh and fiery the other!” Those who say so are not the worst of men: they are often the best-the men of taste and feeling, the gentle, the reverent, and the good, who are themselves excellent samples of the old vintage. Their opposition forms by far the most formidable obstacle to the public recognition and toleration of what is new in religious life; for it naturally creates a strong prejudice against any cause when the saintly disapprove of it.

Observe, then, how Christ answers the honest admirers of the old wine. He concedes the point: He admits that their preference is natural. Luke represents Him as saying, in the conclusion of His reply to the disciples of the Baptist: “No man also, having drunk old wine, desireth the new; for he saith, The old is good.” This striking sentiment exhibits rare candor in stating the case of opponents, and not less rare modesty and tact in stating the case of friends. It is as if Jesus had said: “I do not wonder that you love the old wine of Jewish piety, fruit of a very ancient vintage; or even that you dote upon the very bottles which contain it, covered over with the dust and cobwebs of ages. But what then? Do men object to the existence of new wine, or refuse to have it in their possession, because the old is superior in flavor? No: they drink the old, but they carefully preserve the new, knowing that the old will get exhausted, and that the new, however harsh, will mend with age, and may ultimately be superior even in flavor to that which is in present use. Even so should you behave towards the new wine of my kingdom. You may not straightway desire it, because it is strange and novel; but surely you might deal more wisely with it than merely to spurn it, or spill and destroy it!”

Too seldom for the church's good have lovers of old ways understood Christ's wisdom, and lovers of new ways sympathized with His charity. A celebrated historian has remarked: "It must make a man wretched, if, when on the threshold of old age, he looks on the rising generation with uneasiness, and does not rather rejoice in beholding it; and yet this is very common with old men. Fabius would rather have seen Hannibal unconquered than see his own fame obscured by Scipio." There are always too many Fabii in the world, who are annoyed because things will not remain stationary, and because new ways and new men are ever rising up to take the place of the old. Not less rare, on the other hand, is Christ's charity among the advocates of progress. Those who affect freedom despise the stricter sort as fanatics and bigots, and drive on changes without regard to their scruples, and without any appreciation of the excellent qualities of the "old wine." When will young men and old men, liberals and conservatives, broad Christians and narrow, learn to bear with one another; yea, to recognize each in the other the necessary complement of his own one-sidedness?

Section II - Ritual Ablutions Mat 15:1-20; Mark 7:1-23; Luk 11:37-41. The happy free society of Jesus, which kept bridal hightide when others fasted, was in this further respect singular in its manners, that its members took their meals unconcerned about existing usages of purification. They ate bread with "defiled, that is to say, with unwashen hands." Such was their custom, it may be assumed, from the beginning, though the practice does not appear to have become the subject of animadversion till an advanced period in the ministry of our Lord, at least in a way that gave rise to incidents worthy of notice in the Gospel records. Even at the marriage in Cana, where were set six water-pots of stone for the purposes of purifying, Christ and His disciples are to be conceived as distinguished from the other guests by a certain inattention to ritual ablutions. This we infer from the reasons by which the neglect was defended when it was impugned, which virtually take up the position that the habit condemned was not only lawful, but incumbent-a positive duty in the actual circumstances of Jewish society, and therefore, of course, a duty which could at no time be neglected by those who desired to please God rather than men. But indeed it needs no proof that one of such grave earnest spirit as Jesus could never have paid any regard to the trifling regulations about washing before eating invented by the "elders."

These regulations were no trifles in the eyes of the Pharisees; and therefore we are not surprised to learn that the indifference with which they were treated by Jesus and the twelve provoked the censure of that zealous sect of religionists on at least two occasions, adverted to in the Gospel narratives. On one of these occasions, certain Pharisees and scribes, who had followed Christ from Jerusalem to the north, seeing some of His disciples eat without previously going through the customary ceremonial ablutions, came to Him, and asked, "Why walk not Thy disciples according to the traditions of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?" In the other instance Jesus Himself was the direct object of censure. "A certain Pharisee," Luke relates, "besought Jesus to dine with him; and He went in, and sat (directly) down to meat: and when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that He had not first washed before dinner." Whether the host expressed his surprise by words or by looks only is not stated; but it was observed by his guest, and was made an occasion for exposing the vices of the pharisaic character. "Now," said the accused, in holy zeal for true purity, "now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and platter, but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. Ye fools, did not He that made that which is without make that which is within also? But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are

clean unto you." That is to say, the offending guest charged His scandalized host, and the sect he belonged to, with sacrificing inward to outward purity, and at the same time taught the important truth that to the pure all things are pure, and showed the way by which inward real purity was to be reached, viz., by the practice of that sadly neglected virtue, humanity or charity. The Lord's reply in the other encounter with pharisaic adversaries on the subject of washings was similar in its principle, but different in form. He told the zealots for purifications, without periphrasis, that they were guilty of the grave offence of sacrificing the commandments of God to the commandments of men-to these pet traditions of the elders. The statement was no libel, but a simple melancholy fact, though its truth does not quite lie on the surface. This we hope to show in the following remarks; but before we proceed to that task, we must force ourselves, however reluctantly, to acquire a little better acquaintance with the contemptible senilities whose neglect once seemed so heinous a sin to persons deeming themselves holy. The aim of the rabbinical prescriptions respecting washings was not physical cleanliness, but something thought to be far higher and more sacred. Their object was to secure, not physical, but ceremonial purity; that is, to cleanse the person from such impurity as might be contracted by contact with a Gentile, or with a Jew in a ceremonially unclean state, or with an unclean animal, or with a dead body or any part thereof. To the regulations in the law of Moses respecting such uncleanness the rabbis added a vast number of additional rules on their own responsibility, in a self-willed zeal for the scrupulous observance of the Mosaic precepts. They issued their commandments, as the Church of Rome has issued hers, under the pretext that they were necessary as means towards the great end of fulfilling strictly the commandments of God. The burdens laid on men's shoulders by the scribes on this plausible ground were, by all accounts, indeed most grievous. Not content with purifications prescribed in the law for uncleanness actually contracted, they made provision for merely possible cases. If a man did not remain at home all day, but went out to market, he must wash his hands on his return, because it was possible that he might have touched some person or thing ceremonially unclean. Great care, it appears, had also to be taken that the water used in the process of ablution was itself perfectly pure; and it was necessary even to apply the water in a particular manner to the hands, in order to secure the desired result. Without travelling beyond the sacred record, we find, in the items of information supplied by Mark respecting prevailing Jewish customs of purification, enough to show to what ridiculous lengths this momentous business of washing was carried. "Many other things," remarks he quaintly, and not without a touch of quiet satire, "there be which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables." All things, in short, used in connection with food-in cooking it, or in placing it on the table-had to be washed, not merely as people might wash them now to remove actual impurity, but to deliver them from the more serious uncleanness which they might possibly have contracted since last used, by touching some person or thing not technically clean. A kind and measure of purity, in fact, were aimed at incompatible with life in this world. The very air of heaven was not clean enough for the doting patrons of patristic traditions; for, not to speak of other more real sources of contamination, the breeze, in blowing over Gentile lands to the sacred land of Jewry, had contracted defilement which made it unfit to pass into ritualistic lungs till it had been sifted by a respirator possessing the magic power to cleanse it from its pollution. The extravagant fanatical zeal of the Jews in these matters is illustrated in the Talmud by stories which, although belonging to a later age, may be regarded as a faithful reflection of the spirit which animated the Pharisees in the time of our Lord. Of these stories the following is a sample: "Rabbi Akiba was thrown by the Christians into prison, and Rabbi

Joshua brought him every day as much water as sufficed both for washing and for drinking. But on one occasion it happened that the keeper of the prison got the water to take in, and spilled the half of it. Akiba saw that there was too little water, but nevertheless said, Give me the water for my hands. His brother rabbi replied, My master, you have not enough for drinking. But Akiba replied, He who eats with unwashed hands perpetrates a crime that ought to be punished with death. Better for me to die of thirst than to transgress the traditions of my ancestors." Rabbi Akiba would rather break the sixth commandment, and be guilty of self-murder, than depart from the least punctilio of a fantastic ceremonialism; illustrating the truth of the declaration made by Christ in His reply to the Pharisees, which we now proceed to consider.

It was not to be expected that, in defending His disciples from the frivolous charge of neglecting the washing of hands, Jesus would show much respect for their accusers. Accordingly, we observe a marked difference between the tone of His reply in the present case, and that of His answer to John's disciples. Towards them the attitude assumed was respectfully defensive and apologetic; towards the present interrogants the attitude assumed is offensive and denunciatory. To John's disciples Jesus said, "Fasting is right for you: not to fast is equally right for my disciples." To the Pharisees He replies by a retort which at once condemns their conduct and justifies the behavior which they challenged. "Why," ask they, "do Thy disciples transgress the traditions of the elders?" "Why," asked He in answer, "do ye also transgress the commandments of God by your traditions?" as if to say, "It becomes not you to judge; you, who see the imaginary mote in the eye of a brother, have a beam in your own." This spirited answer was something more than a mere retort or et tu quoque argument. Under an interrogative form it enunciated a great principle, viz., that the scrupulous observance of human traditions in matters of practice leads by a sure path to a corresponding negligence and unscrupulousness in reference to the eternal laws of God. Hence Christ's defence of His disciples was in substance this: "I and my followers despise and neglect those customs because we desire to keep the moral law. Those washings, indeed, may not seem seriously to conflict with the great matters of the law, but to be at worst only trifling and contemptible. But the case is not so. To treat trifles as serious matters, as matters of conscience, which ye do, is degrading and demoralizing. No man can do that without being or becoming a moral imbecile, or a hypocrite: either one who is incapable of discerning between what is vital and what not in morals, or one who finds his interest in getting trifles, such as washing of hands, or paying tithe of herbs, to be accepted as the important matters, and the truly great things of the law-justice, mercy, and faith-quietly pushed aside as if they were of no moment whatever." The whole history of religion proves the truth of these views. A ceremony and tradition ridden time is infallibly a morally corrupt time. Hypocrites ostensibly zealots, secretly atheists; profligates taking out their revenge in licentiousness for having been compelled, by tyrannous custom or intolerant ecclesiastical authorities, to conform outwardly to practices for which they have no respect; priests of the type of the sons of Eli, gluttonous, covetous, wanton: such are the black omens of an age in which ceremonies are every thing, and godliness and virtue nothing. Ritualistic practices, artificial duties of all kinds, whether originating with Jewish rabbis or with doctors of the Christian church, are utterly to be abjured. Recommended by their zealous advocates, often sincerely, as eminently fitted to promote the culture of morality and piety, they ever prove, in the long run, fatal to both. Well are they called in the Epistle to the Hebrews "dead works." They are not only dead, but death-producing; for, like all dead things, they tend to putrefy, and to breed a spiritual pestilence which sweeps thousands of souls into perdition. If they have any life at all, it is life feeding on

death, the life of fungi growing on dead trees; if they have any beauty, it is the beauty of decay, of autumnal leaves sere and yellow, when the sap is descending down to the earth, and the woods are about to pass into their winter state of nakedness and desolation. Ritualism at its best is but the shortlived after-summer of the spiritual year! very fascinating it may be, but when it cometh, be sure winter is at the doors. “We all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.”

Having brought a grave countercharge against the Pharisees, that of sacrificing morality to ceremonies, the commandments of God to the traditions of men, Jesus proceeded forthwith to substantiate it by a striking example and a Scripture quotation. The example selected was the evasion of the duties arising out of the fifth commandment, under pretence of a previous religious obligation. God said, “Honor thy father and mother,” and attached to a breach of the commandment the penalty of death. The Jewish scribes said, “Call a thing Corban, and you will be exempt from all obligation to give it away, even for the purpose of assisting needy parents.” The word Corban in the Mosaic law signifies a gift or offering to God, of any kind, bloody or bloodless, presented on any occasion, as in the fulfilment of a vow. In rabbinical dialect it signified a thing devoted to sacred purposes, and therefore not available for private or secular use. The traditional doctrine on the subject of Corban was mischievous in two ways. It encouraged men to make religion an excuse for neglecting morality, and it opened a wide door to knavery and hypocrisy. It taught that a man might not only by a vow deny himself the use of things lawful, but that he might, by devoting a thing to God, relieve himself of all obligation to give to others what, but for the vow, it would have been his duty to give them. Then, according to the pernicious system of the rabbis, it was not necessary really to give the thing to God in order to be free of obligation to give it to man. It was enough to call it Corban. Only pronounce that magic word over any thing, and forthwith it was sealed over to God, and sacred from the use of others at least, if not from your own use. Thus self-willed zeal for the honor of God led to the dishonoring of God, by taking His name in vain; and practices which at best were chargeable with setting the first table of the law over against the second, proved eventually to be destructive of both tables. They made the whole law of God of none effect by their traditions. The disannulling of the fifth commandment was but a sample of the mischief the zealots for the commandments of men had wrought, as is implied in Christ’s concluding words, “Many such like things do ye.” The Scripture quotation made by our Lord in replying to the Pharisees was not less apt than the example was illustrative, as pointing out their characteristic vices, hypocrisy and superstition. They were near to God with their mouth, they honored Him with their lips, but they were far from Him in their hearts. Their religion was all on the outside. They scrupulously washed their hands and their cups, but they took no care to cleanse their polluted souls. Then, in the second place, their fear of God was taught by the precept of men. Human prescriptions and traditions were their guide in religion, which they followed blindly, heedless how far these commandments of men might lead them from the paths of righteousness and true godliness. The prophetic word was quick, powerful, sharp, searching, and conclusive. Nothing more was needed to confound the Pharisees, and nothing more was said to them at this time. The sacred oracle was the fitting conclusion of an unanswerable argument against the patrons of tradition. But Jesus had compassion on the poor multitude who were being misled to their ruin by their blind spiritual guides, and therefore He took the opportunity of addressing a word to those who stood around on the subject of dispute. What He had to say to them He expressed in the terse, pointed form of a proverb: “Hear and understand: not that which goeth into the mouth

defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man." This was a riddle to be solved, a secret of wisdom to be searched out, a lesson in religion to be conned. Its meaning, though probably understood by few at the moment, was very plain. It was simply this: "Pay most attention to the cleansing of the heart, not, like the Pharisees, to the cleansing of the hands. When the heart is pure, all is pure; when the heart is impure, all outward purification is vain. The defilement to be dreaded is not that from meat ceremonially unclean, but that which springs from a carnal mind, the defilement of evil thoughts, evil passions, evil habits." This passing word to the bystanders became the subject of a subsequent conversation between Jesus and His disciples, in which He took occasion to justify Himself for uttering it, and explained to them its meaning. The Pharisees had heard the remark, and were naturally offended by it, as tending to weaken their authority over the popular conscience. The twelve observed their displeasure, perhaps they overheard their comments; and, fearing evil consequences, they came and informed their Master, probably with a tone which implied a secret regret that the speaker had not been less outspoken. Be that as it may, Jesus gave them to understand that it was not a case for forbearance, compromise, or timid, time-serving, prudential policy; the ritualistic tendency being an evil plant which must be uprooted, no matter with what offence to its patrons. He pleaded, in defence of His plainness of speech, His concern for the souls of the ignorant people whose guides the Pharisees claimed to be. "Let them alone, what would follow? Why, the blind leaders and the blindly led would fall together into the ditch. Therefore if the leaders be so hopelessly wedded to their errors that they cannot be turned from them, let us at least try to save their comparatively ignorant victims." The explanation of the proverbial word spoken to the people Jesus gave to His disciples by request of Peter. It is rudely plain and particular, because addressed to rudely ignorant hearers. It says over again, in the strongest possible language, that to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man, because nothing entering the mouth can come near the soul; that the defilement to be dreaded, the only defilement worth speaking of, is that of an evil, unrenewed heart, out of which proceed thoughts, words, and acts which are offences against the holy, pure law of God. The concluding words, "purging all meats," have, however, a peculiar significance, if we adopt the reading approved by critics: "This He said, purging all meats." In that case we have the evangelist giving his own opinion of the effect of Christ's words, viz., that they amounted to an abrogation of the ceremonial distinction between clean and unclean. A very remarkable comment, as coming from the man to whom we are indebted for the report of the preaching of that apostle who in his disciple days called forth the declaration, and who had the vision of the sheet let down from heaven. The evangelist having given us his comment, we may add ours. We observe that our Lord is here silent concerning the ceremonial law of Moses (to which the traditions of the elders were a supplement), and speaks only of the commandments of God, i.e. the precepts of the decalogue. The fact is significant, as showing in what direction He had come to destroy, and in what to fulfil. Ceremonialism was to be abolished, and the eternal laws of morality were to become all in all. Men's consciences were to be delivered from the burden of outward positive ordinances, that they might be free to serve the living God, by keeping His ten words, or the one royal law of love. And it is the duty of the church to stand fast in the liberty Christ designed and purchased for her, and to be jealous of all human traditions out of holy zeal for the divine will, shunning superstition on the one side, and the licentious freedom of godless libertinism on the other. Christ's true followers wish to be free, but not to do as they like; rather to do what God requires of them. So minded, they reject unceremoniously all human authority in religion, thereby separating themselves from the

devotees to tradition; and at the same time, as God's servants, they reverence His word and His law, thereby putting a wide gulf between them and the lawless and disobedient, who side with movements of religious reform, not in order to get something better in the place of what is rejected, but to get rid of all moral restraint in matters human or divine.

Section III - Sabbath Observance Mat 12:1-14; Mark 2:23-28; Mark 3:1-6; Luk 6:1-11; Luk 13:10-16; Luk 14:1-6; John 5:1-18; John 9:13-17. In no part of their conduct were Jesus and His disciples more frequently found fault with than in respect to their mode of observing the Sabbath. Six distinct instances of offence given or taken on this score are recorded in the Gospel history; in five of which Jesus Himself was the offender, while in the remaining instance His disciples were at least the ostensible objects of censure. The offences of Jesus were all of one sort; His crime was, that on the Sabbath-day He wrought works of healing on the persons of men afflicted respectively with palsy, a withered hand, blindness, dropsy, and on the body of a poor woman "bowed together" by an infirmity of eighteen years' standing. The offence of the disciples, on the other hand, was that, while walking along a way which lay through a corn-field, they stepped aside and plucked some ears of grain for the purpose of satisfying their hunger. This was not theft, for it was permitted by the law of Moses; but nevertheless it was, in the judgment of the Pharisees, Sabbath-breaking. It was contrary to the command, "Thou shalt not work;" for to pluck some ears was reaping on a small scale, and to rub them was a species of threshing!

These offences, deemed so grave when committed, seem very small at this distance. All the transgressions of the Sabbath law charged against Jesus were works of mercy; and the one transgression of the disciples was for them a work of necessity, and the toleration of it was for others a duty of mercy, so that in condemning them the Pharisees had forgotten that divine word: "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." It is, indeed, hard for us now to conceive how any one could be serious in regarding such actions as breaches of the Sabbath, especially the harmless act of the twelve. There is a slight show of plausibility in the objection taken by the ruler of the synagogue to miraculous cures wrought on the seventh day: "There are six days on which men ought to work; in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath-day." The remark was specially plausible with reference to the case which had provoked the ire of the dignitary of the synagogue. A woman who had been a sufferer for eighteen years might surely bear her trouble one day more, and come and be healed on the morrow! But on what pretence could the disciples be blamed as Sabbath-breakers for helping themselves to a few ears of corn? To call such an act working was too ridiculous. Men who found a Sabbatic offence here must have been very anxious to catch the disciples of Jesus in a fault. On the outlook for faults we have no doubt the Pharisees were; and yet we must admit that, in condemning the act referred to, they were acting faithfully in accordance with their theoretical views and habitual tendencies. Their judgment on the conduct of the twelve was in keeping with their traditions concerning washings, and their tithing of mint and other garden herbs, and their straining of gnats out of their wine-cup. Their habit, in all things, was to degrade God's law by framing innumerable petty rules for its better observance, which, instead of securing that end, only made the law appear base and contemptible. In no case was this miserable micrology carried greater lengths than in connection with the fourth commandment. With a most perverse ingenuity, the most insignificant actions were brought within the scope of the prohibition against labor. Even in the case put by our Lord, that of an animal fallen into a pit, it was deemed lawful to lift it out-so at least those learned in rabbinical lore tell us-only when to leave it

there till Sabbath was past would involve risk to life. When delay was not dangerous, the rule was to give the beast food sufficient for the day; and if there was water in the bottom of the pit, to place straw and bolsters below it, that it might not be drowned.

Yet with all their strictness in abstaining from every thing bearing the faintest resemblance to work, the Jews were curiously lax in another direction. While scrupulously observing the law which prohibited the cooking of food on Sabbath, they did not make the holy day by any means a day of fasting. On the contrary, they considered it their duty to make the Sabbath a day of feasting and good cheer. In fact, it was at a Sabbath feast, given by a chief man among the Pharisees, that one of the Sabbath miracles was wrought for which Jesus was put upon His defence. At this feast were numerous guests, Jesus Himself being one-invited, it is to be feared, with no friendly feelings, but rather in the hope of finding something against Him concerning the Sabbatic law. “It came to pass,” we read in Luke, “as He (Jesus) went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread on a Sabbath-day, that they were watching Him. They set a trap, and hoped to catch in it Him whom they hated without cause; and they got for their pains such searching, humbling table-talk as they had probably never heard before. This habit of feasting had grown to a great abuse in the days of Augustine, as appears from the description he gives of the mode in which contemporary Jews celebrated their weekly holiday. “Today,” he writes, “is the Sabbath, which the Jews at the present time keep in loose, luxurious ease, for they occupy their leisure in frivolity; and whereas God commanded a Sabbath, they spend it in those things which God forbids. Our rest is from evil works, theirs is from good works; for it is better to plough than to dance. They rest from good work, they rest not from idle work.” From the folly and pedantry of scribes and Pharisees we gladly turn to the wisdom of Jesus, as revealed in the animated, deep, and yet sublimely simple replies made by Him to the various charges of Sabbath-breaking brought against Himself and His disciples. Before considering these replies in detail, we premise one general remark concerning them all. In none of these apologies or defences does Jesus call in question the obligation of the Sabbath law. On that point He had no quarrel with His accusers. His argument in this instance is entirely different from the line of defence adopted in reference to fasting and purifications. In regard to fasting, the position He took up was: Fasting is a voluntary matter, and men may fast or not as they are disposed. In regard to purification His position was: Ceremonial ablutions at best are of secondary moment, being mere types of inward purity, and as practised now, lead inevitably to the utter ignoring of spiritual purity, and therefore must be neglected by all who are concerned for the great interests of morality. But in reference to the alleged breaches of the Sabbath, the position Jesus took up was this: These acts which you condemn are not transgressions of the law, rightly apprehended, in its spirit and principle. The importance of the law was conceded, but the pharisaic interpretation of its meaning was rejected. An appeal was made from their pedantic code of regulations about Sabbath observance to the grand design and principle of the law; and the right was asserted to examine all rules in the light of the principle, and to reject or disregard those in which the principle had either been mistakenly applied, or, as was for the most part the case with the Pharisees, lost sight of altogether. The key to all Christ’s teaching on the Sabbath, therefore, lies in His conception of the original design of that divine institution. This conception we find expressed with epigrammatic point and conciseness, in contrast to the pharisaic idea of the Sabbath, in words uttered by Jesus on the occasion when He was defending His disciples. “The Sabbath,” said He, “was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.” In other words, His doctrine was this: The Sabbath was meant to be a boon to man, not a burden; it was not a day taken from

man by God in an exacting spirit, but a day given by God in mercy to man-God's holiday to His subjects; all legislation enforcing its observance having for its end to insure that all should really get the benefit of the boon-that no man should rob himself, and still less his fellow-creatures, of the gracious boon. This difference between Christ's mode of regarding the Sabbath and the pharisaic involves of necessity a corresponding difference in the spirit and the details of its observance. Take Christ's view, and your principle becomes: That is the best way of observing the Sabbath which is most conducive to man's physical and spiritual well-being-in other words, which is best for his body and for his soul; and in the light of this principle, you will keep the holy day in a spirit of intelligent joy and thankfulness to God the Creator for His gracious consideration towards His creatures. Take the pharisaic view, and your principle of observance becomes: He best keeps the Sabbath who goes greatest lengths in mere abstinence from any thing that can be construed into labor, irrespective of the effect of this abstinence either on his own well-being or on that of others. In short, we land in the silly, senseless minuteness of a rabbinical legislation, which sees in such an act as that of the disciples plucking and rubbing the ears of corn, or that of the healed man who carried his bed home on his shoulders, or that of one who should walk a greater distance than two thousand cubits, or three-fourths of a mile, on a Sabbath, a heinous offence against the fourth commandment and its Author. A Sabbath observance regulated by the principle that the institution was made for man's good, obviously involves two great general uses-rest for the body, and worship as the solace of the spirit. We should rest from servile labor on the divinely given holiday, and we should lift up our hearts in devout thought to Him who made all things at the first, who "worketh hitherto," preserving the creation in being and well-being, and whose tender compassion towards sinful men is great, passing knowledge. These things are both necessary to man's true good, and therefore must enter as essential elements of a worthy Sabbath observance.

But, on the other hand, the Sabbath being made for man, the two general requirements of rest and worship may not be so pressed that they shall become hostile to man's well-being, and in effect self-destructive, or mutually destructive. The rule, "Thou shalt rest," must not be so applied as to exclude all action and all work; for absolute inaction is not rest, and entire abstinence from work of every description would often-times be detrimental both to private and to public well-being. Room must be left for acts of "necessity and mercy;" and too peremptory as well as too minute legislation as to what are and what are not acts of either description must be avoided, as these may vary for different persons, times, and circumstances, and men may honestly differ in opinion in such details who are perfectly loyal to the great broad principles of Sabbath sanctification. In like manner, the rule, "Thou shalt worship," must not be so enforced as to make religious duties irksome and burdensome-a mere mechanical, legal service; or so as to involve the sacrifice of the other great practical end of the Sabbath, viz., rest to the animal nature of man. Nor may men dictate to each other as to the means of worship any more than as to the amount; for one may find helps to devotion in means which to another would prove a hindrance and a distraction.

It was only in regard to cessation from work that pharisaic legislation and practice anent Sabbath observance were carried to superstitious and vexatious excess. The Sabbatic mania was a monomania, those affected thereby being mad simply on one point, the stringent enforcement of rest. Hence the peculiar character of all the charges brought against Christ and His disciples, and also of His replies. The offences committed were all works deemed unlawful; and the defences all went to show that the works done were not contrary to law when the law was interpreted in the

light of the principle that the Sabbath was made for man. They were works of necessity or of mercy, and therefore lawful on the Sabbath-day.

Jesus drew His proofs of this position from three sources: Scripture history, the everyday practice of the Pharisees themselves, and the providence of God. In defence of His disciples, He referred to the case of David eating the shewbread when he fled to the house of God from the court of King Saul, and to the constant practice of the priests in doing work for the service of the temple on Sabbath-days, such as offering double burnt-offerings, and removing the stale shewbread from the holy place, and replacing it by hot loaves. David's case proved the general principle that necessity has no law, hunger justifying his act, as it should also have justified the act of the disciples even in pharisaic eyes. The practice of the priests showed that work merely as work is not contrary to the law of the Sabbath, some works being not only lawful, but incumbent on that day. The argument drawn by Jesus from common practice was well fitted to silence captious critics, and to suggest the principle by which His own conduct could be defended. It was to this effect: "You would lift an ox or an ass out of a pit on Sabbath, would you not? Why? To save life? Why then should not I heal a sick person for the same reason? Or is a beast's life of more importance than that of a human being? Or again: Would you scruple to loose your ox or your ass from the stall on the day of rest, and lead him away to watering? If not, why object to me when on the Sabbath-day I release a poor human victim from a bondage of eighteen years' duration, that she may draw water out of the wells of salvation?" The argument is irresistible, the conclusion inevitable; that it is lawful, dutiful, most seasonable, to do well on the Sabbath-day. How blind they must have been to whom so obvious a proposition needed to be proved! how oblivious of the fact that love is the foundation and fulfilment of all law, and that therefore no particular precept could ever be meant to suspend the operation of that divine principle! The argument from providence used by Jesus on another occasion was designed to serve the same purpose with the others, viz., to show the lawfulness of certain kinds of work on the day of rest. "My Father worketh even until now," said He to His accusers, "and I work." The Son claimed the right to work because and as the Father worked on all days of the week. The Father worked incessantly for beneficent, conservative ends, most holy, wisely, and powerfully preserving and governing all His creatures and all their actions, keeping the planets in their orbits, causing the sun to rise and shine, and the winds to circulate in their courses, and the tides to ebb and flow on the seventh day as on all the other six. So Jesus Christ, the son of God, claimed the right to work, and did work-saving, restoring, healing; as far as might be bringing fallen nature back to its pristine state, when God the Creator pronounced all things good, and rested, satisfied with the world He had brought into being. Such works of beneficence, by the doctrine of Christ, may always be done on the Sabbath-day: works of humanity, like those of the physician, or of the teacher of neglected children, or of the philanthropist going his rounds among the poor and needy, or of the Christian minister preaching the gospel of peace, and many others, of which men filled with love will readily bethink themselves, but whereof too many, in the coldness of their heart, do not so much as dream. Against such works there is no law save that of churlish, ungenial, pharisaic custom.

One other saying our Lord uttered on the present subject, which carries great weight for Christians, though it can have had no apologetic value in the opinion of the Pharisees, but must rather have appeared an aggravation of the offence it was meant to excuse. We refer to the word, "The Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath-day," uttered by Jesus on the occasion when He

defended His disciples against the charge of Sabbath-breaking. This statement, remarkable, like the claim made at the same time to be greater than the temple, as an assertion of superhuman dignity on the part of the meek and lowly One, was not meant as a pretension to the right to break the law of rest without cause, or to abrogate it altogether. This is evident from Mark's account, where the words come in as an inference from the proposition that the Sabbath was made for man, which could not logically be made the foundation for a repeal of the statute, seeing it is the most powerful argument for the perpetuity of the weekly rest. Had the Sabbath been a mere burdensome restriction imposed on men, we should have expected its abrogation from Him who came to redeem men from all sorts of bondage. But was the Sabbath made for man-for man's good? Then should we expect Christ's function to be not that of a repealer, but that of a universal philanthropic legislator, making what had previously been the peculiar privilege of Israel a common blessing to all mankind. For the Father sent His Son into the world to deliver men indeed from the yoke of ordinances, but not to cancel any of His gifts, which are all "without repentance," and, once given, can never be withdrawn.

What, then, does the lordship of Christ over the Sabbath signify? Simply this: that an institution which is of the nature of a boon to man properly falls under the control of Him who is the King of grace and the administrator of divine mercy. He is the best judge how such an institution should be observed; and He has a right to see that it shall not be perverted from a boon into a burden, and so put in antagonism to the royal imperial law of love. The Son of man hath authority to cancel all regulations tending in this direction emanating from men, and even all by-laws of the Mosaic code savoring of legal rigor, and tending to veil the beneficent design of the fourth commandment of the decalogue. He may, in the exercise of His mediatorial prerogative, give the old institution a new name, alter the day of its celebration, so as to invest it with distinctively Christian associations congenial to the hearts of believers, and make it in all the details of its observance subservient to the great ends of His incarnation. To such effect did the Son of man claim to be Lord of the Sabbath-day; and His claim, so understood, was acknowledged by the church, when, following the traces of the apostolic usage, she changed the weekly rest from the seventh day to the first, that it might commemorate the joyful event of the resurrection of the Saviour, which lay nearer the heart of a believer than the old event of the creation, and called the first day by His name, the Lord's day. That claim all Christians acknowledge who, looking at the day in the light of God's original design, and of Christ's teaching, example and work, so observe it as to keep the golden mean between the two extremes of pharisaic rigor and of Sadducaic laxity: recognizing on the one hand the beneficent ends served by the institution, and doing their utmost to secure that these ends shall be fully realized, and, on the other hand, avoiding the petty scrupulosity of a cheerless legalism, which causes many, especially among the young, to stumble at the law as a statute of unreasonable arbitrary restriction; avoiding also the bad pharisaic habit of indulging in over-confident judgments on difficult points of detail, and on the conduct of those who in such points do not think and act as they do themselves.

We may not close this chapter, in which we have been studying the lessons in free yet holy living given by our Lord to His disciples, without adding a reflection applicable to all the three. By these lessons the twelve were taught a virtue very necessary for the apostles of a religion in many respects new-the power to bear isolation and its consequences. When Peter and John appeared before the Sanhedrin, the rulers marvelled at their boldness, till they recognized in them

companions of Jesus the Nazarene. They seem to have imagined that His followers were fit for any thing requiring audacity. They were right. The apostles had strong nerves, and were not easily daunted; and the lessons which we have been considering help us to understand whence they got their rare moral courage. They had been accustomed for years to stand alone, and to disregard the fashion of the world, till at length they could do what was right, heedless of human criticism, without effort, almost without thought.

02.08. First Attempts at Evangelism

First Attempts at Evangelism Section I - The Mission Mat 10:1-42; Mark 6:7-13, Mark 6:30-32; Luk 9:1-11. The twelve are now to come before us as active agents in advancing the kingdom of God. Having been for some time in Christ's company, witnessing His miraculous works, hearing His doctrine concerning the kingdom, and learning how to pray and how to live, they were at length sent forth to evangelize the towns and villages of their native province, and to heal the sick in their Master's name, and by His power. This mission of the disciples as evangelists or miniature apostles was partly, without doubt, an educational experiment for their own benefit; but its direct design was to meet the spiritual necessities of the people, whose neglected condition lay heavy on Christ's heart. The compassionate Son of man, in the course of His wanderings, had observed how the masses of the population were, like a shepherdless flock of sheep, scattered and torn, and it was His desire that all should know that a good Shepherd had come to care for the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The multitudes were ready enough to welcome the good news; the difficulty was to meet the pressing demand of the hour. The harvest, the grain, ready for reaping, was plenteous, but the laborers were few. In connection with this mission four things call for special notice: The sphere assigned for the work, the nature of the work, the instructions for carrying it on, the results of the mission, and the return of the missionaries. These points we shall consider in their order, except that, for convenience, we shall reserve Christ's instructions to His disciples for the last place, and give them a section to themselves.

1. The sphere of the mission, as described in general terms, was the whole land of Israel. "Go," said Jesus to the twelve, "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel;" and further on, in Matthew's narrative, He speaks to them as if the plan of the mission involved a visit to all the cities of Israel. Practically, however, the operations of the disciples seem to have been restricted to their native province of Galilee, and even within its narrow limits to have been carried on rather among the villages and hamlets, than in considerable towns or cities like Tiberias. The former of these statements is supported by the fact that the doings of the disciples attracted the attention of Herod the tetrarch of Galilee, which implies that they took place in his neighborhood; while the latter is proved by the words of the third evangelist in giving a summary account of the mission: "They departed and went through the villages (towns, Eng. Ver.), preaching the gospel, and healing everywhere."

While the apprentice missionaries were permitted by their instructions to go to any of the lost sheep of Israel, to all if practicable, they were expressly forbidden to extend their labors beyond these limits. They were not to go into the way of the Gentiles, nor enter into any city or town of the Samaritans. This prohibition arose in part out of the general plan which Christ had formed for founding the kingdom of God on the earth. His ultimate aim was the conquest of the world; but in order to do that, He deemed it necessary first to secure a strong base of operations in the Holy Land and among the chosen people. Therefore He ever regarded Himself personally as a Messenger of God to the Jewish nation, seriously giving that as a reason why He should not work among the heathen, and departing occasionally from the rule only in order to supply in His own

ministry prophetic intimations of an approaching time when Jew and Samaritan and Gentile should be united on equal terms in one divine commonwealth. But the principal reason of the prohibition lay in the present spiritual condition of the disciples themselves. The time would come when Jesus might say to His chosen ones, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;” but that time was not yet. The twelve, at the period of their first trial mission, were not fit to preach the gospel, or to do good works, either among Samaritans or Gentiles. Their hearts were too narrow, their prejudices too strong: there was too much of the Jew, too little of the Christian, in their character. For the catholic work of the apostleship they needed a new divine illumination and a copious baptism with the benignant spirit of love. Suppose these raw evangelists had gone into a Samaritan village, what would have happened? In all probability they would have been drawn into disputes on the religious differences between Samaritans and Jews, in which, of course, they would have lost their temper; so that, instead of seeking the salvation of the people among whom they had come, they would rather be in a mood to call down fire from heaven to consume them, as they actually proposed to do at a subsequent period.

2. The work intrusted to the twelve was in one department very extensive, and in the other very limited. They were endowed with unlimited powers of healing, but their commission was very restricted so far as preaching was concerned. In regard to the former their instructions were: “Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give;” in regard to the latter: “As ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” The commission in the one case seems too wide, in the other too narrow; but in both the wisdom of Jesus is apparent to a deeper consideration. In so far as miraculous works were concerned, there was no need for restriction, unless it were to avoid the risk of producing elation and vanity in those who wielded such wonderful power-a risk which was certainly not imaginary, but which could be remedied when it assumed tangible form. All the miracles wrought by the twelve were really wrought by Jesus Himself, their sole function consisting in making a believing use of His name. This seems to have been perfectly understood by all; for the works done by the apostles did not lead the people of Galilee to wonder who they were, but only who and what He was in whose name all these things were done. Therefore, it being Christ’s will that such miracles should be wrought through the instrumentality of His disciples, it was just as easy for them to do the greatest works as to do the smaller; if, indeed, there be any sense in speaking of degrees of difficulty in connection with miracles, which is more than doubtful. As regards the preaching, on the other hand, there was not only reason, but necessity, for restriction. The disciples could do no more than proclaim the fact that the kingdom was at hand, and bid men everywhere repent, by way of a preparation for its advent. This was really all they knew themselves. They did not as yet understand, in the least degree, the doctrine of the cross; they did not even know the nature of the kingdom. They had, indeed, heard their Master discourse profoundly thereon, but they had not comprehended his words. Their ideas respecting the coming kingdom were nearly as crude and carnal as were those of other Jews, who looked for the restoration of Israel’s political independence and temporal prosperity as in the glorious days of old. In one point only were they in advance of current notions. They had learned from John and from Jesus that repentance was necessary in order to citizenship in this kingdom. In all other respects they and their hearers were pretty much on a level. Far from wondering, therefore, that the preaching programme of the disciples was so limited, we are rather tempted to wonder how Christ could trust them to open their mouths at all, even on the one topic of the kingdom. Was there not a danger that men with such

crude ideas might foster delusive hopes, and give rise to political excitement? Nay, may we not discover actual traces of such excitement in the notice taken of their movements at Herod's court, and in the proposal of the multitude not long after, to take Jesus by force to make Him a king? Doubtless there was danger in this direction; and therefore, while He could not, to avoid it, leave the poor perishing people uncared for, Jesus took all possible precautions to obviate mischief as far as might be, by in effect prohibiting His messengers from entering into detail on the subject of the kingdom, and by putting a sound form of words into their mouths. They were instructed to announce the kingdom as a kingdom of heaven; a thing which some might deem a lovely vision, but which all worldly men would guess to be quite another thing from what they desired. A kingdom of heaven! What was that to them? What they wanted was a kingdom of earth, in which they might live peaceably and happily under just government, and, above all, with plenty to eat and drink. A kingdom of heaven! That was only for such as had no earthly hope; a refuge from despair, a melancholy consolation in absence of any better comfort. Even so, ye worldlings! Only for such as ye deem miserable was the message meant. To the poor the kingdom was to be preached. To the laboring and heavy laden was the invitation "Come to me" addressed, and the promise of rest made; of rest from ambition and discontent, and scheming, carking care, in the blessed hope of the supernal and the eternal.

3. The impression produced by the labors of the twelve seems to have been very considerable. The fame of their doings, as already remarked, reached the ears of Herod, and great crowds appear to have accompanied them as they moved from place to place. On their return, e.g. from the mission to rejoin the company of their Master, they were thronged by an eager, admiring multitude who had witnessed or experienced the benefits of their work, so that it was necessary for them to withdraw into a desert place in order to obtain a quiet interval of rest. "There were many," the second evangelist informs us, "coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And they departed unto a desert place by ship privately." Even in the desert solitudes on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee they failed to secure the desired privacy. "The people saw them departing, and ran afoot thither (round the end of the sea) out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto Him." In quality the results of the mission appear to have been much less satisfactory than in their extent. The religious impressions produced seem to have been in a great measure superficial and evanescent. There were many blossoms, so to speak, on the apple-tree in the springtide of this Galilean "revival;" but only a comparatively small number of them set in fruit, while of these a still smaller number ever reached the stage of ripe fruit. This we learn from what took place shortly after, in connection with Christ's discourse on the bread of life, in the synagogue of Capernaum. Then the same men who, after the miraculous feeding in the desert, would have made Christ a king, deserted Him in a body, scandalized by His mysterious doctrine; and those who did this were, for the most part, just the men who had listened to the twelve while they preached repentance.

Such an issue to a benevolent undertaking must have been deeply disappointing to the heart of Jesus. Yet it is remarkable that the comparative abortiveness of the first evangelistic movement did not prevent Him from repeating the experiment some time after on a still more extensive scale. "After these things," writes the third evangelist, "the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before His face, into every city and place whither He Himself would come." The Tübingen school of critics, indeed, as we have already indicated, assure us that this mission had

no existence, being a pure invention of the third evangelist, intended to thrust into the shade the mission of the twelve, and to exhibit the Christian religion as a religion for humanity, represented by the Samaritans as the recipients, and by the seventy as the preachers of the faith, the number corresponding to the number of the nations. The theory is not devoid of plausibility, and it must be owned the history of this mission is very obscure; but the assumption of invention is violent, and we may safely take for granted that Luke's narrative rests on an authentic tradition. The motive of this second mission was the same as in the case of the first, as were also the instructions to the missionaries. Jesus still felt deep compassion for the perishing multitude, and hoping against hope, made a new attempt to save the lost sheep. He would have all men called at least to the fellowship of the kingdom, even though few should be chosen to it. And when the immediate results were promising He was gratified, albeit knowing, from past experience as well as by divine insight, that the faith and repentance of many were only too likely to be evanescent as the early dew. When the seventy returned from their mission, and reported their great success, He hailed it as an omen of the downfall of Satan's kingdom, and, rejoicing in spirit, gave thanks to the Supreme Ruler in heaven and earth, His Father, that while the things of the kingdom were hid from the wise and the prudent, the people of intelligence and discretion, they were by His grace revealed unto babes-the rude, the poor, the ignorant. The reference in the thanksgiving prayer of Jesus to the "wise and prudent" suggests the thought that these evangelistic efforts were regarded with disfavor by the refined, fastidious classes of Jewish religious society. This is in itself probable. There are always men in the church, intelligent, wise, and even good, to whom popular religious movements are distasteful. The noise, the excitement, the extravagances, the delusions, the misdirection of zeal, the rudeness of the agents, the instability of the converts-all these things offend them. The same class of minds would have taken offence at the evangelistic work of the twelve and the seventy, for undoubtedly it was accompanied with the same drawbacks. The agents were ignorant; they had few ideas in their heads; they understand little of divine truth; their sole qualification was, that they were earnest and could preach repentance well. Doubtless, also, there was plenty of noise and excitement among the multitudes who heard them preach; and we certainly know that their zeal was both ill-informed and short-lived. These things, in fact, are standing features of all popular movements. Jonathan Edwards, speaking with reference to the "revival" of religion which took place in America in his day, says truly: "A great deal of noise and tumult, confusion and uproar, darkness mixed with light, and evil with good, is always to be expected in the beginning of something very glorious in the state of things in human society or the church of God. After nature has long been shut up in a cold, dead state, when the sun returns in the spring, there is, together with the increase of the light and heat of the sun, very tempestuous weather before all is settled, calm, and serene, and all nature rejoices in its bloom and beauty."

None of the "wise and prudent" knew half so well as Jesus what evil would be mixed with the good in the work of the kingdom. But He was not so easily offended as they. The Friend of sinners was ever like Himself. He sympathized with the multitude, and could not, like the Pharisees, contentedly resign them to a permanent condition of ignorance and depravity. He rejoiced greatly over even one lost sheep restored; and He was, one might say overjoyed, when not one, but a whole flock, even began to return to the fold. It pleased Him to see men repenting even for a season, and pressing into the kingdom even rudely and violently; for His love was strong, and where strong love is, even wisdom and refinement will not be fastidious.

Before passing from this topic, let us observe that there is another class of Christians, quite distinct from the wise and prudent, in whose eyes such evangelistic labors as those of the twelve stand in no need of vindication. Their tendency, on the contrary, is to regard such labors as the whole work of the kingdom. Revival of religion among the neglected masses is for them the sum of all good-doing. Of the more still, less observable work of instruction going on in the church they take no account. Where there is no obvious excitement, the church in their view is dead, and her ministry inefficient. Such need to be reminded that there were two religious movements going on in the days of the Lord Jesus. One consisted in rousing the mass out of the stupor of indifference; the other consisted in the careful, exact training of men already in earnest, in the principles and truths of the divine kingdom. Of the one movement the disciples, that is, both the twelve and the seventy, were the agents; of the other movement they were the subjects. And the latter movement, though less noticeable, and much more limited in extent, was by far more important than the former; for it was destined to bring forth fruit that should remain-to tell not merely on the present time, but on the whole history of the world. The deep truths which the great Teacher was now quietly and unobservedly, as in the dark, instilling into the minds of a select band, the recipients of His confidential teaching were to speak in the broad daylight ere long; and the sound of their voice would not stop till it had gone through all the earth. There would have been a poor outlook for the kingdom of heaven if Christ had neglected this work, and given Himself up entirely to vague evangelism among the masses.

4. When the twelve had finished their mission, they returned and told their Master all that they had done and taught. Of their report, or of His remarks thereon, no details are recorded. Such details we do find, however, in connection with the later mission of the seventy. “The seventy,” we read, “returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Thy name.” The same evangelist from whom these words are quoted, informs us that, after congratulating the disciples on their success, and expressing His own satisfaction with the facts reported, Jesus spoke to them the warning word: “Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.” It was a timely caution against elation and vanity. It is very probable that a similar word of caution was addressed to the twelve also after their return. Such a word would certainly not have been unseasonable in their case. They had been engaged in the same exciting work, they had wielded the same miraculous powers, they had been equally successful, they were equally immature in character, and therefore it was equally difficult for them to bear success. It is most likely, therefore, that when Jesus said to them on their return, “Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile,” He was not caring for their bodies alone, but was prudently seeking to provide repose for their heated minds as well as for their jaded frames. The admonition to the seventy is indeed a word in season to all who are very zealous in the work of evangelism, especially such as are crude in knowledge and grace. It hints at the possibility of their own spiritual health being injured by their very zeal in seeking the salvation of others. This may happen in many ways. Success may make the evangelists vain, and they may begin to sacrifice unto their own net. They may fall under the dominion of the devil through their very joy that he is subject unto them. They may despise those who have been less successful, or denounce them as deficient in zeal. The eminent American divine already quoted gives a lamentable account of the pride, presumption, arrogance, conceit, and censoriousness which characterized many of the more active promoters of religious revival in his day. Once more, they may fall into carnal security respecting their own spiritual state, deeming

it impossible that any thing can go wrong with those who are so devoted, and whom God has so greatly owned. An obvious as well as dangerous mistake; for doubtless Judas took part in this Galilean mission, and, for aught we know to the contrary, was as successful as his fellow-disciples in casting out devils. Graceless men may for a season be employed as agents in promoting the work of grace in the hearts of others. Usefulness does not necessarily imply goodness, according to the teaching of Christ Himself. “Many,” He declares in the Sermon on the Mount, “will say unto me on that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by Thy name, and by Thy name cast out devils, and by Thy name do many wonderful works?” And mark the answer which He says He will give such. It is not: I call in question the correctness of your statement-that is tacitly admitted; it is: “I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

These solemn words suggest the need of watchfulness and self- examination; but they are not designed to discourage or discountenance zeal. We must not interpret them as if they meant, “Never mind doing good, only be good;” or, “Care not for the salvation of others: look to your own salvation.” Jesus Christ did not teach a listless or a selfish religion. He inculcated on His disciples a large-hearted generous concern for the spiritual well-being of men. To foster such a spirit He sent the twelve on this trial mission, even when they were comparatively unfitted for the work, and notwithstanding the risk of spiritual harm to which it exposed them. At all hazards He would have His apostles be filled with enthusiasm for the advancement of the kingdom; only taking due care, when the vices to which young enthusiasts are liable began to appear, to check them by a warning word and a timely retreat into solitude.

Section II - The Instructions The instructions given by Jesus to the twelve in sending them forth on their first mission, are obviously divisible into two parts. The first, shorter part, common to the narratives of all the three first evangelists, relates to the present; the second and much the longer part, peculiar to Matthew’s narrative, relates mainly to the distant future. In the former, Christ tells His disciples what to do now in their apprentice apostleship; in the latter, what they must do and endure when they have become apostles on the great scale, preaching the gospel, not to Jews only, but to all nations.

It has been doubted whether the discourse included in the second part of the apostolic or missionary instructions, as given by Matthew, was really uttered by Jesus on this occasion. Stress has been laid by those who take the negative view of this question on the facts that the first evangelist alone gives the discourse in connection with the trial mission, and that the larger portion of its contents are given by the other evangelists in other connections. Reference has also been made, in support of this view, to the statement made by Jesus to His disciples, in His farewell address to them before the crucifixion, that He had not till then spoken to them of coming persecutions, and for this reason, that while He was with them it was unnecessary. Finally, it has been deemed unlikely that Jesus would frighten His inexperienced disciples by alluding to dangers not imminent at the time of their mission in Galilee. These doubts, in view of the topical method of grouping his materials undoubtedly followed by Matthew, are legitimate, but they are not conclusive. It was natural that Jesus should signalize the first missionary enterprise of the twelve chosen men by some such discourse as Matthew records, setting forth the duties, perils, encouragements, and rewards of the apostolic vocation. It was His way, on solemn occasions, to speak as a prophet who in the present saw the future, and from small beginnings looked forward to great ultimate issues. And this Galilean mission, though humble and limited compared with the

great undertaking of after years, was really a solemn event. It was the beginning of that vast work for which the twelve had been chosen, which embraced the world in its scope, and aimed at setting up on earth the kingdom of God. If the Sermon on the Mount was appropriately delivered on the occasion when the apostolic company was formed, this discourse on the apostolic vocation was not less appropriate when the members of that company first put their hands to the work unto which they had been called. Even the allusions to distant dangers contained in the discourse appear on reflection natural and seasonable, and calculated to re-assure rather than to frighten the disciples. It must be remembered that the execution of the Baptist had recently occurred, and that the twelve were about to commence their missionary labors within the dominions of the tyrant by whose command the barbarous murder had been committed. Doubtless these humble men who were to take up and repeat the Baptist's message, "Repent," ran no present risk of his fate; but it was natural that they should fear, and it was also natural that their Master should think of their future when such fears would be any thing but imaginary; and on both accounts it was seasonable to say to them in effect: Dangers are coming, but fear not.

Such, in substance, is the burden of the second part of Christ's instructions to the twelve. Of the first part, on the other hand, the burden is, Care not. These two words, Care not, Fear not, are the soul and marrow of all that was said by way of prelude to the first missionary enterprise, and we may add, to all which might follow. For here Jesus speaks to all ages and to all times, telling the Church in what spirit all her missionary enterprises must be undertaken and carried on, that they may have His blessing.

1. The duty of entering on their mission without carefulness, relying on Providence for the necessaries of life, was inculcated on the twelve by their Master in very strong and lively terms. They were instructed to procure nothing for the journey, but just to go as they were. They must provide neither gold nor silver, nor even so much as brass coin in their purses, no scrip or wallet to carry food, no change of raiment; not even sandals for their feet, or a staff for their hands. If they had the last-mentioned articles, good and well; if not, they could do without them. They might go on their errand of love barefooted, and without the aid even of a staff to help them on their weary way, having their feet shod only with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and leaning their weight upon God's words of promise, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." In these directions for the way, it is the spirit, and not the mere letter, which is of intrinsic and permanent value. The truth of this statement is evident from the very variations of the evangelists in reporting Christ's words. One, for example (Mark), makes Him say to His disciples in effect: "If you have a staff in your hand, and sandals on your feet, and one coat on your back, let that suffice." Another (Matthew) represents Jesus as saying: "Provide nothing for this journey, neither coat, shoes, nor staff." In spirit the two versions come to the same thing; but if we insist on the letter of the injunctions with legal strictness, there is an obvious contradiction between them. What Jesus meant to say, in whatever form of language He expressed Himself, was this: Go at once, and go as you are, and trouble not yourselves about food or raiment, or any bodily want; trust in God for these. His instructions proceeded on the principle of division of labor, assigning to the servants of the kingdom military duty, and to God the commissariat department. So understood, the words of our Lord are of permanent validity, and to be kept in mind by all who would serve Him in His kingdom. And though the circumstances of the church have greatly altered since these words were first spoken, they have not been lost sight of. Many a minister and missionary has obeyed those

instructions almost in their letter, and many more have kept them in their spirit. Nay, has not every poor student fulfilled these injunctions, who has gone forth from the humble roof of his parents to be trained for the ministry of the gospel, without money in his pocket either to buy food or to pay fees, only with simple faith and youthful hope in his heart, knowing as little how he is to find his way to the pastoral office, as Abraham knew how to find his way to the promised land when he left his native abode, but, with Abraham, trusting that He who said to him, “Leave thy father’s house,” will be his guide, his shield, and his provider? And if those who thus started on their career do at length arrive at a wealthy place, in which their wants are abundantly supplied, what is that but an indorsement by Providence of the law enunciated by the Master: “The workman is worthy of his meat”? The directions given to the twelve with respect to temporalities, in connection with their first mission, were meant to be an education for their future work. On entering on the duties of the apostolate, they should have to live literally by faith, and Jesus mercifully sought to inure them to the habit while He was with them on earth. Therefore, in sending them out to preach in Galilee, He said to them in effect: “Go and learn to seek the kingdom of God with a single heart, unconcerned about food or raiment; for till ye can do that ye are not fit to be my apostles.” They had indeed been learning to do that ever since they began to follow Him; for those who belonged to His company literally lived from day to day, taking no thought for the morrow. But there was a difference between their past state and that on which they were about to enter. Hitherto Jesus had been with them; now they were to be left for a season to themselves. Hitherto they had been like young children in a family under the care of their parents, or like young birds in a nest sheltered by their mother’s wing, and needing only to open their mouths wide in order to get them filled; now they were to become like boys leaving their father’s house to serve an apprenticeship, or like fledglings leaving the warm nest in which they were nursed, to exercise their wings and seek food for themselves.

While requiring His disciples to walk by faith, Jesus gave their faith something to rest on, by encouraging them to hope that what they provided not for themselves God would provide for them through the instrumentality of His people. “Into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and there abide till ye go thence.” He took for granted, we observe, that there would always be found at every place at least one good man with a warm heart, who would welcome the messengers of the kingdom to his house and table for the pure love of God and of the truth. Surely no unreasonable assumption! It were a wretched hamlet, not to say town, that had not a single worthy person in it. Even wicked Sodom had a Lot within its walls who could entertain angels unawares. To insure good treatment of His servants in all ages wherever the gospel might be preached, Jesus made it known that He put a high premium on all acts of kindness done towards them. This advertisement we find at the close of the address delivered to the twelve at this time: “He that receiveth you,” He said to them, “receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth Him that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet’s reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man’s reward.” And then, with increased pathos and solemnity, He added: “Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.” How easy to go forth into Galilee, yea, into all the world, serving such a sympathetic Master on such terms! But while thus encouraging the young evangelists, Jesus did not allow them to go away with the idea that all things would be pleasant in their experience. He gave them to understand that they should be ill received as well

as kindly received. They should meet with churls who would refuse them hospitality, and with stupid, careless people who would reject their message; but even in such cases, He assured them, they should not be without consolation. If their peaceful salutation were not reciprocated, they should at all events get the benefit of their own spirit of good-will: their peace would return to themselves. If their words were not welcomed by any to whom they preached, they should at least be free from blame; they might shake off the dust from their feet, and say: “Your blood be upon your own heads, we are clean; we leave you to your doom, and go elsewhere.” Solemn words, not to be uttered, as they are too apt to be, especially by young and inexperienced disciples, in pride, impatience, or anger, but humbly, calmly, deliberately, as a part of God’s message to men. When uttered in any other spirit, it is a sign that the preacher has been as much to blame as the hearer for the rejection of his message. Few have any right to utter such words at all; for it requires rare preaching indeed to make the fault of unbelieving hearers so great that it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for them. But such preaching has been. Christ’s own preaching was such, and hence the fearful doom He pronounced on those who rejected His words. Such also the preaching of the apostles was to be; and therefore to uphold their authority, Jesus solemnly declared that the penalty for despising their word would be not less than for neglecting His own.

2. The remaining instructions, referring to the future rather than to the present, while much more copious, do not call for lengthened explanation. The burden of them all, as we have said, is “Fear not.” This exhortation, like the refrain of a song, is repeated again and again in the course of the address. From that fact the twelve might have inferred that their future lot was to be of a kind fitted to inspire fear. But Jesus did not leave them to learn this by inference; He told them of it plainly. “Behold,” He said, with the whole history of the church in His view, “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.” Then He went on to explain in detail, and with appalling vividness, the various forms of danger which awaited the messengers of truth; how they should be delivered up to councils, scourged in synagogues, brought before governors and kings (like Felix, Festus, Herod), and hated of all for His name’s sake. He explained to them, at the same time, that this strange treatment was inevitable in the nature of things, being the necessary consequence of divine truth acting in the world like a chemical solvent, and separating men into parties, according to the spirit which ruled in them. The truth would divide even members of the same family, and make them bitterly hostile to each other; and however deplorable the result might be, it was one for which there was no remedy. Offences must come: “Think not,” He said to His disciples, horrified at the dark picture, and perhaps secretly hoping that their Master had painted it in too sombre colors, “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.”

Amid such dangers two virtues are specially needful-caution and fidelity; the one, that God’s servants may not be cut off prematurely or unnecessarily, the other, that while they live, they may really do God’s work, and fight for the truth. In such times Christ’s disciples must not fear, but be brave and true; and yet, while fearless, they must not be foolhardy. These qualities it is not easy to combine; for conscientious men are apt to be rash, and prudent men are apt to be unfaithful. Yet the combination is not impossible, else it would not be required, as it is in this discourse. For it was

just the importance of cultivating the apparently incompatible virtues of caution and fidelity that Jesus meant to teach by the remarkable proverb-precept: “Be wise as serpents, harmless as doves.” The serpent is the emblem of cunning, the dove of simplicity. No creatures can be more unlike; yet Jesus requires of His disciples to be at once serpents in cautiousness, and doves in simplicity of aim and purity of heart. Happy they who can be both; but if we cannot, let us at least be doves. The dove must come before the serpent in our esteem, and in the development of our character. This order is observable in the history of all true disciples. They begin with spotless sincerity; and after being betrayed by a generous enthusiasm into some acts of rashness, they learn betimes the serpent’s virtues. If we invert the order, as too many do, and begin by being prudent and judicious to admiration, the effect will be that the higher virtue will not only be postponed, but sacrificed. The dove will be devoured by the serpent: the cause of truth and righteousness will be betrayed out of a base regard to self-preservation and worldly advantage. On hearing a general maxim of morals announced, one naturally wishes to know how it applies to particular cases. Christ met this wish in connection with the deep, pregnant maxim, “Be wise as serpents, harmless as doves,” by giving examples of its application. The first case supposed is that of the messengers of truth being brought up before civil or ecclesiastical tribunals to answer for themselves. Here the dictate of wisdom is, “Beware of men,” “Do not be so simple as to imagine all men good, honest, fair, tolerant. Remember there are wolves in the world-men full of malice, falsehood, and unscrupulousness, capable of inventing the most atrocious charges against you, and of supporting them by the most unblushing mendacity. Keep out of their clutches if you can; and when you fall into their hands, expect neither candor, justice, nor generosity.” But how are such men to be answered? Must craft be met with craft, lies with lies? No; here is the place for the simplicity of the dove. Cunning and craft boot not at such an hour; safety lies in trusting to Heaven’s guidance, and telling the truth. “When they deliver you up, take no (anxious) thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.” The counsel given to the apostles has been justified by experience. What a noble book the speeches uttered by confessors of the truth under the inspiration of the Divine Spirit, collected together, would make! It would be a sort of Martyrs’ Bible.

Jesus next puts the case of the heralds of His gospel being exposed to popular persecutions, and shows the bearing of the maxim upon it likewise. Such persecutions, as distinct from judicial proceedings, were common in apostolic experience, and they are a matter of course in all critical eras. The ignorant, superstitious populace, filled with prejudice and passion, and instigated by designing men, play the part of obstructives to the cause of truth, mobbing, mocking, and assaulting the messengers of God. How, then, are the subjects of this ill-treatment to act? On the one hand, they are to show the wisdom of the serpent by avoiding the storm of popular ill-will when it arises; and on the other hand, they are to exhibit the simplicity of the dove by giving the utmost publicity to their message, though conscious of the risk they run. “When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into the next;” yet, undaunted by clamor, calumny, violence, “what I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light; what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the house-tops.” To each of these injunctions a reason is annexed. Flight is justified by the remark, “Verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come.” The coming alluded to is the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jewish nation; and the meaning is, that the apostles would barely have time, before the catastrophe came, to go over all

the land, warning the people to save themselves from the doom of an untoward generation, so that they could not well afford to tarry in any locality after its inhabitants had heard and rejected the message. The souls of all were alike precious; and if one city did not receive the word, perhaps another would. The reason annexed to the injunction to give the utmost publicity to the truth, in spite of all possible dangers, is: “The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.” That is to say: To be evil entreated by the ignorant and violent multitude is hard to bear, but not harder for you than for me, who already, as ye know, have had experience of popular malice at Nazareth, and am destined, as ye know not, to have yet more bitter experience of it at Jerusalem. Therefore see that ye hide not your light under a bushel to escape the rage of wolfish men. The disciples are supposed, lastly, to be in peril not merely of trial, mocking, and violence, but even of their life, and are instructed how to act in that extremity. Here also the maxim, “Wise as serpents, harmless as doves,” comes into play in both its parts. In this case the wisdom of the serpent lies in knowing what to fear. Jesus reminds His disciples that there are two kinds of deaths, one caused by the sword, the other by unfaithfulness to duty; and tells them in effect, that while both are evils to be avoided, if possible, yet if a choice must be made, the latter death is most to be dreaded. “Fear not,” He said, “them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell,”-the tempter, that is, who, when one is in danger, whispers: Save thyself at any sacrifice of principle or conscience. The simplicity of the dove in presence of extreme peril consists in childlike trust in the watchful providence of the Father in heaven. Such trust Jesus exhorted His disciples to cherish in charmingly simple and pathetic language. He told them that God cared even for sparrows, and reminded them that, however insignificant they might seem to themselves, they were at least of more value than many sparrows, not to say than two, whose money value was just one farthing. If God neglected not even a pair of sparrows, but provided for them a place in His world where they might build their nest and safely bring forth their young, would He not care for them as they went forth two and two preaching the doctrine of the kingdom? Yea! He would; the very hairs of their head were numbered. Therefore they might go forth without fear, trusting their lives to His care; remembering also that, at worst, death was no great evil, seeing that for the faithful was reserved a crown of life, and, for those who confessed the Son of man, the honor of being confessed by Him in turn before His Father in heaven.

Such were the instructions of Christ to the twelve when He sent them forth to preach and to heal. It was a rare, unexampled discourse, strange to the ears of us moderns, who can hardly imagine such stern requirements being seriously made, not to say exactly complied with. Some readers of these pages may have stood and looked up at Mont Blanc from Courmayeur or Chamounix. Such is our attitude towards this first missionary sermon. It is a mountain at which we gaze in wonder from a position far below, hardly dreaming of climbing to its summit. Some noble ones, however, have made the arduous ascent; and among these the first place of honor must be assigned to the chosen companions of Jesus.

02.09.1. The Galilean Crisis

The Galilean Crisis Section I - The Miracle John 6:1-15; Mat 14:13-21; Mark 6:33-34; Luk 9:11-17.

John 6:1-71 is full of marvels. It tells of a great miracle, a great enthusiasm, a great storm, a great sermon, a great apostasy, and a great trial of faith and fidelity endured by the twelve. It contains, indeed, the compendious history of an important crisis in the ministry of Jesus and the religious experience of His disciples-a crisis in many respects foreshadowing the great final one, which happened little more than a year afterwards, when a more famous miracle still was followed by a greater popularity, to be succeeded in turn by a more complete desertion, and to end in the crucifixion, by which the riddle of the Capernaum discourse was solved, and its prophecy fulfilled. The facts recorded by John in John 6:1-71 may all be comprehended under these four heads: the miracle in the wilderness, the storm on the lake, the sermon in the synagogue, and the subsequent sifting of Christ's disciples. These, in their order, we propose to consider in four distinct sections. The scene of the miracle was on the eastern shore of the Galilean Sea. Luke fixes the precise locality in the neighborhood of a city called Bethsaida. This, of course, could not be the Bethsaida on the western shore, the city of Andrew and Peter. But there was, it appears, another city of the same name at the north-eastern extremity of the lake, called by way of distinction, Bethsaida Julias. The site of this city, we are informed by an eye-witness, "is discernible on the lower slope of the hill which overhangs the rich plain at the mouth of the Jordan" (that is, at the place where the waters of the Upper Jordan join the Sea of Galilee). "The 'desert place,'" the same author goes on to say, by way of proving the suitableness of the locality to be the scene of this miracle, "was either the green tableland which lies halfway up the hill immediately above Bethsaida, or else in the parts of the plain not cultivated by the hand of man would be found the 'much green grass,' still fresh in the spring of the year when this event occurred, before it had faded away in the summer sun: the tall grass which, broken down by the feet of the thousands then gathered together, would make 'as it were, 'couches' for them to recline upon." To this place Jesus and the twelve had retired after the return of the latter from their mission, seeking rest and privacy. But what they sought they did not find. Their movements were observed, and the people flocked along the shore toward the place whither they had sailed, running all the way, as if fearful that they might escape, and so arriving at the landing place before them. The multitude which thus gathered around Jesus was very great. All the evangelists agree in stating it at five thousand; and as the arrangement of the people at the miraculous repast in groups of hundreds and fifties made it easy to ascertain their number, we may accept this statement not as a rough estimate, but as a tolerably exact calculation.

Such an immense assemblage testifies to the presence of a great excitement among the populations living by the shore of the Sea of Galilee. A fervid enthusiasm, a hero-worship, whereof Jesus was the object, was at work in their minds. Jesus was the idol of the hour: they could not endure his absence; they could not see enough of His work, nor hear enough of His teaching. This enthusiasm of the Galileans we may regard as the cumulative result of Christ's own past labors, and in part also of the evangelistic mission which we considered in the last chapter. The infection seems to have spread as far south as Tiberias, for John relates that boats came from that city "to

the place where they did eat bread." Those who were in these boats came too late to witness the miracle and share in the feast, but this does not prove that their errand was not the same as that of the rest; for, owing to their greater distance from the scene, the news would be longer in reaching them, and it would take them longer to go thither. The great miracle wrought in the neighborhood of Bethsaida Julias consisted in the feeding of this vast assemblage of human beings with the utterly inadequate means of "five barley loaves and two small fishes." It was truly a stupendous transaction, of which we can form no conception; but no event in the Gospel history is more satisfactorily attested. All the evangelists relate the miracle with much minuteness, with little even apparent discrepancy, and with such graphic detail as none but eye-witnesses could have supplied. Even John, who records so few of Christ's miracles, describes this one with as careful a hand as any of his brother evangelists, albeit introducing it into his narrative merely as a preface to the sermon on the Bread of Life found in his Gospel only. This wonderful work, so unexceptionably attested, seems open to exception on another ground. It appears to be a miracle without a sufficient reason. It cannot be said to have been urgently called for by the necessities of the multitude. Doubtless they were hungry, and had brought no victuals with them to supply their bodily wants. But the miracle was wrought on the afternoon of the day on which they left their homes, and most of them might have returned within a few hours. It would, indeed, have been somewhat hard to have undertaken such a journey at the end of the day without food; but the hardship, even if necessary, was far within the limits of human endurance. But it was not necessary; for food could have been got on the way without going far, in the neighboring towns and villages, so that to disperse them as they were would have involved no considerable inconvenience. This is evident from the terms in which the disciples made the suggestion that the multitude should be sent away. We read: "When the day began to wear away, then came the twelve, and said unto Him, Send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages and country round about, and lodge and get victuals." In these respects there is an obvious difference between the first miraculous feeding and the second, which occurred at a somewhat later period at the south-eastern extremity of the Lake. On that occasion the people who had assembled around Jesus had been three days in the wilderness without aught to eat, and there were no facilities for procuring food, so that the miracle was demanded by considerations of humanity. Accordingly we find that compassion is assigned as the motive for that miracle: "Jesus called His disciples unto Him, and saith unto them, I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat; and if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way; for some of them are come from far."

If our object were merely to get rid of the difficulty of assigning a sufficient motive for the first great miracle of feeding, we might content ourselves with saying that Jesus did not need any very urgent occasion to induce Him to use His power for the benefit of others. For His own benefit He would not use it in case even of extreme need, not even after a fast of forty days. But when the well-being (not to say the being) of others was concerned, He dispensed miraculous blessings with a liberal hand. He did not ask Himself: Is this a grave enough occasion for the use of divine power? Is this man ill enough to justify a miraculous interference with the laws of nature by healing him? Are these people here assembled hungry enough to be fed, like their fathers in the wilderness, with bread from heaven? But we do not insist on this, because we believe that something else and higher was aimed at in this miracle than to satisfy physical appetite. It was a symbolic, didactic, critical miracle. It was meant to teach, and also to test; to supply a text for the

subsequent sermon, and a touchstone to try the character of those who had followed Jesus with such enthusiasm. The miraculous feast in the wilderness was meant to say to the multitude just what our sacramental feast says to us: “I, Jesus the Son of God Incarnate, am the bread of life. What this bread is to your bodies, I myself am to your souls.” And the communicants in that feast were to be tested by the way in which they regarded the transaction. The spiritual would see in it a sign of Christ’s divine dignity, and a seal of His saving grace; the carnal would rest simply in the outward fact that they had eaten of the loaves and were filled, and would take occasion from what had happened to indulge in high hopes of temporal felicity under the benign reign of the Prophet and King who had made His appearance among them. The miracle in the desert was in this view not merely an act of mercy, but an act of judgment. Jesus mercifully fed the hungry multitude in order that He might sift it, and separate the true from the spurious disciples. There was a much more urgent demand for such a sifting than for food to satisfy merely physical cravings. If those thousands were all genuine disciples, it was well; but if not-if the greater number were following Christ under misapprehension-the sooner that became apparent the better. To allow so large a mixed multitude to follow Himself any longer without sifting would have been on Christ’s part to encourage false hopes, and to give rise to serious misapprehensions as to the nature of His kingdom and His earthly mission. And no better method of separating the chaff from the wheat in that large company of professed disciples could have been devised, than first to work a miracle which would bring to the surface the latent carnality of the greater number, and then to preach a sermon which could not fail to be offensive to the carnal mind. That Jesus freely chose, for a reason of His own, the miraculous method of meeting the difficulty that had arisen, appears to be not obscurely hinted at in the Gospel narratives. Consider, for example, in this connection, John’s note of time, “The passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.” Is this a merely chronological statement? We think not. What further purpose, then, is it intended to serve? To explain how so great a crowd came to be gathered around Jesus? Such an explanation was not required, for the true cause of the great gathering was the enthusiasm which had been awakened among the people by the preaching and healing work of Jesus and the twelve. The evangelist refers to the approaching passover, it would seem, not to explain the movement of the people, but rather to explain the acts and words of His Lord about to be related. “The passover was nigh, and”-so may we bring out John’s meaning-“Jesus was thinking of it, though He went not up to the feast that season. He thought of the paschal lamb, and how He, the true Paschal Lamb, would ere long be slain for the life of the world; and He gave expression to the deep thoughts of His heart in the symbolic miracle I am about to relate, and in the mystic discourse which followed.” The view we advocate respecting the motive of the miracle in the wilderness seems borne out also by the tone adopted by Jesus in the conversation which took place between Himself and the twelve as to how the wants of the multitude might be supplied. In the course of that conversation, of which fragments have been preserved by the different evangelists, two suggestions were made by the disciples. One was to dismiss the multitude that they might procure supplies for themselves; the other, that they (the disciples) should go to the nearest town (say Bethsaida Julias, probably not far off) and purchase as much bread as they could get for two hundred denarii, which would suffice to alleviate hunger at least, if not to satisfy appetite. Both these proposals were feasible, otherwise they would not have been made; for the twelve had not spoken thoughtlessly, but after consideration, as appears from the fact that one of their number, Andrew, had already ascertained how much provision could be got on the spot. The question how the multitude could be provided

for had evidently been exercising the minds of the disciples, and the two proposals were the result of their deliberations. Now, what we wish to point out is, that Jesus does not appear to have given any serious heed to these proposals. He listened to them, not displeased to see the generous concern of His disciples for the hungry people, yet with the air of one who meant from the first to pursue a different line of action from any they might suggest. He behaved like a general in a council of war whose own mind is made up, but who is not unwilling to hear what his subordinates will say. This is no mere inference of ours, for John actually explains that such was the manner in which our Lord acted on the occasion. After relating that Jesus addressed to Philip the question, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? he adds the parenthetical remark, “This He said to prove him, for He Himself knew what He would do.”

Such, then, was the design of the miracle; what now was its result? It raised the swelling tide of enthusiasm to its full height, and induced the multitude to form a foolish and dangerous purpose-even to crown the wonder-working Jesus, and make Him their king instead of the licentious despot Herod. They said, “This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world;” and they were on the point of coming and taking Jesus by force to make Him a king, insomuch that it was necessary that He should make His escape from them, and depart into a mountain Himself alone. Such are the express statements of the fourth Gospel, and what is there stated is obscurely implied in the narratives of Matthew and Mark. They tell how, after the miracle in the desert, Jesus straightway constrained His disciples to get into a ship and to go to the other side. Why such haste, and why such urgency? Doubtless it was late, and there was no time to lose if they wished to get home to Capernaum that night. But why go home at all, when the people, or at least a part of them, were to pass the night in the wilderness? Should the disciples not rather have remained with them, to keep them in heart and take a charge of them? Nay, was it dutiful in disciples to leave their Master alone in such a situation? Doubtless the reluctance of the twelve to depart sprang from their asking themselves these very questions; and, as a feeling having such an origin was most becoming, the constraint put on them presupposes the existence of unusual circumstances, such as those recorded by John. In other words, the most natural explanation of the fact recorded by the synoptical evangelists is, that Jesus wished to extricate both Himself and His disciples from the foolish enthusiasm of the multitude, an enthusiasm with which, beyond question, the disciples were only too much in sympathy, and for that purpose arranged that they should sail away in the dusk across the lake, while He retired into the solitude of the mountains.

What a melancholy result of a hopeful movement have we here! The kingdom has been proclaimed, and the good news has been extensively welcomed. Jesus, the Messianic King, is become the object of most ardent devotion to an enthusiastic population. But, alas! their ideas of the kingdom are radically mistaken. Acted out, they would mean rebellion and ultimate ruin. Therefore it is necessary that Jesus should save Himself from His own friends, and hide Himself from His own followers. How certainly do Satan’s tares get sown among God’s wheat! How easily does enthusiasm run into folly and mischief! The result of the miracle did not take Jesus by surprise. It was what He expected; nay, in a sense, it was what He aimed at. It was time that the thoughts of many hearts should be revealed; and the certainty that the miracle would help to reveal them was one reason at least for its being worked. Jesus furnished for the people a table in the wilderness, and gave them of the corn of heaven, and sent them meat to the full, that He might prove them, and know what was in their heart,-whether they loved Him for His own sake, or only

for the sake of expected worldly advantage. That many followed Him from by-ends He knew beforehand, but He desired to bring the fact home to their own consciences. The miracle put that in His power, and enabled Him to say, without fear of contradiction, “Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled.” It was a searching word, which might well put all His professed followers, not only then, but now, on self-examining thoughts, and lead each man to ask himself, Why do I profess Christianity? is it from sincere faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Saviour of the world, or from thoughtless compliance with custom, from a regard to reputation, or from considerations of worldly advantage?

Section II - The Storm Mat 14:24-33; Mark 6:45-52; John 6:16-21.

“In perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea,” wrote Paul, describing the varied hardships encountered by himself in the prosecution of his great work as the apostle of the Gentiles. Such perils meet together in this crisis in the life of Jesus. He has just saved himself from the dangerous enthusiasm manifested by the thoughtless multitude after the miraculous repast in the desert; and now, a few hours later, a still greater disaster threatens to befall Him. His twelve chosen disciples, whom He had hurriedly sent off in a boat, that they might not encourage the people in their foolish project, have been overtaken in a storm while He is alone on the mountain praying, and are in imminent danger of being drowned. His contrivance for escaping one evil has involved Him in a worse; and it seems as if, by a combination of mischances, He were to be suddenly deprived of all His followers, both true and false, at once, and left utterly alone, as in the last great crisis. The Messianic King watching on those heights, like a general on the day of battle, is indeed hard pressed, and the battle is going against Him. But the Captain of salvation is equal to the emergency; and however sorely perplexed He may be for a season, He will be victorious in the end. The Sea of Galilee, though but a small sheet of water, some thirteen miles long by six broad, is liable to be visited by sharp, sudden squalls, probably due to its situation. It lies in a deep hollow of volcanic origin, bounded on either side by steep ranges of hills rising above the water-level from one to two thousand feet. The difference of temperature at the top and bottom of these hills is very considerable. Up on the tablelands above the air is cool and bracing; down at the margin of the lake, which lies seven hundred feet below the level of the ocean, the climate is tropical. The storms caused by this inequality of temperature are tropical in violence. They come sweeping down the ravines upon the water; and in a moment the lake, calm as glass before, becomes from end to end white with foam, whilst the waves rise into the air in columns of spray.

Two such storms of wind were encountered by the twelve after they had become disciples, probably within the same year; the one with which we are concerned at present, and an earlier one on the occasion of a visit to Gadara. Both happened by night, and both were exceedingly violent. In the first storm, we are told, the ship was covered with the waves, and filled almost to sinking, so that the disciples feared they should perish. The second storm was equally violent, and was of much longer duration. It caught the twelve apparently when they were half-way across, and after the gray of dusk had deepened into the darkness of night. From that time the wind blew with unabated force till daybreak, in the fourth watch, between the hours of three and six in the morning. Some idea of the fury of the blast may be gathered from the fact recorded, that even then they were still little more than half-way over the sea. They had rowed in all only a distance of twenty-five or thirty furlongs, the whole distance in a slanting direction, from the eastern to the western shore, being probably about fifty. During all those weary hours they had done little more,

pulling with all their might, than hold their own against wind and waves.

All this while what was Jesus doing? In the first storm He had been with His disciples in the ship, sweetly sleeping after the fatigues of the day, “rocked in cradle of the imperious surge.” This time He was absent, and not sleeping; but away up among the mountains alone, watching unto prayer. For He, too, had His own struggle on that tempestuous night; not with the howling winds, but with sorrowful thoughts. That night He, as it were, rehearsed the agony in Gethsemane, and with earnest prayer and absorbing meditation studied the passion sermon which He preached on the morrow. So engrossed was His mind with His own sad thoughts, that the poor disciples were for a season as if forgotten; till at length, at early dawn, looking seawards, He saw them toiling in rowing against the contrary wind, and without a moment’s further delay made haste to their rescue. This storm on the Sea of Galilee, besides being important as a historical fact, possesses also the significance of an emblem. When we consider the time at which it occurred, it is impossible not to connect it in our thoughts with the untoward events of the next day. For the literal storm on the water was succeeded by a spiritual storm on the land, equally sudden and violent, and not less perilous to the souls of the twelve than the other had been to their bodies. The bark containing the precious freight of Christ’s true discipleship was then overtaken by a sudden gust of unpopularity, coming down on it like a squall on a highland loch, and all but upsetting it. The fickle crowd which but the day before would have made Jesus their king, turned away abruptly from Him in disappointment and disgust; and it was not without an effort, as we shall see, that the twelve maintained their steadfastness. They had to pull hard against wind and waves, that they might not be carried headlong to ruin by the tornado of apostasy.

There can be little doubt that the two storms-on the lake and on the shore-coming so close one on the other, would become associated in the memory of the apostles; and that the literal storm would be stereotyped in their minds as an expressive emblem of the spiritual one, and of all similar trials of faith. The incidents of that fearful night-the watching, the wet, the toil without result, the fatigue, the terror and despair-would abide indelibly in their recollection, the symbolic representation of all the perils and tribulations through which believers must pass on their way to the kingdom of heaven, and especially of those that come upon them while they are yet immature in the faith. Symbolic significance might be discovered specially in three features. The storm took place by night; in the absence of Jesus; and while it lasted all progress was arrested. Storms at sea may happen at all hours of the day, but trials of faith always happen in the night. Were there no darkness there could be no trial. Had the twelve understood Christ’s discourse in Capernaum, the apostasy of the multitude would have seemed to them a light matter. But they did not understand it, and hence the solicitude of their Master lest they too should forsake Him. In all such trials, also, the absence of the Lord to feeling is a constant and most painful feature. Christ is not in the ship while the storm rages by night, and we toil on in rowing unaided, as we think, by His grace, uncheered by His spiritual presence. It was so even with the twelve next day on shore. Their Master, present to their eyes, had vanished out of sight to their understanding. They had not the comfort of comprehending His meaning, while they clung to Him as one who had the words of eternal life. Worst of all, in these trials of faith, with all our rowing, we make no progress; the utmost we can effect is to hold our own, to keep off the rocky shore in the midst of the sea. Happily that is something, yea, it is every thing. For it is not always true that if not going forward we must be going backward. This is an adage for fair weather only. In a time of storm there is such a thing

as standing still, and then to do even so much is a great achievement. Is it a small thing to weather the storm, to keep off the rocks, the sands, and the breakers? Vex not the soul of him who is already vexed enough by the buffeting winds, by retailing wise saws about progress and backsliding indiscriminately applied. Instead of playing thus the part of a Job's friend, rather remind him that the great thing for one in his situation is to endure, to be immovable, to hold fast his moral integrity and his profession of faith, and to keep off the dangerous coasts of immorality and infidelity; and assure him that if he will only pull a little longer, however weary his arm, God will come and calm the wind, and he will forthwith reach the land. The storm on the lake, besides being an apt emblem of the trial of faith, was for the twelve an important lesson in faith, helping to prepare them for the future which awaited them. The temporary absence of their Master was a preparation for His perpetual absence. The miraculous interposition of Jesus at the crisis of their peril was fitted to impress on their minds the conviction that even after He had ascended He would still be with them in the hour of danger. From the ultimate happy issue of a plan which threatened for a time to miscarry, they might further learn to cherish a calm confidence in the government of their exalted Lord, even in midst of most untoward events. They probably concluded, when the storm came on, that Jesus had made a mistake in ordering them to sail away across the lake while He remained behind to dismiss the multitude. The event, however, rebuked this hasty judgment, all ending happily. Their experience in this instance was fitted to teach a lesson for life: not rashly to infer mismanagement or neglect on Christ's part from temporary mishaps, but to have firm faith in His wise and loving care for His cause and people, and to anticipate a happy issue out of all perplexities; yea, to glory in tribulation, because of the great deliverance which would surely follow.

Such strong faith the disciples were far enough from possessing at the time of the storm. They had no expectation that Jesus would come to their rescue; for when He did come, they thought He was a spirit flitting over the water, and cried out in an agony of superstitious terror. Here also we note, in passing, a curious correspondence between the incidents of this crisis and those connected with the final one. The disciples had then as little expectation of seeing their Lord return from the dead as they had now of seeing Him come to them over the sea; and therefore His re-appearance at first frightened rather than comforted them. "They were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit." Good, unlooked for in either case, was turned into evil; and what to faith would have been a source of intense joy, became, through unbelief, only a new cause of alarm. The fact of His not being expected seems to have imposed on Jesus the necessity of using artifice in His manner of approaching His storm-tossed disciples. Mark relates that "He would have passed by them," affecting strangeness, as we understand it, out of delicate consideration for their weakness. He knew what He would be taken for when first observed; and therefore He wished to attract their attention at a safe distance, fearing lest, by appearing among them at once, He might drive them distracted. He found it needful to be as cautious in announcing His advent to save as men are wont to be in communicating evil tidings: first appearing, as the spectre, as far away as He could be seen; then revealing Himself by His familiar voice uttering the words of comfort, "It is I; be not afraid," and so obtaining at length a willing reception into the ship. The effects which followed the admission of Jesus into the vessel betrayed the twelve into a new manifestation of the weakness of their faith. "The wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered." They ought not to have wondered so greatly, after what had happened once before on these same waters, and especially after such a miracle as had been wrought in the wilderness on the previous day. But the storm had blown all thoughts of such things out of their

mind, and driven them utterly stupid. “They reflected not on the loaves (nor on the rebuking of the winds), for their heart was hardened.” But the most interesting revelation of the mental state of the disciples at the time when Jesus came to their relief, is to be found in the episode concerning Peter related in Matthew’s Gospel. When that disciple understood that the supposed spectre was his beloved Master, he cried, “Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water;” and on receiving permission, he forthwith stepped out of the ship into the sea. This was not faith, but simple rashness. It was the rebound of an impetuous, headlong nature from one extreme of utter despair to the opposite extreme of extravagant, reckless joy. What in the other disciples took the tame form of a willingness to receive Jesus into the ship, after they were satisfied it was He who walked on the waters, took, in the case of Peter, the form of a romantic, adventurous wish to go out to Jesus where He was, to welcome Him back among them again. The proposal was altogether like the man-generous, enthusiastic, and well-meant, but inconsiderate.

Such a proposal, of course, could not meet with Christ’s approval, and yet He did not negative it. He rather thought good to humor the impulsive disciple so far, by inviting him to come, and then to allow him, while in the water, to feel his own weakness. Thus would He teach him a little self-knowledge, and, if possible, save him from the effects of his rash, self-confident temper. But Peter was not to be made wise by one lesson, nor even by several. He would go on blundering and erring, in spite of rebuke and warning, till at length he fell into grievous sin, denying the Master whom he loved so well. The denial at the final crisis was just what might be looked for from one who so behaved at the minor crisis preceding it. The man who said, “Bid me come to Thee,” was just the man to say, “Lord, I am ready to go with Thee both into prison and to death.” He who was so courageous on deck, and so timid amid the waves, was the one of all the disciples most likely to talk boldly when danger was not at hand, and then play the coward when the hour of trial actually arrived. The scene on the lake was but a foreshadowing or rehearsal of Peter’s fall. And yet that scene showed something more than the weakness of that disciple’s faith. It showed also what is possible to those who believe. If the tendency of weak faith be to sink, the triumph of strong faith is to walk on the waves, glorying in tribulation, and counting it all joy when exposed to divers temptations. It is the privilege of those who are weak in faith, and the duty of all, mindful of human frailty, to pray, “Lead us not into temptation.” But when storms come not of their inviting, and when their ship is upset in midst of the sea, then may Christians trust to the promise, “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee;” and if only they have faith, they shall be enabled to tread the rolling billows as if walking on firm land.

“He bids me come; His voice I know, And boldly on the waters go, And brave the tempest’s shock.

O’er rude temptations now I bound; The billows yield a solid ground, The wave is firm as rock.”

02.09.2. The Galilean Crisis

The Galilean Crisis Section III - The Sermon

John 6:32-58 The task now before us is to study that memorable address delivered by Jesus in the synagogue of Capernaum on the bread of life, which gave so great offence at the time, and which has ever since been a stone of stumbling, a subject of controversy, and a cause of division in the visible church, and, so far as one can judge from present appearances, will be to the world's end. On a question so vexed as that which relates to the meaning of this discourse, one might well shrink from entering. But the very confusion which prevails here points it out as our plain duty to disregard the din of conflicting interpretations, and, humbly praying to be taught of God, to search for and set forth Christ's own mind. The sermon on the bread of life, however strangely it sounds, was appropriate both in matter and manner to the circumstances in which it was delivered. It was natural and seasonable that Jesus should speak to the people of the meat that endureth unto everlasting life after miraculously providing perishable food to supply their physical wants. It was even natural and seasonable that He should speak of this high topic in the startling, apparently gross, harsh style which He adopted on the occasion. The form of thought suited the situation. Passover time was approaching, when the paschal lamb was slain and eaten; and if Jesus desired to say in effect, without saying it in so many words, "I am the true Paschal Lamb," what more suitable form of language could He employ than this: "The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world"? The style was also adapted to the peculiar complexion of the speaker's feelings at the moment. Jesus was in a sad, austere mood when He preached this sermon. The foolish enthusiasm of the multitude had saddened Him. Their wish to force a crown on His head made Him think of His cross; for He knew that this idolatrous devotion to a political Messiah meant death sooner or later to one who declined such carnal homage. He spoke, therefore, in the synagogue of Capernaum with Calvary in view, setting Himself forth as the life of the world in terms applicable to a sacrificial victim, whose blood is shed, and whose flesh is eaten by those presenting the offering; not mincing His words, but saying every thing in the strongest and intensest manner possible. The theme of this memorable address was very naturally introduced by the preceding conversation between Jesus and the people who came from the other side of the lake, hoping to find Him at Capernaum, His usual place of abode. To their warm inquiries as to how He came thither, He replied by a chilling observation concerning the true motive of their zeal, and an exhortation to set their hearts on a higher food than that which perisheth. Understanding the exhortation as a counsel to cultivate piety, the persons to whom it was addressed inquired what they should do that they might work the works of God, i.e. please God. Jesus replied by declaring that the great testing work of the hour was to receive Himself as one whom God had sent. This led to a demand on their part for evidence in support of this high claim to be the divinely missioned Messiah. The miracle just wrought on the other side of the lake was great, but not great enough, they thought, to justify such lofty pretensions. In ancient times a whole nation had been fed for many years by bread brought down from heaven by Moses. What was the recent miracle compared to that? He must show a sign on a far grander scale, if He

wished them to believe that a greater than Moses was here. Jesus took up the challenge, and boldly declared that the manna, wonderful as it was, was not the true heavenly bread. There was another bread, of which the manna was but the type: like it, coming down from heaven; but unlike it, giving life not to a nation, but to a world, and not life merely for a few short years, but life for eternity. This announcement, like the similar one concerning the wonderful water of life made to the woman of Samaria, provoked desire in the hearts of the hearers, and they exclaimed, “Lord, evermore give us this bread.” Then said Jesus unto them, “I am the bread of life: he that cometh unto me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” In these words Jesus briefly enunciated the doctrine of the true bread, which He expounded and inculcated in His memorable Capernaum discourse. The doctrine, as stated, sets forth what the true bread is, what it does, and how it is appropriated.

1. The true bread is He who here speaks of it-Jesus Christ. “I am the bread.” The assertion implies, on the speaker’s part, a claim to have descended from heaven; for such a descent is one of the properties by which the true bread is defined. Accordingly we find Jesus, in the sequel of His discourse, expressly asserting that He had come down from heaven. This declaration, understood in a supernatural sense, was the first thing in His discourse with which His hearers found fault. “The Jews then murmured at Him, because He said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that He saith, I came down from heaven?” It was natural they should murmur if they did not know or believe that there was any thing out of course in the way in which Jesus came into the world. For such language as He here employs could not be used without blasphemy by a mere man born after the fashion of other men. It is language proper only in the mouth of a Divine Being who, for a purpose, hath assumed human nature. In setting Himself forth, therefore, as the bread which came down from heaven, Jesus virtually taught the doctrine of the incarnation. The solemn assertion, “I am the bread of life,” is equivalent in import to that made by the evangelist respecting Him who spoke these words: “The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.”

It is, however, not merely as incarnate that the Son of God is the bread of eternal life. Bread must be broken in order to be eaten. The Incarnate One must die as a sacrificial victim that men may truly feed upon Him. The Word become flesh, and crucified in the flesh, is the life of the world. This special truth Jesus went on to declare, after having stated the general truth that the heavenly bread was to be found in Himself. “The bread,” said He, “that I will give is my flesh, (which I will give) for the life of the world.” The language here becomes modified to suit the new turn of thought. “I am” passes into “I will give,” and “bread” is transformed into “flesh.”

Jesus evidently refers here to His death. His hearers did not so understand Him, but we can have no doubt on the matter. The verb “give,” suggesting a sacrificial act, and the future tense both point that way. In words dark and mysterious before the event, clear as day after it, the speaker declares the great truth, that His death is to be the life of men; that His broken body and shed blood are to be as meat and drink to a perishing world, conferring on all who shall partake of them the gift of immortality. How He is to die, and why His death shall possess such virtue, He does not here explain. The Capernaum discourse makes no mention of the cross; it contains no theory of atonement, the time is not come for such details; it simply asserts in broad, strong terms that the flesh and blood of the incarnate Son of God, severed as in death, are the source of eternal life.

This mention by Jesus of His flesh as the bread from heaven gave rise to a new outburst of murmuring among His hearers. “They strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us His flesh to eat?” Jesus had not yet said that His flesh must be eaten, but they took for granted that such was His meaning. They were right; and accordingly He went on to say, with the greatest solemnity and emphasis, that they must even eat His flesh and drink His blood. Unless they did that, they should have no life in them; if they did that, they should have life in all its fulness-life eternal both in body and in soul. For His flesh was the true food, and His blood was the true drink. They who partook of these would share in His own life. He should dwell in them, incorporated with their very being; and they should dwell in Him as the ground of their being. They should live as secure against death by Him, as He lived from everlasting to everlasting by the Father. “This, therefore,” said the speaker, reverting in conclusion to the proposition with which he started, “this (even my flesh) is that bread which came down from Heaven; not as your fathers did eat manna and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live forever.” A third expression of disapprobation ensuing led Jesus to put the copestone on His high doctrine of the bread of life, by making a concluding declaration, which must have appeared at the time the most mysterious and unintelligible of all: that the bread which descended from heaven must ascend up thither again, in order to be to the full extent the bread of everlasting life. Doth this offend you? asked He at his hearers: this which I have just said about your eating my flesh and blood; what will ye say “if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where He was before?” The question was in effect an affirmation, and it was also a prophetic hint, that only after He had left the world would He become on an extensive scale and conspicuously a source of life to men; because then the manna of grace would begin to descend not only on the wilderness of Israel, but on all the barren places of the earth; and the truth in Him, the doctrine of His life, death, and resurrection, would become meat indeed and drink indeed unto a multitude, not of murmuring hearers, but of devout, enlightened, thankful believers; and no one would need any longer to ask for a sign when he could find in the Christian church, continuing steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking bread and in prayers, the best evidence that He had spoken truth who said, “I am the bread of life.”

2. This, then, is the heavenly bread: even the God-man incarnate, crucified, and glorified. Let us now consider more attentively the marvellous virtue of this bread. It is the bread of life. It is the office of all bread to sustain life, but it is the peculiarity of this divine bread to give eternal life. “He that cometh to me,” said the speaker, “shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me, shall never thirst.” With reference to this life-giving power He called the bread of which He spake “living bread,” and meat indeed, and declared that he who ate thereof should not die, but should live forever. In commending this miraculous bread to His hearers, Jesus, we observe, laid special stress on its power to give eternal life even to the body of man. Four times over He declared in express terms that all who partook of this bread of life should be raised again at the last day. The prominence thus given to the resurrection of the body is due in part to the fact that throughout His discourse Jesus was drawing a contrast between the manna which fed the Israelites in the desert and the true bread of which it was the type. The contrast was most striking just at this point. The manna was merely a substitute for ordinary food; it had no power to ward off death: the generation which had been so miraculously supported passed away from the earth, like all other generations of mankind. Therefore, argued Jesus, it could not be the true bread from heaven; for the true bread must be capable of destroying death, and endowing the recipients with the power of an

endless existence. A man who eats thereof must not die; or dying, must rise again. “Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.” But the prominence given to the resurrection of the body is due mainly to its intrinsic importance. For if the dead rise not, then is our faith vain, and the bread of life degenerates into a mere quack nostrum, pretending to virtues which it does not possess. True, it may still give spiritual life to those who eat thereof, but what is that without the hope of a life hereafter? Not much, according to Paul, who says, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.” Many, indeed, in our day do not concur in the apostle’s judgment. They think that the doctrine of the life everlasting may be left out of the creed without loss-nay, even with positive advantage, to the Christian faith. The life of a Christian seems to them so much nobler when all thought of future reward or punishment is dismissed from the mind. How grand, to pass through the wilderness of this world feeding on the manna supplied in the high, pure teaching of Jesus, without caring whether there be a land of Canaan on the other side of Jordan! Very sublime indeed! but why, in that case, come into the wilderness at all? why not remain in Egypt, feeding on more substantial and palatable viands? The children of Israel would not have left the house of bondage unless they had hoped to reach the promised land. An immortal hope is equally necessary to the Christian. He must believe in a world to come in order to live above the present evil world. If Christ cannot redeem the body from the power of the grave, then it is in vain that He promises to redeem us from guilt and sin. The bread of life is unworthy of the name, unless it hath power to cope with physical as well as with moral corruption.

Hence the prominence given by Jesus in this discourse to the resurrection of the body. He knew that here lay the crucial experiment by which the value and virtue of the bread He offered to His hearers must be tested. “You call this bread the bread of life, in contrast to the manna of ancient times-do you mean to say that, like the tree of life in the garden of Eden, it will confer on those who eat thereof the gift of a blessed immortality?” “Yes, I do,” replied the Preacher in effect to this imaginary question: “this bread I offer you will not merely quicken the soul to a higher, purer life; it will even revivify your bodies, and make the corruptible put on incorruption, and the mortal put on immortality.”

3. And how, then, is this wondrous bread to be appropriated that one may experience its vitalizing influences? Bread, of course, is eaten; but what does eating in this case mean? It means, in one word, faith. “He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth in me shall never thirst.” Eating Christ’s flesh and drinking His blood, and, we may add, drinking the water of which he spake to the woman by the well, all signify believing in Him as He is offered to men in the gospel: the Son of God manifested in the flesh, crucified, raised from the dead, ascended into glory; the Prophet, the Priest, the King, and the Mediator between God and man. Throughout the Capernaum discourse eating and believing are used interchangeably as equivalents. Thus, in one sentence, we find Jesus saying, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life: I am that bread of life;” and shortly after remarking, “I am the living bread which came down from heaven: If any man eat of this bread he shall live forever.” If any further argument were necessary to justify the identifying of eating with believing, it might be found in the instruction given by the Preacher to His hearers before He began to speak of the bread of life; “This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.” That sentence furnishes the key to the interpretation of the whole subsequent discourse. “Believe,” said Jesus, with reference to the

foregoing inquiry, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?-“Believe, and thou hast done God’s work.” “Believe,” we may understand Him as saying with reference to an inquiry, How shall we eat this bread of life?-“Believe, and thou hast eaten.”

Believe, and thou hast eaten: such was the formula in which Augustine expressed his view of Christ’s meaning in the Capernaum discourse. The saying is not only terse, but true, in our judgment; but it has not been accepted by all interpreters. Many hold that eating and faith are something distinct, and would express the relation between them thus: Believe, and thou shalt eat. Even Calvin objected to the Augustinian formula. Distinguishing his own views from those held by the followers of Zwingli, he says: “To them to eat is simply to believe. I say that Christ’s flesh is eaten in believing because it is made ours by faith, and that eating is the fruit and effect of faith. Or more clearly: To them eating is faith, to me it seems rather to follow from faith.” The distinction taken by Calvin between eating and believing seems to have been verbal rather than real. With many other theologians, however, it is far otherwise. All upholders of the magical doctrines of transubstantiation and consubstantiation contend for the literal interpretation of the Capernaum discourse even in its strongest statements. Eating Christ’s flesh and drinking His blood are, for such, acts of the mouth, accompanied perhaps with acts of faith, but not merely acts of faith. It is assumed for the most part as a matter of course, that the discourse recorded in the sixth chapter of John’s Gospel has reference to the sacrament of the Supper, and that only on the hypothesis of such a reference can the peculiar phraseology of the discourse be explained. Christ spoke then of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, so we are given to understand, because He had in His mind that mystic rite ere long to be instituted, in which bread and wine should not merely represent, but become, the constituent elements of His crucified body.

While the sermon on the bread of life continues to be mixed up with sacramentarian controversies, agreement in its interpretation is altogether hopeless. Meantime, till a better day dawn on a divided and distracted church, every man must endeavor to be fully persuaded in his own mind. Three things are clear to our mind. First, it is incorrect to say that the sermon delivered in the Capernaum synagogue refers to the sacrament of the Supper. The true state of the case is, that both refer to a third thing, viz. the death of Christ, and both declare, in different ways, the same thing concerning it. The sermon says in symbolic words what the Supper says in a symbolic act: that Christ crucified is the life of men, the world’s hope of salvation. The sermon says more than this, for it speaks of Christ’s ascension as well as of His death; but it says this for one thing. A second point on which we are clear is, that it is quite unnecessary to assume a mental reference by anticipation to the Holy Supper, in order to account for the peculiarity of Christ’s language in this famous discourse. As we saw at the beginning, the whole discourse rose naturally out of the present situation. The mention by the people of the manna naturally led Jesus to speak of the bread of life; and from the bread He passed on as naturally to speak of the flesh and the blood, because he could not fully be bread until He had become flesh and blood dissevered, i.e. until He had endured death. All that we find here might have been said, in fact, although the sacrament of the Supper had never existed. The Supper is of use not so much for interpreting the sermon as for establishing its credibility as an authentic utterance of Jesus. There is no reason to doubt that He who instituted the mystic feast, could also have preached this mystic sermon. The third truth which shines clear as a star to our eye is that through faith alone we may attain all the blessings of salvation. Sacraments are very useful, but they are not necessary. If it had pleased Christ not to institute them, we could have

got to heaven notwithstanding. Because He has instituted them, it is our duty to celebrate them, and we may expect benefit from their celebration. But the benefit we receive is simply an aid to faith, and nothing which cannot be received by faith. Christians eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man at all times, not merely at communion times, simply by believing in Him. They eat His flesh and drink His blood at His table in the same sense as at other times; only perchance in a livelier manner, their hearts being stirred up to devotion by remembrance of His dying love, and their faith aided by seeing, handling, and tasting the bread and the wine.

Section IV - The Sifting

John 6:66-71 The sermon on the bread of life produced decisive effects. It converted popular enthusiasm for Jesus into disgust; like a fan, it separated true from false disciples; and like a winnowing breeze, it blew the chaff away, leaving a small residuum of wheat behind. “From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him.” This result did not take Jesus by surprise. He expected it; in a sense, He wished it, though He was deeply grieved by it. For while His large, loving human heart yearned for the salvation of all, and desired that all should come and get life, He wanted none to come to Him under misapprehension, or to follow Him from by-ends. He sought disciples God -given, God-drawn, God-taught, knowing that such alone would continue in His word. He was aware that in the large mass of people who had recently followed Him were many disciples of quite another description; and He was not unwilling that the mixed multitude should be sifted. Therefore He preached that mystic discourse, fitted to be a savor of life or of death according to the spiritual state of the hearer. Therefore, also, when offence was taken at the doctrine taught, He plainly declared the true cause, and expressed His assurance that only those whom His Father taught and drew would or could really come unto Him. These things He said not with a view to irritate, but He deemed it right to say them though they should give rise to irritation, reckoning that true believers would take all in good part, and that those who took umbrage would thereby reveal their true character. The apostatizing disciples doubtless thought themselves fully justified in withdrawing from the society of Jesus. They turned their back on Him, we fancy, in most virtuous indignation, saying in their hearts-nay, probably saying aloud to one another: “Who ever heard the like of that? how absurd! how revolting! The man who can speak thus is either a fool, or is trying to make fools of his hearers.” And yet the hardness of His doctrine was not the real reason which led so many to forsake Him; it was simply the pretext, the most plausible and respectable reason that they could assign for conduct springing from other motives. The grand offence of Jesus was this: He was not the man they had taken Him for; He was not going to be at their service to promote the ends they had in view. Whatever He meant by the bread of life, or by eating His flesh, it was plain that He was not going to be a bread-king, making it His business to furnish supplies for their physical appetites, ushering in a golden age of idleness and plenty. That ascertained, it was all over with Him so far as they were concerned: He might offer His heavenly food to whom He pleased; they wanted none of it.

Deeply affected by the melancholy sight of so many human beings deliberately preferring material good to eternal life, Jesus turned to the twelve, and said, “Will ye also go away?” or more exactly, “You do not wish to go away too, do you?” The question may be understood as a virtual expression of confidence in the persons to whom it was addressed, and as an appeal to them for sympathy at a discouraging crisis. And yet, while a negative answer was expected to the question, it was not expected as a matter of course. Jesus was not without solicitude concerning the fidelity

even of the twelve. He interrogated them, as conscious that they were placed in trying circumstances, and that if they did not actually forsake Him now, as at the great final crisis, they were at least tempted to be offended in Him. A little reflection suffices to satisfy us that the twelve were indeed placed in a position at this time calculated to try their faith most severely. For one thing, the mere fact of their Master being deserted wholesale by the crowd of quondam admirers and followers involved for the chosen band a temptation to apostasy. How mighty is the power of sympathy! how ready are we all to follow the multitude, regardless of the way they are going! and how much moral courage it requires to stand alone! How difficult to witness the spectacle of thousands, or even hundreds, going off in sullen disaffection, without feeling an impulse to imitate their bad example! how hard to keep one's self from being carried along with the powerful tide of adverse popular opinion! Especially hard it must have been for the twelve to resist the tendency to apostatize if, as is more than probable, they sympathized with the project entertained by the multitude when their enthusiasm for Jesus was at full-tide. If it would have gratified them to have seen their beloved Master made king by popular acclamation, how their spirits must have sunk when the bubble burst, and the would-be subjects of the Messianic Prince were dispersed like an idle mob, and the kingdom which had seemed so near vanished like a cloudland!

Another circumstance trying to the faith of the twelve was the strange, mysterious character of their Master's discourse in the synagogue of Capernaum. That discourse contained hard, repulsive, unintelligible sayings for them quite as much as for the rest of the audience. Of this we can have no doubt when we consider the repugnance with which some time afterward they received the announcement that Jesus was destined to be put to death. If they objected even to the fact of His death, how could they understand its meaning, especially when both fact and meaning were spoken of in such a veiled and mystic style as that which pervades the sermon on the bread of life? While, therefore, they believed that their Master had the words of eternal life, and perceived that His late discourse bore on that high theme, it may be regarded as certain that the twelve did not understand the words spoken any more than the multitude, however much they might try to do so. They knew not what connection existed between Christ's flesh and eternal life, how eating that flesh could confer any benefit, or even what eating it might mean. They had quite lost sight of the Speaker in His eagle flight of thought; and they must have looked on in distress as the people melted away, painfully conscious that they could not altogether blame them.

Yet, however greatly tempted to forsake their Master, the twelve did abide faithfully by His side. They did come safely through the spiritual storm. What was the secret of their steadfastness? what were the anchors that preserved them from shipwreck? These questions are of practical interest to all who, like the apostles at this crisis, are tempted to apostasy by evil example or by religious doubt; by the fashion of the world they live in, whether scientific or illiterate, refined or rustic; or by the deep things of God, whether these be the mysteries of providence, the mysteries of revelation, or the mysteries of religious experience: we may say, indeed, to all genuine Christians, for what Christian has not been tempted in one or other of these ways at some period in his history?

Sufficient materials for answering these questions are supplied in the words of Simon Peter's response to Jesus. As spokesman for the whole company, that disciple promptly said: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and know that Thou art that Christ, the son of the living God," or, according to the reading preferred by most critics, "that Thou art the Holy One of God."

Three anchors, we infer from these words, helped the twelve to ride out the storm: Religious earnestness or sincerity; a clear perception of the alternatives before them; and implicit confidence in the character and attachment to the person of their Master.

1. The twelve, as a body, were sincere and thoroughly in earnest in religion. Their supreme desire was to know “the words of eternal life,” and actually to gain possession of that life. Their concern was not about the meat that perisheth, but about the higher heavenly food of the soul which Christ had in vain exhorted the majority of His hearers to labor for. As yet they knew not clearly wherein that food consisted, but according to their light they sincerely prayed, “Lord, evermore give us this bread.” Hence it was no disappointment to them that Jesus declined to become a purveyor of mere material food: they had never expected or wished Him to do so; they had joined His company with entirely different expectations. A certain element of error might be mingled with truth in their conceptions of His Mission, but the gross, carnal hopes of the multitude had no place in their breasts. They became not disciples to better their worldly circumstances, but to obtain a portion which the world could neither give them nor take from them.

What we have now stated was true of all the twelve save one; and the crisis we are at present considering is memorable for this, among other things, that it was the first occasion on which Jesus gave a hint that there was a false disciple among the men whom He had chosen. To justify Himself for asking a question which seemed to cast a doubt upon their fidelity, He replied to Peter’s protestation by the startling remark: “Did not I choose you the twelve, and one of you is a devil?” as if to say: “It is painful to me to have to use this language of suspicion, but I have good cause: there is one among you who has had thoughts of desertion, and who is capable even of treachery.” With what sadness of spirit must He have made such an intimation at this crisis! To be forsaken by the fickle crowd of shallow, thoughtless followers had been a small matter, could He have reckoned all the members of the select band good men and true friends. But to have an enemy in one’s own house, a diabolus capable of playing Satan’s part in one’s small circle of intimate companions-it was hard indeed! But how could a man destined to be a traitor, and deserving to be stigmatized as a devil, manage to pass creditably through the present crisis? Does not the fact seem to imply that, after all, it is possible to be steadfast without being single-minded? Not so; the only legitimate inference is, that the crisis was not searching enough to bring out the true character of Judas. Wait till you see the end. A little religion will carry a man through many trials, but there is an experimentum crucis which nothing but sincerity can stand. If the mind be double, or the heart divided, a time comes that compels men to act according to the motives that are deepest and strongest in them. This remark applies especially to creative, revolutionary, or transition epochs. In quiet times a hypocrite may pass respectably through this world, and never be detected till he get to the next, whither his sins follow him to judgment. But in critical eras the sins of the double-minded find them out in this life. True, even then some double-minded men can stand more temptation than others, and are not to be bought so cheaply as the common herd. But all of them have their price, and those who fall less easily than others fall in the end most deeply and tragically. Of the character and fall of Judas we shall have another opportunity to speak. Our present object is simply to point out that from such as he Jesus did not expect constancy. By referring to that disciple as He did, He intimated His conviction that no one in whom the love of God and truth was not the deepest principle of his being would continue faithful to the end. In effect He inculcated the necessity, in order to steadfastness in faith, of moral integrity, or godly

sincerity.

2. The second anchor by which the disciples were kept from shipwreck at this season was a clear perception of the alternatives. “To whom shall we go?” asked Peter, as one who saw that, for men having in view the aim pursued by himself and his brethren, there was no course open but to remain where they were. He had gone over rapidly in his mind all the possible alternatives, and this was the conclusion at which he had arrived. “To whom shall we go-we who seek eternal life? John, our former master, is dead; and even were he alive, he would send us back to Thee. Or shall we go to the scribes and Pharisees? We have been too long with Thee for that; for Thou hast taught us the superficiality, the hypocrisy, the ostentatiousness, the essential ungodliness of their religious system. Or shall we follow the fickle multitude there, and relapse into stupidity and indifference? It is not to be thought of. Or, finally, shall we go to the Sadducees, the idolaters of the material and the temporal, who say there is no resurrection, neither any angels nor spirits? God forbid! That were to renounce a hope dearer than life, without which life to an earnest mind were a riddle, a contradiction, and an intolerable burden.”

We may understand what a help this clear perception of the alternatives was to Peter and his brethren, by reflecting on the help we ourselves might derive from the same source when tempted by dogmatic difficulties to renounce Christianity. It would make one pause if he understood that the alternatives open to him were to abide with Christ, or to become an atheist, ignoring God and the world to come; that when he leaves Christ, he must go to school to some of the great masters of thoroughgoing unbelief. In the works of a well-known German author is a dream, which portrays with appalling vividness the consequences that would ensue throughout the universe should the Creator cease to exist. The dream was invented, so the gifted writer tells us, for the purpose of frightening those who discussed the being of God as coolly as if the question respected the existence of the Kraken or the unicorn, and also to check all atheistic thoughts which might arise in his own bosom. “If ever,” he says, “my heart should be so unhappy and deadened as to have all those feelings which affirm the being of a God destroyed, I would use this dream to frighten myself, and so heal my heart, and restore its lost feelings.” Such benefit as Richter expected from the perusal of his own dream, would any one, tempted to renounce Christianity, derive from a clear perception that in ceasing to be a Christian he must make up his mind to accept a creed which acknowledges no God, no soul, no hereafter.

Unfortunately it is not so easy for us now as it was for Peter to see clearly what the alternatives before us are. Few are so clear-sighted, so recklessly logical, or so frank as the late Dr. Strauss, who in his latest publication, The Old and the New Faith, plainly says that he is no longer a Christian. Hence many in our day call themselves Christians whose theory of the universe (or Weltanschauung, as the Germans call it) does not allow them to believe in the miraculous in any shape or in any sphere; with whom it is an axiom that the continuity of nature’s course cannot be broken, and who therefore cannot even go the length of Socinians in their view of Christ and declare Him to be, without qualification, the Holy One of God, the morally sinless One. Even men like Renan claim to be Christians, and, like Balaam, bless Him whom their philosophy compels them to blame. Our modern Balaams all confess that Jesus is at least the holiest of men, if not the absolutely Holy One. They are constrained to bless the Man of Nazareth. They are spellbound by the Star of Bethlehem, as was the Eastern soothsayer by the Star of Jacob, and are forced to say in effect: “How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath

not defied? Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and He hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it." Others not going so far as Renan, shrinking from thoroughgoing naturalism, believing in a perfect Christ, a moral miracle, yet affect a Christianity independent of dogma, and as little as possible encumbered by miracle, a Christianity purely ethical, consisting mainly in admiration of Christ's character and moral teaching; and, as the professors of such a Christianity, regard themselves as exemplary disciples of Christ. Such are the men of whom the author of Supernatural Religion speaks as characterized by a "tendency to eliminate from Christianity, with thoughtless dexterity, every supernatural element which does not quite accord with current opinions," and as endeavoring "to arrest for a moment the pursuing wolves of doubt and unbelief by practically throwing to them scrap by scrap the very doctrines which constitute the claims of Christianity to be regarded as a divine revelation at all." Such men can hardly be said to have a consistent theory of the universe, for they hold opinions based on incompatible theories, are naturalistic in tendency, yet will not carry out naturalism to all its consequences. They are either not able, or are disinclined, to realize the alternatives and to obey the voice of logic, which like a stern policeman bids them "Move on;" but would rather hold views which unite the alternatives in one compound eclectic creed, like Schleiermacher-himself an excellent example of the class-of whom Strauss remarks that he ground down Christianity and Pantheism to powder, and so mixed them that it is hard to say where Pantheism ends and Christianity begins. In presence of such a spirit of compromise, so widespread, and recommended by the example of many men of ability and influence, it requires some courage to have and hold a definite position, or to resist the temptation to yield to the current and adopt the watchword: Christianity without dogma and miracle. But perhaps it will be easier by and by to realize the alternatives, when time has more clearly shown whither present tendencies lead. Meantime it is the evening twilight, and for the moment it seems as if we could do without the sun, for though he is below the horizon, the air is still full of light. But wait awhile; and the deepening of the twilight into the darkness of night will show how far Christ the Holy One of the Church's confession can be dispensed with as the Sun of the spiritual world.

3. The third anchor whereby the twelve were enabled to ride out the storm, was confidence in the character of their Master. They believed, yea, they knew, that He was the Holy One of God. They had been with Jesus long enough to have come to very decided conclusions respecting Him. They had seen Him work many miracles; they had heard Him discourse with marvellous wisdom, in parable and sermon, on the divine kingdom; they had observed His wondrously tender, gracious concern for the low and the lost; they had been present at His various encounters with Pharisees, and had noted His holy abhorrence of their falsehood, pride, vanity, and tyranny. All this blessed fellowship had begotten a confidence in, and reverence for, their beloved Master, too strong to be shaken by a single address containing some statements of an incomprehensible character, couched in questionable or even offensive language. Their intellect might be perplexed, but their heart remained true; and hence, while others who knew not Jesus well went off in disgust, they continued by His side, feeling that such a friend and guide was not to be parted with for a trifle.

"We believe and know," said Peter. He believed because he knew. Such implicit confidence as the twelve had in Jesus is possible only through intimate knowledge; for one cannot thus trust a stranger. All, therefore, who desire to get the benefit of this trust, must be willing to spend time and take trouble to get into the heart of the Gospel story, and of its great subject. The sure anchorage

is not attainable by a listless, random reading of the evangelic narratives, but by a close, careful, prayerful study, pursued it may be for years. Those who grudge the trouble are in imminent danger of the fate which befell the ignorant multitude, being liable to be thrown into panic by every new infidel book, or to be scandalized by every strange utterance of the Object of faith. Those, on the other hand, who do take the trouble, will be rewarded for their pains. Storm-tossed for a time, they shall at length reach the harbor of a creed which is no nondescript compromise between infidelity and scriptural Christianity, but embraces all the cardinal facts and truths of the faith, as taught by Jesus in the Capernaum discourse, and as afterwards taught by the men who passed safely through the Capernaum crisis. May God in His mercy guide all souls now out in the tempestuous sea of doubt into that haven of rest!

02.10. The Leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees

The Leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees Mat 16:1-12; Mark 8:10-21. This new collision between Jesus and His opponents took place shortly after a second miracle of feeding similar to that performed in the neighborhood of Bethsaida Julias. What interval of time elapsed between the two miracles cannot be ascertained; but it was long enough to admit of an extended journey on the part of our Lord and His disciples to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, the scene of the pathetic meeting with the Syrophenician woman, and round from thence through the region of the ten cities, on the eastern border of the Galilean lake. It was long enough also to allow the cause and the fame of Jesus to recover from the low state to which they sank after the sifting sermon in the synagogue of Capernaum. The unpopular One had again become popular, so that on arriving at the south-eastern shore of the lake He found Himself attended by thousands, so intent on hearing Him preach, and on experiencing His healing power, that they remained with Him three days, almost, if not entirely, without food, thus creating a necessity for the second miraculous repast.

After the miracle on the south-eastern shore, Jesus, we read, sent away the multitude; and taking ship, came into the coasts of Magdala, on the western side of the sea. It was on His arrival there that He encountered the party who came seeking of Him a sign from heaven. These persons had probably heard of the recent miracle, as of many others wrought by Him; but, unwilling to accept the conclusion to which these wondrous works plainly led, they affected to regard them as insufficient evidence of His Messiahship, and demanded still more unequivocal proof before giving in their adherence to His claim. “Show us a sign from heaven,” said they; meaning thereby, something like the manna brought down from heaven by Moses, or the fire called down by Elijah, or the thunder and rain called down by Samuel; it being assumed that such signs could be wrought only by the power of God, whilst the signs on earth, such as Jesus supplied in His miracles of healing, might be wrought by the power of the devil! It was a demand of a sort often addressed to Jesus in good faith or in bad; for the Jews sought after such signs-miracles of a singular and startling character, fitted to gratify a superstitious curiosity, and astonish a wonder-loving mind-miracles that were merely signs, serving no other purpose than to display divine power; like the rod of Moses, converted into a serpent, and reconverted into its original form.

These demands of the sign-seekers Jesus uniformly met with a direct refusal. He would not condescend to work miracles of any description merely as certificates of His own Messiahship, or to furnish food for a superstitious appetite, or materials of amusement to sceptics. He knew that such as remained unbelievers in presence of His ordinary miracles, which were not naked signs, but also works of beneficence, could not be brought to faith by any means; nay, that the more evidence they got, the more hardened they should become in unbelief. He regarded the very demand for these signs as the indication of a fixed determination on the part of those who made it not to believe in Him, even if, in order to rid themselves of the disagreeable obligation, it should be necessary to put Him to death. Therefore, in refusing the signs sought after, He was wont to accompany the refusal with a word of rebuke or of sad foreboding; as when He said, at a very early period of His ministry, on His first visit to Jerusalem, after His baptism: “Destroy this temple,

and in three days I will raise it up." On the present occasion the soul of Jesus was much perturbed by the renewed demands of the sign-seekers. "He sighed deeply in His spirit," knowing full well what these demands meant, with respect both to those who made them and to Himself; and He addressed the parties who came tempting Him in excessively severe and bitter terms-reproaching them with spiritual blindness, calling them a wicked and adulterous generation, and ironically referring them now, as He had once done before, to the sign of the prophet Jonas. He told them, that while they knew the weather signs, and understood what a red sky in the morning or evening meant, they were blind to the manifest signs of the times, which showed at once that the Sun of righteousness had arisen, and that a dreadful storm of judgment was coming like a dark night on apostate Israel for her iniquity. He applied to them, and the whole generation they represented, the epithet "wicked," to characterize their false-hearted, malevolent, and spiteful behavior towards Himself; and He employed the term "adulterous," to describe them, in relation to God, as guilty of breaking their marriage covenant, pretending great love and zeal with their lip, but in their heart and life turning away from the living God to idols-forms, ceremonies, signs. He gave them the story of Jonah the prophet for a sign, in mystic allusion to His death; meaning to say, that one of the most reliable evidences that He was God's servant indeed, was just the fact that He was rejected, and ignominiously and barbarously treated by such as those to whom He spake: that there could be no worse sign of a man than to be well received by them-that he could be no true Christ who was so received.

Having thus freely uttered His mind, Jesus left the sign-seekers; and entering into the ship in which He had just crossed from the other side, departed again to the same eastern shore, anxious to be rid of their unwelcome presence. On arriving at the land, He made the encounter which had just taken place the subject of instruction to the twelve. "Take heed," He said as they walked along the way, "and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." The word was spoken abruptly, as the utterance of one waking out of a revery. Jesus, we imagine, while His disciples rowed Him across the lake, had been brooding over what had occurred, sadly musing on prevailing unbelief, and the dark, lowering weather-signs, portentous of evil to Him and to the whole Jewish people. And now, recollecting the presence of the disciples, He communicates His thoughts to them in the form of a warning, and cautions them against the deadly influence of an evil time, as a parent might bid his child beware of a poisonous plant whose garish flowers attracted its eye. In this warning, it will be observed, pharisaic and Sadducaic tendencies are identified. Jesus speaks not of two leavens, but of one common to both sects, as if they were two species of one genus, two branches from one stem. And such indeed they were. Superficially, the two parties were very diverse. The one was excessively zealous, the other was "moderate" in religion; the one was strict, the other easy in morals; the one was exclusively and intensely Jewish in feeling, the other was open to the influence of pagan civilization. Each party had a leaven peculiar to itself: that of the Pharisees being, as Christ was wont to declare, hypocrisy; that of the Sadducees, an engrossing interest in merely material and temporal concerns, assuming in some a political form, as in the case of the partisans of the Herod family, called in the Gospels Herodians, in others wearing the guise of a philosophy which denied the existence of spirit and the reality of the future life, and made that denial an excuse for exclusive devotion to the interests of time. But here, as elsewhere, extremes met. Phariseeism, Sadduceeism, Herodianism, though distinguished by minor differences, were radically one. The religionists, the philosophers, the politicians, were all members of one great party, which was inveterately hostile to the divine kingdom. All alike were

worldly-minded (of the Pharisees it is expressly remarked that they were covetous); all were opposed to Christ for fundamentally the same reason, viz. because He was not of this world; all united fraternally at this time in the attempt to vex Him by unbelieving, unreasonable demands; and they all had a hand in His death at the last. It was thus made apparent, once for all, that a Christian is not one who merely differs superficially either from Pharisees or from Sadducees separately, but one who differs radically from both. A weighty truth, not yet well understood; for it is fancied by many that right believing and right living consist in going to the opposite extreme from any tendency whose evil influence is apparent. To avoid pharisaic strictness and superstition, grown odious, men run into Sadducaic scepticism and license; or, frightened by the excesses of infidelity and secularity, they seek salvation in ritualism, infallible churches, and the revival of mediaeval monkery. Thus the two tendencies continue ever propagating each other on the principle of action and reaction; one generation or school going all lengths in one direction, and another making a point of being as unlike its predecessor or its neighbor as possible, and both being equally far from the truth.

What the common leaven of Phariseeism and Sadduceeism was, Jesus did not deem it necessary to state. He had already indicated its nature with sufficient plainness in His severe reply to the sign-seekers. The radical vice of both sects was just ungodliness: blindness, and deadness of heart to the Divine. They did not know the true and the good when they saw it; and when they knew it, they did not love it. All around them were the evidences that the King and the kingdom of grace were among them; yet here were they asking for arbitrary outward signs, “external evidences” in the worst sense, that He who spake as never man spake, and worked wonders of mercy such as had never before been witnessed, was no impostor, but a man wise and good, a prophet, and the Son of God. Verily the natural man, religious or irreligious, is blind and dead! What these seekers after a sign needed was not a new sign, but a new heart; not mere evidence, but a spirit willing to obey the truth. The spirit of unbelief which ruled in Jewish society Jesus described as a leaven, with special reference to its diffusiveness; and most fitly, for it passes from sire to son, from rich to poor, from learned to unlearned, till a whole generation has been vitiated by its malign influence. Such was the state of things in Israel as it came under His eye. Spiritual blindness and deadness, with the outward symptom of the inward malady-a constant craving for evidence-met him on every side. The common people, the leaders of society, the religious, the sceptics, the courtiers, and the rustics, were all blind, and yet apparently all most anxious to see; ever renewing the demand, “What sign showest Thou, that we may see and believe Thee? What dost Thou work?”

Vexed an hour ago by the sinister movements of foes, Jesus next found new matter for annoyance in the stupidity of friends. The disciples utterly, even ludicrously, misunderstood the warning word addressed to them. In conversation by themselves, while their Master walked apart, they discussed the question, what the strange words, so abruptly and earnestly spoken, might mean; and they came to the sapient conclusion that they were intended to caution them against buying bread from parties belonging to either of the offensive sects. It was an absurd mistake, and yet, all things considered, it was not so very unnatural: for, in the first place, as already remarked, Jesus had introduced the subject very abruptly; and secondly, some time had elapsed since the meeting with the seekers of a sign, during which no allusion seems to have been made to that matter. How were they to know that during all that time their Master’s thoughts had been occupied with what

took place on the western shore of the lake? In any case, such a supposition was not likely to occur to their mind; for the demand for a sign had, doubtless, not appeared to them an event of much consequence, and it was probably forgotten as soon as their backs were turned upon the men who made it. And then, finally, it so happened that, just before Jesus began to speak, they remembered that in the hurry of a sudden departure they had forgotten to provide themselves with a stock of provisions for the journey. That was what they were thinking about when He began to say, “Take heed, and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.” The momentous circumstance that they had with them but one loaf was causing them so much concern, that when they heard the caution against a particular kind of leaven, they jumped at once to the conclusion, “It is because we have no bread.”

Yet the misunderstanding of the disciples, though simple and natural in its origin, was blameworthy. They could not have fallen into the mistake had the interest they took in spiritual and temporal things respectively been proportional to their relative importance. They had treated the incident on the other side of the lake too lightly, and they had treated their neglect to provide bread too gravely. They should have taken more to heart the ominous demand for a sign, and the solemn words spoken by their Master in reference thereto; and they should not have been troubled about the want of loaves in the company of Him who had twice miraculously fed the hungry multitude in the desert. Their thoughtlessness in one direction, and their over-thoughtfulness in another, showed that food and raiment occupied a larger place in their minds than the kingdom of God and its interests. Had they possessed more faith and more spirituality, they would not have exposed themselves to the reproachful question of their Master: “How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees?” And yet, Jesus can hardly have expected these crude disciples to appreciate as He did the significance of what had occurred on the other side of the lake. It needed no common insight to discern the import of that demand for a sign; and the faculty of reading the signs of the times possessed by the disciples, as we shall soon see, and as all we have learned concerning them already might lead us to expect, was very small indeed. One of the principal lessons to be learned from the subject of this chapter, indeed, is just this: how different were the thoughts of Christ in reference to the future from the thoughts of His companions. We shall often have occasion to remark on this hereafter, as we advance towards the final crisis. At this point we are called to signalize the fact prominently for the first time.

02.11. Peter's Confession

Peter’s Confession; or, Current Opinion and Eternal Truth Mat 16:13-20; Mark 8:27-30; Luk 9:18-21. From the eastern shore of the lake Jesus directed His course northwards along the banks of the Upper Jordan, passing Bethsaida Julias, where, as Mark informs us, He restored eyesight to a blind man. Pursuing His journey, He arrived at length in the neighborhood of a town of some importance, beautifully situated near the springs of the Jordan, at the southern base of Mount Hermon. This was Caesarea Philippi, formerly called Paneas, from the heathen god Pan, who was worshipped by the Syrian Greeks in the limestone cavern near by, in which Jordan’s fountains bubble forth to light. Its present name was given to it by Philip, tetrarch of Trachonitis, in honor of Caesar Augustus; his own name being appended (Caesarea Philippi, or Philip’s Caesarea) to distinguish it from the other town of the same name on the Mediterranean coast. The town so named could boast of a temple of white marble, built by Herod the Great to the first Roman Emperor, besides villas and palaces, built by Philip, Herod’s son, in whose territories it lay, and who, as we have just stated, gave it its new name.

Away in that remote secluded region, Jesus occupied Himself for a season in secret prayer, and in confidential conversations with His disciples on topics of deepest interest. One of these conversations had reference to His own Person. He introduced the subject by asking the twelve the question, “Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?” This question He asked, not as one needing to be informed, still less from any morbid sensitiveness, such as vain men feel respecting the opinions entertained of them by their fellow-creatures. He desired of His disciples a recital of current opinions, merely by way of preface to a profession of their own faith in the eternal truth concerning Himself. He deemed it good to draw forth from them such a profession at this time, because He was about to make communications to them on another subject, viz. His sufferings, which He knew would sorely try their faith. He wished them to be fairly committed to the doctrine of His Messiah-ship before proceeding to speak in plain terms on the unwelcome theme of His death. From the reply of the disciples, it appears that their Master had been the subject of much talk among the people. This is only what we should have expected. Jesus was a very public and a very extraordinary person, and to be much talked about is one of the inevitable penalties of prominence. The merits and the claims of the Son of man were accordingly freely and widely canvassed in those days, with gravity or with levity, with prejudice or with candor, with decision or indecision, intelligently or ignorantly, as is the way of men in all ages. As they mingled with the people, it was the lot of the twelve to hear many opinions concerning their Lord which never reached His ear; sometimes kind and favorable, making them glad; at other times unkind and unfavorable, making them sad. The opinions prevalent among the masses concerning Jesus-for it was with reference to these that He interrogated His disciples-seem to have been mainly favorable. All agreed in regarding Him as a prophet of the highest rank, differing only as to which of the great prophets of Israel He most nearly resembled or personated. Some said He was John the Baptist revived, others Elias, while others again identified Him with one or other of the great prophets, as Jeremiah. These opinions are explained in part by an expectation then commonly

entertained, that the advent of the Messiah would be preceded by the return of one of the prophets by whom God had spoken to the fathers, partly by the perception of real or supposed resemblances between Jesus and this or that prophet; His tenderness reminding one hearer of the author of the Lamentations, His sternness in denouncing hypocrisy and tyranny reminding another of the prophet of fire, while perhaps His parabolic discourses led a third to think of Ezekiel or of Daniel. When we reflect on the high veneration in which the ancient prophets were held, we cannot fail to see that these diverse opinions current among the Jewish people concerning Jesus imply a very high sense of His greatness and excellence. To us, who regard Him as the Sun, while the prophets were at best but lamps of greater or less brightness, such comparisons may well seem not only inadequate, but dishonoring. Yet we must not despise them, as the testimonies of open-minded but imperfectly -formed contemporaries to the worth of Him whom we worship as the Lord. Taken separately, they show that in the judgment of candid observers Jesus was a man of surpassing greatness; taken together, they show the many-sidedness of His character, and its superiority to that of any one of the prophets; for He could not have reminded those who witnessed His works, and heard Him preach, of all the prophets in turn, unless He had comprehended them all in His one person. The very diversity of opinion respecting Him, therefore, showed that a greater than Elias, or Jeremiah, or Ezekiel, or Daniel, had appeared.

These opinions, valuable still as testimonials to the excellence of Christ, must be admitted further to be indicative, so far, of good dispositions on the part of those who cherished and expressed them. At a time when those who deemed themselves in every respect immeasurably superior to the multitude could find no better names for the Son of man than Samaritan, devil, blasphemer, glutton and drunkard, companion of publicans and sinners, it was something considerable to believe that the calumniated One was a prophet as worthy of honor as any of those whose sepulchres the professors of piety carefully varnished, while depreciating, and even putting to death, their living successors. The multitude who held this opinion might come short of true discipleship; but they were at least far in advance of the Pharisees and Sadducees, who came in tempting mood to ask a sign from heaven, and whom no sign, whether in heaven or in earth, would conciliate or convince.

How, then, did Jesus receive the report of His disciples? Was He satisfied with these favorable, and in the circumstances really gratifying, opinions current among the people? He was not. He was not content to be put on a level with even the greatest of the prophets. He did not indeed express any displeasure against those who assigned Him such a rank, and He may even have been pleased to hear that public opinion had advanced so far on the way to the true faith. Nevertheless He declined to accept the position accorded. The meek and lowly Son of man claimed to be something more than a great prophet. Therefore He turned to His chosen disciples, as to men from whom He expected a more satisfactory statement of the truth, and pointedly asked what they thought of Him. “But you-whom say ye that I am?” In this case, as in many others, Simon son of Jonas answered for the company. His prompt, definite, memorable reply to his Master’s question was this: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” With this view of His person Jesus was satisfied. He did not charge Peter with extravagance in going so far beyond the opinion of the populace. On the contrary, He entirely approved of what the ardent disciple had said, and expressed His satisfaction in no cold or measured terms. Never, perhaps, did He speak in more animated language, or with greater appearance of deep emotion. He solemnly

pronounced Peter “blessed” on account of His faith; He spake for the first time of a church which should be founded, professing Peter’s faith as its creed; He promised that disciple great power in that church, as if grateful to him for being the first to put the momentous truth into words, and for uttering it so boldly amid prevailing unbelief, and crude, defective belief; and He expressed, in the strongest possible terms, His confidence that the church yet to be founded would stand to all ages proof against all the assaults of the powers of darkness.

Simon’s confession, fairly interpreted, seems to contain these two propositions-that Jesus was the Messiah, and that He was divine. “Thou art the Christ,” said he in the first place, with conscious reference to the reported opinions of the people, “Thou art the Christ,” and not merely a prophet come to prepare Christ’s way. Then he added: “the Son of God,” to explain what he understood by the term Christ. The Messiah looked for by the Jews in general was merely a man, though a very superior one, the ideal man endowed with extraordinary gifts. The Christ of Peter’s creed was more than man-a superhuman, a divine being. This truth he sought to express in the second part of his confession. He called Jesus Son of God, with obvious reference to the name His Master had just given Himself-Son of man. “Thou,” he meant to say, “art not only what Thou hast now called Thyself, and what, in lowliness of mind, Thou art wont to call Thyself-the Son of man; Thou art also Son of God, partaking of the divine nature not less really than of the human.” Finally, he prefixed the epithet “living” to the divine name, to express his consciousness that he was making a very momentous declaration, and to give that declaration a solemn, deliberate character. It was as if he said: “I know it is no light matter to call any one, even Thee, Son of God, of the One living eternal Jehovah. But I shrink not from the assertion, however bold, startling, or even blasphemous it may seem. I cannot by any other expression do justice to all I know and feel concerning Thee, or convey the impression left on my mind by what I have witnessed during the time I have followed Thee as a disciple.” In this way was the disciple urged on, in spite of his Jewish monotheism, to the recognition of his Lord’s divinity. That the famous confession, uttered in the neighborhood of Caesarea Philippi, really contains in germ the doctrine of Christ’s divinity, might be inferred from the simple fact that Jesus was satisfied with it; for He certainly claimed to be Son of God in a sense predicable of no mere man, even according to synoptical accounts of His teaching. But when we consider the peculiar terms in which He expressed Himself respecting Peter’s faith, we are still further confirmed in this conclusion. “Flesh and blood,” said He to the disciple, “hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” These words evidently imply that the person addressed had said something very extraordinary; something he could not have learned from the traditional established belief of his generation respecting Messiah; something new even for himself and his fellow-disciples, if not in word, at least in meaning, to which he could not have attained by the unaided effort of his own mind. The confession is virtually represented as an inspiration, a revelation, a flash of light from heaven, the utterance not of the rude fisherman, but of the divine Spirit speaking, through his mouth, a truth hitherto hidden, and yet but dimly comprehended by him to whom it hath been revealed. All this agrees well with the supposition that the confession contains not merely an acknowledgment of the Messiahship of Jesus in the ordinary sense, but a proclamation of the true doctrine concerning Messiah’s person-viz. that He was a divine being manifest in the flesh. The remaining portion of our Lord’s address to Simon shows that He assigned to the doctrine confessed by that disciple the place of fundamental importance in the Christian faith. The object of these remarkable statements is not to assert the supremacy of Peter, as Romanists contend, but to declare the supremely important nature of the

truth he has confessed. In spite of all difficulties of interpretation, this remains clear and certain to us. Who or what the “rock” is we deem doubtful; it may be Peter, or it may be his confession: it is a point on which scholars equally sound in the faith, and equally innocent of all sympathy with Popish dogmas, are divided in opinion, and on which it would ill become us to dogmatize. Of this only we are sure, that not Peter’s person, but Peter’s faith, is the fundamental matter in Christ’s mind. When He says to that disciple, “Thou art Petros,” He means, “Thou art a man of rock, worthy of the name I gave thee by anticipation the first time I met thee, because thou hast at length got thy foot planted on the rock of the eternal truth.” He speaks of the church that is to be, for the first time, in connection with Simon’s confession, because that church is to consist of men adopting that confession as their own, and acknowledging Him to be the Christ, the Son of God. He alludes to the keys of the kingdom of heaven in the same connection, because none but those who homologate the doctrine first solemnly enunciated by Simon, shall be admitted within its gates. He promises Peter the power of the keys, not because it is to belong to him alone, or to him more than others, but by way of honorable mention, in recompense for the joy he has given his Lord by the superior energy and decision of his faith. He is grateful to Peter, because he has believed most emphatically that He came out from God; and He shows His gratitude by promising first to him individually a power which He afterwards conferred on all His chosen disciples. Finally, if it be true that Peter is here called the rock on which the church shall be built, this is to be understood in the same way as the promise of the keys. Peter is called the foundation of the church only in the same sense as all the apostles are called the foundation by the Apostle Paul, viz. as the first preachers of the true faith concerning Jesus as the Christ and Son of God; and if the man who first professed that faith be honored by being called individually the rock, that only shows that the faith, and not the man, is after all the true foundation. That which makes Simon a Petros, a rock-like man, fit to build on, is the real Petra on which the Ecclesia is to be built.

After these remarks we deem it superfluous to enter minutely into the question to what the term “rock” refers in the sentence, “Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my church.” At the same time, we must say that it is by no means so clear to us that the rock must be Peter, and can be nothing else, as it is the fashion of modern commentators to assert. To the rendering, “Thou art Petros, a man of rock; and on thee, as on a rock, I will build my church,” it is possible, as already admitted, to assign an intelligible scriptural meaning. But we confess our preference for the old Protestant interpretation, according to which our Lord’s words to His disciple should be thus paraphrased: “Thou, Simon Barjonas, art Petros, a man of rock, worthy of thy name Peter, because thou hast made that bold, good confession; and on the truth thou hast now confessed, as on a rock, will I build my church; and so long as it abides on that foundation it will stand firm and unassailable against all the powers of hell.” So rendering, we make Jesus say not only what He really thought, but what was most worthy to be said. For divine truth is the sure foundation. Believers, even Peters, may fail, and prove any thing but stable; but truth is eternal, and faileth never. This we say not unmindful of the counterpart truth, that “the truth,” unless confessed by living souls, is dead, and no source of stability. Sincere personal conviction, with a life corresponding, is needed to make the faith in the objective sense of any virtue.

We cannot pass from these memorable words of Christ without adverting, with a certain solemn awe, to the strange fate which has befallen them in the history of the church. This text, in which the church’s Lord declares that the powers of darkness shall not prevail against her, has been used by

these powers as an instrument of assault, and with only too much success. What a gigantic system of spiritual despotism and blasphemous assumption has been built on these two sentences concerning the rock and the keys! How nearly, by their aid, has the kingdom of God been turned into a kingdom of Satan! One is tempted to wish that Jesus, knowing beforehand what was to happen, had so framed His words as to obviate the mischief. But the wish were vain. No forms of expression, however carefully selected, could prevent human ignorance from falling into misconception, or hinder men who had a purpose to serve, from finding in Scripture what suited that purpose. Nor can any Christian, on reflection, think it desirable that the Author of our faith had adopted a studied prudential style of speech, intended not so much to give faithful expression to the actual thoughts of His mind and feelings of His heart, as to avoid giving occasion of stumbling to honest stupidity, or an excuse for perversion to dishonest knavery. The spoken word in that case had been no longer a true reflection of the Word incarnate. All the poetry and passion and genuine human feeling which form the charm of Christ's sayings would have been lost, and nothing would have remained but prosaic platitudes, like those of the scribes and of theological pedants. No; let us have the precious words of our Master in all their characteristic intensity and vehemence of unqualified assertion; and if prosaic or disingenuous men will manufacture out of them incredible dogmas, let them answer for it. Why should the children be deprived of their bread, and only the dogs be cared for?

One remark more ere we pass from the subject of this chapter. The part we find Peter playing in this incident at Caesarea Philippi prepares us for regarding as historically credible the part assigned to him in the Acts of the Apostles in some momentous scenes, as, e.g., in that brought before us in the tenth chapter. The Tübingen school of critics tell us that the Acts is a composition full of invented situations adapted to an apologetic design; and that the plan on which the book proceeds is to make Peter act as like Paul as possible in the first part, and Paul, on the other hand, as much like Peter as possible in the second. The conversion of the Roman centurion by Peter's agency they regard as a capital instance of Peter being made to pose as Paul, i.e., as an universalist in his views of Christianity. Now, all we have to say on the subject here is this. The conduct ascribed to Peter the apostle in the tenth chapter of the Acts is credible in the light of the narrative we have been studying. In both we find the same man the recipient of a revelation; in both we find him the first to receive, utter, and act on a great Christian truth. Is it incredible that the man who received one revelation as a disciple should receive another as an apostle? Is it not psychologically probable that the man who now appears so original and audacious in connection with one great truth, will again show the same attributes of originality and audacity in connection with some other truth? For our part, far from feeling sceptical as to the historic truth of the narrative in the Acts, we should have been very much surprised if in the history of the nascent church Peter had been found playing a part altogether devoid of originalities and audacities. He would in that case have been very unlike his former self.

02.12. First Lesson On the Cross

First Lesson On the Cross Section I - First Announcement of Christ's Death Mat 16:21-28; Mark 8:31-38; Luk 9:22-27. Not till an advanced period in His public ministry-not, in fact, till it was drawing to a close-did Jesus speak in plain, unmistakable terms of His death. The solemn event was foreknown by Him from the first; and He betrayed His consciousness of what was awaiting Him by a variety of occasional allusions. These earlier utterances, however, were all couched in mystic language. They were of the nature of riddles, whose meaning became clear after the event, but which before, none could, or at least did, read. Jesus spake now of a temple, which, if destroyed, He should raise again in three days; at another time of a lifting up of the Son of man, like unto that of the brazen serpent in the wilderness; and on yet other occasions, of a sad separation of the bridegroom from the children of the bridechamber, of the giving of His flesh for the life of the world, and of a sign like that of the prophet Jonas, which should be given in His own person to an evil and adulterous generation. At length, after the conversation in Caesarea Philippi, Jesus changed His style of speaking on the subject of His sufferings, substituting for dark, hidden allusions, plain, literal, matter-of-fact statements. This change was naturally adapted to the altered circumstances in which He was placed. The signs of the times were growing ominous; storm-clouds were gathering in the air; all things were beginning to point towards Calvary. His work in Galilee and the provinces was nearly done; it remained for Him to bear witness to the truth in and around the holy city; and from the present mood of the ecclesiastical authorities and the leaders of religious society, as manifested by captious question and unreasonable demand, and a constant espionage on His movements, it was not difficult to foresee that it would not require many more offences, or much longer time, to ripen dislike and jealousy into murderous hatred. Such plain speaking, therefore, concerning what was soon to happen, was natural and seasonable. Jesus was now entering the valley of the shadow of death, and in so speaking He was but adapting His talk to the situation.

Plain-speaking regarding His death was now not only natural on Christ's part, but at once necessary and safe in reference to his disciples. It was necessary, in order that they might be prepared for the approaching event, as far as that was possible in the case of men who, to the last, persisted in hoping that the issue would be different from what their Master anticipated. It was safe; for now the subject might be spoken of plainly without serious risk to their faith. Before the disciples were established in the doctrine of Christ's person, the doctrine of the cross might have scared them away altogether. Premature preaching of a Christ to be crucified might have made them unbelievers in the fundamental truth that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ. Therefore, in consideration of their weakness, Jesus maintained a certain reserve respecting His sufferings, till their faith in Him as the Christ should have become sufficiently rooted to stand the strain of the storm soon to be raised by a most unexpected, unwelcome, and incomprehensible announcement. Only after hearing Peter's confession was He satisfied that the strength necessary for enduring the trial had been attained.

Wherefore, “from that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.”

Every clause in this solemn announcement demands our reverent scrutiny.

Jesus showed unto His disciples:

1. “That He must go unto Jerusalem.” Yes! there the tragedy must be enacted: that was the fitting scene for the stupendous events that were about to take place. It was dramatically proper that the Son of man should die in that “holy,” unholy city, which had earned a most unenviable notoriety as the murderess of the prophets, the stoner of them whom God sent unto her. “It cannot be”-it were incongruous-“that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.” It was due also to the dignity of Jesus, and to the design of His death, that He should suffer there. Not in an obscure corner or in an obscure way must He die, but in the most public place, and in a formal, judicial manner. He must be lifted up in view of the whole Jewish nation, so that all might see Him whom they had pierced, and by whose stripes also they might yet be healed. The “Lamb of God” must be slain in the place where all the legal sacrifices were offered.

2. “And suffer many things.” Too many to enumerate, too painful to speak of in detail, and better passed over in silence for the present. The bare fact that their beloved Master was to be put to death, without any accompanying indignities, would be sufficiently dreadful to the disciples; and Jesus mercifully drew a veil over much that was present to His own thoughts. In a subsequent conversation on the same sad theme, when His passion was near at hand, He drew aside the veil a little, and showed them some of the “many things.” But even then He was very sparing in His allusions, hinting only by a passing word that He should be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon. He took no delight in expatiating on such harrowing scenes. He was willing to bear those indignities, but He cared not to speak of them more than was absolutely necessary.

3. “Of the elders and chief priests and scribes.” Not of them alone, for Gentile rulers and the people of Israel were to have a hand in evil-entreating the Son of man as well as Jewish ecclesiastics. But the parties named were to be the prime movers and most guilty agents in the nefarious transaction. The men who ought to have taught the people to recognize in Jesus the Lord’s Anointed, would hound them on to cry, “Crucify Him, crucify Him,” and by importunities and threats urge heathen authorities to perpetrate a crime for which they had no heart. Gray-haired elders sitting in council would solemnly decide that He was worthy of death; high priests would utter oracles, that one man must die for the people, that the whole nation perish not; scribes learned in the law would use their legal knowledge to invent plausible grounds for an accusation involving capital punishment. Jesus had suffered many petty annoyances from such persons already; but the time was approaching when nothing would satisfy them but getting the object of their dislike cast forth out of the world. Alas for Israel, when her wise men, and her holy men, and her learned men, knew of no better use to make of the stone chosen of God, and precious, than thus contemptuously and wantonly to fling it away!

4. “And be killed.” Yes, and for blessed ends pre-ordained of God. But of these Jesus speaks not now. He simply states, in general terms, the fact, in this first lesson on the doctrine of the cross. Any thing more at this stage had been wasted words. To what purpose speak of the theology of

the cross, of God's great design in the death which was to be brought about by man's guilty instrumentality, to disciples unwilling to receive even the matter of fact? The rude shock of an unwelcome announcement must first be over before any thing can be profitably said on these higher themes. Therefore not a syllable here of salvation by the death of the Son of man; of Christ crucified for man's guilt as well as by man's guilt. The hard bare fact alone is stated, theology being reserved for another season, when the hearers should be in a fitter frame of mind for receiving instruction.

5. Finally, Jesus told His disciples that He should "be raised again the third day." To some so explicit a reference to the resurrection at this early date has appeared improbable. To us, on the contrary, it appears eminently seasonable. When was Jesus more likely to tell His disciples that He would rise again shortly after His death, than just on the occasion when He first told them plainly that He should die? He knew how harsh the one announcement would be to the feelings of His faithful ones, and it was natural that He should add the other, in the hope that when it was understood that His death was to be succeeded, after a brief interval of three days, by resurrection, the news would be much less hard to bear. Accordingly, after uttering the dismal words "be killed," He, with characteristic tenderness, hastened to say, "and be raised again the third day;" that, having torn, He might heal, and having smitten, He might bind up. The grave communications made by Jesus were far from welcome to His disciples. Neither now nor at any subsequent time did they listen to the forebodings of their Lord with resignation even, not to speak of cheerful acquiescence or spiritual joy. They never heard Him speak of His death without pain; and their only comfort, in connection with such announcements as the present, seems to have been the hope that He had taken too gloomy a view of the situation, and that His apprehensions would turn out groundless. They, for their part, could see no grounds for such dark anticipations, and their Messianic ideas did not dispose them to be on the outlook for these. They had not the slightest conception that it behoved the Christ to suffer. On the contrary, a crucified Christ was a scandal and a contradiction to them, quite as much as it continued to be to the majority of the Jewish people after the Lord had ascended to glory. Hence the more firmly they believed that Jesus was the Christ, the more confounding it was to be told that He must be put to death. "How," they asked themselves, "can these things be? How can the Son of God be subject to such indignities? How can our Master be the Christ, as we firmly believe, come to set up the divine kingdom, and to be crowned its King with glory and honor, and yet at the same time be doomed to undergo the ignominious fate of a criminal execution?" These questions the twelve could not now, nor until after the Resurrection, answer; nor is this wonderful, for if flesh and blood could not reveal the doctrine of Christ's person, still less could it reveal the doctrine of His cross. Not without a very special illumination from heaven could they understand the merest elements of that doctrine, and see, e.g., that nothing was more worthy of the Son of God than to humble Himself and become subject unto death, even the death of the cross; that the glory of God consists not merely in being the highest, but in this, that being high, He stoops in lowly love to bear the burden of His own sinful creatures; that nothing could more directly and certainly conduce to the establishment of the divine kingdom than the gracious self-humiliation of the King; that only by ascending the cross could Messiah ascend the throne of His mediatorial glory; that only so could He subdue human hearts, and become Lord of men's affections as well as of their destinies. Many in the church do not understand these blessed truths, even at this late era: what wonder, then, if they were hid for a season from the eyes of the first disciples! Let us not reproach them for the veil that was on their

faces; let us rather make sure that the same veil is not on our own. On this occasion, as at Caesarea Philippi, the twelve found a most eloquent and energetic interpreter of their sentiments in Simon Peter. The action and speech of that disciple at this time were characteristic in the highest degree. He took Jesus, we are told (laid hold of Him, we suppose, by His hand or His garment), and began to rebuke Him, saying, “Be it far from Thee, Lord;” or more literally, “God be merciful to Thee: God forbid! this shall not be unto Thee.” What a strange compound of good and evil is this man! His language is dictated by the most intense affection: he cannot bear the thought of any harm befalling his Lord; yet how irreverent and disrespectful he is towards Him whom he has just acknowledged to be the Christ, the Son of the living God! How he overbears, and contradicts, and domineers, and, as it were, tries to bully his Master into putting away from His thoughts those gloomy forebodings of coming evil! Verily he has need of chastisement to teach him his own place, and to scourge out of his character the bad elements of forwardness, and undue familiarity, and presumptuous self-will.

Happily for Peter, he had a Master who, in His faithful love, spared not the rod when it was needful. Jesus judged that it was needed now, and therefore He administered a rebuke not less remarkable for severity than was the encomium at Caesarea Philippi for warm, unqualified approbation, and curiously contrasting with that encomium in the terms in which it was expressed. He turned round on His offending disciple, and sternly said: “Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.” The same disciple who on the former occasion had spoken by inspiration of Heaven is here represented as speaking by inspiration of mere flesh and blood-of mere natural affection for his Lord, and of the animal instinct of self-preservation, thinking of self-interest merely, not of duty. He whom Christ had pronounced a man of rock, strong in faith, and fit to be a foundation-stone in the spiritual edifice, is here called an offence, a stumbling-stone lying in his Master’s path. Peter, the noble confessor of that fundamental truth, by the faith of which the church would be able to defy the gates of hell, appears here in league with the powers of darkness, the unconscious mouth-piece of Satan the tempter. “Get thee behind me, Satan!” What a downcome for him who but yesterday got that promise of the power of the keys! How suddenly has the novice church dignitary, too probably lifted up with pride or vanity, fallen into the condemnation of the devil! This memorable rebuke seems mercilessly severe, and yet on consideration we feel it was nothing more than what was called for. Christ’s language on this occasion needs no apology, such as might be drawn from supposed excitement of feeling, or from a consciousness on the speaker’s part that the infirmity of His own sentient nature was whispering the same suggestion as that which came from Peter’s lips. Even the hard word Satan, which is the sting of the speech, is in its proper place. It describes exactly the character of the advice given by Simon. That advice was substantially this: “Save thyself at any rate; sacrifice duty to self-interest, the cause of God to personal convenience.” An advice truly Satanic in principle and tendency! For the whole aim of Satanic policy is to get self-interest recognized as the chief end of man. Satan’s temptations aim at nothing worse than this. Satan is called the Prince of this world, because self-interest rules the world; he is called the accuser of the brethren, because he does not believe that even the sons of God have any higher motive. He is a sceptic; and his scepticism consists in determined, scornful unbelief in the reality of any chief end other than that of personal advantage. “Doth Job, or even Jesus, serve God for naught? Self-sacrifice, suffering for righteousness’ sake, fidelity to truth even unto death-it is all romance and youthful sentimentalism, or hypocrisy and hollow cant. There is

absolutely no such thing as a surrender of the lower life for the higher; all men are selfish at heart, and have their price: some may hold out longer than others, but in the last extremity every man will prefer his own things to the things of God. All that a man hath will he give for his life, his moral integrity and his piety not excepted." Such is Satan's creed. The suggestion made by Peter, as the unconscious tool of the spirit of evil, is identical in principle with that made by Satan himself to Jesus in the temptation in the wilderness. The tempter said then in effect: "If Thou be the Son of God, use Thy power for Thine own behoof; Thou art hungry, e.g., make bread for Thyself out of the stones. If Thou be the Son of God, presume on Thy privilege as the favorite of Heaven; cast Thyself down from this elevation, securely counting on protection from harm, even where other men would be allowed to suffer the consequences of their foolhardiness. What better use canst Thou make of Thy divine powers and privileges than to promote Thine own advantage and glory?" Peter's feeling at the present time seems to have been much the same: "If Thou be the Son of God, why shouldst Thou suffer an ignominious, violent death? Thou hast power to save Thyself from such a fate; surely Thou wilt not hesitate to use it!" The attached disciple, in fact, was an unconscious instrument employed by Satan to subject Jesus to a second temptation, analogous to the earlier one in the desert of Judea. It was the god of this world that was at work in both cases; who, being accustomed to find men only too ready to prefer safety to righteousness, could not believe that he should find nothing of this spirit in the Son of God, and therefore came again and again seeking an open point in His armor through which he might shoot his fiery darts; not renouncing hope till his intended victim hung on the cross, apparently conquered by the world, but in reality a conqueror both of the world and of its lord. The severe language uttered by Jesus on this occasion, when regarded as addressed to a dearly beloved disciple, shows in a striking manner His holy abhorrence of every thing savoring of self-seeking. "Save Thyself," counsels Simon: "Get thee behind me, Satan," replies Simon's Lord. Truly Christ was not one who pleased Himself. Though He were a Son, yet would He learn obedience by the things which He had to suffer. And by this mind He proved Himself to be the Son, and won from His Father the approving voice: "Thou art my beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased,"-Heaven's reply to the voice from hell counselling Him to pursue a course of self-pleasing. Persevering in this mind, Jesus was at length lifted up on the cross, and so became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him. Blessed now and forevermore be His name, who so humbled Himself, and became obedient as far as death!

Section II - Cross-Bearing, The Law of Discipleship Mat 16:24-28; Mark 8:34-38; Luk 9:23-27.

After one hard announcement , comes another not less hard. The Lord Jesus has told His disciples that He must one day be put to death; He now tells them, that as it fares with Him, so it must fare with them also. The second announcement was naturally occasioned by the way in which the first had been received. Peter had said, and all had felt, "This shall not be unto Thee." Jesus replies in effect, "Say you so? I tell you that not only shall I, your Master, be crucified-for such will be the manner of my death,-but ye too, faithfully following me, shall most certainly have your crosses to bear. 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.'" The second announcement was not, like the first, made to the twelve only. This we might infer from the terms of the announcement, which are general, even if we had not been informed, as we are by Mark and Luke, that before making it Jesus called the people unto Him, with His disciples, and spake in the hearing of them all. The doctrine here taught, therefore, is for

all Christians in all ages: not for apostles only, but for the humblest disciples; not for priests or preachers, but for the laity as well; not for monks living in cloisters, but for men living and working in the outside world. The King and Head of the church here proclaims a universal law binding on all His subjects, requiring all to bear a cross in fellowship with Himself.

We are not told how the second announcement was received by those who heard it, and particularly by the twelve. We can believe, however, that to Peter and his brethren it sounded less harsh than the first, and seemed, at least theoretically, more acceptable. Common experience might teach them that crosses, however unpleasant to flesh and blood, were nevertheless things that might be looked for in the lot of mere men. But what had Christ the Son of God to do with crosses? Ought He not to be exempt from the sufferings and indignities of ordinary mortals? If not, of what avail was His divine Sonship? In short, the difficulty for the twelve was probably, not that the servant should be no better than the Master, but that the Master should be no better than the servant. Our perplexity, on the other hand, is apt to be just the reverse of this. Familiar with the doctrine that Jesus died on the cross in our room, we are apt to wonder what occasion there can be for our bearing a cross. If He suffered for us vicariously, what need, we are ready to inquire, for suffering on our part likewise? We need to be reminded that Christ's sufferings, while in some respects peculiar, are in other respects common to Him with all in whom His spirit abides; that while, as redemptive, His death stands alone, as suffering for righteousness' sake it is but the highest instance of a universal law, according to which all who live a true godly life must suffer hardship in a false evil world. And it is very observable that Jesus took a most effectual method of keeping this truth prominently before the mind of His followers in all ages, by proclaiming it with great emphasis on the first occasion on which He plainly announced that He Himself was to die, giving it, in fact, as the first lesson on the doctrine of His death: the first of four to be found in the Gospels. Thereby He in effect declared that only such as were willing to be crucified with Him should be saved by His death; nay, that willingness to bear a cross was indispensable to the right understanding of the doctrine of salvation through Him. It is as if above the door of the school in which the mystery of redemption was to be taught, He had inscribed the legend: Let no man who is unwilling to deny himself, and take up his cross, enter here. In this great law of discipleship the cross signifies not merely the external penalty of death, but all troubles that come on those who earnestly endeavor to live as Jesus lived in this world, and in consequence of that endeavor. Many and various are the afflictions of the righteous, differing in kind and degree, according to times and circumstances, and the callings and stations of individuals. For the righteous One, who died not only by the unjust, but for them, the appointed cup was filled with all possible ingredients of shame and pain, mingled together in the highest degree of bitterness. Not a few of His most honored servants have come very near their Master in the manner and measure of their afflictions for His sake, and have indeed drunk of His cup, and been baptized with His bloody baptism. But for the rank and file of the Christian host the hardships to be endured are ordinarily less severe, the cross to be borne less heavy. For one the cross may be the calumnies of lying lips, "which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous;" for another, failure to attain the much-worshipped idol success in life, so often reached by unholy means not available for a man who has a conscience; for a third, mere isolation and solitariness of spirit amid uncongenial, unsympathetic neighbors, not minded to live soberly, righteously, and godly, and not loving those who do so live. The cross, therefore, is not the same for all. But that there is a cross of some shape for all true disciples is clearly implied in the words: "If any one will come after me, let him

deny himself, and take up his cross." The plain meaning of these words is, that there is no following Jesus on any other terms-a doctrine which, however clearly taught in the Gospel, spurious Christians are unwilling to believe and resolute to deny. They take the edge off their Lord's statement by explaining that it applies only to certain critical times, happily very different from their own; or that if it has some reference to all times, it is only applicable to such as are called to play a prominent part in public affairs as leaders of opinion, pioneers of progress, prophets denouncing the vices of the age, and uttering unwelcome oracles-a proverbially dangerous occupation, as the Greek poet testified who said: "Apollo alone should prophesy, for he fears nobody." To maintain that all who would live devoutly in Christ Jesus must suffer somehow, is, they think, to take too gloomy and morose a view of the wickedness of the world, or too high and exacting a view of the Christian life. The righteousness which in ordinary times involves a cross is in their view folly and fanaticism. It is speaking when one should be silent, meddling in matters with which one has no concern; in a word, it is being righteous overmuch. Such thoughts as these, expressed or unexpressed, are sure to prevail extensively when religious profession is common. The fact that fidelity involves a cross, as also the fact that Christ was crucified just because He was righteous, are well understood by Christians when they are a suffering minority, as in primitive ages. But these truths are much lost sight of in peaceful, prosperous times. Then you shall find many holding most sound views of the cross Christ bore for them, but sadly ignorant concerning the cross they themselves have to bear in fellowship with Christ. Of this cross they are determined to know nothing. What it can mean, or whence it can come, they cannot comprehend; though had they the true spirit of self-denial required of disciples by Christ, they might find it for themselves in their daily life, in their business, in their home, nay, in their own heart, and have no need to seek for it in the ends of the earth, or to manufacture artificial crosses out of ascetic austerities. To the law of the cross Jesus annexed three reasons designed to make the obeying of it easier, by showing disciples that, in rendering obedience to the stern requirement, they attend to their own true interest. Each reason is introduced by a "For." The first reason is: "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." In this startling paradox the word "life" is used in a double sense. In the first clause of each member of the sentence it signifies natural life, with all the adjuncts that make it pleasant and enjoyable; in the second, it means the spiritual life of a renewed soul. The deep, pregnant saying may therefore be thus expanded and paraphrased: Whosoever will save, i.e., make it his first business to save, or preserve, his natural life and worldly well-being, shall lose the higher life, the life indeed; and whosoever is willing to lose his natural life for my sake shall find the true eternal life. According to this maxim we must lose something, it is not possible to live without sacrifice of some kind; the only question being what shall be sacrificed-the lower or the higher life, animal happiness or spiritual blessedness. If we choose the higher, we must be prepared to deny ourselves and take up our cross, though the actual amount of the loss we are called on to bear may be small; for godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. If, on the other hand, we choose the lower, and resolve to have it at all hazards, we must inevitably lose the higher. The soul's life, and all the imperishable goods of the soul-righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness-are the price we pay for worldly enjoyment. This price is too great: and that is what Jesus next told His hearers as the second persuasive to cross-bearing. "For what," He went on to ask, "is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" The two

questions set forth the incomparable value of the soul on both sides of a commercial transaction. The soul, or life, in the true sense of the word, is too dear a price to pay even for the whole world, not to say for that small portion of it which falls to the lot of any one individual. He who gains the world at such a cost is a loser by the bargain. On the other hand, the whole world is too small, yea, an utterly inadequate price, to pay for the ransom of the soul once lost. What shall a man give in exchange for the priceless thing he has foolishly bartered away? “Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before Him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” No! O man; not any of these things, nor any thing else thou hast to give; not the fruit of thy merchandise, not ten thousands of pounds sterling. Thou canst not buy back thy soul, which thou hast bartered for the world, with all that thou hast of the world. The redemption of the soul is indeed precious; it cannot be delivered from the bondage of sin by corruptible things, such as silver and gold: the attempt to purchase pardon and peace and life that way can only make thy case more hopeless, and add to thy condemnation. The appeal contained in these solemn questions comes home with irresistible force to all who are in their right mind. Such feel that no outward good can be compared in value to having a “saved soul,” i.e. being a right-minded Christian man. All, however, are not so minded. Multitudes account their souls of very small value indeed. Judas sold his soul for thirty pieces of silver; and not a few who probably deem themselves better that he would part with theirs for the most paltry worldly advantage. The great ambition of the million is to be happy as animals, not to be blessed as “saved,” noble-spirited, sanctified men. “Who will show us any good?” is that which the many say. “Give us health, wealth, houses, lands, honors, and we care not for righteousness, either imputed or personal, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost. These may be good also in their way, and if one could have them along with the other, without trouble or sacrifice, it were perhaps well; but we cannot consent, for their sakes, to deny ourselves any pleasure, or voluntarily endure any hardship.” The third argument in favor of cross-bearing is drawn from the second advent. “For the son of man shall come in the glory of His Father, with His angels; and then shall He reward every man according to his works.” These words suggest a contrast between the present and the future state of the speaker, and imply a promise of a corresponding contrast between the present and the future of His faithful followers. Now Jesus is the Son of man, destined ere many weeks pass to be crucified at Jerusalem. At the end of the days He will appear invested with the manifest glory of Messiah, attended with a mighty host of ministering spirits; His reward for enduring the cross, despising the shame. Then will He reward every man according to the tenor of his present life. To the cross-bearers He will grant a crown of righteousness; to the cross-spurners He will assign, as their due, shame and everlasting contempt. Stern doctrine, distasteful to the modern mind on various grounds, specially on these two: because it sets before us alternatives in the life beyond, and because it seeks to propagate heroic virtue by hope of reward, instead of exhibiting virtue as its own reward. As to the former, the alternative of the promised reward is certainly a great mystery and burden to the spirit; but it is to be feared that an alternative is involved in any earnest doctrine of moral distinctions or of human freedom and responsibility. As to the other, Christians need not be afraid of degenerating into moral vulgarity in Christ’s company. There is no vulgarity or impurity in the virtue which is sustained by the hope of eternal life. That hope is not selfishness, but simply self-consistency. It is simply believing in the reality of the kingdom for which you labor and suffer;

involving, of course, the reality of each individual Christian's interest therein, your own not excepted. And such faith is necessary to heroism. For who would fight and suffer for a dream? What patriot would risk his life for his country's cause who did not hope for the restoration of her independence? And who but a pedant would say that the purity of his patriotism was sullied, because his hope for the whole nation did not exclude all reference to himself as an individual citizen? Equally necessary is it that a Christian should believe in the kingdom of glory, and equally natural and proper that he should cherish the hope of a personal share in its honors and felicities. Where such faith and hope are not, little Christian heroism will be found. For as an ancient Church Father said, "There is no certain work where there is an uncertain reward." Men cannot be heroes in doubt or despair. They cannot struggle after perfection and a divine kingdom, sceptical the while whether these things be more than devout imaginations, unrealizable ideals. In such a mood they will take things easy, and make secular happiness their chief concern.

02.13. The Transfiguration

The Transfiguration Mat 17:1-13; Mark 9:2-13; Luk 9:28-36. The transfiguration is one of those passages in the Saviour's earthly history which an expositor would rather pass over in reverent silence. For such silence the same apology might be pleaded which is so kindly made in the Gospel narrative for Peter's foolish speech concerning the three tabernacles: "He wist not what to say." Who does know what to say any more than he? Who is able fully to speak of that wondrous night-scene among the mountains, during which heaven was for a few brief moments let down to earth, and the mortal body of Jesus being transfigured shone with celestial brightness, and the spirits of just men made perfect appeared and held converse with Him respecting His approaching passion, and a voice came forth from the excellent glory, pronouncing Him to be God's well-beloved Son? It is too high for us, this august spectacle, we cannot attain unto it; its grandeur oppresses and stupefies; its mystery surpasses our comprehension; its glory is ineffable. Therefore, avoiding all speculation, curious questioning, theological disquisition, and ambitious word-picturing in connection with the remarkable occurrence here recorded, we confine ourselves in this chapter to the humble task of explaining briefly its significance for Jesus Himself, and its lesson for His disciples. The "transfiguration," to be understood, must be viewed in connection with the announcement made by Jesus shortly before it happened, concerning His death. This it evident from the simple fact, that the three evangelists who relate the event so carefully note the time of its occurrence with reference to that announcement, and the conversation which accompanied it. All tell how, within six or eight days thereafter, Jesus took three of His disciples, Peter, James, and John, and brought them into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them. The Gospel historians are not wont to be so careful in their indications of time, and their minute accuracy here signifies in effect: "While the foregoing communications and discourses concerning the cross were fresh in the thoughts of all the parties, the wondrous events we are now to relate took place." The relative date, in fact, is a finger post pointing back to the conversation on the passion, and saying: "If you desire to understand what follows, remember what went before." This inference from the note of time given by all the evangelists is fully borne out by a statement made by Luke alone, respecting the subject of the conversation on the holy mount between Jesus and His celestial visitants. "And," we read, "behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias; who appeared in glory, and spake of His decease (or exodus) which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." That exit, so different from their own in its circumstances and consequences, was the theme of their talk. They had appeared to Jesus to converse with Him thereon; and when they ceased speaking concerning it, they took their departure for the abodes of the blessed. How long the conference lasted we know not, but the subject was sufficiently suggestive of interesting topics of conversation. There was, e.g., the surprising contrast between the death of Moses, immediate and painless, while his eye was not dim nor his natural force abated, and the painful and ignominious death to be endured by Jesus. Then there was the not less remarkable contrast between the manner of Elijah's departure from the earth-translated to heaven without tasting death at all, making a triumphant exit out of the world in a chariot of fire, and the way by which Jesus should enter into glory-the via dolorosa of the cross. Whence this

privilege of exemption from death, or from its bitterness, granted to the representatives of the law and the prophets, and wherefore denied to Him who was the end both of law and of prophecy? On these points, and others of kindred nature, the two celestial messengers, enlightened by the clear light of heaven, may have held intelligent and sympathetic converse with the Son of man, to the refreshment of His weary, saddened, solitary soul. The same evangelist who specifies the subject of conversation on the holy mount further records that, previous to His transfiguration, Jesus had been engaged in prayer. We may therefore see, in the honor and glory conferred on Him there, the Father's answer to His Son's supplications; and from the nature of the answer we may infer the subject of prayer. It was the same as afterwards in the garden of Gethsemane. The cup of death was present to the mind of Jesus now, as then; the cross was visible to His spiritual eye; and He prayed for nerve to drink, for courage to endure. The attendance of the three confidential disciples, Peter, James, and John, significantly hints at the similarity of the two occasions. The Master took these disciples with Him into the mount, as He afterwards took them into the garden, that He might not be altogether destitute of company and kindly sympathy as He walked through the valley of the shadow of death, and felt the horror and the loneliness of the situation.

It is now clear how we must view the transfiguration scene in relation to Jesus. It was an aid to faith and patience, specially vouchsafed to the meek and lowly Son of man, in answer to His prayers, to cheer Him on His sorrowful path towards Jerusalem and Calvary. Three distinct aids to His faith were supplied in the experiences of that wondrous night. The first was a foretaste of the glory with which He should be rewarded after His passion, for His voluntary humiliation and obedience unto death. For the moment He was, as it were, rapt up into heaven, where He had been before He came into the world; for His face shone like the sun, and His raiment was white as the pure untrodden snow on the high alpine summits of Herman. "Be of good cheer," said that sudden flood of celestial light: "the suffering will soon be past, and Thou shalt enter into Thine eternal joy!" A second source of comfort to Jesus in the experiences on the mount, was the assurance that the mystery of the cross was understood and appreciated by saints in heaven, if not by the darkened minds of sinful men on earth. He greatly needed such comfort; for among the men then living, not excepting His chosen disciples, there was not one to whom He could speak on that theme with any hope of eliciting an intelligent and sympathetic response. Only a few days ago, He had ascertained by painful experience the utter incapacity of the twelve, even of the most quick-witted and warm-hearted among them, to comprehend the mystery of His passion, or even to believe in it as a certain fact. Verily the Son of man was most lonely as He passed through the dark valley! the very presence of stupid, unsympathetic companions serving only to enhance the sense of solitariness. When He wanted company that could understand His passion thoughts, He was obliged to hold converse with spirits of just men made perfect; for, as far as mortal men were concerned, He had to be content to finish His great work without the comfort of being understood until it was accomplished. The talk of the great lawgiver and of the great prophet of Israel on the subject of His death was doubtless a real solace to the spirit of Jesus. We know how He comforted Himself at other times with the thought of being understood in heaven if not on earth. When heartless Pharisees called in question His conduct in receiving sinners, He sought at once His defense and His consolation in the blessed fact that there was joy in heaven at least, whatever there might be among them, over one penitent sinner, more than over ninety and nine just persons that needed no repentance. When He thought how "little ones," the weak and helpless, were despised and trampled under foot in this proud inhuman world, He reflected with unspeakable

satisfaction that in heaven their angels did always behold the face of His Father; yea, that in heaven there were angels who made the care of little ones their special business, and were therefore fully able to appreciate the doctrine of humility and kindness which He strove to inculcate on ambitious and quarrelsome disciples. Surely, then, we may believe that when He looked forward to His own decease-the crowning evidence of His love for sinners-it was a comfort to His heart to think: “Up yonder they know that I am to suffer, and comprehend the reason why, and watch with eager interest to see how I move on with unfaltering step, with my face steadfastly set to go to Jerusalem.” And would it not be specially comforting to have sensible evidence of this, in an actual visit from two denizens of the upper world, deputed as it were and commissioned to express the general mind of the whole community of glorified saints, who understood that their presence in heaven was due to the merits of that sacrifice which He was about to offer up in His own person on the hill of Calvary? A third, and the chief solace to the heart of Jesus, was the approving voice of His heavenly Father: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” That voice, uttered then, meant: “Go on Thy present way, self-devoted to death, and shrinking not from the cross. I am pleased with Thee, because Thou pleasest not Thyself. Pleased with Thee at all times, I am most emphatically delighted with Thee when, in a signal manner, as lately in the announcement made to Thy disciples, Thou dost show it to be Thy fixed purpose to save others, and not to save Thyself.” This voice from the excellent glory was one of three uttered by the divine Father in the hearing of His Son during His life on earth. The first was uttered by the Jordan, after the baptism of Jesus, and was the same as the present, save that it was spoken to Him, not concerning Him, to others. The last was uttered at Jerusalem shortly before the crucifixion, and was of similar import with the two preceding, but different in form. The soul of Jesus being troubled with the near prospect of death, He prayed: “Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name.” Then, we read, came there a voice from heaven, saying: “I have both glorified it (by Thy life), and will glorify it again” (more signally by Thy death). All three voices served one end. Elicited at crises in Christ’s history, when He manifested in peculiar intensity His devotion to the work for which He had come into the world, and His determination to finish it, however irksome the task might be to flesh and blood, these voices expressed, for His encouragement and strengthening, the complacency with which His Father regarded His self-humiliation and obedience unto death. At His baptism, He, so to speak, confessed the sins of the whole world; and by submitting to the rite, expressed His purpose to fulfill all righteousness as the Redeemer from sin. Therefore the Father then, for the first time, pronounced Him His beloved Son. Shortly before the transfiguration He had energetically repelled the suggestion of an affectionate disciple, that He should save Himself from His anticipated doom, as a temptation of the devil; therefore the Father renewed the declaration, changing the second person into the third, for the sake of those disciples who were present, and specially of Peter, who had listened to the voice of his own heart rather than to his Master’s words. Finally, a few days before His death, He overcame a temptation of the same nature as that to which Peter had subjected Him, springing this time out of the sinless infirmity of His own human nature. Beginning His prayer with the expression of a wish to be saved from the dark hour, He ended it with the petition, “Glorify Thy name.” Therefore the Father once more repeated the expression of His approval, declaring in effect His satisfaction with the way in which His Son had glorified His name hitherto, and His confidence that He would not fail to crown His career of obedience by a God-glorifying death.

Such being the meaning of the vision on the mount for Jesus, we have now to consider what lesson it taught the disciples who were present, and through them their brethren and all Christians. The main point in this connection is the injunction appended to the heavenly voice: “Hear Him.” This command refers specially to the doctrine of the cross preached by Jesus to the twelve, and so ill received by them. It was meant to be a solemn, deliberate endorsement of all that He had said then concerning His own sufferings, and concerning the obligation to bear their cross lying on all His followers. Peter, James, and John were, as it were, invited to recall all that had fallen from their Master’s lips on the unwelcome topic, and assured that it was wholly true and in accordance with the divine mind. Nay, as these disciples had received the doctrine with murmurs of disapprobation, the voice from heaven addressed to them was a stern word of rebuke, which said: “Murmur not, but devoutly and obediently hear.” This rebuke was all the more needful, that the disciples had just shown that they were still of the same mind as they had been six days ago. Peter at least was as yet in no cross-bearing humor. When, on wakening up to clear consciousness from the drowsy fit which had fallen on him, that disciple observed the two strangers in the act of departing, he exclaimed: “Master, it is good for us to be here, and let us make three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.” He was minded, we perceive, to enjoy the felicities of heaven without any preliminary process of cross-bearing. He thought to himself: “How much better to abide up here with the saints than down below amidst unbelieving captious Pharisees and miserable human beings, enduring the contradiction of sinners, and battling with the manifold ills wherewith the earth is cursed! Stay here, my Master, and you may bid good-by to all those dark forebodings of coming sufferings, and will be beyond the reach of malevolent priests, elders, and scribes. Stay here, on this sun-lit, heaven-kissing hill; go no more down into the depressing, sombre valley of humiliation. Farewell, earth and the cross: welcome, heaven and the crown!”

We do not forget, while thus paraphrasing Peter’s foolish speech, that when he uttered it he was dazed with sleep and the splendors of the midnight scene. Yet, when due allowance has been made for this, it remains true that the idle suggestion was an index of the disciple’s present mind. Peter was drunken, though not with wine; but what men say, even when drunken, is characteristic. There was a sober meaning in his senseless speech about the tabernacle. He really meant that the celestial visitants should remain, and not go away, as they were in the act of doing when he spoke. This appears from the conversation which took place between Jesus and the three disciples while descending the mountain. Peter and his two companions asked their Master: “Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?” The question referred, we think, not to the injunction laid on the disciples by Jesus just before, “Tell the vision to no man until the Son of man be risen again from the dead,” but rather to the fugitive, fleeting character of the whole scene on the mountain. The three brethren were not only disappointed, but perplexed, that the two celestials had been so like angels in the shortness of their stay and the suddenness of their departure. They had accepted the current notion about the advent of Elias before, and in order to, the restoration of the kingdom; and they fondly hoped that this was he come at last in company with Moses, heralding the approaching glory, as the advent of swallows from tropical climes is a sign that summer is nigh, and that winter with its storms and rigors is over and gone. In truth, while their Master was preaching the cross they had been dreaming of crowns. We shall find them continuing so to dream till the very end.

“Hear ye Him”-this voice was not meant for the three disciples alone, or even for the twelve, but for all professed followers of Christ as well as for them. It says to every Christian: “Hear Jesus, and strive to understand Him while He speaks of the mystery of His sufferings and the glory that should follow-those themes which even angels desire to look into. Hear Him when He proclaims cross-bearing as a duty incumbent on all disciples, and listen not to self-indulgent suggestions of flesh and blood, or the temptations of Satan counseling thee to make self-interest or self-preservation thy chief end. Hear Him, yet again, and weary not of the world, nor seek to lay down thy burden before the time. Dream not of tabernacles where thou mayest dwell secure, like a hermit in the wild, having no share in all that is done beneath the circuit of the sun. Do thy part manfully, and in due season thou shalt have, not a tent, but a temple to dwell in: an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

It is true, indeed, that we who are in this tabernacle of the body, in this world of sorrow, cannot but groan now and then, being burdened. This is our infirmity, and in itself it is not sinful; neither is it wrong to heave an occasional sigh, and utter a passing wish that the time of cross-bearing were over. Even the holy Jesus felt at times this weariness of life. An expression of something like impatience escaped His lips at this very season. When He came down from the mount and learned what was going on at its base, He exclaimed, with reference at once to the unbelief of the scribes who were present, to the weak faith of the disciples, and to the miseries of mankind suffering the consequences of the curse: “O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?” Even the loving Redeemer of man felt tempted to be weary in well-doing-weary of encountering the contradiction of sinners and of bearing with the spiritual weakness of disciples. Such weariness therefore, as a momentary feeling, is not necessarily sinful: it may rather be a part of our cross. But it must not be indulged in or yielded to. Jesus did not give Himself up to the feeling. Though He complained of the generation amidst which He lived, He did not cease from His labors of love for its benefit. Having relieved His heart by this utterance of a reproachful exclamation, He gave orders that the poor lunatic should be brought to Him that he might be healed. Then, when He had wrought this new miracle of mercy, He patiently explained to His own disciples the cause of their impotence to cope successfully with the maladies of men, and taught them how they might attain the power of casting out all sorts of devils, even those whose hold of their victims was most obstinate, viz. by faith and prayer. So He continued laboring in helping the miserable and instructing the ignorant, till the hour came when He could truly say, “It is finished.”

02.14.1. Training in Temper

Training in Temper; or, Discourse On Humility Section I - As This Little Child Mat 18:1-14; Mark 9:33-37; Mark 9:42-50; Luk 9:46-48. From the Mount of Transfiguration Jesus and the twelve returned through Galilee to Capernaum. On this homeward journey the Master and His disciples were in very different moods of mind. He sadly mused on His cross; they vainly dreamed of places of distinction in the approaching kingdom. The diversity of spirit revealed itself in a corresponding diversity of conduct. Jesus for the second time began to speak on the way of His coming sufferings, telling His followers how the Son of man should be betrayed into the hands of men, and how they should kill Him, and how the third day He should be raised again. The twelve, on the other hand, began as they journeyed along to dispute among themselves who should be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Strange, humiliating contrast exhibited again and again in the evangelic history; jealous, angry altercations respecting rank and precedence, on the part of the disciples, following new communications respecting His passion on the part of their Lord, as comic follows tragic in a dramatic representation. This unseemly and unseasonable dispute shows clearly what need there was for that injunction appended to the voice from heaven, “Hear Him;” and how far the disciples were as yet from complying therewith. They heard Jesus only when He spake things agreeable. They listened with pleasure when He assured them that ere long they should see the Son of man come in His kingdom; they were deaf to all He said concerning the suffering which must precede the glory. They forgot the cross, after a momentary fit of sorrow when their Lord referred to it, and betook themselves to dreaming of the crown; as a child forgets the death of a parent, and returns to its play. “How great,” thought they, “shall we all be when the kingdom comes!” Then by an easy transition they passed from idle dreams of the common glory to idle disputes as to who should have the largest share therein; for vanity and jealousy lie very near each other. “Shall we all be equally distinguished in the kingdom, or shall one be higher than another? Does the favor shown to Peter, James, and John, in selecting them to be eye-witnesses of the prefigurement of the coming glory, imply a corresponding precedence in the kingdom itself?” The three disciples probably hoped it did; the other disciples hoped not, and so the dispute began. It was nothing that they should all be great together; the question of questions was, who should be the greatest-a question hard to settle when vanity and presumption contend on one side, and jealousy and envy on the other.

Arrived at Capernaum, Jesus took an early opportunity of adverting to the dispute in which His disciples had been engaged, and made it the occasion of delivering a memorable discourse on humility and kindred topics, designed to serve the purpose of disciplining their temper and will. The task to which He now addressed Himself was at once the most formidable and the most needful He had as yet undertaken in connection with the training of the twelve. Most formidable, for nothing is harder than to train the human will into loyal subjection to universal principles, to bring men to recognize the claims of the law of love in their mutual relations, to expel pride, ambition, vainglory, and jealousy, and envy from the hearts even of the good. Men may have made great progress in the art of prayer, in religious liberty, in Christian activity, may have shown themselves

faithful in times of temptation, and apt scholars in Christian doctrine, and yet prove signally defective in temper: self-willed, self-seeking, having an eye to their own glory, even when seeking to glorify God. Most needful, for what good could these disciples do as ministers of the kingdom so long as their main concern was about their own place therein? Men full of ambitious passions and jealous of each other could only quarrel among themselves, bring the cause they sought to promote into contempt, and breed all around them confusion and every evil work. No wonder then that Jesus from this time forth devoted Himself with peculiar earnestness to the work of casting out from His disciples the devil of self-will, and imparting to them as a salt His own spirit of meekness, humility, and charity. He knew how much depended on His success in this effort to salt the future apostles, to use His own strong figure, and the whole tone and substance of the discourse before us reveal the depth of His anxiety. Specially significant in this respect is the opening part in which He makes use of a child present in the chamber as the vehicle of instruction; so, out of the mouth of a babe and suckling, perfecting the praise of a lowly mind. Sitting in the midst of ambitious disciples with the little one in His arms for a text, He who is the greatest in the kingdom proceeds to set forth truths mortifying to the spirit of pride, but sweeter than honey to the taste of all renewed souls. The first lesson taught is this: To be great in the kingdom, yea, to gain admission into it at all, it is necessary to become like a little child. “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” The feature of child-nature which forms the special point of comparison is its unpretentiousness. Early childhood knows nothing of those distinctions of rank which are the offspring of human pride, and the prizes coveted by human ambition. A king’s child will play without scruple with a beggar’s, thereby unconsciously asserting the insignificance of the things in which men differ, compared with the things that are common to all. What children are unconsciously, that Jesus requires His disciples to be voluntarily and deliberately. They are not to be pretentious and ambitious, like the grown children of the world, but meek and lowly of heart; disregarding rank and distinctions, thinking not of their place in the kingdom, but giving themselves up in simplicity of spirit to the service of the King. In this sense, the greatest one in the kingdom, the King Himself, was the humblest of men. Of humility in the form of self-depreciation or self-humiliation on account of sin Jesus could know nothing, for there was no defect or fault in His character. But of the humility which consists in self-forgetfulness He was the perfect pattern. We cannot say that He thought little of Himself, but we may say that He thought not of Himself at all: He thought only of the Father’s glory and of man’s good. Considerations of personal aggrandizement had no place among His motives. He shrank with holy abhorrence from all who were influenced by such considerations; no character appearing so utterly detestable in His eye as that of the Pharisee, whose religion was a theatrical exhibition, always presupposing the presence of spectators, and who loved the uppermost rooms at feasts and the chief seats in the synagogues, and to be called of men Rabbi, Rabbi. For Himself He neither desired nor received honor from men. He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister: He, the greatest, humbled Himself to be the least-to be a child born in a stable and laid in a manger; to be a man of sorrow, lightly esteemed by the world; yea, to be nailed to a cross. By such wondrous self-humiliation He showed His divine greatness. The higher we rise in the kingdom the more we shall be like Jesus in this humbling of Himself. Childlikeness such as He exhibited is an invariable characteristic of spiritual advancement, even as its absence is the mark of moral littleness. The little man, even when well-intentioned, is ever consequential and

scheming-ever thinking of himself, his honor, dignity, reputation, even when professedly doing good. He always studies to glorify God in a way that shall at the same time glorify himself. Frequently above the love of gain, he is never above the feeling of self-importance. The great ones in the kingdom, on the other hand, throw themselves with such unreservedness into the work to which they are called, that they have neither time nor inclination to inquire what place they shall obtain in this world or the next. Leaving consequences to the great Governor and Lord, and forgetful of self-interest, they give their whole soul to their appointed task; content to fill a little space or a large one, as God shall appoint, if only He be glorified. This is the true road to a high place in the eternal kingdom. For be it observed, Jesus did not summarily dismiss the question, who is greatest in the kingdom, by negativing the existence of distinctions therein. He said not on this occasion, He said not on any other, “It is needless to ask who is the greatest in the kingdom: there is no such thing as a distinction of greater and less there.” On the contrary, it is implied here, and it is asserted elsewhere, that there is such a thing. According to the doctrine of Christ, the supernal commonwealth has no affinity with jealous radicalism, which demands that all shall be equal. There are grades of distinction there as well as in the kingdoms of this world. The difference between the divine kingdom and all others lies in the principle on which promotion proceeds. Here the proud and the ambitious gain the post of honor; there honors are conferred on the humble and the self-forgetful. He that on earth was willing to be the least in lowly love will be the great one in the kingdom of heaven. The next lesson Jesus taught His disciples was the duty of receiving little ones; that is, not merely children in the literal sense, but all that a child represents-the weak, the insignificant, the helpless. The child which He held in His arms having served as a type of the humble in spirit, next became a type of the humble in station, influence, and importance; and having been presented to the disciples in the former capacity as an object of imitation, was commended to them in the latter as an object of kind treatment. They were to receive the little ones graciously and lovingly, careful not to offend them by harsh, heartless, contemptuous conduct. All such kindness He, Jesus, would receive as done to Himself. This transition of thought from being like a child to receiving all that of which childhood in its weakness is the emblem, was perfectly natural; for there is a close connection between the selfish struggle to be great and an offensive mode of acting towards the little. Harshness and contemptuousness are vices inseparable from an ambitious spirit. An ambitious man is not, indeed, necessarily cruel in his disposition, and capable of cherishing heartless designs in cold blood. At times, when the demon that possesses him is quiescent, the idea of hurting a child, or any thing that a child represents, may appear to him revolting; and he might resent the imputation of any such design, or even a hint at the possibility of his harboring it, as a wanton insult. “Is thy servant a dog?” asked Hazael indignantly at Elisha, when the prophet described to him his own future self, setting the strongholds of Israel on fire, slaying their young men with the sword, dashing their children to the earth, and ripping up their women with child. At the moment his horror of these crimes was quite sincere, and yet he was guilty of them all. The prophet rightly divined his character, and read his future career of splendid wickedness in the light of it. He saw that he was ambitious, and all the rest followed as a matter of course. The king of Syria, his master, about whose recovery he affected solicitude, he should first put to death; and once on the throne, the same ambition that made him a murderer would goad him on to schemes of conquest, in the prosecution of which he should perpetrate all the barbarous cruelties in which Oriental tyrants seemed to take fiendish delight. The crimes of ambition, and the lamentations with which it has filled the earth, are a moral

commonplace. Full well aware of the fact, Jesus exclaimed, as the havoc already wrought and yet to be wrought by the lust for place and power rose in vision before His eye: “Woe to the world because of offences!” Woe indeed, but not merely to the wrong-sufferer; the greater woe is reserved for the wrong-doer. So Jesus taught His disciples, when He added: “but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!” Nor did He leave His hearers in the dark as to the nature of the offender’s doom. “Whoso,” He declared, in language which came forth from His lips like a flame of righteous indignation at thought of the wrongs inflicted on the weak and helpless-“Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.” “It were better for him”-or, it suits him, it is what he deserves; and it is implied, though not expressed, that it is what he gets when divine vengeance at length overtakes him. The mill-stone is no idle figure of speech, but an appropriate emblem of the ultimate doom of the proud. He who will mount to the highest place, regardless of the injuries he may inflict on little ones, shall be cast down, not to earth merely, but to the very lowest depths of the ocean, to the very abyss of hell, with a heavy weight of curses suspended on his neck to sink him down, and keep him down, so that he shall rise no more. “They sank as lead in the mighty waters!”

Such being the awful doom of selfish ambition, it were wise in the high-minded to fear, and to anticipate God’s judgment by judging themselves. This Jesus counselled His disciples to do by repeating a stern saying uttered once before in the Sermon on the Mount, concerning the cutting off offending members of the body. At first view that saying appears irrelevant here, because the subject of discourse is offences against others, not offences against one’s self. But its relevancy becomes evident when we consider that all offences against a brother are offences against ourselves. That is the very point Christ wishes to impress on His disciples. He would have them understand that self-interest dictates scrupulous care in avoiding offences to the little ones. “Rather than harm one of these,” says the great Teacher in effect, “by hand, foot, eye, or tongue, have recourse to self-mutilation; for he that sinneth against even the least in the kingdom, sinneth also against his own soul.”

One thing more Jesus taught His disciples while He held the child in His arms, viz. that those who injured or despised little ones were entirely out of harmony with the mind of Heaven. “Take heed,” said He, “that ye despise not one of these little ones;” and then He proceeded to enforce the warning by drawing aside the veil, and showing them a momentary glimpse of that very celestial kingdom in which they were all so desirous to have prominence. “Lo, there! see those angels standing before the throne of God-these be ministering spirits to the little ones! And lo, here am I, the Son of God, come all the way from heaven to save them! And behold how the face of the Father in heaven smiles on the angels and on me because we take such loving interest in them!” How eloquent the argument! how powerful the appeal! “The inhabitants of heaven,” such is its drift, “are loving and humble; ye are selfish and proud. What hope can ye cherish of admission into a kingdom, the spirit of which is so utterly diverse from that by which ye are animated? Nay, are ye not ashamed of yourselves when ye witness this glaring contrast between the lowliness of the celestials and the pride and pretensions of puny men? Put away, henceforth and forever, vain, ambitious thoughts, and let the meek and gentle spirit of Heaven get possession of your hearts.” In the beautiful picture of the upper world one thing is specially noteworthy, viz. the introduction by Jesus of a reference to His work as the Saviour of the lost, into an argument designed to enforce

care for the little ones. The reference is not an irrelevance; it is of the nature of an argument à fortiori. If the Son of man cared for the lost, the low, the morally degraded, how much more will He care for those who are merely little! It is a far greater effort of love to seek the salvation of the wicked than to interest one's self in the weak; and He who did the one will certainly not fail to do the other. In adverting to His love as the Saviour of the sinful, as set forth in the parable of the good shepherd going after the straying sheep, Jesus further directed the attention of His disciples to the sublimest example of humility. For that love shows that there was not only no pride of greatness in the Son of God, but also no pride of holiness. He could not only condescend to men of humble estate, but could even become the brother of the vile: one with them in sympathy and lot, that they might become one with Him in privilege and character. Once more, in making reference to His own love as the Saviour, Jesus pointed out to His disciples the true source of that charity which careth for the weak and despiseth not the little. No one who rightly appreciated His love could deliberately offend or heartlessly condemn any brother, however insignificant, who had a place in His Saviour-sympathies. The charity of the Son of man, in the eyes of all true disciples, surrounds with a halo of sacredness the meanest and vilest of the human race.

Section II - Church Discipline

Mat 18:15-20

Having duly cautioned His hearers against offending the little ones, Jesus proceeded (according to the account of His words in the Gospel of Matthew) to tell them how to act when they were not the givers, but the receivers or the judges, of offences. In this part of His discourse He had in view the future rather than the present. Contemplating the time when the kingdom-that is, the church-should be in actual existence as an organized community, with the twelve exercising in it authority as apostles, He gives directions for the exercise of discipline, in order to the purity and well-being of the Christian brotherhood; confers on the twelve collectively what He had already granted to Peter singly-the power to bind and loose, that is, to inflict and remove church censures; and makes a most encouraging promise of His own spiritual presence, and of prevailing power with His heavenly Father in prayer, to all assembled in His name, and agreeing together in the objects of their desires. His aim throughout is to insure beforehand that the community to be called after His name shall be indeed a holy, loving, united society. The rules here laid down for the guidance of the apostles in dealing with offenders, though simple and plain, have given rise to much debate among religious controversialists interested in the upholding of diverse theories of church government. Of these ecclesiastical disputes we shall say nothing here; nor do we deem it needful to offer any expository comments on our Lord's words, save a sentence of explanation on the phrase employed by Him to describe the state of excommunication: "Let him" (that is, the impenitent brother about to be cast out of the church) "be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." These words, luminous without doubt at the time they were spoken, are not quite so clear to us now; but yet their meaning in the main is sufficiently plain. The idea is, that the persistently impenitent offender is to become at length to the person he has offended, and to the whole church, one with whom is to be held no religious, and as little as possible social fellowship. The religious aspect of excommunication is pointed at by the expression "as an heathen man," and the social side of it is expressed in the second clause of the sentence, "and a publican." Heathens were excluded from the temple, and had no part in Jewish religious rites. Publicans were not excluded from the temple, so far as we know; but they were regarded as social pariahs by all Jews

affecting patriotism and religious strictness. This indiscriminate dislike of the whole class was not justifiable, nor is any approval of it implied here. Jesus refers to it simply as a familiar matter of fact, which conveniently and clearly conveyed His meaning to the effect: Let the impenitent offender be to you what heathens are to all Jews by law-persons with whom to hold no religious fellowship; and what publicans are to Pharisees by inveterate prejudice-persons to be excluded from all but merely unavoidable social intercourse."

Whatever obscurity may attach to the letter of the rules for the management of discipline, there can be no doubt at all as to the loving, holy spirit which pervades them. The spirit of love appears in the conception of the church which underlies these rules. The church is viewed as a commonwealth, in which the concern of one is the concern of all, and vice versa. Hence Jesus does not specify the class of offences He intends, whether private and personal ones, or such as are of the nature of scandals, that is, offences against the church as a whole. On His idea of a church such explanations were unnecessary, because the distinction alluded to in great part ceases to exist. An offence against the conscience of the whole community is an offence against each individual member, because he is jealous for the honor of the body of believers; and on the other hand, an offence which is in the first place private and personal, becomes one in which all are concerned so soon as the offended party has failed to bring His brother to confession and reconciliation. A chronic alienation between two Christian brethren will be regarded, in a church after Christ's mind, as a scandal not to be tolerated, because fraught with deadly harm to the spiritual life of all.

Very congenial also to the spirit of charity is the order of proceeding indicated in the directions given by Jesus. First, strictly private dealing on the part of the offended with his offending brother is prescribed; then, after such dealing has been fairly tried and has failed, but not till then, third parties are to be brought in as witnesses and assistants in the work of reconciliation; and finally, and only as a last resource, the subject of quarrel is to be made public, and brought before the whole church. This method of procedure is obviously most considerate as towards the offender. It makes confession as easy to him as possible by sparing him the shame of exposure. It is also a method which cannot be worked out without the purest and holiest motives on the part of him who seeks redress. It leaves no room for the reckless talkativeness of the scandalmonger, who loves to divulge evil news, and speaks to everybody of a brother's faults rather than to the brother himself. It puts a bridle on the passion of resentment, by compelling the offended one to go through a patient course of dealing with his brother before he arrive at the sad issue at which anger jumps at once, viz. total estrangement. It gives no encouragement to the officious and over-zealous, who make themselves busy in ferreting out offences; for the way of such is not to begin with the offender, and then go to the church, but to go direct to the church with severe charges, based probably on hearsay information gained by dishonorable means.

Characteristic of the loving spirit of Jesus, the Head of the church, is the horror with which He contemplates, and would have His disciples contemplate, the possibility of any one, once a brother, becoming to his brethren as a heathen or a publican. This appears in His insisting that no expedient shall be left untried to avert the sad catastrophe. How unlike in this respect is His mind to that of the world, which can with perfect equanimity allow vast multitudes of fellow-men to be what heathens were to Jews, and publicans to Pharisees-persons excluded from all kindly communion! Nay, may we not say, how unlike the mind of Jesus in this matter to that of many

even in the church, who treat brethren in the same outward fellowship with most perfect indifference, and have become so habituated to the evil practice, that they regard it without compunction as a quite natural and right state of things!

Such heartless indifferentism implies a very different ideal of the church from that cherished by its Founder. Men who do not regard ecclesiastical fellowship as imposing any obligation to love their Christian brethren, think, consciously or unconsciously, of the church as if it were a hotel, where all kinds of people meet for a short space, sit down together at the same table, then part, neither knowing nor caring any thing about each other; while, in truth, it is rather a family, whose members are all brethren, bound to love each other with pure heart fervently. Of course this hotel theory involves as a necessary consequence the disuse of discipline. For, strange as the idea may seem to many, the law of love is the basis of church discipline. It is because I am bound to take every member of the church to my arms as a brother, that I am not only entitled, but bound, to be earnestly concerned about his behavior. If a brother in Christ, according to ecclesiastical standing, may say to me, “You must love me with all your heart,” I am entitled to say in reply, “I acknowledge the obligation in the abstract, but I demand of you in turn that you shall be such that I can love you as a Christian, however weak and imperfect; and I feel it to be both my right and my duty to do all I can to make you worthy of such brotherly regard, by plain dealing with you anent your offences. I am willing to love you, but I cannot, I dare not, be on friendly terms with your sins; and if you refuse to part with these, and virtually require me to be a partaker in them by connivance, then our brotherhood is at an end, and I am free from my obligations.” To such a language and such a style of thought the patron of the hotel theory of church fellowship is an utter stranger. Disclaiming the obligation to love his brethren, he at the same time renounces the right to insist on Christian virtue as an indispensable attribute of church membership, and declines to trouble himself about the behavior of any member, except in so far as it may affect himself personally. All may think and act as they please-be infidels or believers, sons of God or sons of Belial: it is all one to him.

Holy severity finds a place in these directions, as well as tender, considerate love. Jesus solemnly sanctions the excommunication of an impenitent offender. “Let him,” saith He, with the tone of a judge pronouncing sentence of death, “be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.” Then, to invest church censures righteously administered with all possible solemnity and authority, He proceeds to declare that they carry with them eternal consequences; adding in His most emphatic manner the awful words-awful both to the sinner cast out and to those who are responsible for his ejection: “Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.” The words may be regarded in one sense as a caution to ecclesiastical rulers to beware how they use a power of so tremendous a character; but they also plainly show that Christ desired His church on earth, as nearly as possible, to resemble the church in heaven: to be holy in her membership, and not an indiscriminate congregation of righteous and unrighteous men, of believers and infidels, of Christians and reprobates; and for that end committed the power of the keys to those who bear office in His house, authorizing them to deliver over to Satan’s thrall the proud, stubborn sinner who refuses to be corrected, and to give satisfaction to the aggrieved consciences of his brethren.

Such rigor, pitiless in appearance, is really merciful to all parties. It is merciful to the faithful members of the church, because it removes from their midst a mortifying limb, whose presence imperils the life of the whole body. Scandalous open sin cannot be tolerated in any society without

general demoralization ensuing; least of all in the church, which is a society whose very raison d'être is the culture of Christian virtue. But the apparently pitiless rigor is mercy even towards the unfaithful who are the subjects thereof. For to keep scandalous offenders inside the communion of the church is to do your best to damn their souls, and to exclude them ultimately from heaven. On the other hand, to deliver them over to Satan may be, and it is to be hoped will be, but giving them a foretaste of hell now that they may be saved from hell-fire forever. It was in this hope that Paul insisted on the excommunication of the incestuous person from the Corinthian church, that by the castigation of his fleshly sin "his spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." It is this hope which comforts those on whom the disagreeable task of enforcing church censures falls in the discharge of their painful duty. They can cast forth evil-doers from the communion of saints with less hesitation, when they know that as "publicans and sinners" the excommunicated are nearer the kingdom of God than they were as church members, and when they consider that they are still permitted to seek the good of the ungodly, as Christ sought the good of all the outcasts of His day; that it is still in their power to pray for them, and to preach to them, as they stand in the outer court of the Gentiles, though they may not put into their unholy hands the symbols of the Saviour's body and blood.

Such considerations, indeed, would go far to reconcile those who are sincerely concerned for the spiritual character of the church, and for the safety of individual souls, to very considerable reductions of communion rolls. There cannot be a doubt that, if church discipline were upheld with the efficiency and vigor contemplated by Christ, such reductions would take place on an extensive scale. It is indeed true that the purging process might be carried to excess, and with very injurious effects. Tares might be mistaken for wheat, and wheat for tares. The church might be turned into a society of Pharisees, thanking God that they were not as other men, or as the poor publicans who stood without, hearing and praying, but not communicating; while among those outside the communion rails might be not only the unworthy, but many timid ones who dared not come nigh, but, like the publican of the parable, could only stand afar off, crying, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," yet all the while were justified rather than the others. A system tending to bring about such results is one extreme to be avoided. But there is another yet more pernicious extreme still more sedulously to be shunned: a careless laxity, which allows sheep and goats to be huddled together in one fold, the goats being thereby encouraged to deem themselves sheep, and deprived of the greatest benefit they can enjoy-the privilege of being spoken to plainly as "unconverted sinners."

Such unseemly mixtures of the godly and the godless are too common phenomena in these days. And the reason is not far to seek. It is not indifference to morality, for that is not generally a characteristic of the church in our time. It is the desire to multiply members. The various religious bodies value members still more than morality or high-toned Christian virtue, and they fear lest by discipline they may lose one or two names from their communion roll. The fear is not without justification. Fugitives from discipline are always sure of an open door and a hearty welcome in some quarter. This is one of the many curses entailed upon us by that greatest of all scandals, religious division. One who has become, or is in danger of becoming, as a heathen man and a publican to one ecclesiastical body, has a good chance of becoming a saint or an angel in another. Rival churches play at cross purposes, one loosing when another binds; so doing their utmost to make all spiritual sentences null and void, both in earth and heaven, and to rob religion of all dignity and authority. Well may libertines pray that the divisions of the church may continue, for

while these last they fare well! Far otherwise did it fare with the like of them in the days when the church was catholic and one; when sinners repenting worked their way, in the slow course of years, from the locus lugentium outside the sanctuary, through the locus audientium and the locus substratorum to the locus fidelium: in that painful manner learning what an evil and a bitter thing it is to depart from the living God. The promise made to consent in prayer comes in appropriately in a discourse delivered to disciples who had been disputing who should be the greatest. In this connection the promise means: “So long as ye are divided by dissensions and jealousies, ye shall be impotent alike with men and with God; in your ecclesiastical procedure as church rulers, and in your supplications at the throne of grace. But if ye be united in mind and heart, ye shall have power with God, and shall prevail: my Father will grant your requests, and I myself will be in the midst of you.”

It is not necessary to assume any very close connection between this promise and the subject of which Jesus had been speaking just before. In this familiar discourse transition is made from one topic to another in an easy conversational manner, care being taken only that all that is said shall be relevant to the general subject in hand. The meeting, supposed to be convened in Christ’s name, need not therefore be one of church officers assembled for the transaction of ecclesiastical business: it may be a meeting, in a church or in a cottage, purely for the purposes of worship. The promise avails for all persons, all subjects of prayer, all places, and all times; for all truly Christian assemblies great and small. The promise avails for the smallest number that can make a meeting-even for two or three. This minimum number is condescended on for the purpose of expressing in the strongest possible manner the importance of brotherly concord. Jesus gives us to understand that two agreed are better, stronger, than twelve or a thousand divided by enmities and ambitious passions. “The Lord, when He would commend unanimity and peace to His disciples, said, ‘If two of you shall agree on earth,’ etc., to show that most is granted not to the multitude, but to the concord of the supplicants.” It is an obvious inference, that if by agreement even two be strong, then a multitude really united in mind would be proportionally stronger. For we must not fancy that God has any partiality for a little meeting, or that there is any virtue in a small number. Little strait sects are apt to fall into this mistake, and to imagine that Christ had them specially in His eye when He said two or three, and that the kind of agreement by which they are distinguished-agreement in whim and crotchet-is what He desiderated. Ridiculous caricature of the Lord’s meaning! The agreement He requires of His disciples is not entire unanimity in opinion, but consent of mind and heart in the ends they aim at, and in unselfish devotion to these ends. When He spake of two or three, He did not contemplate, as the desirable state of things, the body of His church split up into innumerable fragments by religious opinionativeness, each fragment in proportion to its minuteness imagining itself sure of His presence and blessing. He did not wish His church to consist of a collection of clubs having no intercommunion with each other, any more than He desired it to be a monster hotel, receiving and harboring all comers, no questions being asked. He made the promise now under consideration, not to stimulate sectarianism, but to encourage the cultivation of virtues which have ever been too rare on earth-brotherly-kindness, meekness, charity. The thing He values, in a word, is not paucity of numbers, due to the want of charity, but union of hearts in lowly love among the greatest number possible.

Section III - Forgiving Injuries

Mat 18:21-35 A lesson on forgiveness fitly ended the solemn discourse on humility delivered in the hearing of disputatious disciples. The connection of thought between beginning and end is very real, though it does not quite lie on the surface. A vindictive temper, which is the thing here condemned, is one of the vices fostered by an ambitious spirit. An ambitious man is sure to be the receiver of many offences, real or imaginary. He is quick to take offence, and slow to forgive or forget wrong. Forgiving injuries is not in his way: he is more in his element when he lays hold of his debtor by the throat, and with ruffian fierceness demands payment. The concluding part of the discourse was occasioned by a question put by Peter, the usual spokesman of the twelve, who came to Jesus and said: “Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?” By what precise association of ideas the question was suggested to Peter’s mind we know not; perhaps he did not know himself, for the movements of the mind are often mysterious, and in impulsive mercurial natures they are also apt to be sudden. Thoughts shoot into consciousness like meteors into the upper atmosphere; and suddenly conceived, are as abruptly uttered, with physical gestures accompanying, indicating the force with which they have taken possession of the soul. Suffice it to say, that the disciple’s query, however suggested, was relevant to the subject in hand, and had latent spiritual affinities with all that Jesus had said concerning humility and the giving and receiving of offences. It showed on Peter’s part an intelligent attention to the words of his Master, and a conscientious solicitude to conform his conduct to those heavenly precepts by which he felt for the moment subdued and softened. The question put by Peter further revealed a curious mixture of childlikeness and childishness. To be so earnest about the duty of forgiving, and even to think of practicing the duty so often as seven times towards the same offender, betrayed the true child of the kingdom; for none but the graciously-minded are exercised in that fashion. But to imagine that pardon repeated just so many times would exhaust obligation and amount to something magnanimous and divine, was very simple. Poor Peter, in his ingenuous attempt at the magnanimous, was like a child standing on tiptoe to make himself as tall as his father, or climbing to the top of a hillock to get near the skies. The reply of Jesus to His honest but crude disciple was admirably adapted to put him out of conceit with himself, and to make him feel how puny and petty were the dimensions of his charity. Echoing the thought of the prophetic oracle, it tells those who would be like God that they must multiply pardons: “I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven.” Alas for the rarity of such charity under the sun! Christ’s thoughts are not man’s thoughts, neither are His ways common among men. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His thoughts and ways higher than those current in this world. For many, far from forgiving times without number a brother confessing his fault, do not forgive even so much as once, but act so that we can recognize their portrait drawn to the life in the parable of the unmerciful servant. In this parable, whose minutest details are fraught with instruction, three things are specially noteworthy: the contrast between the two debts; the corresponding contrast between the two creditors; and the doom pronounced on those who, being forgiven the large debt owed by them, refuse to forgive the small debt owed to them. The two debts are respectively ten thousand talents and a hundred denarii, being to each other in the proportion of, say, a million to one. The enormous disparity is intended to represent the difference between the shortcomings of all men towards God, and those with which any man can charge a fellow-creature. The representation is confessed to be just by all who know human nature and their own hearts; and the consciousness of its truth helps them greatly to be gentle and forbearing towards offenders. Yet the parable seems to be faulty in this, that it makes the unmerciful servant

answerable for such a debt as it seems impossible for any man to run up. Who ever heard of a private debt amounting in British money to millions sterling? The difficulty is met by the suggestion that the debtor is a person of high rank, like one of the princes whom Darius set over the kingdom of Persia, or a provincial governor of the Roman Empire. Such an official might very soon make himself liable for the huge sum here specified, simply by retaining for his own benefit the revenues of his province as they passed through his hands, instead of remitting them to the royal treasury. That it was some such unscrupulous minister of state, guilty of the crime of embezzlement, whom Jesus had in His eye, appears all but certain when we recollect what gave rise to the discourse of which this parable forms the conclusion. The disciples had disputed among themselves who should be greatest in the kingdom, each one being ambitious to obtain the place of distinction for himself. Here, accordingly, their Master holds up to their view the conduct of a great one, concerned not about the faithful discharge of his duty, but about his own aggrandizement. “Behold,” He says to them in effect, “what men who wish to be great ones do! They rob their king of his revenue, and abuse the opportunities afforded by their position to enrich themselves; and while scandalously negligent of their own obligations, they are characteristically exacting towards any little one who may happen in the most innocent way, not by fraud, but by misfortune, to have become their debtor.”

Thus understood, the parable faithfully represents the guilt and criminality of those at least who are animated by the spirit of pride, and deliberately make self-advancement their chief end: a class by no means small in number. Such men are great sinners, whoever may be little ones. They not merely come short of the glory of God, the true chief end of man, but they deliberately rob the Supreme of His due, calling in question His sovereignty, denying their accountability to Him for their actions, and by the spirit which animates them, saying every moment of their lives, “Who is Lord over us?” It is impossible to over-estimate the magnitude of their guilt. The contrast between the two creditors is not less striking than that between the two debts. The king forgives the enormous debt of his unprincipled satrap on receiving a simple promise to pay; the forgiven satrap relentlessly exacts the petty debt of some three pounds sterling from the poor hapless underling who owes it, stopping his ear to the identical petition for delay which he had himself successfully presented to his sovereign lord. Here also the coloring of the parable appears too strong. The great creditor seems lenient to excess: for surely such a crime as the satrap had been guilty of ought not to go unpunished; and surely it had been wise to attach little weight to a promise of future payment made by a man who, with unbounded extravagance, had already squandered such a prodigious sum, so that he had nothing to pay! Then this great debtor, in his character as small creditor, seems incredibly inhuman; for even the meanest, most greedy, and grasping churl, not to speak of so great a gentleman, might well be ashamed to show such eagerness about so trifling a sum as to seize the poor wight who owed it by the throat and drag him to prison, to lie there till he paid it. The representation is doubtless extreme, and yet in both parts it is in accordance with truth. God does deal with His debtors as the king dealt with the satrap. He is slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil He hath threatened. He giveth men space to repent, and by providential delays accepts promises of amendment, though He knoweth full well that they will be broken, and that those who made them will go on sinning as before. So He dealt with Pharaoh, with Israel, with Nineveh; so He deals with all whom He calls to account by remorse of conscience, by a visitation of sickness, or by the apprehension of death, when, on their exclaiming, in a passing penitential mood, “Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay Thee all,” He grants their

petition, knowing that when the danger or the fit of repentance is over, the promise of amendment will be utterly forgotten. Truly was it written of old: “He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.” Nor is the part played by the unmerciful servant, however infamous and inhuman, altogether unexampled; although its comparative rarity is implied in that part of the parabolic story which represents the fellow- servants of the relentless one as shocked and grieved at his conduct, and as reporting it to the common master. It would not be impossible to find originals of the dark picture, even among professors of the Christian religion, who believe in the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus, and hope to experience all the benefits of divine mercy for His sake. It is, indeed, precisely by such persons that the crime of unmercifulness is, in the parable, supposed to be committed. The exacting creditor meets his debtor just as he himself comes out from the presence of the king after craving and receiving remission of his own debt. This feature in the story at once adapts its lesson specially to believers in the gospel, and points out the enormity of their guilt. All such, if not really forgiven, do at least consciously live under a reign of grace, in which God is assuming the attitude of one who desires all to be reconciled unto Himself, and for that end proclaims a gratuitous pardon to all who will receive it. In men so situated the spirit of unmercifulness is peculiarly offensive. Shameful in a pagan-for the light of nature teacheth the duty of being merciful-such inhuman rigor as is here portrayed in a Christian is utterly abominable. Think of it! he goes out from the presence of the King of grace; rises up from the perusal of the blessed gospel, which tells of One who received publicans and sinners, even the chief; walks forth from the house of prayer where the precious evangel is proclaimed, yea, from the communion table, which commemorates the love that moved the Son of God to pay the debt of sinners; and he meets a fellow-mortal who has done him some petty wrong, and seizes him by the throat, and truculently demands reparation on pain of imprisonment or something worse if it be not forthcoming May not the most gracious Lord righteously say to such an one: “O thou wicked servant! I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me; shouldest thou not also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?” What can the miscreant who showed no mercy expect, but to receive judgment without mercy, and to be delivered over to the tormentors, to be kept in durance and put to the rack, without hope of release, till he shall have paid his debt to the uttermost farthing? This very doom Jesus, in the closing sentences of His discourse, solemnly assured His disciples awaited all who cherish an unforgiving temper, even if they themselves should be the guilty parties. “So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother.” Stern words these, which lay down a rule of universal application, not relaxable in the case of favored parties. Were partiality admissible at all, such as the twelve would surely get the benefit of it; but as if to intimate that in this matter there is no respect of persons, the law is enunciated with direct, emphatic reference to them. And harsh as the law might seem, Jesus is careful to indicate His cordial approval of its being enforced with Rhadamanthine rigor. For that purpose He calls God the Judge by the endearing name “My heavenly Father;” as if to say: “The great God and King does not seem to me unduly stern in decreeing such penalties against the unforgiving. I, the merciful, tender-hearted Son of man, thoroughly sympathize with such judicial severity. I should solemnly say Amen to that doom pronounced even against you if you behaved so as to deserve it. Think not that because ye are my chosen companions, therefore violations of the law of love by you will be winked at. On the contrary, just because ye are great ones in the kingdom, so far as privilege goes, will compliance with its fundamental laws be especially expected of you, and

non-compliance most severely punished. To whom much is given, of him shall much be required. See, then, that ye forgive every one his brother their trespasses, and that ye do so really, not in pretense, even from your very hearts." By such severe plainness of speech did Jesus educate His disciples for being truly great ones in His kingdom: great not in pride, pretension, and presumption, but in loyal obedience to the behests of their King, and particularly to this law of forgiveness, on which He insisted in His teaching so earnestly and so frequently. And we cannot but remark here, at the close of our exposition of the discourse on humility, that if the apostles in after days did not rise superior to petty passions, it was not the fault of their Master in neglecting their training. "With holy earnestness"-to quote the language of a German scholar-"springing equally out of solicitude for the new community, zeal for the cause of God and of men; nay, for the essential truths of the new religion of divine grace and of the brotherhood of mankind, Jesus sought to ward off the dark shadow of petty, ungodly feelings which He saw creeping stealthily into the circle of His disciples, and of whose still more extensive and mischievous influence, after His departure, He could not but be apprehensive." We cannot believe that all this earnestness had been manifested in vain; that the disciples did not at length get the salt thoroughly into them.

02.14.2. Training in Temper

Training in Temper; or, Discourse On Humility Section IV - The Temple Tax: An Illustration of the Sermon

Mat 17:24-27 This story is a nut with a dry, hard shell, but a very sweet kernel. Superficial readers may see in it nothing more than a curious anecdote of a singular fish with a piece of money in its mouth turning up opportunely to pay a tax, related by Matthew, alone of the evangelists, not because of its intrinsic importance, but simply because, being an ex-tax gatherer, he took kindly to the tale. Devout readers, though unwilling to acknowledge it, may be secretly scandalized by the miracle related, as not merely a departure from the rule which Jesus observed of not using His divine power to help Himself, but as something very like a piece of sport on His part, or an expression of a humorous sense of incongruity, reminding one of the grotesque figures in old cathedrals, in the carving of which the builders delighted to show their skill, and find for themselves amusement.

Breaking the shell of the story, we discover within, as its kernel, a most pathetic exhibition of the humiliation and self-humiliation of the Son of man, who appears exposed to the indignity of being dunned for temple dues, and so oppressed with poverty that He cannot pay the sum demanded, though its amount is only fifteen pence; yet neither pleading poverty nor insisting on exemption on the score of privilege, but quietly meeting the claims of the collectors in a manner which, if sufficiently strange, as we admit, was at all events singularly meek and peaceable. The present incident supplies, in truth, an admirable illustration of the doctrine taught in the discourse on humility. The greatest in the kingdom here exemplifies by anticipation the lowliness He inculcated on His disciples, and shows them in exercise a holy, loving solicitude to avoid giving offence not only to the little ones within the kingdom, but even to those without. He stands not on His dignity as the Son of God, though the voice from heaven uttered on the holy mount still rings in His ears, but consents to be treated as a subject or a stranger; desiring to live peaceably with men whose ways He does not love, and who bear Him no good-will, by complying with their wishes in all things lawful. We regard, in short, this curious scene at Capernaum (with the Mount of Transfiguration in the distant background!) as a historical frontispiece to the sermon we have been studying. We think ourselves justified in taking this view of it, by the consideration that, though the scene occurred before the sermon was delivered, it happened after the dispute which supplied the preacher with a text. The disciples fell to disputing on the way home from the Mount of Transfiguration, while the visit of the tax-gatherers took place on their arrival in Capernaum. Of course Jesus knew of the dispute at the time of the visit, though He had not yet expressly adverted to it. Is it too much to assume that His knowledge of what had been going on by the way influenced His conduct in the affair of the tribute money, and led Him to make it the occasion for teaching by action the same lesson which He meant to take an early opportunity of inculcating by words? This assumption, so far from being unwarranted, is, we believe, quite necessary in order to make Christ’s conduct on this occasion intelligible. Those who leave out of account the dispute by the way are not at the right point of view for seeing the incident at Capernaum in its natural light, and

they fall inevitably into misunderstandings. They are forced, e.g., to regard Jesus as arguing seriously against payment of the temple tax, as something not legally obligatory, or as lying out of the ordinary course of His humiliation as the Son of man. Now it was neither one nor other of these things. The law of Moses ordained that every man above twenty years should pay the sum of half a shekel as an atonement for his soul, and to meet the expenses connected with the service of the tabernacle rendered to God for the common benefit of all Israelites; and Jesus, as a Jew, was just as much under obligation to comply with this particular law as with any other. Nor was there any peculiar indignity, either in kind or degree, involved in obeying that law. Doubtless it was a great indignity and humiliation to the Son of God to be paying taxes for the maintenance of His own Father's house! All that He said to Peter, pointing out the incongruity of such a state of things, was sober truth. But the incongruity does not meet us here alone; it runs through the whole of our Lord's earthly experience. His life, in all respects, departed from the analogy of kings' sons. Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience; though He were a Son, yet came He not to be ministered unto, but to minister; though He were a Son, yet became He subject to the law, not merely the moral but the ceremonial, and was circumcised, and took part in the temple worship, and frequented the sacred feasts, and offered sacrifices, though these were all only shadows of good things, whereof He Himself was the substance. Surely, in a life containing so many indignities and incongruities-which was, in fact, one grand indignity from beginning to end-it was a small matter to be obliged to pay annually, for the benefit of the temple, the paltry sum of fifteen pence! He who with marvelous patience went through all the rest, could not possibly mean to stumble and scruple at so trifling a matter. He who did nothing towards destroying the temple and putting an end to legal worship before the time, could not be a party to the mean policy of starving out its officials, or grudging the funds necessary to keep the sacred edifice in good repair. He might say openly what He thought of existing ecclesiastical abuses, but He would do no more. The truth is, that the words spoken by Jesus to Simon were not intended as an argument against paying the tax, but as an explanation of what was meant by His paying it, and of the motive which guided Him in paying it. They were a lesson for Simon, and through him for the twelve, on a subject wherein they had great need of instruction; not a legal defense against the demands of the tax-gatherer. But for that dispute by the way, Jesus would probably have taken the quietest means for getting the tax paid, as a matter of course, without making any remarks on the subject. That He had already acted thus on previous occasions, Peter's prompt affirmative reply to the question of the collectors seems to imply. The disciple said "yes," as knowing what his Master had done in past years, and assuming as a thing of course that His practice would be the same now. But Jesus did not deem it, in present circumstances, expedient to let His disciples regard His action with respect to the tax as a mere vulgar matter of course; He wanted them to understand and reflect on the moral meaning and the motive of His action for their own instruction and guidance.

He wished them to understand, in the first place, that for Him to pay the temple dues was a humiliation and an incongruity, similar to that of a king's son paying a tax for the support of the palace and the royal household; that it was not a thing of course that He should pay, any more than it was a thing of course that He should become man, and, so to speak, leave His royal state behind and assume the rank of a peasant; that it was an act of voluntary humiliation, forming one item in the course of humiliation to which He voluntarily submitted, beginning with His birth, and ending with His death and burial. He desired His disciples to think of these things in the hope that meditation on them would help to rebuke the pride, pretension, and self-assertion which had given

rise to that petty dispute about places of distinction. He would say to them, in effect: “Were I, like you, covetous of honors, and bent on asserting my importance, I would stand on my dignity, and haughtily reply to these collectors of tribute: Why trouble ye me about temple dues? Know ye not who I am? I am the Christ, the Son of the living God: the temple is my Father’s house; and I, His Son, am free from all servile obligations. But, note ye well, I do nothing of the kind. With the honors heaped upon me on the Mount of Transfiguration fresh in my recollection, with the consciousness of who I am, and whence I came, and whither I go, abiding deep in my soul, I submit to be treated as a mere common Jew, suffering my honors to fall into abeyance, and making no demands for a recognition which is not voluntarily conceded. The world knows me not; and while it knows me not, I am content that it should do with me, as with John, whatsoever it lists. Did the rulers know who I am, they would be ashamed to ask of me temple dues; but since they do not, I accept and bear all the indignities consequent on their ignorance.”

All this Jesus said in effect to His disciples, by first adverting to the grounds on which a refusal to pay the didrachmon might plausibly be defended, and then after all paying it. The manner of payment also was so contrived by Him as to re-enforce the lesson. He said not to Simon simply: “Go and catch fish, that with the proceeds of their sale we may satisfy our creditors.” He gave him directions as the Lord of nature, to whom all creatures in land or sea were subject, and all their movements familiar, while yet so humbled as to need the services of the meanest of them. By drawing on His omniscience in giving these instructions to His disciple, He did, in a manner, what He never did either before or after, viz. wrought a miracle for His own behoof. The exception, however, had the same reason as the rule, and therefore proved the rule. Jesus abstained from using His divine faculties for His own benefit, that He might not impair the integrity of His humiliation; that His human life might be a real bona fide life of hardship, unalleviated by the presence of the divine element in His personality. But what was the effect of the lightning-flash of divine knowledge emitted by Him in giving those directions to Peter? To impair the integrity of His humiliation? Nay, but only to make it glaringly conspicuous. It said to Simon, and to us, if he and we had ears to hear: “Behold who it is that pays this tax, and that is reduced to such straits in order to pay it! It is He who knoweth all the fowls of the mountain, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea!” The other point on which Jesus desired to fix the attention of His disciples, was the reason which moved Him to adopt the policy of submission to what was in itself an indignity. That reason was to avoid giving offence: “Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them.” This was not, of course, the only reason of His conduct in this case. There were other comprehensive reasons applicable to His whole experience of humiliation, and to this small item therein in particular; a full account of which would just amount to an answer to the great question put by Anselm: “Cur Deus Homo;” Why did God become man? On that great question we do not enter here, however, but confine ourselves to the remark, that while the reason assigned by Jesus to Peter for the payment of the temple dues was by no means the only one, or even the chief, it was the reason to which, for the disciples’ sake, He deemed it expedient just then to give prominence. He was about to discourse to them largely on the subject of giving and receiving offences; and He wished them, and specially their foremost man, first of all to observe how very careful He Himself was not to offend-what a prominent place the desire to avoid giving offence occupied among His motives.

Christ's declared reason for paying the tribute is strikingly expressive of His lowliness and His love. The mark of His lowliness is that there is no word here of taking offence. How easily and plausibly might He have taken up the position of one who did well to be angry! "I am the Christ, the Son of God," He might have said, "and have substantiated my claims by a thousand miracles in word and deed, yet they willfully refuse to recognize me; I am a poor homeless wanderer, yet they, knowing this, demanded the tribute, as if more for the sake of annoying and insulting me than of getting the money. And for what purpose do they collect these dues? For the support of a religious establishment thoroughly effete, to repair an edifice doomed to destruction, to maintain a priesthood scandalously deficient in the cardinal virtues of integrity and truth, and whose very existence is a curse to the land. I cannot in conscience pay a didrachmon, no, not even so much as a farthing, for any such objects." The lowly One did not assume this attitude, but gave what was asked without complaint, grudging, or railing; and His conduct conveys a lesson for Christians in all ages, and in our own age in particular. It teaches the children of the kingdom not to murmur because the world does not recognize their status and dignity. The world knew not when He came, even God's eternal Son; what wonder if it recognize not His younger brethren! The kingdom of heaven itself is not believed in, and its citizens should not be surprised at any want of respect towards them individually. The manifestation of the sons of God is one of the things for which Christians wait in hope. For the present they are not the children, but the strangers: instead of exemption from burdens, they should rather expect oppression; and they should be thankful when they are put on a level with their fellow-creatures, and get the benefit of a law of toleration. As the humility of Jesus was shown by His not taking, so His love was manifested by His solicitude to avoid giving offence. He desired, if possible, to conciliate persons who for the most part had treated Him all along as a heathen and a publican, and who ere long, as He knew well, would treat Him even as a felon. How like Himself was the Son of man in so acting! How thoroughly in keeping His procedure here with His whole conduct while He was on the earth! For what was His aim in coming to the world, what His constant endeavor after He came, but to cancel offences, and to put an end to enmities-to reconcile sinful men to God and to each other? For these ends He took flesh; for these ends He was crucified. His earthly life was all of a piece-a life of lowly love.

"Lest we should offend," said Jesus, using the plural to hint that He meant His conduct to be imitated by the twelve and by all His followers. How happy for the world and the church were this done! How many offences might have been prevented had the conciliatory spirit of the Lord always animated those called by His name! How many offences might be removed were this spirit abundantly poured out on Christians of all denominations now! Did this motive, "Notwithstanding, lest we should offend," bulk largely in all minds, what breaches might be healed, what unions might come! A national church morally, if not legally, established in unity and peace, might be realized in Scotland in the present generation. Surely a consummation devoutly to be wished! Let us wish for it; let us pray for it; let us cherish a spirit tending to make it possible; let us hope for it against hope, in spite of increasing tendencies on all sides to indulge in an opposite spirit.

Section V - The Interdicted Exorcist: Another Illustration Mark 9:38-41; Luk 9:49-50. The discourses of our Lord were not continuous, unbroken addresses on formally announced themes, such as we are wont to hear, but rather for the most part of the nature of Socratic dialogues, in which He was the principal speaker, His disciples contributing their part in the form of a question asked, an exclamation uttered, or a case of conscience propounded. In the discourse or dialogue

on humility, two of the disciples acted as interlocutors, viz. Peter and John. Towards the close the former of these two disciples, as we saw, asked a question concerning the forgiving of injuries; and near the commencement the other disciple, John, related an anecdote which was brought up to his recollection by the doctrine of his Master, respecting receiving little ones in His name, and on which the truth therein set forth seemed to have a bearing. The facts thus brought under his notice led Jesus to make reflections, which supply an interesting illustration of the bearing of the doctrine He was inculcating on a particular class of cases or questions. These reflections, with the incident to which they relate, now solicit attention. The story told by John was to the effect that on one occasion he and his brethren had found a man unknown to them engaged in the work of casting out devils, and had served him with an interdict, because, though he used the name of Jesus in practicing exorcism, he did not follow or identify himself with them, the twelve. At what particular time this happened is not stated; but it may be conjectured with much probability that the incident was a reminiscence of the Galilean mission, during which the disciples were separated from their Master, and were themselves occupied in healing the sick, and casting out evil spirits, and in preaching the gospel of the kingdom.

John, it will be observed, does not disclaim joint responsibility for the high-handed proceeding he relates, but speaks as if the twelve had acted unanimously in the matter. It may surprise some to find him, the apostle of love, consenting to so uncharitable a deed; but such surprise is founded on superficial views of his character, as well as on ignorance of the laws of spiritual growth. John is not now what he will be, but differs from his future self, as much as an orange in its second year differs from the same orange in its third final year of growth. The fruit of the Spirit will ultimately ripen in this disciple into something very sweet and beautiful; but meantime it is green, bitter, and fit only to set the teeth on edge. Devoted in mind, tender and intense in his attachment to Jesus, scrupulously conscientious in all his actions, he is even now; but he is also bigoted, intolerant, ambitious. Already he has played the part of a very high churchman in suppressing the nonconforming exorcist; ere long we shall see him figuring, together with his brother, as a persecutor, proposing to call down fire from heaven to destroy the enemies of his Lord; and yet again we shall find him, along with the same brother and their common mother, engaged in an ambitious plot to secure those places of distinction in the kingdom about which all the twelve have lately been wrangling. In refusing to recognize the exorcist fellow-worker, however humble, as a brother, the disciples proceeded on very narrow and precarious grounds. The test they applied was purely external. What sort of man the person interdicted might be they did not inquire; it was enough that he was not of their company: as if all inside that charmed circle-Judas, for example-were good; and all outside, not excepting a Nicodemus, utterly Christless! Two good things, on their own showing, could be said of him whom they silenced: he was well occupied, and he seemed to have a most devout regard for Jesus; for he cast out devils, and he did it in Jesus' name. These were not indeed decisive marks of discipleship, for it was possible that a man might practice exorcism for gain, and use the name of Christ because it had been proved to be a good name to conjure by; but they ought to have been regarded as at least presumptive evidence in favor of one in whose conduct they appeared. Judging by the facts, it was probable that the silenced exorcist was an honest and sincere man, whose heart had been impressed by the ministry of Jesus and His disciples, and who desired to imitate their zeal in doing good. It was even possible that he was more than this-a man possessing higher spiritual endowment than his censors, some provincial prophet as yet unknown to fame. How preposterous, in view of such a

possibility, that narrow outward test, “Not with us”! As an illustration of what this way of judging lands in, one little fact in the history of the celebrated Sir Matthew Hale, whose Contemplations are familiar to all readers of devout literature, may here be introduced. Richard Baxter relates that the good people in the part of the country where the distinguished judge resided, after his retirement from the judicial bench, did not entertain a favorable opinion of his religious character, their notion being that he was certainly a very moral man, but not converted. It was a serious conclusion to come to about a fellow-creature, and one is curious to know on what so solemn a judgment was based. The author of the Saint’s Rest gives us the needful information on this momentous point. The pious folks about Acton, he tells us, ranked the ex-judge among the unconverted, because he did not frequent their private weekly prayer-meetings! It was the old story of the twelve and the exorcist under a new Puritanic form. Baxter, it is needless to say, did not sympathize with the harsh, uncharitable opinion of his less enlightened brethren. His thoughts breathed the gentle, benignant, humble, charitable spirit of Christian maturity. “I,” he adds, after relating the fact above stated, “I that have heard and read his serious expressions of the concernments of eternity, and seen his love to all good men, and the blamelessness of his life, thought better of his piety than of mine own.” In silencing the exorcist the twelve were probably actuated by a mixture of motives-partly by jealousy, and partly by conscientious scruples. They disliked, we imagine, the idea of any one using Christ’s name but themselves, desiring a monopoly of the power conferred by that name to cast out evil spirits; and they probably thought it unlikely, if not impossible, that any one who kept aloof from them could be sincerely devoted to their Master. In so far as the disciples acted under the influence of jealousy, their conduct towards the exorcist was morally of a piece with their recent dispute who should be the greatest. The same spirit of pride revealed itself on the two occasions under different phases. The silencing of the exorcist was a display of arrogance analogous to that of those who advance for their church the claim to be exclusively the church of Christ. In their dispute among themselves, the disciples played on a humble scale the game of ambitious, self-seeking ecclesiastics contending for seats of honor and power. In the one case the twelve said in effect to the man whom they found casting out devils: We are the sole commissioned, authorized agents of the Lord Jesus Christ; in the other case they said to each other: We are all members of the kingdom and servants of the King; but I deserve to have a higher place than thou, even to be a prelate sitting on a throne. In so far as the intolerance of the twelve was due to honest scrupulosity, it is deserving of more respectful consideration. The plea of conscience, honestly advanced, must always be listened to with serious attention, even when it is mistaken. We say “honestly” with emphasis, because we cannot forget that there is much scrupulosity that is not honest. Conscience is often used as a stalking-horse by proud, quarrelsome, self-willed men to promote their own private ends. Pride, says one, speaking of doctrinal disputes, “is the greatest enemy of moderation. This makes men stickle for their opinions to make them fundamental. Proud men, having deeply studied some additional point in divinity, will strive to make the same necessary to salvation, to enhance the value of their own worth and pains; and it must needs be fundamental in religion, because it is fundamental to their reputation.” These shrewd remarks hold good of other things besides doctrine. Opinionative, pragmatic persons, would make every thing in religion fundamental on which they have decided views; and if they could get their own way, they would exclude from the church all who held not with them in the very minutiae of belief and practice. But there is such a thing also as honest scrupulosity, and it is more common than many imagine. There is a certain tendency to intolerant exaction, and to

severity in judging, in the unripe stage of every earnest life. For the conscience of a young disciple is like a fire of green logs, which smokes first before it burns with a clear blaze. And a Christian whose conscience is in this state must be treated as we treat a dull fire: he must be borne with, that is, till his conscience clear itself of bitter, cloudy smoke, and become a pure, genial, warm flame of zeal tempered by charity. That the scrupulosity of the twelve was of the honest kind, we believe for this reason, that they were willing to be instructed. They told their Master what they had done, that they might learn from Him whether it was right or wrong This is not the way of men whose plea of conscience is a pretext. The instruction honestly desired by the disciples, Jesus promptly communicated in the form of a clear, definite judgment on the case, with a reason annexed. “Forbid him not,” He replied to John, “for he that is not against us is for us.” The reason assigned for this counsel of tolerance reminds us of another maxim uttered by Jesus on the occasion when the Pharisees brought against Him the blasphemous charge of casting out devils by aid of Beelzebub. The two sayings have a superficial aspect of contradiction: one seeming to say, The great matter is not to be decidedly against; the other, The great matter is to be decidedly for. But they are harmonized by a truth underlying both-that the cardinal matter in spiritual character is the bias of the heart. Here Jesus says: “If the heart of a man be with me, then, though by ignorance, error, isolation from those who are avowedly my friends, he may seem to be against me, he is really for me.” In the other case He meant to say: “If a man be not in heart with me (the case of the Pharisees), then, though by his orthodoxy and his zeal he may seem to be on God’s side, and therefore on mine, he is in reality against me.” To the words just commented on, Mark adds the following, as spoken by Jesus at this time: “There is no man that shall do a miracle in my name that can lightly speak evil of me.” The voice of wisdom and charity united is audible here. The emphasis is on the word tachu, lightly or readily. This word, in the first place, involves the admission that the case supposed might happen; an admission demanded by historical truth, for such cases did actually occur in after days. Luke tells, e.g., of certain vagabond Jews (in every sense well named) who took upon them to call over demoniac the name of the Lord Jesus, without any personal faith in Him, but simply in the way of trade, being vile traffickers in exorcism for whom even the devils expressed their contempt, exclaiming, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye?” Our Lord knowing before that such cases would happen, and being acquainted with the depths of human depravity, could not do otherwise than admit the possibility of the exorcist referred to by John being animated by unworthy motives. But while making the admission, He took care to indicate that, in His judgment, the case supposed was very improbable, and that it was very unlikely that one who did a miracle in His name would speak evil of Him. And He desired His disciples to be on their guard against readily and lightly believing that any man could be guilty of such a sin. Till strong reasons for thinking otherwise appeared, He would have them charitably regard the outward action as the index of sincere faith and love (which they might the more easily do then, when nothing was to be gained by the use or profession of Christ’s name, but the displeasure of those who had the characters and lives of men in their power).

Such were the wise, gracious words spoken by Jesus with reference to the case brought up for judgment by John. Is it possible to extract any lessons from these words of general application to the church in all ages, or specially applicable to our own age in particular? It is a question on which one must speak with diffidence; for while all bow to the judgment of Jesus on the conduct of His disciples, as recorded in the Gospels, there is much difference among Christians as to the inferences to be drawn therefrom, in reference to cases in which their own conduct is concerned.

The following reflections, may, however, safely be hazarded:

1. We may learn from the discreet, loving words of the great Teacher to beware of hasty conclusions concerning men's spiritual state based on merely external indications. Say not with the Church of Rome, "Out of our communion is no possibility of salvation or of goodness;" but rather admit that even in that corrupt communion may be many building on the true foundation, though, for the most part, with very combustible materials; nay, that Christ may have not a few friends outside the pale of all the churches. Ask not with Nathanael, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" but remember that the best things may come out of most unexpected quarters. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Bear in mind that, by indulging in the cry, "Not with us," in reference to trifles and crotchets, you may tempt God, while giving His Holy Spirit to those whom you unchurch, to withdraw His influences from you for your pride, exclusiveness, and self-will, and may turn your creed into a prison, in which you shall be shut out from the fellowship of saints, and doomed to experience the chagrin of seeing through the window-bars of your cell God's people walking at large, while you lie immured in a jail.

2. In view of that verdict, "Forbid him not," one must read with a sad, sorrowful heart, many pages of church history, in which the predominating spirit is that of the twelve rather than that of their Master. One may confidently say, that had Christ's mind dwelt more in those called by His name, many things in that history would have been different. Separatism, censoriousness, intolerance of nonconformity, persecution, would not have been so rife; Conventicle Acts and Five-mile Acts would not have disgraced the statute-book of the English Parliament; Bedford jail would not have had the honor of receiving the illustrious dreamer of the Pilgrim's Progress as a prisoner; Baxter, and Livingstone of Ancrum, and thousands more like-minded, by whose stirring words multitudes had been quickened to a new spiritual life, would not have been driven from their parishes and their native lands, and forbidden under heavy penalties to preach that gospel they understood and loved so well, but would have enjoyed the benefit of that law of toleration which they purchased so dearly for us, their children.

3. The divided state of the church has ever been a cause of grief to good men, and attempts have been made to remedy the evil by schemes of union. All honest endeavors having in view the healing of breaches, which, since the days of the Reformation, have multiplied so greatly as to be the opprobrium of Protestantism, deserve our warmest sympathies and most earnest prayers. But we cannot be blind to the fact that through human infirmity such projects are apt to miscarry; it being extremely difficult to get a whole community, embracing men of different temperaments and in different stages of Christian growth, to take the same view of the terms of fellowship. What, then, is the duty of Christians meanwhile? We may learn from our Lord's judgment in the case of the exorcist. If those who are not of our company cannot be brought to enter into the same ecclesiastical organization, let us still recognize them from the heart as fellow-disciples and fellow-laborers, and avail ourselves of all lawful or open ways of showing that we care infinitely more for those who truly love Christ, in whatever church they be, than for those who are with us ecclesiastically, but in spirit and life are not with Christ, but against Him. So shall we have the comfort of feeling that, though separated from brethren beloved, we are not schismatical, and be able to speak of the divided state of the church as a thing that we desire not, but merely endure because we cannot help it.

Many religious people are at fault here. There are Christians not a few who do not believe in these two articles of the Apostles' Creed, "the holy catholic church" and "the communion of saints." They care little or nothing for those who are outside the pale of their own communion: they practice brotherly-kindness most exemplarily, but they have no charity. Their church is their club, in which they enjoy the comfort of associating with a select number of persons, whose opinions, whims, hobbies, and ecclesiastical politics entirely agree with their own; every thing beyond in the wide wide world being regarded with cold indifference, if not with passionate aversion or abhorrence. It is one of the many ways in which the spirit of religious legalism, so prevalent amongst us, reveals itself. The spirit of adoption is a catholic spirit. The legal spirit is a dividing, sectarian spirit, multiplying fundamentals, and erecting scruples into principles, and so manufacturing evermore new religious sects or clubs. Now a club, ecclesiastical or other, is a very pleasant thing by way of a luxury; but it ought to be remembered that, besides the club, and including all the clubs, there is the great Christian commonwealth. This fact will have to be more recognized than it has been if church life is not to become a mere imbecility. To save us from this doom one of two things must take place. Either religious people must overcome their doting fondness for the mere club fellowship of denominationalism, involving absolute uniformity in opinion and practice; or a sort of Amphictyonic council must be set on foot as a counterpoise to sectarianism, in which all the sects shall find a common meeting-place for the discussion of great catholic questions bearing on morals, missions, education, and the defense of cardinal truths. Such a council (utopian it will be deemed) would have many open questions in its constitution. In the ancient Amphictyonic council men were not known as Athenians or Spartans, but as Greeks; and in our modern utopian one men would be known only as Christians, not as Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Independents, Churchmen, and Dissenters. It would be such a body, in fact, as the "Evangelical Alliance" of recent origin, created by the craving for some visible expression of the feeling of catholicity; but not, like it, amateur, self-constituted, and patronized (to a certain extent) by persons alienated from all existing ecclesiastical organizations, and disposed to substitute it as a new church in their place, but consisting of representatives belonging to, and regularly elected and empowered by, the different sections of the church.

One remark more we make on this club theory of church fellowship. Worked out, it secures at least one object. It breaks Christians up into small companies, and insures that they shall meet in twos and threes! Unhappily, it does not at the same time procure the blessing promised to the two or three. The spirit of Jesus dwells not in coteries of self-willed, opinionative men, but in the great commonwealth of saints, and especially in the hearts of those who love the whole body more than any part, not excepting that to which they themselves belong; to whom the Lord and Head of the church fulfill His promise, by enriching them with magnanimous heroic graces, and causing them to rise like cedars above the general level of contemporary character, and endowing them with a moral power which exercises an ever-widening influence long after the strifes of their age, and the men who delighted in them, have sunk into oblivion.

02.15. The Sons of Thunder

The Sons of Thunder

Luk 9:51-56 The delivery of the discourse on humility appears to have been the closing act of our Lord's ministry in Galilee; for immediately after finishing their accounts of the discourse, the two first evangelists proceed to speak of what we have reason to regard as His final departure from His native province for the south. "It came to pass," says Matthew, "that when Jesus had finished these sayings, He departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judea." Of this journey neither Matthew nor Mark gives any details: they do not even mention Christ's visit to Jerusalem at the feast of dedication in winter, referred to by John, from which we know that the farewell to Galilee took place at least some four months before the crucifixion. The journey, however, was not without its interesting incidents, as we know from Luke, who has preserved several of them in his Gospel. Of these incidents, that recorded in the passage above cited is one. For the words with which the evangelist introduces his narrative obviously allude to the same journey from Galilee to the south, of which Matthew and Mark speak in the passages already referred to. The journey through Samaria adverted to here by Luke occurred "when the time was come (or rather coming) that He (Jesus) should be received up," that is, towards the close of His life. Then the peculiar expression, "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem," hints not obscurely at a final transference of the scene of Christ's work from the north to the south. It refers not merely to the geographical direction in which He was going, but also, and chiefly, to the state of mind in which He journeyed. He went towards Jerusalem, feeling that His duty lay in and near it henceforth, as a victim self-consecrated to death, His countenance wearing a solemn, earnest, dignified aspect, expressive of the great lofty purpose by which His soul was animated.

It was natural that Luke, the companion of Paul and evangelist to the Gentiles, should carefully preserve this anecdote from the last journey of Jesus to Judea through Samaria. It served admirably the purpose he kept in view throughout in compiling his Gospel-that, viz., of illustrating the catholicity of the Christian dispensation; and therefore he gathered it into his basket, that it might not be lost. He has brought it in at a very suitable place, just after the anecdote of the exorcist; for, not to speak of the link of association supplied in the name of John, the narrator in one case and an actor in the other, this incident, like the one recorded immediately before, exhibits a striking contrast between the harsh spirit of the disciples and the gentle, benignant spirit of their Master. That contrast forms the moral interest of the story. The main fact in the story was this. The inhabitants of a certain Samaritan village at which Jesus and His traveling companions arrived at the close of a day's journey having declined, on being requested, to give them quarters for the night, James and John came to their Master, and proposed that the offending villagers should be destroyed by fire from heaven.

It was a strange proposal to come from men who had been for years disciples of Jesus, and especially from one who, like John, had been in the Master's company at the time of that meeting with the woman by the well, and heard the rapturous words with which He spoke of the glorious

new era that was dawning. It shows how slow the best are to learn the heavenly doctrine and practice of charity. How startling, again, to think of this same John, a year or two after the date of this savage suggestion, going down from Jerusalem and preaching the gospel of Jesus the crucified in “many of the villages of the Samaritans,” possibly in this very village which he desired to see destroyed!

Such are the contrasts which growth in grace brings. In the green, crude stage of the divine life, whose characteristics are opinionativeness, censoriousness, scrupulosity, intolerance, blind passionate zeal, John would play the part of a mimic Elijah; in his spiritual maturity, after the summer sun of Pentecost had wrought its effects in his soul, and sweetened all its acid juices, he became an ardent apostle of salvation, and exhibited in his character the soft, luscious fruits of “love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control.” Such contrasts in the same character at different periods, however surprising, are perfectly natural. Amid all changes the elements of the moral being remain the same. The juice of the ripe apple is the same that was in the green fruit, plus sun-light and sun-heat. The zeal of the son of thunder did not disappear from John’s nature after he became an apostle; it only became tempered by the light of wisdom, and softened by the heat of love. He did not even cease to hate, and become an indiscriminately amiable individual, whose charity made no distinction between good and evil. To the last, John was what he was at the first, an intense hater as well as an intense lover. But in his later years he knew better what to hate-the objects of his abhorrence being hypocrisy, apostasy, and Laodicean insincerity; not, as of old, mere ignorant rudeness and clownish incivility. He could distinguish then between wickedness and weakness, malice and prejudice; and while cherishing strong antipathy towards the one, he felt only compassion towards the other. To some it may seem a matter of wonder how a man capable of entertaining so revolting a purpose as is here ascribed to James and John could ever be the disciple whom Jesus loved. To understand this, it must be remembered that Jesus, unlike most men, could love a disciple not merely for what he was, but for what he should become. He could regard with complacency even sour grapes in their season for the sake of the goodly fruit into which they should ripen. Then, further, we must not forget that John, even when possessed by the devil of resentment, was animated by a purer and holier spirit. Along with the smoke of carnal passion there was some divine fire in his heart. He loved Jesus as intensely as he hated the Samaritans; it was his devoted attachment to his Master that made him resent their incivility so keenly. In his tender love for the Bridegroom of his soul, he was beautiful as a mother overflowing with affection in the bosom of her family; though in his hatred he was terrible as the same mother can be in her enmity against her family’s foes. John’s nature, in fact, was feminine both in its virtues and in its faults, and, like all feminine natures, could be both exquisitely sweet and exquisitely bitter.

Passing now from personal remarks on John himself to the truculent proposal emanating from him and his brother, we must beware of regarding it in the light of a mere extravagant ebullition of temper consequent upon a refusal of hospitality. No doubt the two brethren and all their fellow-disciples were annoyed by the unexpected incivility, nor can one wonder if it put them out of humor. Weary men are easily irritated, and it was not pleasant to be obliged to trudge on to another village after the fatigues of a day’s journey. But we have too good an opinion of the twelve to fancy any of them capable of revenging rudeness by murder. The savage mood of James and John is not even thoroughly explained by the recollection that the churlish villagers were

Samaritans, and that they were Jews. The chronic ill-will between the two races had unquestionably its own influence in producing ill-feeling on both sides. The nationality of the travellers was one, if not the sole reason, why the villagers refused them quarters. They were Galilean Jews going southwards to Jerusalem, and that was enough. Then the twelve, as Jews, were just as ready to take offence as the Samaritan villagers were to give it. The powder of national enmity was stored up in their breasts; and a spark, one rude word or insolent gesture, was enough to cause an explosion. Though they had been for years with Jesus, there was still much more of the old Jewish man than of the new Christian man in them. If they had been left to the freedom of their own will, they would probably have avoided the Samaritan territory altogether, and, like the rest of their countrymen, taken a roundabout way to Jerusalem by crossing to the eastward of the Jordan. Between persons so affected towards each other offences are sure to arise. When Guelph and Ghibeline, Orangemen and Ribbonmen, Cavalier and Roundhead meet, it does not take much to make a quarrel. But there was something more at work in the minds of the two disciples than party passion. There was conscience in their quarrel as well as temper and hereditary enmities. This is evident, both from the deliberate manner in which they made their proposal to Jesus, and from the reason by which they sought to justify it. They came to their Master, and said, “Wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them?” entertaining no doubt apparently of obtaining His approval, and of procuring forthwith the requisite fire from heaven for the execution of their dire intent. Then they quoted the precedent of Elijah, who, refusing to have any dealings with the idolatrous king of Samaria, called down fire from heaven to consume his messengers, as a signal mark of divine displeasure. The conscious motive by which they were actuated was evidently sincere, though ill-informed, jealousy for the honor of their Lord. As the prophet of fire was indignant at the conduct of King Ahaziah in sending messengers to the god of Ekron, Baalzebub by name, to inquire whether he should recover from the disease with which he was afflicted; so the sons of thunder were indignant because inhabitants of the same godless territory over which Ahaziah ruled had presumed to insult their revered Master by refusing a favor which they ought to have been only too proud to have an opportunity of granting. The two brothers thought they did well to be angry; and, if they had been minded to defend their conduct after it was condemned by Jesus, which they do not seem to have been, they might have made a defense by no means destitute of plausibility. For consider who these Samaritans were. They belonged to a mongrel race, sprung from heathen Assyrians, whose presence in the land was a humiliation, and from base, degenerate Israelites unworthy of the name. Their forefathers had been the bitter enemies of Judah in the days of Nehemiah, spitefully obstructing the building of Zion’s walls, instead of helping the exiles in their hour of need, as neighbors ought to have done. Then, if it was unfair to hold the present generation responsible for the sins of past generations, what was the character of the Samaritans then living? Were they not blasphemous heretics, who rejected all the Old Testament Scriptures save the five books of Moses? Did they not worship at the site of the rival temple on Gerizim, which their fathers had with impious effrontery erected in contempt of the true temple of God in the holy city? And finally, had not these villagers expressed their sympathy with all the iniquities of their people, and repeated them all in one act by doing dishonor to Him who was greater than even the true temple, and worthy not only to receive common civility, but even divine worship?

Ruthless persecutors and furious zealots, furnished with such plausible pleas, have always been confident, like the two disciples, that they did God service. It is of the very nature of zealotry to

make the man of whom it has taken possession believe that the Almighty not only approves, but shares his fierce passions, and fancy himself in trusted with a carte blanche to launch the thunders of the Most High against all in whom his small, peering, inhuman eye can discern aught not approved by his tyrannic conscience. What a world were this if the fact were so indeed!

“Every pelting, petty officer Would use God’s heaven for thunder; nothing but thunder.”

Thank God the fact is not so! The Almighty does thunder sometimes, but not in the way His petty officers would wish.

“Merciful Heaven!

Thou rather, with Thy sharp and sulphurous bolt, Splitt’st the unwedgeable and gnarled oak Than the soft myrtle.”

Jesus too, all gentle as He was, had His thunderbolts; but He reserved them for other objects than poor, benighted, prejudiced Samaritans. His zeal was directed against great sins, and powerful, privileged, presumptuous sinners; not against little sins, or poor, obscure, vulgar sinners. He burst into indignation at the sight of His Father’s house turned into a den of thieves by those who ought to have known, and did know better; He only felt compassion for those who, like the woman by the well, knew not what they worshipped, and groped after God in semi-heathen darkness. His spirit was kindled within Him at the spectacle of ostentatious orthodoxy and piety allied to the grossest worldliness; He did not, like the Pharisee, blaze up in sanctimonious wrath against irreligious publicans, who might do no worship at all, or who, like the heretical Samaritans, did not worship in the right place. Would that zeal like that of Jesus, aiming its bolts at the proud oak and sparing the humble shrub, were more common! But such zeal is dangerous, and therefore it will always be rare. The Master, in whose vindication the two disciples wished to call down heaven’s destroying fire, lost no time in making known His utter want of sympathy with the monstrous proposal. He turned and rebuked them. According to the old English version, He said, “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.” It is a doubtful reading, and as such is omitted in our Revised Version, but it is a true saying. The saying was true in more senses than one. The spirit of James and John was, in the first place, not such as they fancied. They thought themselves actuated by zeal for the glory of their Lord, and so they were in part. But the flame of their zeal was not pure: it was mixed up with the bitter smoke of carnal passions, anger, pride, self-will. Then, again, their spirit was not such as became the apostles of the gospel, the heralds of a new era of grace. They were chosen to preach a message of mercy to every creature, even to the chief of sinners; to tell of a love that suffered not itself to be overcome of evil, but sought to overcome evil with good; to found a kingdom composed of citizens from every nation, wherein should be neither Jew nor Samaritan, but Christ all and in all. What a work to be achieved by men filled with the fire-breathing spirit of the “sons of thunder”! Obviously a great change must be wrought within them to fit them for the high vocation wherewith they have been called. Yet again, the spirit of James and John was, of course, not that of their Master. He “came not to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.” To see the difference between the mind of the disciples and that of Jesus, put this scene side by side with that other which happened on Samaritan ground-the meeting by the well. We know what we have seen here: what see we there? The Son of man, as a Jew, speaking to and having dealings with a Samaritan, so seeking to abolish inveterate and deep-seated enmities between man and man; as the Friend of sinners seeking to restore a poor, erring, guilty creature to God and holiness; as the

Christ announcing the close of an old time, in which the worship even of the true God was ritualistic, exclusive, and local, and the advent of a new religious era characterized by the attributes of spirituality, universality, and catholicity. And we see Jesus rejoicing, enthusiastic in His work; deeming it His very meat and drink to reveal to men one God and Father, one Saviour, one life, for all without distinction; to regenerate individual character, society, and religion; to break down all barriers separating man from God and from his fellow-men, and so to become the great Reconciler and Peacemaker. Thinking of this work as exhibited by sample in the conversion of the woman by the well, He speaks to His surprised and unsympathetic disciples as one who perceives on the eastern horizon the first faint streaks of light heralding the advent of a new glorious day, and all around, in the field of the world, yellow crops of grain ripe for the sickle. “It is coming on apace,” He says in effect, “the blessed, long expected era, after a long night of spiritual darkness; the new world is about to begin: lift up your eyes and look on the fields of Gentile lands, and see how they be white already for the harvest!” At the time of the meeting by the well, the disciples who were with Jesus neither understood nor sympathized with His high thoughts and hopes. The bright prospect on which His eyes were riveted was not within their horizon. For them, as for children, the world was still small, a narrow valley bounded by hills on either side; while their Master, up on the mountain-top, saw many valleys beyond, in which He was interested, and out of which He believed many souls would find their way into the eternal kingdom. For the disciples God was yet the God of the Jews only; salvation was for the Jews as well as of them: they knew of only one channel of grace-Jewish ordinances; only one way to heaven-that which lay through Jerusalem. At the later date to which the present scene belongs, the disciples, instead of progressing, seem to have retrograded. Old bad feelings seem to be intensified, instead of being replaced by new and better ones. They are now not merely out of sympathy with, but in direct antagonism to, their Lord’s mind; not merely apathetic or skeptical about the salvation of Samaritans, but bent on their destruction. Aversion and prejudice have grown into a paroxysm of enmity.

Yes, even so; things must get to the worst before they begin to mend. There will be no improvement till the Lamb shall have been slain to take away sin, to abolish enmities, and to make of twain one new man. It is the knowledge of that which makes Jesus set His face so steadfastly towards Jerusalem. He is eager to drink the cup of suffering, and to be baptized with the baptism of blood, because He knows that only thereby can He finish the work whereof He spoke in such glowing language on the earlier occasion to His disciples. The very wrath of His devoted followers against the Samaritan villagers makes Him quicken His pace on His crossward way, saying to Himself sadly as He advances, “Let me hasten on, for not till I am lifted up can these things end.”

02.16.1. In Perea

In Perea; or, The Doctrine of Self-Sacrifice Section I - Counsels of Perfection Mat 19:1-26; Mark 10:1-27; Luk 18:15-27.

After His final departure from Galilee, Jesus found for Himself a new place of abode and scene of labor for the brief remainder of His life, in the region lying to the eastward of the Jordan, at the lower end of its course. “He departed from Galilee, and came into the borders of Judea beyond Jordan.” We may say that He ended His ministry where it began, healing the sick, and teaching the high doctrines of the kingdom in the place which witnessed His consecration by baptism to His sacred work, and where He gained His first disciples. This visit of Jesus to Peraea towards the close of His career is a fact most interesting and significant in itself, apart altogether from its accompanying incidents. It was evidently so regarded by John, who not less carefully than the two first evangelists records the fact of the visit, though, unlike them, he gives no details concerning it. The terms in which he alludes to this event are peculiar. Having briefly explained how Jesus had provoked the ill-will of the Jews in Jerusalem at the feast of dedication, he goes on to say: “Therefore they sought again to take Him; but He escaped out of their hands, and went away again beyond Jordan, into the place where John at first baptized.” The word “again,” and the reference to the Baptist, are indicative of reflection and recollection-windows letting us see into John’s heart. He is thinking with emotion of his personal experiences connected with the first visit of Jesus to those sacred regions, of his first meeting with his beloved Master, and of the mystic name given to Him by the Baptist, “the Lamb of God” then uncomprehended by the disciples, now on the eve of being expounded by events; and to the evangelist writing his Gospel, clear as day in the bright light of the cross.

It was hardly possible that the disciple whom Jesus loved could do other than think of the first visit when speaking of the second. Even the multitude, as he records, reverted mentally to the earlier occasion while following Jesus in the later. They remembered what John, His forerunner, had said of One among them whom they knew not, and who yet was far greater than himself; and they remarked that his statements, however improbable they might have appeared at the time, had been verified by events, and he himself proved to be a true prophet by Christ’s miracles, if not by his own. “John,” said they to each other, “did no miracle; but all things that John said of this man were true.”

If John the disciple, and even the common people, thought of the first visit of Jesus to Peraea at the time of His second, we may be sure that Jesus Himself did so also. He had His own reasons, doubt it not, for going back to that hallowed neighborhood. His journey to the Jordan, we believe, was a pilgrimage to holy ground, on which He could not set His foot without profound emotion. For there lay His Bethel, where He had made a solemn baptismal vow, not, as Jacob, to give a tithe of His substance, but to give Himself, body and soul, a sacrifice to His Father, in life and in death; there the Spirit had descended on Him like a dove; there He had heard a celestial voice of approval and encouragement, the reward of His entire self-surrender to His Father’s holy will. All

the recollections of the place were heart stirring, recalling solemn obligations, inspiring holy hopes, urging Him on to the grand consummation of His life-work; charging Him by His baptism, His vows, the descent of the Spirit, and the voice from heaven, to crown His labors of love, by drinking of the cup of suffering and death for man's redemption. To these voices of the past He willingly opened His ear. He wished to hear them, that by their hallowed tones His spirit might be braced and solemnized for the coming agony.

While retiring to Peraea for these private reasons, that He might muse on the past and the future, and link sacred memories to solemn anticipations, Jesus did not by any means live there a life of seclusion and solitary meditation. On the contrary, during His sojourn in that neighborhood, He was unusually busy healing the sick, teaching the multitude "as He was wont" (so Mark states, with a mental reference to the past ministry in Galilee), answering inquiries, receiving visits, granting favors. "Many resorted unto Him" there on various errands. Pharisees came, asking entangling questions about marriage and divorce, hoping to catch Him in a trap, and commit Him to the expression of an opinion which would make Him unpopular with some party or school, Hillel's or Shammai's, it did not matter which. A young ruler came with more honorable intent, to inquire how he might obtain eternal life. Mothers came with their little ones, beseeching for them His blessing, thinking it worth getting, and not fearing denial; and messengers came with sorrowful tidings from friends, who looked to Him as their comfort in the time of trouble.

Though busily occupied among the thronging crowd, Jesus contrived to have some leisure hours with His chosen disciples, during which He taught them some new lessons on the doctrine of the divine kingdom. The subject of these lessons was sacrifice for the sake of the kingdom-a theme congenial to the place, the time, the situation, and the mood of the Teacher. The external occasion suggesting that topic was supplied by the interviews Jesus had had with the Pharisees and the young ruler. These interviews naturally led Him to speak to His disciples on the subject of self-sacrifice under two special forms-abstinence from marriage and renunciation of property-though He did not confine His discourse to these points, but went on to set forth the rewards of self-sacrifice in any form, and the spirit in which all sacrifices must be performed, in order to possess value in God's sight. The Pharisees, we read, "came unto Him, tempting Him, and saying, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" To this question Jesus replied, by laying down the primitive principle, that divorce was justified only by conjugal infidelity, and by explaining, that any thing to the contrary in the law of Moses was simply an accommodation to the hardness of men's hearts. The disciples heard this reply, and they made their own remarks on it. They said to Jesus: "If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry." The view enunciated by their Master, which took no account of incompatibility of temper, involuntary dislike, uncongeniality of habits, differences in religion, quarrels among relatives, as pleas for separation, seemed very stringent even to them; and they thought that a man would do well to consider what he was about before committing himself to a life-long engagement with such possibilities before him, and to ask himself whether it would not be better, on the whole, to steer clear of such a sea of troubles, by abstaining from wedlock altogether. The impromptu remark of the disciples, viewed in connection with its probable motives, was not a very wise one; yet it is to be observed that Jesus did not absolutely disapprove of it. He spoke as if He rather sympathized with the feeling in favor of celibacy-as if to abstain from marriage were the better and wiser way, and only not to be required of men because for the majority it was

impracticable. “But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given.” Then going on to enumerate the cases in which, from any cause, men remained unmarried, He spoke with apparent approbation of some who voluntarily, and from high and holy motives, denied themselves the comfort of family relationships: “There be eunuchs which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake.” Such, He finally gave His disciples to understand, were to be imitated by all who felt called and able to do so. “He that is able to receive (this high virtue), let him receive it,” He said; hinting that, while many men could not receive it, but could more easily endure all possible drawbacks of married life, even on the strictest views of conjugal obligation, than preserve perfect chastity in an unmarried state, it was well for him who could make himself a eunuch for the kingdom of heaven, as he would not only escape much trouble, but be free from carefulness, and be able to serve the kingdom without distraction. The other form of self-sacrifice-the renunciation of property-became the subject of remark between Jesus and His disciples, in consequence of the interview with the young man who came inquiring about eternal life. Jesus, reading the heart of this anxious inquirer, and perceiving that he loved this world’s goods more than was consistent with spiritual freedom and entire singleness of mind, had concluded His directions to him by giving this counsel: “If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and then thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, and follow me.” The young man having thereon turned away sorrowful, because, though desiring eternal life, he was unwilling to obtain it at such a price, Jesus proceeded to make his case a subject of reflection for the instruction of the twelve. In the observations He made He did not expressly say that to part with property was necessary to salvation, but He did speak in a manner which seemed to the disciples almost to imply that. Looking round about, He remarked to them first, “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!” The disciples being astonished at this hard saying, He softened it somewhat by altering slightly the form of expression. “Children,” he said, “how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!” hinting that the thing to be renounced in order to salvation was not money, but the inordinate love of it. But then He added a third reflection, which, by its austerity, more than cancelled the mildness of the second. “It is easier,” He declared, “for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.” That assertion, literally interpreted, amounts to a declaration that the salvation of a rich man is an impossibility, and seems to teach by plain implication, that the only way for a rich man to get into heaven is to cease to be rich, and become poor by a voluntary renunciation of property. Such seems to have been the impression made thereby on the minds of the disciples: for we read that they were astonished above measure, and said among themselves, “Who then can be saved?”

It is an inquiry of vital moment what our Lord really meant to teach on the subjects of marriage and money. The question concerns not merely the life to come, but the whole character of our present life. For if man’s life on earth doth not consist wholly in possessions and family relations, these occupy a very prominent place therein. Family relations are essential to the existence of society, and without wealth there could be no civilization. Did Jesus, then, frown or look down on these things, as at least unfavorable to, if not incompatible with, the interests of the divine kingdom and the aspirations of its citizens? This question up till the time of the Reformation was for the most part answered by the visible church in the affirmative. From a very early period the idea began to be entertained that Jesus meant to teach the intrinsic superiority, in point of Christian virtue, of a life of celibacy and voluntary poverty, over that of a married man possessing property. Abstinence

from marriage and renunciation of earthly possessions came, in consequence, to be regarded as essential requisites for high Christian attainments. They were steps of the ladder by which Christians rose to higher grades of grace than were attainable by men involved in family cares and ties, and in the entanglements of worldly substance. They were not, indeed, necessary to salvation-to obtain, that is, a simple admission into heaven-but they were necessary to obtain an abundant entrance. They were trials of virtue appointed to be undergone by candidates for honors in the city of God. They were indispensable conditions of the higher degrees of spiritual fruitfulness. A married or rich Christian might produce thirty-fold, but only those who denied themselves the enjoyments of wealth and wedlock could bring forth sixty-fold or an hundred-fold. While, therefore, these virtues of abstinence were not to be demanded of all, they were to be commended as “counsels of perfection” to such as, not content to be commonplace Christians, would rise to the heroic pitch of excellence, and, despising a simple admission into the divine kingdom, wished to occupy first places there. This style of thought is now so antiquated that it is hard to believe it ever prevailed. As a proof, however, that it is no invention of ours, take two brief extracts from a distinguished bishop and martyr of the third century, Cyprian of Carthage, which are samples of much of the same kind to be found in the early Fathers of the church. The one quotation proclaims the superior virtue of voluntary virginity in these terms: “Strait and narrow is the way which leads to life, hard and arduous is the path (limes, narrower still than the narrow way) which tends to glory. Along this path of the way go the martyrs, go virgins, go all the just. For the first (degree of fruitfulness), the hundred-fold, is that of the martyrs; the second, the sixty-fold, is yours (ye virgins).” The second extract, while ascribing, like the first, superior merit to virginity, indicates the optional character of that high-class virtue. Referring to the words of Christ, “There be eunuchs which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake,” Cyprian says: “This the Lord commands not, but exhorts; He imposes not the yoke of necessity, that the free choice of the will might remain. But whereas he says (John 14:2), that there are many mansions with His Father, He here points out the lodging quarters of the better mansion (melioris habitaculi hospitia). Seek ye, O virgins, those better mansions. Crucifying (castrantes) the desires of the flesh, obtain for yourselves the reward of greater grace in the celestial abodes.”

Similar views were entertained in those early ages respecting the meaning of Christ’s words to the young man. The inevitable results of such interpretations in due course were monastic institutions and the celibacy of the clergy. The direct connection between an ascetic interpretation of the counsel given by Jesus to the rich youth who inquired after eternal life, and the rise of monasticism, is apparent in the history of Antony, the father of the monastic system. It is related of him, that going into the church on one occasion when the Gospel concerning the rich young man was read before the assembly, he, then also young, took the words as addressed by Heaven to himself. Going out of the church, he forthwith proceeded to distribute to the inhabitants of his native village his large, fertile, and beautiful landed estates which he inherited from his fathers, reserving only a small portion of his property for the benefit of his sister. Not long after he gave away that also, and placed his sister to be educated with a society of pious virgins, and settling down near his paternal mansion, began a life of rigid asceticism. The ascetic theory of Christian virtue, which so soon began to prevail in the church, has been fully tested by time, and proved to be a huge and mischievous mistake. The verdict of history is conclusive, and to return to an exploded error, as some seem disposed to do, is utter folly. At this time of day, the views of those who would find the beau-ideal of Christian life in a monk’s cell appear hardly worthy of serious

refutation. It may, however, be useful briefly to indicate the leading errors of the monkish theory of morals; all the more that, in doing this, we shall at the same time be explaining the true meaning of our Lord's words to His disciples. This theory, then, is in the first place based on an erroneous assumption-viz., that abstinence from things lawful is intrinsically a higher sort of virtue than temperance in the use of them. This is not true. Abstinence is the virtue of the weak, temperance is the virtue of the strong. Abstinence is certainly the safer way for those who are prone to inordinate affection, but it purchases safety at the expense of moral culture; for it removes us from those temptations connected with family relationships and earthly possessions, through which character, while it may be imperilled, is at the same time developed and strengthened. Abstinence is also inferior to temperance in healthiness of tone. It tends inevitably to morbidity, distortion, exaggeration. The ascetic virtues were wont to be called by their admirers angelic. They are certainly angelic in the negative sense of being unnatural and inhuman. Ascetic abstinence is the ghost or disembodied spirit of morality, while temperance is its soul, embodied in a genuine human life transacted amid earthly relations, occupations, and enjoyments. Abstinence is even inferior to temperance in respect to what seems its strong point-self-sacrifice. There is something morally sublime, doubtless, in the spectacle of a man of wealth, birth, high office, and happy domestic condition, leaving rank, riches, office, wife, children, behind, and going away to the deserts of Sinai and Egypt to spend his days as a monk or anchoret. The stern resolution, the absolute mastery of the will over the natural affections, exhibited in such conduct, is very imposing. Yet how poor, after all, is such a character compared with Abraham, the father of the faithful, and model of temperance and singleness of mind; who could use the world, of which he had a large portion, without abusing it; who kept his wealth and state, and yet never became their slave, and was ready at God's command to part with his friends and his native land, and even with an only son! So to live, serving ourselves heir to all things, yet maintaining unimpaired our spiritual freedom; enjoying life, yet ready at the call of duty to sacrifice life's dearest enjoyments: this is true Christian virtue, the higher Christian life for those who would be perfect. Let us have many Abrahams so living among our men of wealth, and there is no fear of the church going back to the Middle Ages. Only when the rich, as a class, are luxurious, vain, selfish, and proud, is there a danger of the tenet gaining credence among the serious, that there is no possibility of living a truly Christian life except by parting with property altogether. The ascetic theory is also founded on an error in the interpretation of Christ's sayings. These do not assert or necessarily imply any intrinsic superiority of celibacy and voluntary poverty over the conditions to which they are opposed. They only imply, that in certain circumstances the unmarried dispossessed state affords peculiar facilities for attending without distraction to the interests of the divine kingdom. This is certainly true. It is less easy sometimes to be single-minded in the service of Christ as a married person than as an unmarried, as a rich man than as a poor man. This is especially true in times of hardship and danger, when men must either not be on Christ's side at all, or be prepared to sacrifice all for His sake. The less one has to sacrifice in such a case, the easier it is for him to bear his cross and play the hero; and he may be pronounced happy at such a crisis who has no family to forsake and no worldly concerns to distract him. Personal character may suffer from such isolation: it may lose geniality, tenderness, and grace, and contract something of inhuman sternness; but the particular tasks required will be more likely to be thoroughly done. On this account, it may be said with truth that "the forlorn hope in battle, as well as in the cause of Christianity, must consist of men who have no domestic relations to divide their devotion, who will leave no wife nor children to mourn

over their loss." Yet this statement cannot be taken without qualification. For it is not impossible for married and wealthy Christians to take their place in the forlorn hope: many have done so, and those who do are the greatest heroes of all. The advantage is not necessarily and invariably on the side of those who are disengaged from all embarrassing relationships, even in time of war; and in times of peace it is all on the other side. Monks, like soldiers, are liable to frightful degeneracy and corruption when there are no great tasks for them to do. Men who in emergencies are capable, in consequence of their freedom from all domestic and secular embarrassments, of rising to an almost superhuman pitch of self-denial, may at other seasons sink to a depth of self-indulgence in sloth and sensuality which is rarely seen in those who enjoy the protecting influence of family ties and business engagements. But not to insist further on this, and conceding frankly all that can be said in favor of the unmarried and dispossessed state in connection with the service of the kingdom in certain circumstances, what we are concerned to maintain is, that nowhere in the Gospel do we find the doctrine taught that such a state is in itself and essentially virtuous. It is absurd to say, as Renan does, that the monk is in a sense the only true Christian. The natural type of the Christian is not the monk, but the soldier, both of whom are often placed in the same position in relation to marriage and property ties, but for altogether different reasons. The watchword of Christian ethics is not devoteeism, but devotion. Consuming devotion to the kingdom is the one cardinal virtue required of all citizens, and every stern word enjoining self-sacrifice is to be interpreted in relation thereto. "Let the dead bury their dead;" "No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God;" "If any man hate not father and mother, he cannot be my disciple;" "Sell all that thou hast, and come follow me"-these and many other sayings of kindred import all mean one thing: the kingdom first, every thing else second, and when the interest of the holy state demands it, military promptitude in leaving all and repairing to the standards. Essentially the same idea is the key to the meaning of a difficult parable spoken to "the apostles," and recorded in Luke's Gospel, which we may call the parable of extra service. The thought intended is that the service of the kingdom is very exacting, involving not only hard toil in the field through the day, but extra duties in the evening when the weary laborer would gladly rest, having no fixed hours of labor, eight, ten, or twelve, but claiming the right to summon to work at any hour of all the twenty-four, as in the case of soldiers in time of war, or of farm-laborers in time of harvest. And the extra service, or overtime duty, is not monkish asceticism, but extraordinary demands in unusual emergencies, calling men weary from age or from over-exertion to still further efforts and sacrifices. The theory under consideration is guilty, in the third place, of an error in logic. On the assumption that abstinence is necessarily and intrinsically a higher virtue than temperance, it is illogical to speak of it as optional. In that case, our Lord should have given not counsels, but commands. For no man is at liberty to choose whether he shall be a good Christian or an indifferent one, or is excused from practicing certain virtues merely because they are difficult. It is absolutely incumbent on all to press on towards perfection; and if celibacy and poverty be necessary to perfection, then all who profess godliness should renounce wedlock and property. The church of Rome, consistently with her theory of morals, forbids her priests to marry. But why stop there? Surely what is good for priests is good for people as well. The reason why the prohibition is not carried further, is of course that the laws of nature and the requirements of society render it impracticable. And this brings us to the last objection to the ascetic theory, viz. that, consistently carried out, it lands in absurdity, by involving the destruction of society and the human race. A theory which involves such consequences cannot be true. For the kingdom of

grace and the kingdom of nature are not mutually destructive. One God is the sovereign of both; and all things belonging to the lower kingdom-every relation of life, every faculty, passion, and appetite of our nature, all material possessions-are capable of being made subservient to the interests of the higher kingdom, and of contributing to our growth in grace and holiness. The grand practical difficulty is to give the kingdom of God and His righteousness their due place of supremacy, and to keep all other things in strict subordination. The object of those hard sayings uttered by Jesus in Peraea was to fix the attention of the disciples and of all on that difficulty. He spoke so strongly, that men compassed by the cares of family and the comforts of wealth might duly lay to heart their danger; and, conscious of their own helplessness, might seek grace from God, to do that which, though difficult, is not impossible, viz. while married, to be as if unmarried, caring for the things of the Lord; and while rich, to be humble in mind, free in spirit, and devoted in heart to the service of Christ.

One word may here aptly be said on the beautiful incident of the little children brought to Jesus to get His blessing. Who can believe that it was His intention to teach a monkish theory of morals after reading that story? How opportunely those mothers came to Him seeking a blessing for their little ones, just after He had uttered words which might be interpreted, and were actually interpreted in after ages, as a disparagement of family relations. Their visit gave Him an opportunity of entering His protest by anticipation against such a misconstruction of His teaching. And the officious interference of the twelve to keep away the mothers and their offspring from their Master's person only made that protest all the more emphatic. The disciples seem to have taken from the words Jesus had just spoken concerning abstaining from marriage for the sake of the kingdom, the very impression out of which monasticism sprang. "What does He care," thought they, "for you mothers and your children? His whole thoughts are of the kingdom of heaven, where they neither marry nor are given in marriage: go away, and don't trouble Him at this time." The Lord did not thank His disciples for thus guarding His person from intrusion like a band of over-zealous policemen. "He was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God."

Section II - The Rewards of Self-Sacrifice Mat 19:27-30; Mark 10:28-31; Luk 18:28-30. The remarks of Jesus on the temptations of riches, which seemed so discouraging to the other disciples, had a different effect on the mind of Peter. They led him to think with self-complacency of the contrast presented by the conduct of himself and his brethren to that of the youth who came inquiring after eternal life. "We," thought he to himself, have done what the young man could not do-what, according to the statement just made by the Master, rich men find very hard to do; we have left all to follow Jesus. Surely an act so difficult and so rare must be very meritorious." With his characteristic frankness, as he thought so he spoke. "behold," said he with a touch of brag in his tone and manner, "we have forsaken all, and followed Thee: what shall we have therefore?" To this question of Peter, Jesus returned a reply full at once of encouragement and of warning for the twelve, and for all who profess to be servants of God. First, with reference to the subject-matter of Peter's inquiry, He set forth in glowing language the great rewards in store for him and his brethren; and not for them only, but for all who made sacrifices for the kingdom. Then, with reference to the self-complacent or calculating spirit which, in part at least, had prompted the inquiry, He added a moral reflection, with an illustrative parable appended, conveying the idea that rewards in the kingdom of God were not determined merely by the fact, or even by the amount, of

sacrifice. Many that were first in these respects might be last in real merit, for lack of another element which formed an essential ingredient in the calculation, viz. right motive; while others who were last in these respects might be first in recompense in virtue of the spirit by which they were animated. We shall consider these two parts of the reply in succession. Our present theme is the rewards of self-sacrifice in the divine kingdom. The first thing which strikes one in reference to these rewards, is the utter disproportion between them and the sacrifices made. The twelve had forsaken fishing-boats and nets, and they were to be rewarded with thrones; and every one that forsakes any thing for the kingdom, no matter what it may be, is promised an hundred-fold in return, in this present life, of the very thing he has renounced, and in the world to come life everlasting.

These promises strikingly illustrate the generosity of the Master whom Christians serve. How easy it would have been for Jesus to depreciate the sacrifices of His followers, and even to turn their glory into ridicule! “You have forsaken all! What was your all worth, pray? If the rich young man had parted with his possessions as I counselled, he might have had something to boast of; but as for you poor fishermen, any sacrifices you have made are hardly deserving of mention.” But such words could not have been uttered by Christ’s lips. It was never His way to despise things small in outward bulk, or to disparage services rendered to Himself, as if with a view to diminish His own obligations. He rather loved to make Himself a debtor to His servants, by generously exaggerating the value of their good deeds, and promising to them, as their fit recompense, rewards immeasurably exceeding their claims. So He acted in the present instance. Though the “all” of the disciples was a very little one, He still remembered that it was their all; and with impassioned earnestness, with a “verily” full of tender, grateful feeling, He promised them thrones as if they had been fairly earned!

These great and precious promises, if believed, would make sacrifices easy. Who would not part with a fishing-boat for a throne? and what merchant would stick at an investment which would bring a return, not of five per cent, or even of a hundred per cent, but of a hundred to one? The promises made by Jesus have one other excellent effect when duly considered. They tend to humble. Their very magnitude has a sobering effect on the mind. Not even the vainest can pretend that their good deeds deserve to be rewarded with thrones, and their sacrifices to be recompensed an hundred-fold. At this rate, all must be content to be debtors to God’s grace, and all talk of merit is out of the question. That is one reason why the rewards of the kingdom of heaven are so great. God bestows His gifts so as at once to glorify the Giver and to humble the receiver.

Thus far of the rewards in general. Looking now more narrowly at those specially made to the twelve, we remark that on the surface they seem fitted to awaken or foster false expectation. Whatever they meant in reality, there can be little doubt as to the meaning the disciples would put on them at the time. The “regeneration” and the “thrones” of which their Master spake would bring before their imagination the picture of a kingdom of Israel restored-regenerated in the sense in which men speak of a regenerated Italy-the yoke of foreign domination thrown off; alienated tribes reconciled and reunited under the rule of Jesus, proclaimed by popular enthusiasm their hero King; and themselves, the men who had first believed in His royal pretensions and shared His early fortunes, rewarded for their fidelity by being made provincial governors, each ruling over a separate tribe. These romantic ideas were never to be realized: and we naturally ask why Jesus, knowing that, expressed Himself in language fitted to encourage such baseless fancies? The

answer is, that He could not accomplish the end He designed, which was to inspire His disciples with hope, without expressing His promise in terms which involved the risk of illusion. Language so chosen as to obviate all possibility of misconception caption would have had no inspiring influence whatever. The promise, to have any charm, must be like a rainbow, bright in its hues, and solid and substantial in its appearance. This remark applies not only to the particular promise now under consideration, but more or less to all God's promises in Scripture or in nature. In order to stimulate, they must to a certain extent deceive us, by promising that which, as we conceive it, and cannot at the time help conceiving it, will never be realized. The rainbow is painted in such colors as to draw us, children as we are, irresistibly on; and then, having served that end, it fades away. When this happens, we are ready to exclaim, "O Lord, Thou hast deceived me!" but we ultimately find that we are not cheated out of the blessing, though it comes in a different form from what we expected. God's promises are never delusive, though they may be illusive. Such was the experience of the twelve in connection with the dazzling promise of thrones. They did not get what they expected; but they got something analogous, something which to their mature spiritual judgment appeared far greater and more satisfying than that on which they had first set their hearts.

What, then, was this Something? A real glory, honor, and power in the kingdom of God, conferred on the twelve as the reward of their self- sacrifice, partially in this life, perfectly in the life to come. In so far as the promise referred to this present life, it was shown by the event to signify the judicial legislative influence of the companions of Jesus as apostles and founders of the Christian church. The twelve, as the first preachers of the gospel trained by the Lord for that end, occupied a position in the church that could be filled by none that came after them. The keys of the kingdom of heaven were put into their hands. They were the foundation-stones on which the walls of the church were built. They sat, so to speak, on episcopal thrones, judging, guiding, ruling the twelve tribes of the true Israel of God, the holy commonwealth embracing all who professed faith in Christ. Such a sovereign influence the twelve apostles exerted in their lifetime; yea, they continue to exert it still. Their word not only was, but still is, law; their example has ever been regarded as binding on all ages. From their epistles, as the inspired expositions of their Master's pregnant sayings, the church has derived the system of doctrine embraced in her creed. All that remains of their writings forms part of the sacred canon, and all their recorded words are accounted by believers "words of God." Surely here is power and authority nothing short of regal! The reality of sovereignty is here, though the trappings of royalty, which strike the vulgar eye, are wanting. The apostles of Jesus were princes indeed, though they wore no princely robes; and they were destined to exercise a more extensive sway than ever fell to the lot of any monarch of Israel, not to speak of governors of single tribes. The promise to the twelve had doubtless a reference to their position in the church in heaven as well as in the church on earth. What they will be in the eternal kingdom we know not, any more than we know what we ourselves shall be, our notions of heaven altogether being very hazy. We believe, however, on the ground of clear Scripture statements, that men will not be on a dead level in heaven any more than on earth. Radicalism is not the law of the supernal commonwealth, even as it is not the law in any well-ordered society in this world. The kingdom of glory will be but the kingdom of grace perfected, the regeneration begun here brought to its final and complete development. But the regeneration, in its imperfect state, is an attempt to organize men into a society based on the possession of spiritual life, all being included in the kingdom who are new creatures in Christ Jesus, and the highest place being assigned to those who have attained the highest stature as spiritual men. This ideal has never been more than

approximately realized. The “visible” church, the product of the attempt to realize it, is, and ever has been, a most disappointing embodiment, in outward visible shape, of the ideal city of God. Ambition, selfishness, worldly wisdom, courtly arts, have too often procured thrones for false apostles, who never forsook any thing for Christ. Therefore we still look forward and upward with longing eyes for the true city of God, which shall as far exceed our loftiest conceptions as the visible church comes short of them. In that ideal commonwealth perfect moral order will prevail. Every man shall be in his own true place there; no vile men shall be in high places, no noble souls shall be doomed to obstruction, obscurity, and neglect; but the noblest will be the highest and first, even though now they be the lowest and last. “There shall be true glory, where no one shall be praised by mistake or in flattery; true honor, which shall be denied to no one worthy, granted to no one unworthy; nor shall any unworthy one ambitiously seek it, where none but the worthy are permitted to be.”

Among the noblest in the supernal commonwealth will be the twelve men who cast in their lot with the Son of man, and were His companions in His wanderings and temptations. There will probably be many in heaven greater than they in intellect and otherwise; but the greatest will most readily concede to them the place of honor as the first to believe in Jesus, the personal friends of the Man of Sorrow, and the chosen vessels who carried His name to the nations, and in a sense opened the kingdom of heaven to all who believe.

Such we conceive to be the import of the promise made to the apostles, as leaders of the white-robed band of martyrs and confessors who suffer for Christ’s sake. We have next to notice the general promise made to all the faithful indiscriminately. “There is no man,” so it runs in Mark, “that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel’s, but he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.” This promise also, like the special one to the twelve, has a twofold reference. Godliness is represented as profitable for both worlds. In the world to come the men who make sacrifices for Christ will receive eternal life; in the present they shall receive, along with persecutions, an hundred-fold of the very things which have been sacrificed. As to the former of these, eternal life, it is to be understood as the minimum reward in the great Hereafter. All the faithful will get that at least. What a maximum is that minimum! How blessed to be assured on the word of Christ that there is such a thing as eternal life attainable on any terms! We may well play the man for truth and conscience, and fight the good fight of faith, when, by so doing, it is possible for us to gain such a prize. “A hope so great and so divine may trials well endure.” To win the crown of an imperishable life of bliss, we should not deem it an unreasonable demand on the Lord’s part that we be faithful even unto death. Life sacrificed on these terms is but a river emptying itself into the ocean, or the morning star posing itself in the perfect light of day. Would that we could lay hold firmly of the blessed hope set before us here, and through its magic influence become transformed into moral heroes! We in these days have but a faint belief in the life to come. Our eyes are dim, and we cannot see the land that is afar off. Some of us have become so philosophical as to imagine we can do without the future reward promised by Jesus, and play the hero on atheistical principles. That remains to be seen. The annals of the martyrs tell us what men have been able to achieve who earnestly believed in the life everlasting. Up to this date we have not heard of any great heroisms enacted or sacrifices made by unbelievers. The

martyrology of skepticism has not yet been written. That part of Christ's promise which respects hereafter must be taken on trust; but the other part, which concerns the present life, admits of being tested by observation. The question, therefore, may competently be put: Is it true, as matter of fact, that sacrifices are recompensed by an hundredfold-that is, a manifold-return in kind in this world? To this question we may reply, first, that the promise will be found to hold good with the regularity of a law, if we do not confine our view to the individual life, but include successive generations. When providence has had time to work out its results, the meek do, at least by their heirs and representatives, inherit the earth, and delight themselves in the abundance of peace. The persecuted cause at length conquers the world's homage, and receives from it such rewards as it can bestow. The words of the prophet are then fulfilled: "The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other (by persecutor's hands), shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell." And again: "Lift up thine eyes round about, and see; all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall throb and swell; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the wealth of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breast of kings. For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron." These prophetic promises, extravagant though they seem, have been fulfilled again and again in the history of the church: in the early ages, under Constantine, after the fires of persecution kindled by pagan zeal for hoary superstitions and idolatries had finally died out; in Protestant Britain, once famous for men who were ready to lose all, and who did actually lose much, for Christ's sake, now mistress of the seas, and heiress of the wealth of all the world; in the new world across the Atlantic, with its great, powerful, populous nation, rivaling England in wealth and strength, grown from a small band of Puritan exiles who loved religious liberty better than country, and sought refuge from despotism in the savage wildernesses of an unexplored continent.

Still it must be confessed that, taken strictly and literally, the promise of Christ does not hold good in every instance. Multitudes of God's servants have had what the world would account a miserable lot. Does the promise, then, simply and absolutely fail in their case? No; for, secondly, there are more ways than one in which it can be fulfilled. Blessings, for example, may be multiplied an hundred-fold without their external bulk being altered, simply by the act of renouncing them. Whatever is sacrificed for truth, whatever we are willing to part with for Christ's sake, becomes from that moment immeasurably increased in value. Fathers and mothers, and all earthly friends, become unspeakably dear to the heart when we have learned to say: "Christ is first, and these must be second." Isaac was worth an hundred sons to Abraham when he received him back from the dead. Or, to draw an illustration from another quarter, think of John Bunyan in jail brooding over his poor blind daughter, whom he left behind at home. "Poor child, thought I," thus he describes his feelings in that inimitable book, Grace Abounding, "what sorrow art thou like to have for thy portion in this world! Thou must be beaten, must beg, suffer hunger, cold, nakedness, and a thousand calamities, though I cannot now endure the wind should blow upon thee. But yet, thought I, I must venture you all with God, though it goeth to the quick to leave you. Oh! I saw I was as a man who was pulling down his house upon the heads of his wife and children; yet I thought on those two milch Kline that were to carry the ark of God into another country, and to leave their calves behind them." If the faculty of enjoyment be, as it is, the measure of real possession, here

was a case in which to forsake wife and child was to multiply them an hundred-fold, and in the multiplied value of the things renounced to find a rich solarium for sacrifice and persecutions. The soliloquy of the Bedford prisoner is the very poetry of natural affection. What pathos is in that allusion to the Mitch Kline! what a depth of tender feeling it reveals! The power to feel so is the reward of self-sacrifice; the power to love so is the reward of “hating” our kindred for Christ’s sake. You shall find no such love among those who make natural affection an excuse for moral unfaithfulness, thinking it a sufficient apology for disloyalty to the interests of the divine kingdom to say, “I have a wife and family to care for.”

Without undue spiritualizing, then, we see that a valid meaning can be assigned to the strong expression, “an hundred-fold.” And from the remarks just made, we see further why “persecutions” are thrown into the account, as if they were not drawbacks, but a part of the gain. The truth is, the hundred-fold is realized, not in spite of persecutions, but to a great extent because of them. Persecutions are the salt with which things sacrificed are salted, the condiment which enhances their relish. Or, to put the matter arithmetically, persecutions are the factor by which earthly blessings given up to God are multiplied an hundred-fold, if not in quantity, at least in virtue.

Such are the rewards provided for those who make sacrifices for Christ’s sake. Their sacrifices are but a seed sown in tears, from which they afterwards reap a plentiful harvest in joy. But what now of those who have made no sacrifices, who have received no wounds in battle? If this has proceeded not from lack of will, but from lack of opportunity, they shall get a share of the rewards. David’s law has its place in the divine kingdom: “As his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike.” Only all must see to it that they remain not by the stuff from cowardice, or indolence and self-indulgence. They who act thus, declining to put themselves to any trouble, to run any risk, or even so much as to part with a sinful lust for the kingdom of God, cannot expect to find a place therein at the last.

02.16.2. In Perea

In Perea; or, The Doctrine of Self-Sacrifice Section III - The First Last, and the Last First Mat 19:30; Mat 20:1-20; Mark 10:31.

Having declared the rewards of self-sacrifice, Jesus proceeded to show the risk of forfeiture or partial loss arising out of the indulgence of unworthy feelings, whether as motives to self-denying acts, or as self- complacent reflections on such acts already performed. “But,” He said in a warning manner, as if with upraised finger, “many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first.” Then, to explain the profound remark, He uttered the parable preserved in Matthew’s Gospel only, which follows immediately after. The explanation is in some respects more difficult than the thing to be explained, and has given rise to much diverse interpretation. And yet the main drift of this parable seems clear enough. It is not, as some have supposed, designed to teach that all will share alike in the eternal kingdom, which is not only irrelevant to the connection of thought, but untrue. Neither is the parable intended to proclaim the great evangelic truth that salvation is of grace and not of merit, though it may be very proper in preaching to take occasion to discourse on that fundamental doctrine. The great outstanding thought set forth therein, as it seems to us, is this, that in estimating the value of work, the divine Lord whom all serve takes into account not merely quantity, but quality; that is, the spirit in which the work is done. The correctness of this view is apparent when we take a comprehensive survey of the whole teaching of Jesus on the important subject of work and wages in the divine kingdom, from which it appears that the relation between the two things is fixed by righteous law, caprice being entirely excluded; so that if the first in work be last in wages in any instances, it is for very good reasons.

There are, in all, three parables in the Gospels on the subject referred to, each setting forth a distinct idea, and, in case our interpretation of the one at present to be specially considered is correct, all combined presenting an exhaustive view of the topic to which they relate. They are the parables of the Talents and of the Pounds, and the one before us, called by way of distinction “the Laborers in the Vineyard.” In order to see how these parables are at once distinct and mutually complementary, it is necessary to keep in view the principles on which the value of work is to be determined. Three things must be taken into account in order to form a just estimate of men’s works, viz. the quantity of work done, the ability of the worker, and the motive. Leaving out of view meantime the motive: when the ability is equal, quantity determines relative merit; and when ability varies, then it is not the absolute amount, but the relation of the amount to the ability that ought to determine value. The parables of the Pounds and of the Talents are designed to illustrate respectively these two propositions. In the former parable the ability is the same in all, each servant receiving one pound; but the quantity of work done varies, one servant with his pound gaining ten pounds, while another with the same amount gains only five. Now, by the above rule, the second should not be rewarded as the first, for he has not done what he might. Accordingly, in the parable a distinction is made, both in the rewards given to the two servants, and in the manner in which they are respectively addressed by their employer. The first gets ten cities to govern, and these words of commendation in addition: “Well, thou good servant; because thou hast been

faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities." The second, on the other hand, gets only five cities, and what is even more noticeable, no praise. His master says to him dryly, "Be thou also over five cities." He had done somewhat, in comparison with idlers even something considerable, and therefore his service is acknowledged and proportionally rewarded. But he is not pronounced a good and faithful servant; and the eulogy is withheld, simply because it was not deserved: for he had not done what he could, but only half of what was possible, taking the first servant's work as the measure of possibility. In the parable of the Talents the conditions are different. There the amount of work done varies, as in the parable of the Pounds; but the ability varies in the same proportion, so that the ratio between the two is the same in the case of both servants who put their talents to use. One receives five, and gains five; the other receives two, and gains two According to our rule, these two should be equal in merit; and so they are represented in the parable. The same reward is assigned to each, and both are commended in the very same terms; the master's words in either case being: "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

Thus the case stands when we take into account only the two elements of ability to work and the amount of work done; or, to combine both into one, the element of zeal. But there is more than zeal to be considered, at least in the kingdom of God. In this world men are often commended for their diligence irrespective of their motives; and it is not always necessary even to be zealous in order to gain vulgar applause. If one do something that looks large and liberal, men will praise him without inquiring whether for him it was a great thing, a heroic act involving self-sacrifice, or only a respectable act, not necessarily indicative of earnestness or devotion. But in God's sight many bulky things are very little, and many small things are very great. The reason is, that He Seth the heart, and the hidden springs of action there, and judges the stream by the fountain. Quantity is nothing to Him, unless there be zeal; and even zeal is nothing to Him, unless it be purged from all vain glory and self-seeking-a pure spring of good impulses; cleared of all smoke of carnal passion-a pure flame of heaven-born devotion. A base motive vitiates all. To emphasize this truth, and to insist on the necessity of right motives and emotions in connection with work and sacrifices, is the design of the parable spoken by Jesus in Peraea. It teaches that a small quantity of work done in a right spirit is of greater value than a large quantity done in a wrong spirit, however zealously it may have been performed. One hour's work done by men who make no bargain is of greater value than twelve hours' work done by men who have borne the heat and burden of the day, but who regard their doings with self-complacency. Put in receptive form, the lesson of the parable is: Work not as hirelings basely calculating, or as Pharisees arrogantly exacting, the wages to which you deem yourselves entitled; work humbly, as deeming yourselves unprofitable servants at best; generously, as men superior to selfish calculations of advantage; trustfully, as men who confide in the generosity of the great Employer, regarding Him as one from whom you need not to protect yourselves by making beforehand a firm and fast bargain. In this interpretation, it is assumed that the spirit of the first and of the last to enter the vineyard was respectively such as has been indicated; and the assumption is justified by the manner in which the parties are described. In what spirit the last worked may be inferred from their making no bargain; and the temper of the first is manifest from their own words at the end of the day: "These last," said they, "have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day." This is the language of envy, jealousy, and self-esteem, and it is in keeping

with the conduct of these laborers at the commencement of the day's work; for they entered the vineyard as hirelings, having made a bargain, agreeing to work for a stipulated amount of wages. The first and last, then, represent two classes among the professed servants of God. The first are the calculating and self-complacent; the last are the humble, the self-forgetful, the generous, the trustful. The first are the Jacobs, plodding, conscientious, able to say for themselves, "Thus I was: in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and the sleep departed from mine eyes;" yet ever studious of their own interest, taking care even in their religion to make a sure bargain for themselves, and trusting little to the free grace and unfettered generosity of the great Lord. The last are Abraham-like men, not in the lateness of their service, but in the magnanimity of their faith, entering the vineyard without bargaining, as Abraham left his father's house, knowing not whither he was to go, but knowing only that God had said, "Go to a land that I shall show thee." The first are the Simons, righteous, respectable, exemplary, but hard, prosaic, ungenial; the last are the women with alabaster boxes, who for long have been idle, aimless, vicious, wasteful of life, but at last, with bitter tears of sorrow over an unprofitable past, begin life in earnest, and endeavor to redeem lost time by the passionate devotion with which they serve their Lord and Saviour. The first, once more, are the elder brothers who stay at home in their father's house, and never transgress any of his commandments, and have no mercy on those who do; the last are the prodigals, who leave their father's house and waste their substance on riotous living, but at length come to their senses, and say, "I will arise, and go to my father;" and having met him, exclaim, "Father, I have sinned, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." The two classes differing thus in character are treated in the parable precisely as they ought to be. The last are made first, and the first are made last. The last are paid first, to signify the pleasure which the master has in rewarding them. They are also paid at a much higher rate; for, receiving the same sum for one hour's work that the others receive for twelve, they are paid at the rate of twelve pence per diem. They are treated, in fact, as the prodigal was, for whom the father made a feast; while the "first" are treated as the elder brother, whose service was acknowledged, but who had to complain that his father never had given him a kid to make merry with his friends. Those who deem themselves unworthy to be any thing else than hired servants, and most unprofitable in that capacity, are dealt with as sons; and those who deem themselves most meritorious are treated coldly and distantly, as hired servants.

Reverting now from the parable to the apophthegm it was designed to illustrate, we observe that the degradation of such as are first in ability, zeal, and length of service, to the last place as regards the reward, is represented as a thing likely to happen often. "Many that are first shall be last." This statement implies that self-esteem is a sin which easily besets men situated as the twelve, i.e. men who have made sacrifices for the kingdom of God. Now, that this is a fact observation proves; and it further teaches us that there are certain circumstances in which the laborious and self-denying are specially liable to fall into the vice of self-righteousness. It will serve to illustrate the deep and, to most minds on first view, obscure saying of Jesus, if we indicate here what these circumstances are.

1. Those who make sacrifices for Christ's sake are in danger of falling into a self-righteous mood of mind, when the spirit of self-denial manifests itself in rare occasional acts, rather than in the form of a habit. In this case Christians rise at certain emergencies to an elevation of spirit far above the usual level of their moral feelings; and therefore, though at the time when the sacrifice

was made they may have behaved heroically, they are apt afterwards to revert self-complacently to their noble deeds, as an old soldier goes back on his battles, and with Peter to ask, with a proud consciousness of merit for having forsaken all, What shall we have therefore? Verily, a state of mind greatly to be feared. A society in which spiritual pride and self-complacency prevails is in a bad way. One possessed of prophetic insight into the moral laws of the universe can foretell what will happen. The religious community which deems itself first will gradually fall behind in gifts and graces, and some other religious community which it despises will gradually advance onward, till the two have at length, in a way manifest to all men, changed places.

2. There is great danger of degeneracy in the spirit of those who make sacrifices for the kingdom of God, when any particular species of service has come to be much in demand, and therefore to be held in very high esteem. Take, as an example, the endurance of physical tortures and of death in times of persecution. It is well known with what a furor of admiration martyrs and confessors were regarded in the suffering church of the early centuries. Those who suffered martyrdom were almost deified by popular enthusiasm: the anniversaries of their death-of their birthdays, as they were called, into the eternal world-were observed with religious solemnity, when their doings and sufferings in this world were rehearsed with ardent admiration in strains of extravagant eulogy. Even the confessors, who had suffered, but not died for Christ, were looked up to as a superior order of beings, separated by a wide gulf from the common herd of untried Christians. They were saints, they had a halo of glory round their heads; they had power with God, and could, it was believed, bind or loose with even more authority than the regular ecclesiastical authorities. Absolution was eagerly sought for from them by the lapsed; admission to their communion was regarded as an open door by which sinners might return into the fellowship of the church. They had only to say to the erring, ego in peace," and even bishops must receive them. Bishops joined with the populace in this idolatrous homage to the men who suffered for Christ's sake. They petted and flattered the confessors, partly from honest admiration, but partly also from policy, to induce others to imitate their example, and to foster the virtue of hardihood, so much needed in suffering times. This state of feeling in the church was obviously fraught with great danger to the souls of those who endured hardship for the truth, as tempting them to fanaticism, vanity, spiritual pride, all presumption. Nor were they all by any means temptation-proof. Many took all the praise thou received as their due, all deemed themselves persons of great consequence. The soldiers, who had been flattered by their generals to make them brave, began to act as if they were the masters, and could write, for example, to one who had been a special offender in the extravagance of his eulogies, such a letter as this: "All the confessors to Cyprian the bishop: Know that we have granted peace to all those of whom you have had an account what they have done: how they have behaved since the commission of their crimes; and we would that these presents should be by you imparted to the rest of the bishops. We wish you to maintain peace with the holy martyrs." Thus was fulfilled in those confessors the saying, "Many that are first shall be last." First in suffering for the truth and in reputation for sanctity, they became last in the judgment of the great Searcher of hearts. They gave their bodies to be scourged, maimed, burned, and it profited them little or nothing.

3. The first are in danger of becoming the last when self-denial is reduced to a System, and practiced ascetically, not for Christ's sake, but for one's own sake. That in respect of the amount of self-denial the austere ascetic is entitled to rank first, nobody will deny. But his right to rank first in

intrinsic spiritual worth, and therefore in the divine kingdom, is more open to dispute. Even in respect to the fundamental matter of getting rid of self, he may be, not first, but last. The self-denial of the ascetic is in a subtle way intense self-assertion. True Christian self-sacrifice signifies hardship, loss undergone, not for its own sake, but for Christ's sake, and for truth's sake, at a time when truth cannot be maintained without sacrifice. But the self-sacrifice of the ascetic is not of this kind. It is all endured for his own sake, for his own spiritual benefit and credit. He practices self-denial after the fashion of a miser, who is a total abstainer from all luxuries, and even grudges himself the necessaries of life because he has a passion for hoarding. Like the miser, he deems himself rich; yet both he and the miser are alike poor: the miser, because with all his wealth he cannot part with his coin in exchange for enjoyable commodities; the ascetic, because his coins, "good works," so called, painful acts of abstinence, are counterfeit, and will not pass current in the kingdom of heaven. All his labors to save his soul will turn out to be just so much rubbish to be burned up; and if he be saved at all, it will be as by fire.

Recalling now for a moment the three classes of cases in which the first are in danger of becoming last, we perceive that the word "many" is not an exaggeration. For consider how much of the work done by professing Christians belongs to one or other of these categories: occasional spasmodic efforts; good works of liberality and philanthropy, which are in fashion and in high esteem in the religious world; and good works done, not so much from interest in the work, as from their reflex bearing on the doer's own religious interests. Many are called to work in God's vineyard, and many are actually at work. But few are chosen; few are choice workers; few work for God in the spirit of the precepts taught by Jesus. But though there be few such workers, there are some. Jesus does not say all who are first shall be last, and all who are last shall be first: His word is many. There are numerous exceptions to the rule in both its parts. Not all who bear the heat and burden of the day are mercenary and self-righteous. No; the Lord has always had in His spiritual vineyard a noble band of workers, who, if there were room for boasting in any case, might have boasted on account of the length, the arduousness, and the efficiency of their service, yet cherished no self-complacent thoughts, nor indulged in any calculations how much more they should receive than others. Think of devoted missionaries to heathen lands; of heroic reformers like Luther, Calvin, Knox, and Latimer; of eminent men of our own day, recently taken from amongst us. Can you fancy such men talking like the early laborers in the vineyard? Nay, verily! all through life their thoughts of themselves and their service were very humble indeed; and at the close of life's day their day's work seemed to them a very sorry matter, utterly undeserving of the great reward of eternal life. Such first ones shall not be last.

If there be some first who shall not be last, there are doubtless also some last who shall not be first. If it were otherwise; if to be last in length of service, in zeal and devotion, gave a man an advantage, it would be ruinous to the interests of the kingdom of God. It would, in fact, be in effect putting a premium on indolence, and encouraging men to stand all the day idle, or to serve the devil till the eleventh hour; and then in old age to enter the vineyard, and give the Lord the poor hour's work, when their limbs were stiff and their frames feeble and tottering. No such demoralizing law obtains in the divine kingdom. Other things being equal, the longer and the more earnestly a man serves God, the sooner he begins, and the harder he works, the better for himself hereafter. If those who begin late in the day are graciously treated, it is in spite, not in consequence, of their tardiness. That they have been so long idle is not a commendation, but a

sin; not a subject of self-congratulation, but of deep humiliation. If it be wrong for those who have served the Lord much to glory in the greatness of their service, it is surely still more unbecoming, even ridiculous, for any one to pride himself in the littleness of his. If the first has no cause for boasting and self-righteousness, still less has the last.

02.17. The Sons of Zebedee Again

The Sons of Zebedee Again; or, Second Lesson On the Doctrine of the Cross Mat 20:17-28; Mark 10:32-45; Luk 18:31-34. The incident recorded in these sections of Matthew's and Mark's Gospels happened while Jesus and His disciples were going up to Jerusalem for the last time, journeying via Jericho, from Ephraim in the wilderness, whither they had retired after the raising of Lazarus. The ambitious request of the two sons of Zebedee for the chief places of honor in the kingdom was therefore made little more than a week before their Lord was crucified. How little must they have dreamed what was coming! Yet it was not for want of warning; for just before they presented their petition, Jesus had for the third time explicitly announced His approaching passion, indicating that His death would take place in connection with this present visit to Jerusalem, and adding other particulars respecting His last sufferings not specified before fitted to arrest attention; as that His death should be the issue of a judicial process, and that He should be delivered by the Jewish authorities to the Gentiles, to be mocked, and scourged, and crucified.

After recording the terms of Christ's third announcement, Luke adds, with reference to the disciples: "They understood none of these things; and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken." The truth of this statement is sufficiently apparent from the scene which ensued, not recorded by Luke, as is also the cause of the fact stated. The disciples, we perceive, were thinking of other matters while Jesus spake to them of His approaching sufferings. They were dreaming of the thrones they had been promised in Peraea, and therefore were not able to enter into the thoughts of their Master, so utterly diverse from their own. Their minds were completely possessed by romantic expectations, their heads giddy with the sparkling wine of vain hope; and as they drew nigh the holy city their firm conviction was, "that the kingdom of God should immediately appear."

While all the disciples were looking forward to their thrones, James and John were coveting the most distinguished ones, and contriving a scheme for securing these to themselves, and so getting the dispute who should be the greatest settled in their own favor. These were the two disciples who made themselves so prominent in resenting the rudeness of the Samaritan villagers. The greatest zealots among the twelve were thus also the most ambitious, a circumstance which will not surprise the student of human nature. On the former occasion they asked fire from heaven to consume their adversaries; on the present occasion they ask a favor from Heaven to the disadvantage of their friends. The two requests are not so very dissimilar. In hatching and executing their little plot, the two brothers enjoyed the assistance of their mother, whose presence is not explained, but may have been due to her having become an attendant on Jesus in her widowhood, or to an accidental meeting with Him and His disciples at the junction of the roads converging on Jerusalem, whither all were now going to keep the feast. Salome was the principal actor in the scene, and it must be admitted she acted her part well. Kneeling before Jesus, as if doing homage to a king, she intimated her humble wish to proffer a petition; and being gently asked, "What wilt thou?" said, "Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand, and the other on the left, in Thy kingdom." This prayer had certainly another origin than the

inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and the scheme of which it was the outcome was not one which we should have expected companions of Jesus to entertain. And yet the whole proceeding is so true to human nature as it reveals itself in every age, that we cannot but feel that we have here no myth, but a genuine piece of history. We know how much of the world's spirit is to be found at all times in religious circles of high reputation for zeal, devotion, and sanctity; and we have no right to hold up our hands in amazement when we see it appearing even in the immediate neighborhood of Jesus. The twelve were yet but crude Christians, and we must allow them time to become sanctified as well as others. Therefore we neither affect to be scandalized at their conduct, nor, to save their reputation, do we conceal its true character. We are not surprised at the behavior of the two sons of Zebedee, and yet we say plainly that their request was foolish and offensive: indicative at once of bold presumption, gross stupidity, and unmitigated selfishness.

It was an irreverent, presumptuous request, because it virtually asked Jesus their Lord to become the tool of their ambition and vanity. Fancying that He would yield to mere solicitation, perhaps calculating that He would not have the heart to refuse a request coming from a female suppliant, who as a widow was an object of compassion, and as a contributor to His support had claims to His gratitude, they begged a favor which Jesus could not grant without being untrue to His own character and His habitual teaching, as exemplified in the discourse on humility in the house at Capernaum. In so doing they were guilty of a disrespectful, impudent forwardness most characteristic of the ambitious spirit, which is utterly devoid of delicacy, and pushes on towards its end, reckless what offence it may give, heedless how it wounds the sensibilities of others. The request of the two brothers was as ignorant as it was presumptuous. The idea implied therein of the kingdom was utterly wide of truth and reality. James and John not only thought of the kingdom that was coming as a kingdom of this world, but they thought meanly of it even under that view. For it is an unusually corrupt and unwholesome condition of matters, even in a secular state, when places of highest distinction can be obtained by solicitation and favor, and not on the sole ground of fitness for the duties of the position. When family influence or courtly arts are the pathway to power, every patriot has cause to mourn. How preposterous, then, the idea that promotion can take place in the divine, ideally-perfect kingdom by means that are inadmissible in any well-regulated secular kingdom! To cherish such an idea is in effect to degrade and dishonor the Divine King, by likening Him to an unprincipled despot, who has more favor for flatterers than for honest men; and to caricature the divine kingdom by assimilating it to the most misgoverned states on earth, such as those ruled over by a Bomba or a Nero. The request of the brethren was likewise intensely selfish. It was ungenerous as towards their fellow-disciples; for it was an attempt to overreach them, and, like all such attempts, produced mischief, disturbing the peace of the family circle, and giving rise to a most unseemly embitterment of feeling among its members. "When the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation." No wonder; and if James and John did not anticipate such a result, it showed that they were very much taken up with their own selfish thoughts; and if they did anticipate it, and nevertheless shrank not from a course of action which was sure to give offence, that only made their selfishness the more heartless and inexcusable. But the petition of the two disciples was selfish in a far wider view, viz. with reference to the public interests of the divine kingdom. It virtually meant this: "Grant us the places of honor and power, come what may; even though universal discontent and disaffection, disorder, disaster, and chaotic confusion ensue." These are the sure effects of promotion by favor instead of by merit, both in church and in state, as many a nation has found to its cost in the day of trial. James and John, it is

true, never dreamt of disaster resulting from their petition being granted. No self-seekers and place-hunters ever do anticipate evil results from their promotion. But that does not make them less selfish. It only shows that, besides being selfish, they are vain. The reply of Jesus to this ambitious request, considering its character, was singularly mild. Offensive though the presumption, forwardness, selfishness, and vanity of the two disciples must have been to His meek, holy, self-forgetful spirit, He uttered not a word of direct rebuke, but dealt with them as a father might deal with a child that had made a senseless request. Abstaining from animadversion on the grave faults brought to light by their petition, He noticed only the least culpable-their ignorance. “Ye know not,” He said to them quietly, “what ye ask;” and even this remark He made in compassion rather than in the way of blame. He pitied men who offered prayers whose fulfillment, as He knew, implied painful experiences of which they had no thought. It was in this spirit that He asked the explanatory question: “Are ye able to drink of the cup that I am about to drink, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” But there was more than compassion or correction in this question, even instruction concerning the true way of obtaining promotion in the kingdom of God. In interrogatory form Jesus taught His disciples that advancement in His kingdom went not by favor, nor was obtainable by clamorous solicitation; that the way to thrones was the via dolorosa of the cross; that the palm-bearers in the realms of glory should be they who had passed through great tribulation, and the princes of the kingdom they who had drunk most deeply of His cup of sorrow; and that for those who refused to drink thereof, the selfish, the self-indulgent, the ambitious, the vain, there would be no place at all in the kingdom, not to speak of places of honor on His right or left hand. The startling question put to them by Jesus did not take James and John by surprise. Promptly and firmly they replied, “We are able.” Had they then really taken into account the cup and the baptism of suffering, and deliberately made up their minds to pay the costly price for the coveted prize? Had the sacred fire of the martyr spirit already been kindled in their hearts? One would be happy to think so, but we fear there is nothing to justify so favorable an opinion. It is much more probable that, in their eagerness to obtain the object of their ambition, the two brothers were ready to promise any thing, and that, in fact, they neither knew nor cared what they were promising. Their confident declaration bears a suspiciously close resemblance to the bravado uttered by Peter a few days later: “Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended.”

Jesus, however, did not choose, in the case of the sons of Zebedee, as in the case of their friend, to call in question the heroism so ostentatiously professed, but adopted the course of assuming that they were not only able, but willing, yea, eager, to participate in His sufferings. With the air of a king granting to favorites the privilege of drinking out of the royal wine-cup, and of washing in the royal ewer, He replied: “Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with.” It was a strange favor which the King thus granted! Had they only known the meaning of the words, the two brethren might well have fancied that their Master was indulging in a stroke of irony at their expense. Yet it was not so. Jesus was not mocking His disciples when He spake thus, offering them a stone instead of bread: He was speaking seriously, and promising what He meant to bestow, and what, when the time of bestowal came-for it did come-they themselves regarded as a real privilege; for all the apostles agreed with Peter that they who were reproached for the name of Christ were to be accounted happy, and had the spirit of glory and of God resting on them. Such, we believe, was the mind of James when Herod killed him with the persecutor’s sword: such, we know, was the mind of John when he was in the isle of Patmos “for

the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ."

Having promised a favor not coveted by the two disciples, Jesus next explained that the favor they did covet was not unconditionally at His disposal: "But to sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give, save to those for whom it is prepared of my Father." The Authorized Version suggests the idea that the bestowal of rewards in the kingdom is not in Christ's hands at all. That, however, is not what Jesus meant to say; but rather this, that though it is Christ's prerogative to assign to citizens their places in His kingdom, it is not in His power to dispose of places by partiality and patronage, or otherwise than in accordance with fixed principles of justice and the sovereign ordination of His Father. The words, paraphrased, signify: "I can say to any one, Come, drink of my cup, for there is no risk of mischief arising out of favoritism in that direction. But there my favors must end. I cannot say to any one, as I please, Come, sit beside me on a throne; for each man must get the place prepared for him, and for which he is prepared."

Thus explained, this solemn saying of our Lord furnishes no ground for an inference which, on first view, it seems not only to suggest, but to necessitate, viz. that one may taste of the cup, yet lose the crown; or, at least, that there is no connection between the measure in which a disciple may have had fellowship with Christ in His cross, and the place which shall be assigned to him in the eternal kingdom. That Jesus had no intention to teach such a doctrine is evident from the question He had asked just before He made the statement now under consideration, which implies a natural sequence between the cup and the throne, the suffering and the glory. The sacrifice and the great reward so closely conjoined in the promise made to the twelve in Peraea are disjoined here, merely for the purpose of signalizing the rigor with which all corrupt influences are excluded from the kingdom of heaven. It is beyond doubt, that those on whom is bestowed in high measure the favor of being companions with Jesus in tribulation shall be rewarded with high promotion in the eternal kingdom. Nor does this statement compromise the sovereignty of the Father and Lord of all; on the contrary, it contributes towards its establishment. There is no better argument in support of the doctrine of election than the simple truth that affliction is the education for heaven. For in what does the sovereign hand of God appear more signally than in the appointment of crosses? If crosses would let us alone, we would let them alone. We choose not the bitter cup and the bloody baptism: we are chosen for them, and in them. God impresses men into the warfare of the cross; and if any come to glory in this way, as many an impressed soldier has done, it will be to glory to which, in the first place at least, they did not aspire. The asserted connection between suffering and glory serves to defend as well as to establish the doctrine of election. Looked at in relation to the world to come, that doctrine seems to lay God open to the charge of partiality, and is certainly very mysterious. But look at election in its bearing on the present life. In that view it is a privilege for which the elect are not apt to be envied. For the elect are not the happy and the prosperous, but the toilers and sufferers. In fact, they are elected not for their own sake, but for the world's sake, to be God's pioneers in the rough, unwelcome work of turning the wilderness into a fruitful field; to be the world's salt, leaven, and light, receiving for the most part little thanks for the service they render, and getting often for reward the lot of the destitute, the afflicted, and the tormented. So that, after all, election is a favor to the non-elect: it is God 's method of benefiting men at large; and whatever peculiar benefit may be in store for the elect is well earned, and should not be grudged. Does any one envy them their prospect? He may be a partaker of their future joy if he be willing to be companion to such forlorn beings, and to share their tribulations now.

It is hardly needful to explain that, in uttering these words, Jesus did not mean to deny the utility of prayer, and to say, “You may ask for a place in the divine kingdom, and not get it; for all depends on what God has ordained.” He only wished the two disciples and all to understand that to obtain their requests they must know what they ask, and accept all that is implied, in the present as well as in the future, in the answering of their prayers. This condition is too often overlooked. Many a bold, ambitious prayer, even for spiritual blessing, is offered up by petitioners who have no idea what the answer would involve, and if they had, would wish their prayer unanswered. Crude Christians ask, e.g., to be made holy. But do they know what doubts, temptations, and sore trials of all kinds go to the making of great saints? Others long for a full assurance of God’s love; desire to be perfectly persuaded of their election. Are they willing to be deprived of the sunshine of prosperity, that in the dark night of sorrow they may see heaven’s stars? Ah me! how few do know what they ask! how much all need to be taught to pray for right things with an intelligent mind and in a right spirit!

Having said what was needful to James and John, Jesus next addressed a word in season to their brethren inculcating humility; most appropriately, for though the ten were the offended party, not offenders, yet the same ambitious spirit was in them, else they would not have felt and resented the wrong done so keenly. Pride and selfishness may vex and grieve the humble and the self-forgetful, but they provoke resentment only in the proud and the selfish; and the best way to be proof against the assaults of other men’s evil passions is to get similar affections exorcised out of our own breasts. “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus;” then shall nothing be done by you at least in strife or vainglory.

“When the ten heard it,” we read, “they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.” Doubtless it was a very unedifying scene which ensued; and it is very disappointing to witness such scenes where one might have looked to see in perfection the godly spectacle of brethren dwelling together in unity. But the society of Jesus was a real thing, not the imaginary creation of a romance-writer; and in all real human societies, in happy homes, in the most select brotherhoods, scientific, literary, or artistic, in Christian churches, there will arise tempests now and then. And let us be thankful that the twelve, even by their folly, gave their Master an occasion for uttering the sublime words here recorded, which shine down upon us out of the serene sky of the gospel story like stars appearing through the tempestuous clouds of human passion-manifestly the words of a Divine Being, though spoken out of the depths of an amazing self-humiliation. The manner of Jesus, in addressing His heated disciples, was very tender and subdued. He collected them all around Him, the two and the ten, the offenders and the offended, as a father might gather together his children to receive admonition, and He spoke to them with the calmness and solemnity of one about to meet death. Throughout this whole scene death’s solemnizing influence is manifestly on the Saviour’s spirit. For does He not speak of His approaching sufferings in language reminding us of the night of His betrayal, describing His passion by the poetic sacramental name “my cup,” and for the first time revealing the secret of His life on earth-the grand object for which He is about to die? In moral significance, the doctrine of Jesus at this time was a repetition of His teaching in Capernaum, when He chose the little child for His text. As He said then, Who would be great must be childlike, so He says here, Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister. In the former discourse His model and His text was an infant; now it is a slave, another representative of the mean and despicable. Now, as before, He quotes His own example to enforce His precept;

stimulating His disciples to seek distinction in a path of lowly love by representing the Son of man as come not to be ministered unto, but to minister, even to the length of giving His life a ransom for the many, as He then reminded them, that the Son of man came like a shepherd, to seek and to save the lost sheep. The single new feature in the lesson which Jesus gave His disciples at this season is, the contrast between His kingdom and the kingdoms of earth in respect to the mode of acquiring dominion, to which He directed attention, by way of preface, to the doctrine about to be communicated. “Ye know,” He said, “that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great (provincial governors, often more tyrannical than their superiors) exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you.” There is a hint here at another contrast besides the one mainly intended, viz. that between the harsh despotic sway of worldly potentates, and the gentle dominion of love alone admissible in the divine kingdom. But the main object of the words quoted is to point out the difference in the way of acquiring rather than in the manner of using power. The idea is this: earthly kingdoms are ruled by a class of persons who possess hereditary rank-the aristocracy, nobles, or princes. The governing class are those whose birthright it is to rule, and whose boast it is never to have been in a servile position, but always to have been served. In my kingdom, on the other hand, a man becomes a great one, and a ruler, by being first the servant of those over whom he is to bear rule. In other states, they rule whose privilege it is to be ministered unto; in the divine commonwealth, they rule who account it a privilege to minister. In drawing this contrast, Jesus had, of course, no intention to teach politics; no intention either to recognize or to call in question the divine right of the princely cast to rule over their fellow-creatures. He spoke of things as they were, and as His hearers knew them to be in secular states, and especially in the Roman Empire. If any political inference might be drawn from His words, it would not be in favor of absolutism and hereditary privilege, but rather in favor of power being in the hands of those who have earned it by faithful service, whether they belong to the governing class by birth or not. For what is beneficial in the divine kingdom cannot be prejudicial to secular commonwealths. The true interests, one would say, of an earthly kingdom should be promoted by its being governed as nearly as possible in accordance with the laws of the kingdom which cannot be moved. Thrones and crowns may, to prevent disputes, go by hereditary succession, irrespective of personal merit; but the reality of power should ever be in the hands of the ablest, the wisest, and the most devoted to the public good.

Having explained by contrast the great principle of the spiritual commonwealth, that he who would rule therein must first serve, Jesus proceeded next to enforce the doctrine by a reference to His own example. “Whosoever will be chief among you,” said He to the twelve, “let him be your servant;” and then He added the memorable words: “Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

These words were spoken by Jesus as one who claimed to be a king, and aspired to be the first in a great and mighty kingdom. At the end of the sentence we must mentally supply the clause-which was not expressed simply because it was so obviously implied in the connection of thought-“so seeking to win a kingdom.” Our Lord sets Himself forth here not merely as an example of humility, but as one whose case illustrates the truth that the way to power in the spiritual world is service; and in stating that He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, He expresses not the whole truth, but only the present fact. The whole truth was, that He came to minister in the first place, that He might be ministered to in turn by a willing, devoted people, acknowledging Him as their

sovereign. The point on which He wishes to fix the attention of His disciples is the peculiar way He takes to get His crown; and what He says in effect is this: “I am a King, and I expect to have a kingdom; James and John were not mistaken in that respect. But I shall obtain my kingdom in another way than secular princes get theirs. They get their thrones by succession, I get mine by personal merit; they secure their kingdom by right of birth, I hope to secure mine by the right of service; they inherit their subjects, I buy mine, the purchase-money being mine own life.”

What the twelve thought of this novel plan of getting dominion and a kingdom, and especially what ideas the concluding word of their Master suggested to their minds when uttered, we know not. We are sure, however, that they did not comprehend that word; and no marvel, for the thought of Jesus was very deep. Who can understand it fully even now? Here we emphatically see through a glass, in enigmas. This memorable saying has been the subject of much doubtful disputation among theologians, nor can we hope by any thing that we can say to terminate controversy. The word is a deep well which has never yet been fathomed, and probably never will. Brought in so quietly as an illustration to enforce a moral precept, it opens up a region of thought which takes us far beyond the immediate occasion of its being uttered. It raises questions in our minds which it does not solve; and yet there is little in the New Testament on the subject of Christ’s death which might not be comprehended within the limits of its possible significance.

First of all, let us say that we have no sympathy with that school of critical theologians who call in question the authenticity of this word. It is strange to observe how unwilling some are to recognize Christ as the original source of great thoughts which have become essential elements in the faith of the church. This idea of Christ’s death as a ransom is here now. With whom did it take its rise? was the mind of Jesus not original enough to conceive it, that it must be fathered on some one else? Another thing has to be considered in connection with this saying, and the kindred one uttered at the institution of the supper. After Jesus had begun to dwell much in thought, accompanied with deep emotion, on the fact that He must die, it was inevitable that His mind should address itself to the task of investing the harsh, prosaic fact with poetic, mystic meanings. We speak of Jesus for the moment simply as a man of wonderful spiritual genius, whose mind was able to cope with death, and rob it of its character of a mere fate, and invest it with beauty, and clothe the skeleton with the flesh and blood of an attractive system of spiritual meanings.

Regarding, then, this precious saying as unquestionably authentic, what did Christ mean to teach by it? First this, at least, in general, that there was a causal connection between His act in laying down His life and the desired result, viz. spiritual sovereignty. And without having any regard to the term ransom, even supposing it for the moment absent from the text, we can see for ourselves that there is such a connection. However original the method adopted by Jesus for getting a kingdom-and when compared with other methods of getting kingdoms, e.g. by inheritance, the most respectable way, or by the sword, or, basest of all, by paying down a sum of money, as in the last days of the Roman Empire, its originality is beyond dispute-however original the method of Jesus, it has proved strangely successful. The event has proved that there must be a connection between the two things-the death on the cross and the sovereignty of souls. Thousands of human beings, yea, millions, in every age, have said Amen with all their hearts to the doxology of John in the Apocalypse: “Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, unto Him be glory and dominion forever.” Without doubt this result of His self-devotion was present to the mind of Jesus when He uttered

the words before us, and in uttering them He meant for one thing to emphasize the power of divine love in self-sacrifice, to assert its sway over human hearts, and to win for the King of the sacred commonwealth a kind of sovereignty not attainable otherwise than by humbling Himself to take upon Him the form of a servant. Some assert that to gain this power was the sole end of the Incarnation. We do not agree with this view, but we have no hesitation in regarding the attainment of such moral power by self-sacrifice as one end of the Incarnation. The Son of God wished to charm us away from self-indulgence and self-worship, to emancipate us from sin's bondage by the power of His love, that we might acknowledge ourselves to be His, and devote ourselves gratefully to His services. But there is more in the text than we have yet found, for Jesus says not merely that He is to lay down His life for the many, but that He is to lay down His life in the form of a ransom. The question is, what are we to understand by this form in which the fact of death is expressed? Now it may be assumed that the word "ransom" was used by Jesus in a sense having affinity to Old Testament usage. The Greek word (lu)tron) is employed in the Septuagint as the equivalent for the Hebrew word kopher, about whose meaning there has been much discussion, but the general sense of which is a covering. How the idea of covering is to be taken, whether in the sense of shielding, or in the sense of exactly covering the same surface, as one penny covers another, i.e. as an equivalent, has been disputed, and must remain doubtful. The theological interest of the question is this, that if we accept the word in the general sense of protection, then the ransom is not offered or accepted as a legal equivalent for the persons or things redeemed, but simply as something of a certain value which is received as a matter of favor. But leaving this point on one side, what we are concerned with in connection with this text is the broader thought that Christ's life is given and accepted for the lives of many, whether as an exact equivalent or otherwise being left indeterminate. Jesus represents His death voluntarily endured as a means of delivering from death the souls of the many; how or why does not clearly appear. A German theologian, who energetically combats the Anselmian theory of satisfaction, finds in the word these three thoughts: First, the ransom is offered as a gift to God, not to the devil. Jesus, having undoubtedly the train of thought in Psa 49:1 in His mind, speaks of devoting His life to God in the pursuit of His vocation, not of subjecting Himself to the might of sin or of the devil. Second, Jesus not only presupposes that no man can offer either for himself or for others a valuable gift capable of warding off death unto God, as the Psalmist declares; but He asserts that in this view He Himself renders a service in the place of many which no one of them could render either for himself or for another. Third, Jesus, having in mind also, doubtless, the words of Elihu in the Book of Job concerning an angel, one of a thousand, who may avail to ransom a man from death, distinguishes Himself from the mass of men liable to death in so far as He regards Himself as excepted from the natural doom of death, and conceives of His death as a voluntary act by which He surrenders His life to God, as in the text John 10:17-18. In taking so much out of the saying we do not subject it to undue straining. The assumption that there is a mental reference to the Old Testament texts in the forty-ninth Psalm and in the thirty-third chapter of Job, as also to the redemption of the males among the children of Israel by the payment of a half-shekel, seems reasonable; and in the light of these passages it does not seem going too far to take out of our Lord's words these three ideas: The ransom is given to God (Psa 49:7 : "Nor give to God a ransom for him"); it is given for the lives of men doomed to die; and it is available for such a purpose because the thing given is the life of an exceptional being, one among a thousand, not a brother mortal doomed to die, but an angel assuming flesh that He may freely die. Thus the text contains,

besides the general truth that by dying in self-sacrificing love the Son of man awakens in the many a sense of grateful devotion that carries Him to a throne, this more special one, that by His death He puts the many doomed to death as the penalty of sin somehow in a different relation to God, so that they are no longer criminals, but sons of God, heirs of eternal life, members of the holy commonwealth, enjoying all its privileges, redeemed by the life of the King Himself, as the half-shekel offered as the price of redemption.

These few hints must suffice as an indication of the probable meaning of the autobiographical saying in which Jesus conveyed to His disciples their second lesson on the doctrine of the cross. With two additional reflections thereon we end this chapter. When He said of Himself that He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, Jesus alluded not merely to His death, but to His whole life. The statement is an epitome in a single sentence of His entire earthly history. The reference to His death has the force of a superlative. He came to minister, even to the extent of giving His life a ransom. Then this saying, while breathing the spirit of utter lowliness, at the same time betrays the consciousness of superhuman dignity. Had Jesus not been more than man, His language would not have been humble, but presumptuous. Why should the son of a carpenter say of Himself, I came not to be ministered unto? servile position and occupation was a matter of course for such an one. The statement before us is rational and humble, only as coming from one who, being in the form of God, freely assumed the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death for our salvation.

02.18. The Anointing in Bethany

The Anointing in Bethany; or, Third Lesson On the Doctrine of the Cross Mat 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-8. The touching story of the anointing of Jesus by Mary at Bethany forms part of the preface to the history of the passion, as recorded in the synoptical Gospels. That preface, as given most fully by Matthew, includes four particulars: first, a statement made by Jesus to His disciples two days before the passover concerning His betrayal; second, a meeting of the priests in Jerusalem to consult when and how Jesus should be put to death; third, the anointing by Mary; fourth, the secret correspondence between Judas and the priests. In Mark's preface the first of these four particulars is omitted; in Luke's both the first and the third. The four facts related by the first evangelist had this in common, that they were all signs that the end so often foretold was at length at hand. Jesus now says, not "the Son of man shall be betrayed," but "the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified." The ecclesiastical authorities of Israel are assembled in solemn conclave, not to discuss the question what should be done with the object of their dislike-that is already determined-but how the deed of darkness may be done most stealthily and most securely. The Victim has been anointed by a friendly hand for the approaching sacrifice. And, finally, an instrument has been found to relieve the priests from their perplexity, and to pave the way in a most unexpected manner for the consummation of their wicked purpose. The grouping of the incidents in the introduction to the tragic history of the crucifixion is strikingly dramatic in its effect. First comes the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem plotting against the life of the Just One. Then comes Mary at Bethany, in her unutterable love breaking her alabaster box, and pouring its contents on the head and feet of her beloved Lord. Last comes Judas, offering to sell his Master for less than Mary wasted on a useless act of affection! Hatred and baseness on either hand, and true love in the midst. This memorable transaction of Mary with her alabaster box belongs to the history of the passion, in virtue of the interpretation put upon it by Jesus, which gives to it the character of a lyric prelude to the great tragedy enacted on Calvary. It belongs to the history of the twelve disciples, because of the unfavorable construction which they put on it. All the disciples, it seems, disapproved of the action, the only difference between Judas and the rest being that he disapproved on hypocritical grounds, while his fellow-disciples were honest both in their judgment and in their motives. By their fault-finding the twelve rendered to Mary a good service. They secured for her a present defender in Jesus, and future eulogists in themselves. Their censure drew from the Lord the extraordinary statement, that wheresoever the gospel might be preached in the whole world, what Mary had done would be spoken of for a memorial of her. This prophecy the fault-finding disciples, when they became apostles, helped to fulfill. They felt bound by the virtual commandment of their Master, as well as by the generous redaction of their own hearts, to make amends to Mary for former wrong done, by telling the tale of her true love to Jesus wherever they told the story of His true love to men. From their lips the touching narrative passed in due course into the gospel records, to be read with a thrill of delight by true Christians to the end of time. Verily one might be content to be spoken against for a season for the sake of such chivalrous championship as that of Jesus, and such magnanimous recantations as those of His apostles! When we consider from whom Mary's defense proceeds, we must be satisfied that it was not

merely generous, but just. And yet surely it is a defense of a most surprising character! Verily it seems as if, while the disciples went to one extreme in blaming, their Lord went to the other extreme in praising; as if, in so lauding the woman of Bethany, He were but repeating her extravagance in another form. You feel tempted to ask: Was her action, then, so preeminently meritorious as to deserve to be associated with the gospel throughout all time? Then, as to the explanation of the action given by Jesus, the further questions suggest themselves: Was there really any reference in Mary's mind to His death and burial while she was performing it? Does not Jesus rather impute to her His own feeling, and invest her act with an ideal poetic significance, which lay not in it, but in His own thoughts? And if so, can we endorse the judgment He pronounced; or must we, on the question as to the intrinsic merit of Mary's act, give our vote on the side of the twelve against their Master?

We, for our part, cordially take Christ's side of the question; and in doing so, we can afford to make two admissions. In the first place, we admit that Mary had no thought of embalming, in the literal sense, the dead body of Jesus, and possibly was not thinking of His death at all when she anointed Him with the precious ointment. Her action was simply a festive honor done to one whom she loved unspeakably, and which she might have rendered at another time. We admit further, that it would certainly have been an extravagance to speak of Mary's deed, however noble, as entitled to be associated with the gospel everywhere and throughout all time, unless it were fit to be spoken of not merely for her sake, but more especially for the gospel's sake; that is to say, unless it were capable of being made use of to expound the nature of the gospel. In other words, the breaking of the alabaster box must be worthy to be employed as an emblem of the deed of love performed by Jesus in dying on the cross.

Such, indeed, we believe it to be. Wherever the gospel is truly preached, the story of the anointing is sure to be prized as the best possible illustration of the spirit which moved Jesus to lay down His life, as also of the spirit of Christianity as it manifests itself in the lives of sincere believers. The breaking of the alabaster box is a beautiful symbol at once of Christ's love to us and of the love we owe to Him. As Mary broke her box of ointment and poured forth its precious contents, so Christ broke His body and shed His precious blood; so Christians pour forth their hearts before their Lord, counting not their very lives dear for His sake. Christ's death was a breaking of an alabaster box for us; our life should be a breaking of an alabaster box for Him. This relation of spiritual affinity between the deed of Mary and His own deed in dying is the true key to all that is enigmatical in the language of Jesus in speaking of the former. It explains, for example, the remarkable manner in which He referred to the gospel in connection therewith. "This gospel," He said, as if it had been already spoken of; nay, as if the act of anointing were the gospel. And so it was in a figure. The one act already done by Mary naturally suggested to the mind of Jesus the other act about to be done by Himself. "There," He thought within Himself, "in that broken vessel and outpoured oil is my death foreshadowed; in the hidden motive from which that deed proceeded is the eternal spirit in which I offer myself a sacrifice revealed." This thought He meant to express when He used the phrase "this gospel;" and in putting such a construction on Mary's deed He was in effect giving His disciples their third lesson on the doctrine of the cross. In the light of this same relation of spiritual affinity, we clearly perceive the true meaning of the statement made by Jesus concerning Mary's act: "In that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial." It was a mystic, poetic explanation of a most poetic deed, and as such was not only beautiful, but true. For the

anointing in Bethany has helped to preserve, to embalm so to speak, the true meaning of the Saviour's death. It has supplied us with a symbolic act through which to understand that death; it has shed around the cross an imperishable aroma of self forgetting love; it has decked the Saviour's grave with flowers that never shall wither, and reared for Jesus, as well as for Mary, a memorial-stone that shall endure throughout all generations. Might it not be fitly said of such a deed, She did it for my burial? Was it not most unfitly said of a deed capable of rendering so important a service to the gospel, that it was wasteful and useless?

These questions will be answered in the affirmative by all who are convinced that the spiritual affinity asserted by us really did exist. What we have now to do, therefore, is to show, by going a little into detail, that our assertion is well founded.

There are three outstanding points of resemblance between Mary's "good work" in anointing Jesus, and the good work wrought by Jesus Himself in dying on the cross.

There was first a resemblance in motive. Mary wrought her good work out of pure love. She loved Jesus with her whole heart, for what He was, for what He had done for the family to which she belonged, and for the words of instruction she had heard from His lips when He came on a visit to their house. There was such a love in her heart for her friend and benefactor as imperatively demanded expression, and yet could not find expression in words. She must do something to relieve her pent-up emotions: she must get an alabaster box and break it, and pour it on the person of Jesus, else her heart will break.

Herein Mary's act resembles closely that of Jesus in dying on the cross, and in coming to this world that He might die. For just such a love as that of Mary, only far deeper and stronger, moved Him to sacrifice Himself for us. The simple account of Christ's whole conduct in becoming man, and undergoing what is recorded of Him, is this: He loved sinners. After wearying themselves in studying the philosophy of redemption, learned theologians come back to this as the most satisfactory explanation that can be given. Jesus so loved sinners as to lay down His life for them; nay, we might almost say, He so loved them that He must needs come and die for them. Like Nehemiah, the Jewish patriot in the court of the Persian king, He could not stay in heaven's court while His brethren far away on earth were in an evil case; He must ask and obtain leave to go down to their assistance. Or, like Mary, He must procure an alabaster box-a human body-fill it with the fine essence of a human soul, and pour out His soul unto death on the cross for our salvation. The spirit of Jesus, yea, the spirit of the Eternal God, is the spirit of Mary and of Nehemiah, and of all who are likeminded with them. In reverence we ought rather to say, the spirit of such is the spirit of Jesus and of God; and yet it is needful at times to put the matter in the inverse way. For somehow we are slow to believe that love is a reality for God. We almost shrink, as if it were an impiety, from ascribing to the Divine Being attributes which we confess to be the noblest and most heroic in human character. Hence the practical value of the sanction here given by Jesus to the association of the anointing in Bethany with the crucifixion on Calvary. He, in effect, says to us thereby: Be not afraid to regard my death as an act of the same kind as that of Mary: an act of pure, devoted love. Let the aroma of her ointment circulate about the neighborhood of my cross, and help you to discern the sweet savor of my sacrifice. Amid all your speculations and theories on the grand theme of redemption, take heed that ye fail not to see in my death my loving heart, and the loving heart of my Father, revealed.

Mary's "good work" further resembled Christ's in its self-sacrificing character. It was not without an effort and a sacrifice that that devoted woman performed her famous act of homage. All the evangelists make particular mention of the costliness of the ointment. Mark and John represent the murmuring disciples as estimating its value at the round sum of three hundred pence; equal, say, to the wages of a laboring man for a whole year at the then current rate of a denarius per day. This was a large sum in itself; but what is more particularly to be noted, it was a very large sum for Mary. This we learn from Christ's own words, as recorded by the second evangelist. "She hath done what she could," He kindly remarked of her, in defending her conduct against the harsh censures of His disciples. It was a remark of the same kind as that which He made a day or two after in Jerusalem concerning the poor widow whom He saw casting two mites into the temple treasury; and it implied that Mary had expended all her resources on that singular tribute of respect to Him whom her soul loved. All her earnings, all her little hoard, had been given in exchange for that box, whose precious contents she poured on the Saviour's person. Hers was no ordinary love: it was a noble, heroic, self-sacrificing devotion, which made her do her utmost for its object.

Herein the woman of Bethany resembled the Son of man. He, too, did what He could. Whatever it was possible for a holy being to endure in the way of humiliation, temptation, sorrow, suffering, yea, even in the way of becoming "sin" and "a curse," He willingly underwent. All through His life on earth He scrupulously abstained from doing aught that might tend to make his cup of affliction come short of absolute fullness. He denied himself all the advantages of divine power and privilege; He emptied Himself; He made Himself poor; He became in all possible respects like His sinful brethren, that He might qualify Himself for being a merciful and trustworthy High Priest to them in things pertaining to God. Such sacrifices in life and death did His love impose on Him.

While imposing sacrifices, love, by way of compensation, makes them easy. It is not only love's destiny, but it is love's delight, to endure hardships, to bear burdens for the object loved. It is not satisfied till it has found an opportunity of embodying itself in a service involving cost, labor, pain. The things from which selfishness shrinks love ardently longs for. These reflections, we believe, are applicable to Mary. With her love to Jesus, it was more easy for her to do what she did than to refrain from doing it. But love's readiness and eagerness to sacrifice herself are most signally exemplified in the case of Jesus Himself. It was indeed His pleasure to suffer for our redemption. Far from shrinking from the cross, He looked forward to it with earnest desire; and when the hour of His passion approached, He spoke of it as the hour of His glorification. He had no thought of achieving our salvation at the smallest possible cost to Himself. His feeling was rather akin to this: "The more I suffer the better: the more thoroughly shall I realize my identity with my brethren; the more completely will the sympathetic, burden-bearing, help-bringing instincts and yearnings of my love be satisfied." Yes: Jesus had more to do than to purchase sinners for as small a price as would be accepted for their ransom. He had to do justice to His own heart; He had adequately to express its deep compassion; and no act of limited or calculated dimensions would avail to exhaust the contents of that whose dimensions were immeasurable. Measured suffering, especially when endured by so august a personage, might satisfy divine justice, but it could not satisfy divine love. A third feature which fitted Mary's "good work" to be an emblem of the Saviour's, was its magnificence. This also appeared in the expenditure connected with the act of anointing, which was not only such as involved a sacrifice for a person of her means, but very liberal with reference to the purpose in hand. The quantity of oil employed in the service was,

according to John, not less than a pound weight. This was much more than could be said to be necessary. There was an appearance of waste and extravagance in the manner of the anointing, even admitting the thing in itself to be right and proper. Whether the disciples would have objected to the ceremony, however performed, does not appear; but it was evidently the extravagant amount of ointment expended which was the prominent object of their displeasure. We conceive them as saying in effect: “Surely less might have done; the greater part at least, if not the whole of this anointment, might have been saved for other uses. This is simply senseless, prodigal expenditure.”

What to the narrow-hearted disciples seemed prodigality was but the princely magnificence of love, which, as even a heathen philosopher could tell, considers not for how much or how little this or that can be done, but how it can be done most gracefully and handsomely. And what seemed to them purposeless waste served at least one good purpose. It symbolized a similar characteristic of Christ’s good work as the Saviour of sinners. He did His work magnificently, and in no mean, economical way. He accomplished the redemption of “many” by means adequate to redeem all. “With Him is plenteous redemption.” He did not measure out His blood in proportion to the number to be saved, nor limit His sympathies as the sinner’s friend to the elect. He shed bitter tears for doomed souls; He shed His blood without measure, and without respect to numbers, and offered an atonement which was sufficient for the sins of the world. Nor was this attribute of universal sufficiency attaching to His atoning work one to which He was indifferent. On the contrary, it appears to have been in His thoughts at the very moment He uttered the words authorizing the association of Mary’s deed of love with the gospel. For He speaks of that gospel, which was to consist in the proclamation of His deed of love in dying for sinners, as a gospel for the whole world; evidently desiring that, as the odor of Mary’s ointment filled the room in which the guests were assembled, so the aroma of His sacrifice might be diffused as an atmosphere of saving health among all the nations.

We may say, therefore, that in defending Mary against the charge of waste, Jesus was at the same time defending Himself; replying by anticipation to such questions as these: To what purpose weep over doomed Jerusalem? why sorrow for souls that are after all to perish? why trouble Himself about men not elected to salvation? why command His gospel to be preached to every creature, with an emphasis which seems to say He wishes every one saved, when He knows only a definite number will believe the report? why not confine His sympathies and His solicitudes to those who shall be effectually benefited by them? why not restrict His love to the channel of the covenant? why allow it to overflow the embankments like a river in full flood?

Such questions betray ignorance of the conditions under which even the elect are saved. Christ could not save any unless He were heartily willing to save all, for that willingness is a part of the perfect righteousness which it behoved Him to fulfill. The sum of duty is, Love God supremely, and thy neighbor as thyself; and “neighbor” means, for Christ as for us, every one who needs help, and whom He can help. But not to dwell on this, we remark that such questions show ignorance of the nature of love. Magnificence, misnamed by churls extravagance and waste, is an invariable attribute of all true love. David recognized this truth when he selected the profuse anointing of Aaron with the oil of consecration at his installation into the office of high priest as a fit emblem of brotherly love. There was “waste” in that anointing too, as well as in the one which took place at Bethany. For the oil was not sprinkled on the head of Aaron, though that might have been

sufficient for the purpose of a mere ceremony. The vessel was emptied on the high priest's person, so that its contents flowed down from the head upon the beard, and even to the skirts of the sacerdotal robes. In that very waste lay the point of the resemblance for David. It was a feature that was likely to strike his mind, for he, too, was a wasteful man in his way. He had loved God in a manner which exposed him to the charge of extravagance. He had danced before the Lord, for example, when the ark was brought up from the house of Obededom to Jerusalem, forgetful of his dignity, exceeding the bounds of decorum, and, as it might seem, without excuse, as a much less hearty demonstration of his feelings would have served the purpose of a religious solemnity.

David, Mary, Jesus, all loving, devoted beings, prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors, belong to one company, and come all under one condemnation. They must all plead guilty to a waste of affection, sorrow, labor, tears; all live so as to earn for themselves the blame of extravagance, which is their highest praise. David dances, and Michal sneers; prophets break their hearts for their people's sins and miseries, and the people make sport of their grief; Marys break their alabaster boxes, and frigid disciples object to the waste; men of God sacrifice their all for their religious convictions, and the world calls them fools for their pains, and philosophers bid them beware of being martyrs by mistake; Jesus weeps over sinners that will not come to Him to be saved, and thankless men ask, Why shed tears over vessels of wrath fitted for destruction?

We have thus seen that Mary's good deed was a fit and worthy emblem of the good deed of Jesus Christ in dying on the cross. We are now to show that Mary herself is in some important respects worthy to be spoken of as a model Christian. Three features in her character entitle her to this honorable name.

First among these is her enthusiastic attachment to the person of Christ. The most prominent feature in Mary's character was her power of loving, her capacity of self devotion. It was this virtue, as manifested in her action, that elicited the admiration of Jesus. He was so delighted with the chivalrous deed of love, that He, so to speak, canonized Mary on the spot, as a king might confer knighthood on the battlefield on a soldier who had performed some noble feat of arms. "Behold," He said in effect, "here is what I understand by Christianity: an unselfish and uncalculating devotion to me as the Saviour of sinners, and as the Sovereign of the kingdom of truth and righteousness. Therefore, wherever the gospel is preached, let this that this woman heath done be spoken of, not merely as a memorial of her, but to intimate what I expect of all who believe in me." In so commending Mary, Jesus gives us to understand in effect that devotion is the chief of Christian virtues. He proclaims the same doctrine afterwards taught by one who, though last, was the first of all the apostles in his comprehension of the mind of Christ-the Apostle Paul. That glowing panegyric on charity, so well known to all readers of his epistles, in which he makes eloquence, knowledge, faith, the gift of tongues, and the gift of prophecy, do obeisance to her, as the sovereign virtue, is but the faithful interpretation in general terms of the encomium pronounced on the woman of Bethany. The story of the anointing and the thirteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians may be read with advantage together. In making love the test and measure of excellence, Jesus and Paul, and the rest of the apostles (for they all shared the Master's mind at last), differ widely from the world religious and Chorologies. Pharisees and Sadducees, scrupulous religionists, and unscrupulous men of no religion, agree in disliking ardent, enthusiastic, chivalrous devotion, even in the most noble cause. They are wise and prudent, and their philosophy might be embodied in such maxims as these: "Be not too catholic in your sentiments, too warm in your

sympathies, too keen in your sense of duty; never allow your heart to get the better of your head, or your principles to interfere with your interest." So widely diffused is the dislike to earnestness, especially in good, that all nations have their proverbs against enthusiasm. The Greeks had their mhden a!gan, the Latins their ne quid nimis; expressing skepticism in proverb-maker and proverb-quoter as to the possibility of wisdom being enthusiastic about any thing. The world is prosaic, not poetic, in temperament-prudential, not impulsive: it abhors eccentricity in good or in evil; it prefers a dead level of mediocrity, moderation, and self-possession; its model man is one who never forgets himself, either by sinking below himself in folly or wickedness, or by rising above himself, and getting rid of meanness, pride, selfishness, cowardice, and vanity in devotion to a noble cause. The twelve were like the world in their temperament at the time of the anointing: they seem to have regarded Mary as a romantic, quixotic, crazy creature, and her action as absurd and indefensible. They objected not, of course, to her love of Jesus; but they deemed the manner of its manifestation foolish, as the money spent on the ointment might have been applied to a better purpose-say, to the relief of the destitute-and Jesus loved nothing the less, seeing that, according to His own teaching, all philanthropic actions were deeds of kindness to Himself. And, on first thoughts, one is half inclined to say that they had reason on their side, and were far wiser, while not less devoted to Jesus than Mary. But look at their behavior on the day of their Lord's crucifixion, and learn the difference between them and her. Mary loved so ardently as to be beyond calculations of consequences or expenses; they loved so coldly, that there was room for fear in their hearts: therefore, while Mary spent her all on the ointment, they all forsook their Master, and fled to save their own lives. Whence we can see that, despite occasional extravagances, apparent or real, that spirit is wisest as well as noblest which makes us incapable of calculation, and proof against temptations arising therefrom. One rash, blundering, but heroic Luther is worth a thousand men of the Erasmus type, unspeakably wise, but cold, passionless, timid, and time-serving. Scholarship is great, but action is greater; and the power to do noble actions comes from love.

How great is the devoted Mary compared with the coldhearted disciples! She does noble deeds, and they criticize them. Poor work for a human being, criticism, especially the sort that abounds in fault-finding! Love does not care for such occupation; it is too petty for her generous mind. If there be room for praise, she will give that in unstinted measure; but rather than carp and blame, she prefers to be silent. Then observe again how love in Mary becomes a substitute for prescience. She does not know that Jesus is about to die, but she acts as if she did. Such as Mary can divine; the instincts of love, the inspiration of the God of love, teach them to do the right thing at the right time, which is the very highest attainment of true wisdom. On the other hand, we see in the case of the disciples how coldness of heart consumes knowledge and makes men stupid. They had received far more information than Mary concerning the future. If they did not know that Jesus was about to be put to death, they ought to have known from the many hints and even plain intimations which had been given them. But, alas! they had forgot all these. And why? For the same reason which makes all men so forgetful of things pertaining to their neighbors. The twelve were too much taken up with their own affairs. Their heads were filled with vain dreams of worldly ambition, and so their Master's words were forgotten almost as soon as they were uttered, and it became needful that He should tell them pathetically and reproachfully: "The poor ye have always with you, but me ye have not always." Men so minded never understand the times, so as to know what Israel ought to do, or to approve the conduct of those who do know. A second admirable feature in

Mary's character was the freedom of her spirit. She was not tied down to methods and rules of well-doing. The disciples, judging from their language, seem to have been great methodists, servile in their adherence to certain stereotyped modes of action. "This ointment," said they, "might have been sold for much, and given to the poor." They understand that charity to the poor is a very important duty: they know that their Master often referred to it; and they make it every thing. "Charity," in the sense of almsgiving, is their hobby. When Judas went out to betray his Lord, they fancied that he was gone to distribute what remained of the supper among some poor persons of his acquaintance. Their very ideas of well-doing appear to be method-ridden. Good works with them do not seem to be co-extensive with noble deeds of all sorts. The phrase is technical, and limited in its application to a confined circle of actions of an expressly and obviously religious and benevolent nature. Not so with Mary. She knows of more ways of doing good than one. She can invent ways of her own. She is original, creative, not slavishly imitative. And she is as fearless as she is original. She cannot only imagine forms of well-doing out of the beaten track, but she has the courage to realize her conceptions. She is not afraid of the public. She does not ask beforehand, What will the twelve think of this? With a free mind she forms her plan, and with prompt, free hand she forthwith executes it. For this freedom Mary was indebted to her large heart. Love made her original in thought and conduct. People without heart cannot be original as she was. They may addict themselves to good works from one motive or another; but they go about them in a very slavish, mechanical way. They have to be told by some individual in whom they confide, or more commonly, by custom or fashion, what to do; and hence they never do any good which is not in vogue. But Mary needed no counselor: she took counsel of her own heart. Love told her infallibly what was the duty of the hour; that her business for the present was not to give alms, but to anoint the person of the great High Priest.

We may learn from the example of Mary that love is, not less than necessity, the mother of invention. A great heart has fully as much to do with spiritual originality as a clever head. What is needed to fill the church with original preachers, original givers, original actors in all departments of Christian work, is not more brains, or more training, or more opportunities, but above all, more heart. When there is little love in the Christian community, it resembles a river in dry weather, which not only keeps within its banks, but does not even occupy the whole of its channel, leaving large beds of gravel or sand lying high and dry on both sides of the current. But when the love of God is shed abroad in the hearts of her members, the church becomes like the same river in time of rain. The stream begins to rise, all the gravel beds gradually disappear, and at length the swollen flood not only fills its channel, but overflows its banks, and spreads over the meadows. New methods of well-doing are then attempted, and new measures of well-doing reached; new songs are indited and sung; new forms of expression for old truths are invented, not for the sake of novelty, but in the creative might of a new spiritual life.

It was love that made Mary free from fear, as well as from the bondage of mechanical custom. "Love," saith one who knew love's power well, "casteth out fear." Love can make even shrinking, sensitive women bold-bolder even than men. It can teach us to disregard that thing called public opinion, before which all mankind cowers. It was love that made Peter and John so bold when they stood before the Sanhedrin. They had been with Jesus long enough to love Him more than their own life, and therefore they quailed not before the face of the mighty. It was love that made Jesus Himself so indifferent to censure, and so disregardful of conventional restraints in the prosecution

of His work. His heart was so devoted to His philanthropic mission, that He set at defiance the world's disapprobation; nay, probably did not so much as think of it, except when it obtruded itself upon His notice. And what love did for Mary, and for Jesus, and for the apostles in after days, it does for all. Wherever it exists in liberal measure, it banishes timidity and shyness, and the imbecility which accompanies these, and brings along with it power of character and soundness of mind. And to crown the encomium, we may add, that while it makes us bold, love does not make us impudent. Some men are bold because they are too selfish to care for other people's feelings. Those who are bold through love may dare to do things which will be found fault with; but they are always anxious, as far as possible, to please their neighbors, and to avoid giving offence.

One remark more let us make under this head. The liberty which springs from love can never be dangerous. In these days many people are greatly alarmed at the progress of broad school theology. And of the breadth that consists in skeptical indifference to catholic Christian truth we do well to be jealous. But, on the other hand, of the breadth and freedom due to consuming love for Christ, and all the grand interests of His kingdom, we cannot have too much. The spirit of charity may indeed treat as comparatively light matters, things which men of austere mind deem of almost vital importance, and may be disposed to do things which men more enamored of order and use and wont than of freedom may consider licentious innovations. But the harm done will be imaginary rather than real; and even if it were otherwise, the impulsive Marys are never so numerous in the church that they may not safely be tolerated. There are always a sufficient number of prosaic, order-loving disciples to keep their quixotic brethren in due check.

Finally, the nobility of Mary's spirit was not less remarkable than its freedom. There was no taint of vulgar utilitarianism about her character. She thought habitually, not of the immediately, obviously, and materially useful, but of the honorable, the lovely, the morally beautiful. Hard, practical men might have pronounced her a romantic, sentimental, dreamy mystic; but a more just, appreciative estimate would represent her as a woman whose virtues were heroic and chivalrous rather than commercial. Jesus signalized the salient point in Mary's character by the epithet which He employed to describe her action. He did not call it a useful work, but a good, or, better still, a noble work. And yet, while Mary's deed was characteristically noble, it was not the less useful. All good deeds are useful in some way and at some time or other. All noble and beautiful things-thoughts, words, deeds-contribute ultimately to the benefit of the world. Only the uses of such deeds as Mary's-of the best and noblest needs-are not always apparent or appreciable. If we were to make immediate, obvious, and vulgar uses the test of what is right, we should exclude not only the anointing in Bethany, but all fine poems and works of art, all sacrifices of material advantage to truth and duty; every thing, in fact, that has not tended directly to increase outward wealth and comfort, but has merely helped to redeem the world from vulgarity, given us glimpses of the far-off land of beauty and goodness, concerning which we now and then but faintly dream, brought us into contact with the divine and the eternal, made the earth classic ground, a field where heroes have fought, and where their bones are buried, and where the moss-grown stone stands to commemorate their valor. In this nobility of spirit Mary was pre-eminently the Christian. For the genius of Christianity is certainly not utilitarian. Its counsel is: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are venerable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, think of these things." All these things are emphatically useful; but it is not of their utility, but of themselves, we are asked to think, and that for a very good reason.

Precisely in order to be useful, we must aim at something higher than usefulness; just as, in order to be happy, we must aim at something higher than happiness. We must make right revealed to us by an enlightened conscience and a loving pure heart our rule of duty, and then we may be sure that uses of all kinds will be served by our conduct, whether we foresee them or not; whereas, if we make calculations of utility our guide in action, we shall leave undone the things which are noblest and best, because as a rule the uses of such things are least obvious, and longest in making their appearance. Supremely useful to the world is the heroic devotion of the martyr; but it takes centuries to develop the benefits of martyrdom; and if all men had followed the maxims of utilitarian philosophy, and made utility their motive to action, there would never have been any martyrs at all. Utilitarianism tends to trimming and time-serving; it is the death of heroism and self-sacrifice; it walks by sight, and not by faith; it looks only to the present, and forgets the future; it seats prudence on the throne of conscience; it produces not great characters, but at best petty busybodies. These things being considered, it need not surprise us to find that the term “usefulness,” of such frequent recurrence in the religious vocabulary of the present day, has no place in the New Testament.

Four further observations may fitly close these meditations on the memorable transactions in Bethany.

1. In all the attributes of character hitherto enumerated, Mary was a model of genuinely evangelic piety. The evangelic spirit is a Spirit of noble love and fearless liberty. It is a counterfeit evangelicism that is a slave to the past, to tradition, to fixed customs and methods in religion. The true name for this temper and tendency is legalism.

2. From Christ’s defense of Mary we may learn that being found fault with is not infallible evidence of being wrong. A much-blamed man is commonly considered to have done something amiss, as the only possible reason for his being censured. But, in truth, he may only have done something unusual; for all unusual things are found fault with-the unusually good as well as, nay, more than, the unusually bad. Hence it comes that Paul makes the apparently superfluous remark, that there is no law against love and its kindred graces. In point of fact, these virtues are treated as if illegal and criminal whenever they exceed the usual stinted niggard measure in which such precious metals are found in the world. Was not He who perfectly embodied all the heavenly graces flung out of existence by the world as a person not to be tolerated? Happily the world ultimately comes round to a juster opinion, though often too late to be of service to those who have suffered wrong. The barbarians of the island of Malta, who, when they saw the viper fastened on Paul’s hand, thought he must needs be a murderer, changed their minds when he shook off the reptile unharmed, and exclaimed, “He is a god.” Hence we should learn this maxim of prudence, not to be too hasty in criticizing if we want to have credit for insight and consistency. But we should discipline ourselves to slowness in judging from far higher considerations. We ought to cherish a reverence for the character and for the personality of all intelligent responsible beings, and to be under a constant fear of making mistakes, and calling good evil, and evil good. In the words of an ancient philosopher, “We ought always to be very careful when about to blame or praise a man, lest we speak not rightly. For this purpose it is necessary to learn to discriminate between good and bad men. For God is displeased when one blames a person like Himself, or praises one unlike Himself. Do not imagine that stones and sticks, and birds and serpents, are holy, and that men are not. For of all things the holiest is a good man, and the most detestable a bad.”

3. If we cannot be Christians like Mary, let us at all events not be disciples like Judas. Some may think it would not be desirable that all should be like the woman of Bethany: plausibly alleging that, considering the infirmity of human nature, it is necessary that the romantic, impulsive, mystic school of Christians should be kept in check by another school of more prosaic, conservative, and so to say, plebeian character; while perhaps admitting that a few Christians like Mary in the church help to preserve religion from degenerating into coarseness, vulgarity, and formalism. Be this as it may, the church has certainly no need for Judases. Judas and Mary! these two represent the two extremes of human character. The one exemplifies Plato's pa)ntwn marw)taton (hatefullest of all things), the other his pa)ntwn i(erw)taton (holiest of all things). Characters so diverse compel us to believe in a heaven and a hell. Each one goeth to his and her own place: Mary to the land of the real; Judas to the land of the false, who sell their conscience and their God for gold.

4. It is worthy of notice how naturally and appropriately Jesus, in His magnanimous defense of Mary's generous, large-hearted deed, rises to the full height of prophetic prescience, and anticipates for His gospel a world-wide diffusion: "Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world." Such a gospel could be nothing less than world-wide in sympathy, and no one who understood it and its Author could fail to have a burning desire to go into all the world and preach it unto every creature. This universalistic touch in Christ's utterance at this time, far from taking us by surprise, rather seems a matter of course. Even critics of the naturalistic school allow its genuineness. "This word in Bethany," says one of the ablest writers on the Gospel history belonging to this school, "is the solitary quite reliable word of the last period of Christ's life concerning the world-wide career which Jesus saw opening up for Himself and His cause." If therefore the twelve remained narrow Judaists to the end, it was not due to the absence of the universalistic element in their Master's teaching, but simply to this, that they remained permanently as incapable of appreciating Mary's act, and the gospel whereof it was an emblem, as they showed themselves at this time. That they did so continue, however, we do not believe; and the best evidence of this is that the story of Mary of Bethany has attained a place in the evangelic records.

02.19. Firstfruits of the Gentiles

Firstfruits of the Gentiles

John 12:20-23 This narrative presents interesting points of affinity with that contained in the fourth chapter of John's Gospel-the story of the woman by the well. In both Jesus comes into contact with persons outside the pale of the Jewish church; in both He takes occasion from such contact to speak in glowing language of an hour that is coming, yea, now is, which shall usher in a glorious new era for the kingdom of God; in both He expresses, in the most intense, emphatic terms, His devotion to His Father's will, His faith in the future spread of the gospel, and His lively hope of a personal reward in glory; in both, to note yet one other point of resemblance, He employs, for the expression of His thought, agricultural metaphors: in one case, the earlier, borrowing His figure from the process of reaping; in the other, the later, from that of sowing.

But, besides resemblances, marked differences are observable in these two passages from the life of the Lord Jesus. Of these the most outstanding is this, that while on the earlier occasion there was nothing but enthusiasm, joy, and hope in the Saviour's breast, on the present occasion these feelings are blended with deep sadness. His soul is not only elated with the prospect of coming glory, but troubled as with the prospect of impending disaster. The reason is that His death is nigh: it is within three days of the time when He must be lifted up on the cross; and sentient nature shrinks from the bitter Cut of suffering. But while we observe the presence of a new emotion here, we also see that its presence produces no abatement in the old emotions manifested by Jesus in connection with His interview with the woman of Samaria. On the contrary, the near prospect of death only furnishes the Saviour with the means of giving enhanced intensity to the expression of His devotion and His faith and hope. Formerly He said that the doing of His Father's will was more to Him than meat; now He says in effect that it is more to Him than life. At the beginning He had seen by the eye of faith a vast extent of fields, white already to the harvest, in the wide wilderness of Gentile lands; now He not only continues to see these fields in spite of His approaching passion, but He sees them as the effect thereof-a whole world of golden grain growing out of one corn of wheat cast into the ground, and rendered fruitful of life by its own death. At the well of Sychar He had spoken with lively hope of the wages in store for Himself, and all fellow-laborers in the kingdom of God, whether sowers or reapers; here death is swallowed up in victory, through the power of His hope. To suffer is to enter into glory; to be lifted up on the cross is to be exalted to heaven, and seated on the throne of a world-wide dominion. The men who desired to see Jesus while He stood in one of the courts of the temple were, the evangelist informs us, Greeks. Whence they came, whether from east or from west, or from north or from south, we know not; but they were evidently bent on entering into the kingdom of God. They had got so far on the way to the kingdom already. The presumption, at least, is that they had left Paganism behind, and had embraced the faith of One living, true God, as taught by the Jews, and were come at this time up to Jerusalem to worship at the Passover as Jewish proselytes. But they had not, it would seem, found rest to their souls: there was something more to be known about God which was still hid from them. This they hoped to learn from Jesus, with whose name and fame they had somehow

become acquainted. Accordingly, an opportunity presenting itself to them of communicating with one of those who belonged to His company, they respectfully expressed to him their desire to meet his Master. “Sir,” said they, “we would see Jesus.” In themselves the words might be nothing more than the expression of a curious wish to get a passing glimpse of one who was understood to be a remarkable man. Such an interpretation of the request, however, is excluded by the deep emotion it awakened in the breast of Jesus. Idle curiosity would not have stirred His soul in such a fashion. Then the notion that these Greeks were merely curious strangers is entirely inconsistent with the connection in which the story is introduced. John brings in the present narrative immediately after quoting a reflection made by the Pharisees respecting the popularity accruing to Jesus from the resurrection of Lazarus. “Perceive ye,” said they to each other, “how ye prevail nothing? Behold, the world has gone after Him.” “Yes, indeed,” rejoins the evangelist in effect, “and that to an extent of which ye do not dream. He whom ye hate is beginning to be inquired after, even by Gentiles from afar, as the following history will show.”

We do right, then, to regard the Greek strangers as earnest inquirers. They were true seekers after God. They were genuine spiritual descendants of their illustrious countrymen Socrates and Plato, whose utterances, written or unwritten, were one long prayer for light and truth, one deep unconscious sigh for a sight of Jesus. They wanted to see the Saviour, not with the eye of the body merely, but, above all, with the eye of the spirit. The part played by the two disciples named in the narrative, in connection with this memorable incident, claims a brief notice. Philip and Andrew had the honor to be the medium of communication between the representatives of the Gentile world and Him who had come to fulfill the desire and be the Saviour of all nations. The devout Greeks addressed themselves to the former of these two disciples, and he in turn took his brother-disciple into his counsels. How Philip came to be selected as the bearer of their request by these Gentile inquirers, we do not know. Reference has been made to the fact that the name Philip is Greek, as implying the probability that the disciple who bore it had Greek connections, and the possibility of a previous acquaintance between him and the persons who accosted him on this occasion. There may be something in these conjectures, but it is more important to remark that the Greeks were happy in their choice of an intercessor. Philip was himself an inquirer, and had an inquirer’s sympathy with all who might be in a similar state of mind. The first time he is named in the Gospel history he is introduced expressing his faith in Jesus, as one who had carefully sought the truth, and who, having at length found what he sought, strove to make others partakers of the blessing. “Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found Him of whom Moses, in the law and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” The exactness and fullness of this confession speaks to careful and conscientious search. And Philip has still the inquirer’s temper. A day or two subsequent to this meeting with the Greeks, we find him making for himself the most important request: “Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.” But why, then, does this sympathetic disciple not convey the request of the Greeks direct to Jesus? Why take Andrew with him, as if afraid to go alone on such an errand? Just because the petitioners are Greeks and Gentiles. It is one thing to introduce a devout Jew like Nathanael to Jesus, quite another to introduce Gentiles, however devout. Philip is pleased that his Master should be inquired after in such a quarter, but he is not sure about the propriety of acting on his first impulse. He hesitates, and is in a flurry of excitement in presence of what he feels to be a new thing, a significant event, the beginning of a religious revolution. His inclination is to play the part of an intercessor for the Greeks; but he distrusts his own judgment, and, before acting on it, lays the case before his

brother-disciple and fellow-townsman Andrew, to see how it will strike him. The result of the consultation was, that the two disciples came and told their Master. They felt that they were perfectly safe in mentioning the matter to Him, and then leaving Him to do as He pleased. From the narrative of the evangelist we learn that the communication of the two disciples mightily stirred the soul of Jesus. Manifestations of spiritual susceptibility, by persons who were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, did always greatly move His feelings. The open-mindedness of the people of Sychar, the simple faith of the Roman centurion, the quick-witted faith of the Syro-Phoenician woman, the gratitude of the Samaritan leper, touched Him profoundly. Such exhibitions of spiritual life in unexpected quarters came upon His spirit like breezes on an Aeolian harp, drawing forth from it sweetest tones of faith, hope, joy, charity; and, alas! also sometimes sad, plaintive tones of disappointment and sorrow, like the sighing of the autumn wind among Scottish pines, when He thought of the unbelief and spiritual deadness of the chosen people for whom He had done so much. Never was His heart more deeply affected than on the present occasion. No marvel! What sight more moving than that of a human being seeking after God, the fountain of light and of life! Then the spontaneity of these Greek inquirers is beautiful. It is something to be thankful for in this unspiritual, unbelieving world, when one and another, here and there, responds to God's call, and receives a divine word which has been spoken to him. But here we have the rare spectacle of men coming uncalled: not sought after by Christ, and accepting Him offering Himself to them as a Saviour and Lord, but seeking Him, and begging it as a great favor to be admitted to His presence, that they may offer Him their sincere homage, and hear Him speak words of eternal life. They come, too, from a most unusual quarter; and, what is still more worthy to be noticed, at a most critical time. Jesus is just about to be conclusively rejected by His own people; just on the point of being crucified by them. Some have shut their eyes, and stopped their ears, and hardened their hearts in the most determined manner against Him and His teaching; others, not insensible to His merits, have meanly and heartlessly concealed their convictions, fearing the consequences of an open profession. The saying of the Prophet Esaias has been fulfilled in His bitter experience, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" Pharisaism, Sadduceeism, ignorance, indifference, fickleness, cowardice, have confronted Him on every side. How refreshing, amidst abounding contradiction, stupidity, and dull insusceptibility, this intimation brought to Him at the eleventh hour: "Here are certain Greeks who are interested in you, and want to see you!" The words fall on His ear like a strain of sweet music; the news is reviving to His burdened spirit like the sight of a spring to a weary traveler in a sandy desert; and in the fullness of His joy He exclaims: "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified." Rejected by His own people, He is consoled by the inspiring assurance that He shall be believed on in the world, and accepted by the outlying nations as all their salvation and all their desire. The thoughts of Jesus at this time were as deep as His emotions were intense. Specially remarkable is the first thought to which He gave utterance in these words: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." He speaks here with the solemnity of one conscious that he is announcing a truth new and strange to his hearers. His object is to make it credible and comprehensible to His disciples, that death and increase may go together. He points out to them that the fact is so in the case of grain; and He would have them understand that the law of increase, not only in spite but in virtue of death, will hold true equally in His own case. "A grain of wheat, by dying, becometh fruitful; so I must die in order to become, on a large scale, an object of

faith and source of life. During my lifetime I have had little success. Few have believed, many have disbelieved; and they are about to crown their unbelief by putting me to death. But my death, so far from being, as they fancy, my defeat and destruction, will be but the beginning of my glorification. After I have been crucified, I shall begin to be believed in extensively as the Lord and Saviour of men."

Having by the analogy of the corn of wheat set forth death as the condition of fruitfulness, Jesus, in a word subsequently spoken, proclaimed His approaching crucifixion as the secret of His future power. "I," said He, "if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." He used the expression "lifted up" in a double sense-partly, as the evangelist informs us, in allusion to the manner of His death, partly with reference to His ascension into heaven; and He meant to say, that after He had been taken up into glory, He would, through His cross, attract the eyes and hearts of men towards Himself. And, strange as such a statement might appear before the event, the fact corresponded to the Saviour's expectation. The cross-symbol of shame!-did become a source of glory; the sign of weakness became an instrument of moral power. Christ crucified, though to unbelieving Jews a stumbling-block, and to philosophic Greeks foolishness, became to many believers the power of God and the wisdom of God. By His voluntary humiliation and meek endurance of suffering the Son of God drew men to Him in sincerest faith, and devoted reverential love. The largeness of Christ's desires and expectations is very noteworthy. He speaks of "much fruit," and of drawing "all men" unto Him. Of course we are not to look here for an exact definition of the extent of redemption. Jesus speaks as a man giving utterance, in the fullness of his heart, to his high, holy hope; and we may learn from His ardent words, if not the theological extent of atonement, at least the extensiveness of the Atoner's good wishes. He would have all men believe in Him and be saved. He complained with deep melancholy of the fewness of believers among the Jews; He turned with unspeakable longing to the Gentiles, in hope of a better reception from them. The greater the number of believers at any time and in any place, the better He is pleased; and He certainly does not contemplate with indifference the vast amount of unbelief which still prevails in all quarters of the world. His heart is set on the complete expulsion of the prince of this world from his usurped dominion, that He Himself may reign over all the kingdoms of the earth. The narrative contains a word of application addressed by Jesus to His disciples in connection with the law of increase by death, saying in effect that it applied to them as well as to Himself. This appears at first surprising, insomuch that we are tempted to think that the sayings alluded to are brought in here by the evangelist out of their true historical connection. But on reconsideration we come to think otherwise. We observe that in all cases, wherever it is possible, Christ in His teaching takes His disciples into partnership with Himself. He does not insist on those aspects of truth which are peculiar to Himself, but rather on those which are common to Him with His followers. If there be any point of contact at all, any sense in which what He states of Himself is true of those who believe in Him, He seizes on that, and makes it a prominent topic of discourse. So He did on the occasion of the meeting by the well; so when He first plainly announced to His disciples that He was to be put to death. And so also He does here. Here, too, He asserts a fellowship between Himself and His followers in respect to the necessity of death as a condition of fruitfulness. And the fellowship asserted is not a far-fetched conceit: it is a great practical reality. The principle laid down is this, that in proportion as a man is a partaker of Christ's suffering in His estate of humiliation shall he be a partaker of the glory, honor, and power which belong to His estate of exaltation. This principle holds true even in this life. The bearing of the cross, the undergoing of

death, is the condition of fruit bearing both in the sense of personal sanctification and in the sense of effective service in the kingdom of God. In the long-run the measure of a man's power is the extent to which he is baptized into Christ's death. We must fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in our flesh for His body's sake, which is the church, if we would be the honored instruments of advancing that great work in the world for which He was willing, like a corn of wheat, to fall into the ground and die.

Striking as this saying is, it is not to be reckoned among those which contain a distinct contribution to the doctrine of the cross. No new principle or view is contained therein, only old views restated, the views taught in the first and second lessons being combined-death a condition of life and of power. Even the very original word concerning the corn of wheat shows us no new aspect of Christ's death, but only helps by a familiar analogy to understand how death can be a means of increase. The main use of the foregoing chapter is to show us the beginnings of that Christian universalism which Jesus anticipated in speaking of Mary's act of anointing, and to serve as a foil to the chapter that follows concerning the doom of Jerusalem.

02.20. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! or, Discourse On the Last Things

Mat 21:1-46; Mat 22:1-46; Mat 23:1-39; Mat 24:1-51; Mat 25:1-46; Mark 11:1-33; Mark 12:1-44; Mark 13:1-37; Luk 19:29-48; Luk 20:1-47; Luk 21:1-38. The few days intervening between the anointing and the Passover were spent by Jesus in daily visits to Jerusalem in company with His disciples, returning to Bethany in the evening. During that time He spoke much in public and in private, on themes congenial to His feelings and situation: the sin of the Jewish nation, and specially of its religious leaders; the doom of Jerusalem, and the end of the world. The record of His sayings during these last days fills five chapters of Matthew's Gospel-a proof of the deep impressions which they made on the mind of the twelve.

Prominent among these utterances, which together form the dying testimony of the "Prophet of Nazareth," stands the great philippic delivered by Him against the scribes and Pharisees of Jerusalem. This terrible discourse had been preceded by various encounters between the speaker and His inverate foes, which were as the preliminary skirmishes that form the prelude to a great engagement. In these petty fights Jesus had been uniformly victorious, and had overwhelmed His opponents with confusion. They had asked Him concerning His authority for taking upon Him the office of a reformer, in clearing the temple precincts of traders; and he had silenced them by asking in reply their opinion of John's mission, and by speaking in their hearing the parables of the Two Sons, the Vinedressers, and the Rejected Stone, wherein their hypocrisy, unrighteousness, and ultimate damnation were vividly depicted. They had tried to catch Him in a trap by an ensnaring question concerning the tribute paid to the Roman government; and he had extricated Himself with ease, by simply asking for a penny, and pointing to the emperor's head on it, demanding of His assailants, "Whose is this image and superscription?" and on receiving the reply, "Caesar's," giving His judgment in these terms: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." Twice foiled, the Pharisees (with their friends the Herodians) gave place to their usual foes, but present allies, the Sadducees, who attempted to puzzle Jesus on the subject of the resurrection, only to be ignominiously discomfited; whereupon the pharisaic brigade returned to the charge, and through the mouth of a lawyer not yet wholly perverted inquired, "Which is the great commandment in the law?" To this question Jesus gave a direct and serious reply, summing up the whole law in love to God and love to man, to the entire contentment of His interrogator. Then, impatient of further trifling, He blew a trumpet-peal, the signal of a grand offensive attack, by propounding the question, "What think ye of Christ, whose son is He?" and taking occasion from the reply to quote the opening verse of David's martial psalm, asking them to reconcile it with their answer. In appearance fighting the Pharisees with their own weapons, and framing a mere theological puzzle, He was in reality reminding them who He was, and intimating to them the predicted doom of those who set themselves against the Lord's anointed.

Thereupon David's Son and David's Lord proceeded to fulfil the prophetic figure, and to make a footstool of the men who sat in Moses' seat, by delivering that discourse in which, to change the figure, the Pharisee is placed in a moral pillory, a mockery and a byword to all after ages; and a sentence is pronounced on the pharisaic character inexorably severe, yet justified by fact, and approved by the conscience of all true Christians. This anti-pharisaic speech may be regarded as the final, decisive, comprehensive, dying testimony of Jesus against the most deadly and damning form of evil prevailing in His age, or that can prevail in any age-religious hypocrisy; and as such it forms a necessary part of the Righteous One's witness-bearing in behalf of the truth, to which His disciples are expected to say Amen with no faltering voice. For the spirit of moral resentment is as essential in Christian ethics as the spirit of mercy; nor can any one who regards the anti-pharisaic polemic of the Gospel history as a scandal to be ashamed of, or a blemish to be apologized for, or at least as a thing which, however necessary at the time, propriety now requires us to treat with neglect-a practice too common in the religious world-be cleared of the suspicion of having more sympathy at heart with the men by whom the Lord was crucified than with the Lord Himself. Blessed is he who is not ashamed of Christ's sternest words; who, far from stumbling at those bold prophetic utterances, has rather found in them an aid to faith at the crisis of his religious history, as evincing an identity between the moral sentiments of the Founder of the faith and his own, and helping him to see that what he may have mistaken for, and what claimed to be, Christianity, was not that at all, but only a modern reproduction of a religious system which the Lord Jesus Christ could not endure, or be on civil terms with. Yea, and blessed is the church which sympathizes with, and practically gives effect to, Christ's warning words in the opening of this discourse against clerical ambition, the source of the spiritual tyrannies and hypocrisies denounced. Every church needs to be on its guard against this evil spirit. The government of the Jewish church, theoretically theocratic, degenerated at last into rabbinism; and it is quite possible for a church which has for its motto, "One is your Master, even Christ," to fall into a state of abject subjection to the power of ambitious ecclesiastics.

Without for a moment admitting that there is any thing in these invectives against hypocrisy to be apologized for, we must nevertheless advert to the view taken of them by some recent critics of the sceptical school. These speeches, then, we are told, are the rash, unqualified utterances of a young man, whose spirit was unmellowed by years and experience of the world; whose temperament was poetic, therefore irritable, impatient, and unpractical; and whose temper was that of a Jew, morose, and prone to bitterness in controversy. At this time, we are further to understand, provoked by persevering opposition, He had lost self-possession, and had abandoned Himself to the violence of anger, His bad humor having reached such a pitch as to make Him guilty of actions seemingly absurd, such as that of cursing the fig-tree. He had, in fact, become reckless of consequences, or even seemed to court such as were disastrous; and, weary of conflict, sought by violent language to precipitate a crisis, and provoke His enemies to put Him to death.

These are blasphemies against the Son of man as unfounded as they are injurious. The last days of Jesus were certainly full of intense excitement, but to a candid mind no traces of passion are discernible in His conduct. All His recorded utterances during those days are in a high key, suited to one whose soul was animated by the most sublime feelings. Every sentence is eloquent, every word tells; but all throughout is natural, and appropriate to the situation. Even when the terrible attack on the religious leaders of Israel begins, we listen awestruck, but not shocked. We feel that

the speaker has a right to use such language, that what He says is true, and that all is said with commanding authority and dignity, such as became the Messianic King. When the speaker has come to an end, we breathe freely, sensible that a delicate though necessary task has been performed with not less wisdom than fidelity. Deep and undisguised abhorrence is expressed in every sentence, such as it would be difficult for any ordinary man, yea, even for an extraordinary one, to cherish without some admixture of that wrath which worketh not the righteousness of God. But in the antipathies of a Divine Being the weakness of passion finds no place: His abhorrence may be deep, but it is also ever calm; and we challenge unbelievers to point out a single feature in this discourse inconsistent with the hypothesis that the speaker is divine. Nay, leaving out of view Christ's divinity, and criticizing His words with a freedom unfettered by reverence, we can see no traces in them of a man carried headlong by a tempest of anger. We find, after strictest search, no loose expressions, no passionate exaggerations, but rather a style remarkable for artistic precision and accuracy. The pictures of the ostentatious, place-hunting, title-loving rabbi; of the hypocrite, who makes long prayers and devours widows' houses; of the zealot, who puts himself to infinite trouble to make converts, only to make his converts worse rather than better men; of the Jesuitical scribe, who teaches that the gold of the temple is a more sacred, binding thing to swear by than the temple itself; of the Pharisee, whose conscience is strict or lax as suits his convenience; of the whited sepulchres, fair without, full within of dead men's bones; of the men whose piety manifests itself in murdering living prophets and garnishing the sepulchres of dead ones-are moral daguerreotypes which will stand the minutest inspection of criticism, drawn by no irritated, defeated man, feeling sorely and resenting keenly the malice of his adversaries, but by one who has gained so complete a victory, that He can make sport of His foes, and at all events runs no risk of losing self-control. The aim of the discourse, equally with its style, is a sufficient defense against the charge of bitter personality. The direct object of the speaker was not to expose the blind guides of Israel, but to save from delusion the people whom they were misguiding to their ruin. The audience consisted of the disciples and the multitude who heard Him gladly. It is most probable that many of the blind guides were present; and it would make no difference to Jesus whether they were or not, for He had not two ways of speaking concerning men-one before their faces, another behind their backs. It is told of Demosthenes, the great Athenian orator, and the determined opponent of Philip of Macedon, that he completely broke down in that king's presence on the occasion of his first appearance before him as an ambassador from his native city. But a greater than Demosthenes is here, whose sincerity and courage are as marvelous as His wisdom and eloquence, and who can say all He thinks of the religious heads of the people in their own hearing. Still, in the present instance, the parties formally addressed were not the heads of the people, but the people themselves; and it is worthy of notice how carefully discriminating the speaker was in the counsel which He gave them. He told them that what He objected to was not so much the teaching of their guides, as their lives: they might follow all their precepts with comparative impunity, but it would be fatal to follow their example. How many reformers in similar circumstances would have joined doctrine and practice together in one indiscriminate denunciation! Such moderation is not the attribute of a man in a rage. But the best clew of all to the spirit of the speaker is the manner in which His discourse ends: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!" Strange ending for one filled with angry passion! O Jesus, Jesus! how Thou rises above the petty thoughts and feelings of ordinary men! Who shall fathom the depths of Thy heart? What mighty waves of righteousness, truth, pity, and sorrow roll through Thy bosom!

Having uttered that piercing cry of grief, Jesus left the temple, never, so far as we know, to return. His last words to the people of Jerusalem were: “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord.” On the way from the city to Bethany, by the Mount of Olives, the rejected Saviour again alluded to its coming doom. The light-hearted disciples had drawn His attention to the strength and beauty of the temple buildings, then in full view. In too sad and solemn a mood for admiring mere architecture, He replied in the spirit of a prophet: “See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”

Arrived at Mount Olivet, the company sat down to take a leisurely view of the majestic pile of which they had been speaking. How different the thoughts and feelings suggested by the same object to the minds of the spectators! The twelve look with merely outward eye; their Master looks with the inward eye of prophecy. They see nothing before them but the goodly stones; He sees the profanation in the interior, greedy traders within the sacred precincts, religion so vitiated by ostentation, as to make a poor widow casting her two mites into the treasury, in pious simplicity, a rare and pleasing exception. The disciples think of the present only; Jesus looks forward to an approaching doom, fearful to contemplate, and doubtless backward too, over the long and checkered history through which the once venerable, now polluted, house of God had passed. The disciples are elated with pride as they gaze on this national structure, the glory of their country, and are happy as thoughtless men are wont to be; the heart of Jesus is heavy with the sadness of wisdom and prescience, and of love that would have saved, but can now do nothing but weep, and proclaim the awful words of doom.

Yet, with all their thoughtlessness, the twelve could not quite forget those dark forebodings of their Master. The weird words haunted their minds, and made them curious to know more. Therefore they came to Jesus, or some of them-Mark mentions Peter, James, John, and Andrew-and asked two questions: when Jerusalem should be destroyed; and what should be the signs of His coming, and of the end of the world. The two events referred to in the questions-the end of Jerusalem, and the end of the world-were assumed by the questioners to be contemporaneous. It was a natural and by no means a singular mistake. Local and partial judgments are wont to be thus mixed up with the universal one in men’s imaginations; and hence almost every great calamity which inspires awe leads to anticipations of the last day. Thus Luther, when his mind was clouded by the dark shadow of present tribulation, would remark: “The world cannot stand long, perhaps a hundred years at the outside. At the last will be great alterations and commotions, and already there are great commotions among men. Never had the men of law so much occupation as now. There are vehement dissensions in our families, and discord in the church.” In apostolic times Christians expected the immediate coming of Christ with such confidence and ardor, that some even neglected their secular business, just as towards the close of the tenth century people allowed churches to fall into disrepair because the end of the world was deemed close at hand. In reality, the judgment of Jerusalem and that of the world at large were to be separated by a long interval. Therefore Jesus treated the two things as distinct in His prophetic discourse, and gave separate answers to the two questions which the disciples had combined into one, that respecting the end of the world being disposed of first. The answer He gave to this question was general and negative. He did not fix a time, but said in effect: “The end will not be till such and such things have

taken place," specifying six antecedents of the end in succession, the first being the appearance of false Christs. Of these He assured His disciples there would be many, deceiving many; and most truly, for several quack Messiahs did appear even before the destruction of Jerusalem, availing themselves of, and imposing on, the general desire for deliverance, even as quack doctors do in reference to bodily ailments, and succeeding in deceiving many, as unhappily in such times is only too easy. But among the number of their dupes were found none of those who had been previously instructed by the true Christ to regard the appearance of pseudo-Christs merely as one of the signs of an evil time. The deceivers of others were for them a preservative against delusion. The second antecedent is, "wars and rumors of wars." Nation must rise against nation: there must be times of upheaving and dissolution; declines and falls of empires, and risings of new kingdoms on the ruins of the old. This second sign would be accompanied by a third, in the shape of commotions in the physical world, emblematic of those in the political. Famines, earthquakes, pestilences, etc., would occur in divers places.

Yet these things, however dreadful, would be but the beginning of sorrows; nor would the end come till those signs had repeated themselves again and again. No one could tell from the occurrence of such phenomena that the end would be now; he could only infer that it was not yet.

Next in order come persecutions, with all the moral and social phenomena of persecuting times. Christians must undergo a discipline of hatred among the nations because of the Name they bear, and as the reputed authors of all the disasters which befall the people among whom they live. Times must come when, if the Tiber inundate Rome, if the Nile overflow not his fields, if drought, earthquake, famine, or plague visit the earth, the cry of the populace will forthwith be, "The Christians to the lions!"

Along with persecutions, as a fifth antecedent of the end, would come a sifting of the church. Many would break down or turn traitors; there would spring up manifold animosities, schisms, and heresies, each named from its own false prophet. The prevalence of these evils in the church would give rise to much spiritual declension. "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." The last thing that must happen ere the end come is the evangelization of the world; which being achieved, the end would at length arrive. From this sign we may guess that the world will last a long while yet; for, according to the law of historical probability, it will be long ere the gospel shall have been preached to all men for a witness. Ardent Christians or enthusiastic students of prophecy who think otherwise must remember that sending a few missionaries to a heathen country does not satisfy the prescribed condition. The gospel has not been preached to a nation for a witness, that is, so as to form a basis of moral judgment, till it has been preached to the whole people as in Christendom. This has never yet been done for all the nations, and at the present rate of progress it is not likely to be accomplished for centuries to come.

Having rapidly sketched an outline of the events that must precede the end of the world, Jesus addressed Himself to the more special question which related to the destruction of Jerusalem. He could now speak on that subject with more freedom, after He had guarded against the notion that the destruction of the holy city was a sign of His own immediate final coming. "When, then," He began-the introductory formula signifying, to answer now your first question-"ye shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet stand in the holy place, then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains;" the abomination of desolation being the Roman army

with its eagles-abominable to the Jew, desolating to the land. When the eagles appeared, all might flee for their life; resistance would be vain, obstinacy and bravery utterly unavailing. The calamity would be so sudden that there would be no time to save any thing. It would be as when a house is on fire; people would be glad to escape with their life. It would be a fearful time of tribulation, unparalleled before or after. Woe to poor nursing mothers in those horrible days, and to such as were with child! What barbarities and inhumanities awaited them! The calamities that were coming would spare nobody, not even Christians. They would find safety only in flight, and they would have cause to be thankful that they escaped at all. But their flight, though unavoidable, might be more or less grievous according to circumstances; and they should pray for what might appear small mercies, even for such alleviations as that they might not have to flee to the mountains in winter, when it is cold and comfortless, or on the Sabbath, the day of rest and peace.

After giving this brief but graphic sketch of the awful days approaching, intolerable by mortal men were they not shortened “for the elect’s sake,” Jesus repeated His warning word against deception, as if in fear that His disciples, distracted by such calamities, might think “surely now is the end.” He told them that violence would be followed by apostasy and falsehood, as great a trial in one way as the destruction of Jerusalem in another. False teachers should arise, who would be so plausible as almost to deceive the very elect. The devil would appear as an angel of light; in the desert as a monk, in the shrine as an object of superstitious worship. But whatever men might pretend, the Christ would not be there; nor would His appearance take place then, nor at any fixed calculable time, but suddenly, unexpectedly, like the lightning flash in the heavens. When moral corruption had attained its full development, then would the judgment come. In the following part of the discourse, the end of the world seems to be brought into immediate proximity to the destruction of the holy city. If a long stretch of ages was to intervene, the perspective of the prophetic picture seems at fault. The far-distant mountains of the eternal world, visible beyond and above the near hills of time in the foreground, want the dim-blue haze, which helps the eye to realize how far off they are. This defect in Matthew’s narrative, which we have been taking for our text, is supplied by Luke, who interprets the tribulation (qli)yij) so as to include the subsequent long-lasting dispersion of Israel among the nations. The phrase he employs to denote this period is significant, as implying the idea of lengthened duration. It is “the times of the Gentiles” (kairoi(e)qnw~n). The expression means, the time when the Gentiles should have their opportunity of enjoying divine grace, corresponding to the time of gracious visitation enjoyed by the Jews referred to by Jesus in His lament over Jerusalem. There is no reason to suppose Luke coined these phrases; they bear the stamp of genuineness upon them. But if we assume, as we are entitled to do, that not Luke the Pauline universalist, but Jesus Himself, spoke of a time of merciful visitation of the Gentiles, then it follows that in His eschatological discourse He gave clear intimation of a lengthened period during which His gospel was to be preached in the world; even as He did on other occasions, as in the parable of the wicked husbandman, in which He declared that the vineyard should be taken from its present occupants, and given to others who would bring forth fruit. For it is incredible that Jesus should speak of a time of the Gentiles analogous to the time of merciful visitation enjoyed by the Jews, and imagine that the time of the Gentiles was to last only some thirty years. The Jewish kairos lasted thousands of years: it would be only mocking the poor Gentiles to dignify the period of a single generation with the name of a season of gracious visitation. The parable of the fig-tree, employed by Jesus to indicate the sure connection between the signs foregoing and the grand event that was to follow, seems at first to exclude the idea of a

protracted duration, but on second thoughts we shall find it does not. The point of the parable lies in the comparison of the signs of the times to the first buds of the fig-tree. This comparison implies that the last judgment is not the thing which is at the doors. The last day is the harvest season, but from the first buds of early summer to the harvest there is a long interval. The parable further suggests the right way of understanding the statement: “This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled.” Christ did not mean that the generation then living was to witness the end, but that in that generation all the things which form the incipient stage in the development would appear. It was the age of beginnings, of shoots and blossoms, not of fruit and ingathering. In that generation fell the beginnings of Christianity and the new world it was to create, and also the end of the Jewish world, of which the symbol was a fig-tree covered with leaves, but without any blossom or fruit, like that Jesus Himself had cursed, by way of an acted prophecy of Israel’s coming doom. The buds of most things in the church’s history appeared in that age: of gospel preaching, of antiChristian tendencies, of persecutions, heresies, schisms, and apostasies. All these, however, had to grow to their legitimate issues before the end came. How long the development would take, no man could tell, not even the Son of Man. It was a state secret of the Almighty, into which no one should wish to pry. This statement, that the time of the end is known alone to God, excludes the idea that it can be calculated, or that data are given in Scripture for that purpose. If such data be given, then the secret is virtually disclosed. We therefore regard the calculations of students of prophecy respecting the times and seasons as random guesses unworthy of serious attention. The death-day of the world needs to be hid for the purposes of providence as much as the dying-day of individuals. And we have no doubt that God has kept His secret; though some fancy they can cast the world’s horoscope from prophetic numbers, as astrologers were wont to determine the course of individual lives from the positions of the stars.

Though the prophetic discourse of Jesus revealed nothing as to times, it was not therefore valueless. It taught effectively two lessons-one specially for the benefit of the twelve, and the other for all Christians and all ages. The lesson for the twelve was, that they might dismiss from their minds all fond hopes of a restoration of the kingdom to Israel. Not reconstruction, but dissolution and dispersion, was Israel’s melancholy doom. The general lesson for all in this discourse is: “Watch, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.” The call to watchfulness is based on our ignorance of the time of the end, and on the fact that, however long delayed the end may be, it will come suddenly at last, as a thief in the night. The importance of watching and waiting, Jesus illustrated by two parables, the Absent Goodman and the Wise and Foolish Virgins. Both parables depict the diverse conduct of the professed servants of God during the period of delay. The effect on some, we are taught, is to make them negligent, they being eye-servants and fitful workers, who need oversight and the stimulus of extraordinary events. Others, again, are steady, equal, habitually faithful, working as well when the master is absent as when they are under his eye. The treatment of both on the master’s return corresponds to their respective behavior-one class being rewarded, the other punished. Such is the substance of the parable of the Absent Goodman. Luke gives an important appendix, which depicts the conduct of persons in authority in the house of the absent Lord. While the common servants are for the most part negligent, the upper servants play the tyrant over their fellows. This is exactly what church dignitaries did in after ages; and the fact that Jesus contemplated such a state of things, requiring from the nature of the case the lapse of centuries to bring it about, is another proof that in this discourse His prophetic eye swept over a vast tract of time. Another remark is suggested by the great reward promised to such as should

not abuse their authority: “He will make him ruler over all that he hath.” The greatness of the reward indicates an expectation that fidelity will be rare among the stewards of the house. Indeed, the Head of the church seems to have apprehended the prevalence of a negligent spirit among all His servants, high and low; for He speaks of the lord of the household as so gratified with the conduct of the faithful, that he girds himself to serve them while they sit at meat. Has not the apprehension been too well justified by events? The parable of the Ten Virgins, familiar to all, and full of instruction, teaches us this peculiar lesson, that watching does not imply sleepless anxiety and constant thought concerning the future, but quiet, steady attention to present duty. While the bridegroom tarried, all the virgins, wise and foolish alike, slumbered and slept, the wise differing from their sisters in having all things in readiness against a sudden call. This is a sober and reasonable representation of the duty of waiting by one who understands what is possible; for, in a certain sense, sleep of the mind in reference to eternity is as necessary as physical sleep is to the body. Constant thought about the great realities of the future would only result in weakness, distraction, and madness, or in disorder, idleness, and restlessness; as in Thessalonica, where the conduct of many who watched in the wrong sense made it needful that Paul should give them the wholesome counsel to be quiet, and work, and eat bread earned by the labor of their own hands. The great prophetic discourse worthily ended with a solemn representation of the final judgment of the world, when all mankind shall be assembled to be judged either by the historical gospel preached to them for a witness, or by its great ethical principle, the law of charity written on their hearts; and when those who have loved Christ and served Him in person, or in His representatives-the poor, the destitute, the suffering-shall be welcomed to the realms of the blessed, and those who have acted contrariwise shall be sent away to keep company with the devil and his angels.

02.21. The Master Serving

The Master Serving; or, Another Lesson In Humility Section I - The Washing

John 13:1-11

Up to this point the fourth evangelist has said very little indeed of the special relations of Jesus and the twelve. Now, however, he abundantly makes up for any deficiency on this score. The third part of his Gospel, which begins here, is, with the exception of two chapters relating the history of the passion, entirely occupied with the tender, intimate intercourse of the Lord Jesus with “His own,” from the evening before His death to the time when He departed out of the world, leaving them behind! The thirteenth and four following chapters relate scenes and discourses from the last hours spent by the Saviour with His disciples, previous to His betrayal into the hands of His enemies. He has uttered His final word to the outside world, and withdrawn Himself within the bosom of His own family; and we are privileged here to see Him among His spiritual children, and to hear His farewell Words to them in view of His decease. It becomes us to enter the supper chamber with deep reverence. “Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.” The first thing we see, on entering, is Jesus washing His disciples’ feet. Marvellous spectacle! and the evangelist has taken care, in narrating the incident, to enhance its impressiveness by the manner in which he introduces it. He has put the beautiful picture in the best light for being seen to advantage. The preface to the story is indeed a little puzzling to expositors, the sentences being involved, and the sense somewhat obscure. Many thoughts and feelings crowd into the apostle’s mind as he proceeds to relate the memorabilia of that eventful night; and, so to speak, they jostle one another in the struggle for utterance. Yet it is not very difficult to disentangle the meaning of these opening sentences. In the first, John adverts to the peculiar tenderness with which Jesus regarded His disciples on the eve of His crucifixion, and in prospect of His departure from the earth to heaven. “Before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world”-how at such an hour did He feel towards those who had been His companions throughout the years of His public ministry, and whom He was soon to leave behind Him? “He loved them unto the end.” Not selfishly engrossed with His own sorrows, or with the prospect of His subsequent joys, He found room in His heart for His followers still; nay, His love burned out towards them with extraordinary ardor, and His whole care was by precept and example, by words of comfort, warning, and instruction, to prepare them for future duty and trial, as the narrative here commencing would abundantly demonstrate. The second verse of the preface alludes parenthetically to a fact which served as a foil to the constancy of Jesus: “The devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray Him.” John would say: “Jesus loved His disciples to the end, though they did not all so love Him. One of them at this very moment entertained the diabolic purpose of betraying his Lord. Yet that Lord loved even him, condescending to wash even his feet; so endeavoring, if possible, to overcome his evil with good.” The aim of the evangelist, in the last sentence of his preface, is to show by contrast what a wondrous condescension it was in the Saviour to wash the feet of any of the disciples. Jesus knowing these things-these things being true of Him: that “the Father had

given all things into His hands"-sovereign power over all flesh; "that He was come from God"-a divine being by nature, and entitled to divine honors; "and that He was about to return to God," to enter on the enjoyment of such honors-did as is here recorded. He, the August Being who had such intrinsic dignity, such a consciousness, such prospects-even "He riseth from supper and lath aside His garments, and took a towel and girded Himself. After that He poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded." The time when all this took place was, it would seem, about the commencement of the evening meal. The words of the evangelist rendered in the English version "supper being ended," may be translated supper being begun, or better, supper-time having arrived; and from the sequel of the narrative, it is evident that in this sense they must be understood here. The supper was still going on when Jesus introduced the subject of the traitor, which He did not only after He had washed the feet of His disciples, but after He had resumed His seat at the table, and given an explanation of what He had just done. That explanation will fall to be more particularly considered afterwards; but meantime it bears on its face that the occasion of the feet-washing was some misbehavior on the part of the disciples. Jesus had to condescend, we judge, because His disciples would not condescend. This impression is confirmed by a statement in Luke's Gospel, that on the same evening a strife arose among the twelve which of them should be accounted the greatest. Whence that new strife arose we know not, but it is possible that the old quarrel about place was revived by the words uttered by Jesus as they were about to sit down to meat: "With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God." The allusion to the kingdom was quite sufficient to set their imaginations on fire and re-awaken old dreams about thrones, and from old dreams to old feuds and jealousies the transition was natural and easy; and so we can conceive how, even before the supper began, the talk of the brethren had waxed noisy and warm. Or the point in dispute may have been in what order they should sit at table, or who should be the servant for the occasion, and wash the feet of the company. Any one of these suppositions might account for the fact recorded by Luke; for it does not require much to make children quarrel. The expedient employed by Jesus to divert the minds of His disciples from unedifying themes of conversation, and to exorcise ambitious passions from their breasts, was a most effectual one. The very preliminaries of the feet-washing scene must have gone far to change the current of feeling. How the spectators must have stared and wondered as the Master of the feast rose from His seat, laid aside His upper garment, girt Himself with a towel, and poured out water into a basin, doing all with the utmost self-possession, composure, and deliberation! With which of the twelve Jesus made a beginning we are not informed; but we know, as we might have guessed without being told, who was the first to speak his mind about the singular transaction. When Peter's turn came, he had so far recovered from the amazement, under whose influence the first washed may have yielded passively to their Lord's will, as to be capable of reflecting on the indecency of such an inversion of the right relation between master and servants. Therefore, when Jesus came to him, that outspoken disciple asked, in astonishment, "Lord, washest Thou my feet?" His spirit rose in rebellion against the proposal, as one injurious to the dignity of his beloved Lord, and as an outrage upon his own sense of reverence. This impulse of instinctive aversion was by no means discreditable to Peter, and it was evidently not regarded with disapprobation by his Master. The reply of Jesus to his objection is markedly respectful in tone: "What I do," He said, "thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter," virtually admitting that the proceeding in question needed explanation, and that Peter's

opposition was, in the first place, perfectly natural. “I acknowledge,” He meant to say, “that my present action is an offence to the feelings of reverence which you rightly cherish towards me. Nevertheless, suffer it. I do this for reasons which you do not comprehend now, but which you shall understand ere long.” Had Peter been satisfied with this apologetic reply, his conduct would have been entirely free from blame. But He was not content, but persisted in opposition after Jesus had distinctly intimated His will, and vehemently and stubbornly exclaimed: “Thou shalt never wash my feet!” The tune here changes utterly. Peter’s first word was the expression of sincere reverence; his second is simply the language of unmitigated irreverence and downright disobedience. He rudely contradicts his Master, and at the same time, we may add, flatly contradicts himself. His whole behavior on this occasion presents an odd mixture of moral opposites: self-abasement and self-will, humility and pride, respect and disrespect for Jesus, to whom he speaks now as one whose shoe-latchet he is not worthy to unloose, and anon as one to whom he might dictate orders. What a strange man! But, indeed, how strange are we all!

Peter having so changed his tone, Jesus found it needful to alter His tone too, from the apologetic mildness of the first reply to that of magisterial sternness. “If I wash thee not,” He said gravely, “thou hast no part with me;” meaning, “Thou hast taken up a most serious position, Simon Peter, the question at issue being simply, Are you, or are you not, to be admitted into my kingdom-to be a true disciple, and to have a true disciple’s reward?” On a surface view, it is difficult to see how this could be the state of the question. One is tempted to think that Jesus was indulging in exaggeration, for the purpose of intimidating a refractory disciple into compliance with His will. If we reject this method of interpretation as incompatible with the character of the speaker and the seriousness of the occasion, we are thrown back on the inquiry, What does washing in this statement mean? Evidently it signifies more than meets the ear, more than the mere literal washing of the feet, and is to be regarded as a symbol of the washing of the soul from sin, or still more comprehensively, and in our opinion more correctly, as representing all in Christ s teaching and work which would be compromised by the consistent carrying out of the principle on which Peter’s opposition to the washing of his feet by Jesus was based. On either supposition the statement of Jesus was true: in the former case obviously; in the latter not so obviously, but not less really, as we proceed to show.

Observe, then, what was involved in the attitude assumed by Peter. He virtually took his stand on these two positions: that he would admit of nothing which seemed inconsistent with the personal dignity of his Lord, and that he would adopt as his rule of conduct his own judgment in preference to Christ’s will; the one position being involved in the question, Dost Thou wash my feet? the other in the resolution, Thou shalt never wash my feet. In other words, the ground taken up by this disciple compromised the whole sum and substance of Christianity, the former principle sweeping away Christ’s whole state and experience of humiliation, and the latter not less certainly sapping the foundation of Christ’s lordship. That this is no exaggeration on our part, a moment’s reflection will show. Look first at the objection to the feet washing on the score of reverence. If Jesus might not wash the feet of His disciples because it was beneath His dignity, then with equal reason objection might be taken to any act involving self-humiliation. One who said, Thou shalt not wash my feet, because the doing of it is unworthy of Thee, might as well say, Thou shalt not wash my soul, or do aught towards that end, because it involves humiliating experiences. Why, indeed, make a difficulty about a trifling matter of detail? Go to the heart of the business at once, and ask,

“Shall the Eternal Son of God become flesh, and dwell among us? shall He who was in the form of God lay aside His robes of state, and gird Himself with the towel of humanity, to perform menial offices for His own creatures? shall the ever-blessed One become a curse by enduring crucifixion? shall the Holy One degrade Himself by coming into close companionship with the depraved sons of Adam? shall the Righteous One pour His life-blood into a basin, that there may be a fountain wherein the unrighteous may be cleansed from their guilt and iniquity?” In short, incarnation, atonement, and Christ’s whole earthly experience of temptation, hardship, indignity, and sorrow, must go if Jesus may not wash a disciple’s feet. Not less clearly is Christ’s lordship at an end if a disciple may give Him orders, and say, “Thou shalt never wash my feet.” If Peter meant any thing more by these words than a display of temper and caprice, he meant this: that he would not submit to the proposed operation, because his moral feelings and his judgment told him it was wrong. He made his own reason and conscience the supreme rule of conduct. Now, in the first place, by this position the principle of obedience was compromised, which requires that the will of the Lord, once known, whether we understand its reason or perceive its goodness or not, shall be supreme. Then there are other things much more important than the washing of the feet, to which objection might be taken on the score of reason or conscience with equal plausibility. For example, Christ tells us that those who would be His disciples, and obtain entrance into His kingdom, must be willing to part with earthly goods, and even with nearest and dearest friends. To many men this seems unreasonable; and on Peter’s principle they should forthwith say, “I will never do any such thing.” Or again, Christ tells us that we must be born again, and that we must eat His flesh and drink His blood. To me these doctrines may seem incomprehensible, and even absurd; and therefore, on Peter’s principle, I may turn my back on the great Teacher, and say, “I will not have this speaker of dark, mystic sayings for my master.” Once more, Christ tells us that we must give the kingdom of God the first place in our thoughts, and dismiss from our hearts carking care for to-morrow. To me this may appear in my present mood simply impossible; and therefore, on Peter’s principle, I may set aside this moral requirement as utopian, however beautiful, without even seriously attempting to comply with it.

Now that we know whither Peter’s refusal tends, we can see that Jesus spake the simple truth when He said: “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.” Look at that refusal as an objection to Christ humbling Himself. If Christ may not humble Himself, then, in the first place, He can have no part with us. The Holy Son of God is forbidden by a regard to His dignity to become in any thing like unto His brethren, or even to acknowledge them as His brethren. The grand paternal law, by which the Sanctifier is identified with them that are to be sanctified, is disannulled, and all its consequences made void. A great impassable gulf separates the Divine Being from His creatures. He may stand on the far-off shore, and wistfully contemplate their forlorn estate; but He cannot, He dare not-His majesty forbids it-come near them, and reach forth a helping hand. But if the Son of God may have no part with us, then, in the second place, we can have no part with Him. We cannot share His fellowship with the Father, if He come not forth to declare Him. We can receive no acts of brotherly kindness from Him. He cannot deliver us from the curse of the law, or from the fear of death; He cannot succor us when we are tempted; He cannot wash our feet; nay, what is a far more serious matter, He cannot wash our souls. If there is to be no fountain opened for sin in the human nature of Emmanuel sinners must remain impure. For a God afar off is not able, even if He were willing, to purify the human soul. A God whose majesty, like an iron fate, kept Him aloof from sinners, could not even effectively forgive them. Still less could He sanctify them. Love alone

has sanctifying virtue, and what room is there for love in a Being who cannot humble Himself to be a servant?

Look now at Peter's refusal as resistance to Christ's will. In this view also it justified the saying, "Thou hast no part with me." It excluded from salvation; for if Jesus is not to be Lord, He will not be Saviour. It excluded from fellowship; for Jesus will have no communion with self-will. His own attitude towards His Father was, "not my will, but Thine;" and He demands this attitude towards Himself in turn from all His disciples. He will be the Author of eternal salvation, only to them that obey Him. Not that He would have us be always servants, blindly obeying a Lord whose will we do not understand. His aim is to advance us ultimately to the status of friends, doing His will intelligently and freely-not as complying mechanically with an outward commandment, but as being a law to ourselves. But we can attain that high position only by beginning with a servant's obedience. We must do, and suffer to be done to us, what we know not now, in order that we may know hereafter the philosophy of our duty to our Lord, and of our Lord's dealings with us. And the perfection of obedience lies in doing that which reverence unenlightened finds peculiarly hard, viz. in letting the Lord change places with us, and if it seem good to Him, humble Himself to be our servant.

It was a serious thing, therefore, to say, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." But Peter was not aware how serious it was. He knew not what he said, or what he did. He had hastily taken up a position whose ground and consequences he had not considered. And his heart was right, though his temper was wrong. Therefore the stern declaration of Jesus at once brought him to reason, or rather to unreason in an opposite direction. The idea of being cut off from his dear Master's sympathy or favor through his waywardness drove him in sheer fright to the opposite extreme of overdone compliance; and he said in effect, "If my interest in Thee depends on my feet being washed, then, Lord, wash my whole body-hands, head, feet, and all." How characteristic! how like a child, in whose heart is much foolishness, but also much affection, and who can always be managed by the bands of love! There is as yet a sad want of balance in this disciple's character: he goes, swinging like a pendulum, from one extreme to another; and it will take some time ere he settle down into a harmonious equipoise of all parts of his being-intellect, will, heart, and conscience. But the root of the matter is in him: he is sound at the core; and after the due amount of mistakes, he will become a wise man by and by. He is clean, and needs not more than to have his feet washed. Jesus Himself admits it of him, and of all his brother-disciples-save one, who is unclean all over.

Section II - The Explanation

John 13:12-20

Peter's resistance overcome, the washing proceeded without further interruption. When the process had come to an end, Jesus, putting on again His upper garment, resumed His seat, and briefly explained to His disciples the purport of the action. "Know ye," He inquired, "what I have done unto you?" Then, answering His own question, He went on to say: "Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you."

It was another lesson in humility which Jesus had been giving “His own,”-a lesson very similar to the earlier ones recorded in the synoptical Gospels. John’s Christ, we see here, teaches the same doctrine as the Christ of the three first evangelists. The twelve, as they are depicted in the fourth Gospel, are just such as we have found them in Matthew, Mark, and Luke-grievously needing to be taught meekness and brotherly kindness; and Jesus teaches them these virtues in much the same way here as elsewhere-by precept and example, by symbolic act, and added word of interpretation. Once He held up a little child, to shame them out of ambitious passions; here He rebukes their pride, by becoming the menial of the household. At another time He hushed their angry strife by adverting to His own self-humiliation, in coming from heaven to be a minister to men’s needs in life and in death; here He accomplishes the same end, by expressing the spirit and aim of His whole earthly ministry in a representative, typical act of condescension. This lesson, like all the rest, Jesus gave with the authority of one who might lay down the law. In the very act of playing the servant’s part, He was asserting His sovereignty. He reminds His disciples, when the service is over, of the titles they were wont to give Him, and in a marked, emphatic manner He accepts them as His due. He tells them distinctly that He is indeed their Teacher, whose doctrine it is their business to learn, and their Lord, whose will it is their duty to obey. His humility, therefore, is manifestly not an affectation of ignorance as to who and what He is. He knows full well who He is, whence He has come, whither He is going; His humility is that of a king, yea, of a Divine Being. The pattern of meekness is at the same time one who prescribes Himself to His followers as a pattern, and demands that they fix their attention on His behavior, and strive to copy it. In making this demand, Jesus is obviously very thoroughly in earnest. He is not less earnest in requiring the disciples to wash one another’s feet, than He was in insisting that He Himself should wash the feet of one and all. As He said to Peter in express words, “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me;” so He says to them all in effect, though not in words, “If ye wash not each other, if ye refuse to serve one another in love, ye have again no part with me.” This is a hard saying; for if it be difficult to believe in the humiliation of Christ, it is still more difficult to humble ourselves. Hence, notwithstanding the frequency and urgency with which the Saviour declares that we must have the spirit manifested in His humiliation for us dwelling in us, and giving birth in our life to conduct kindred to His own, even sincere disciples are constantly, though it may be half unconsciously, inventing excuses for treating the example of their Lord as utterly inimitable, and therefore in reality no example at all. Even the apparently unanswerable argument employed by Jesus to enforce imitation does not escape secret criticism. “Verily, verily,” saith He, “a servant is not greater than his lord, neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.” “It may,” say we, “be more incumbent on the servant to humble himself than on the master, but in some respects it is also more difficult. The master can afford to condescend: his action will not be misunderstood, but will be taken for what it is. But the servant cannot afford to be humble: he must assert himself, and assume airs, in order to make himself of any consequence.” The great Master knew too well how slow men would ever be to learn the lesson He had just been teaching His disciples. Therefore He appended to His explanation of the feet-washing this reflection: “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them,” hinting at the rarity and difficulty of such high morality as He had been inculcating, and declaring the blessedness of the few who attained unto it. And surely the reflection is just! Is not the morality here enjoined indeed rare? Are not the virtues called into play by acts of condescension and charity most high and difficult? Who dreams of calling them easy? How utterly contrary they are to the native tendencies of the human heart! how alien from the spirit of society!

Is it the way of men to be content with the humblest place, and to seek their felicity in serving others? Doth not the spirit that is in us lust unto envy, strive ambitiously for positions of influence, and deem it the greatest happiness to be served, and to be exempt from the drudgery of servile tasks? The world itself does not dispute the difficulty of Christ-like virtue; it rather exaggerates its difficulty, and pronounces it utopian and impracticable-merely a beautiful, unattainable ideal. And as for the sincere disciple of Jesus, no proof is needed to convince him of the arduousness of the task appointed him by his Lord. He knows by bitter experience how far conduct lags behind knowledge, and how hard it is to translate admiration of unearthly goodness into imitation thereof. His mind is familiarly conversant with the doctrine and life of the Saviour; he has read and re-read the Gospel story, fondly lingering over its minutest details; his heart has burned as he followed the footsteps of the Blessed One walking about on this earth, ever intent on doing good: sweeter to his ear than the finest lyric poems are the stories of the woman by the well, the sinner in the house of Simon, and of Zacchaeus the publican; those touching incidents of the little child upheld as a pattern of humility, and of the Master washing quarrelsome disciples' feet, and the exquisite parables of the Lost Sheep, the Prodigal, and the Good Samaritan. But when he has to close his New Testament, and go away into the rude, ungodly, matter-of-fact world, and be there a Christ-like man, and do the things which he knows so intimately, and counts himself blessed in knowing, alas, what a descent! It is like a fall from Eden into a state of mere sin and misery. And the longer he lives, and the more he gets mixed up with life's relations and engagements, the further he seems to himself to degenerate from the gospel pattern; till at length he is almost ashamed to think or speak of the beauties of holiness exhibited therein, and is tempted to adopt a lower and more worldly tone, out of a regard to sincerity, and in fear of becoming a mere sentimental hypocrite like Judas, who kissed his Master at the very moment he was betraying Him. In proportion to the difficulty and the rarity of the virtue prescribed is the felicity of those who are enabled to practice it. Theirs is a threefold blessedness. First, they have the joy connected with the achievement of an arduous task. Easy undertakings bring small pains, but they also bring small pleasures; rapturous delight is reserved for those who attempt and accomplish that which passes for impossible. And what raptures can be purer, holier, and more intense than those of the man who has at length succeeded in making the mind of the meek and lowly One his own; who, after long climbing, has reached the alpine summit of self-forgetful, self-humbling love! Those who practice the things here enjoined further win for themselves the approbation of their Lord. A master is pleased when a pupil understands his lesson, but a lord is pleased only when his servants do his bidding. Christ, being Lord as well as Master, demands that we shall not only know but do. And in proportion to the peremptoriness of the demand is the satisfaction with which the Lord of Christians regards all earnest efforts to comply with His will and to follow His example. And to all who make such efforts it is a great happiness to be assured of the approval of Him whom they serve. The thought, "I am guided in my present action by the spirit of Jesus, and He approves what I do," sustains the mind in peace, even when one has not the happiness to win the approbation of his fellow-men; which is not an impertinent remark here, for it will often happen to us to please men least when we are pleasing the Lord most. You shall please many men by a prudent selfishness much more readily than by a generous uncalculating devotion to what is right. "Men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself;" and they will wink at very considerable deviations from the line of pure Christian morality in the prosecution of self-interest, provided you be successful. Even religious people will often vex and grieve you by advices savoring much more of

worldly wisdom than of Christian simplicity and godly sincerity. But if Christ approve, we may make shift to do without the sympathy and approbation of men. Their approbation is at most but a comfort; His is matter of life and death. The third element in the felicity of the man who is not merely a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the perfect law of Christ, is that he escapes the guilt of unimproved knowledge. It is a religious commonplace that to sin against light is more heinous than to sin in ignorance. “To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.” And, of course, the clearer the light the greater the responsibility. Now, in no department of Christian truth is knowledge clearer than in that which belongs to the department of ethics. There are some doctrines which the church, as a whole, can hardly be said to know, they are so mysterious, or so disputed. But the ethical teaching of Jesus is simple and copious in all its leading features; it is universally understood, and as universally admired. Protestants and Papists, Trinitarians, Socinians, and Deists, are all at one here. Happy then are they, of all sects and denominations, who do the things which all know and agree in admiring; for a heavy woe lies on those who do them not. The woe is not indeed expressed, but it is implied in Christ’s words. The common Lord of all believers virtually addresses all Christendom here, saying: “Ye behold the sunlight of a perfect example; ye have been made acquainted with a high and lovely ideal of life, such as pagan moralists never dreamed of. What are ye doing with your light? Are ye merely looking at it, and writing books about it, and boasting of it, and talking of it, meanwhile allowing men outside the pale of the church to surpass you in humane and philanthropic virtue? If this is all the use you are making of your knowledge, it will be more tolerable for pagans at the day of judgment than for you.”

Having made the reflection we have been considering, Jesus followed it up with a word of apology for the tone of suspicion with which it was uttered, and which was no doubt felt by the disciples. “I speak not,” He said, “of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.” The remark may be thus paraphrased: “In hinting at the possibility of a knowledge of right, unaccompanied by corresponding action, I have not been indulging in gratuitous insinuation. I do not indeed think so badly of you all as to imagine you capable of deliberate and habitual neglect of known duty. But there is one among you who is capable of such conduct. I have chosen you twelve, and I know the character of every one of you; and, as I said a year ago, after asking a question which hurt your feelings, that one of you had a devil, so now, after making a suspicious reflection, I say there is one among you whose character illustrates negatively its meaning; one who knows, but will not do; who puts sentiment in place of action, and admiration in place of imitation; one who, having eaten bread with me as a familiar friend, will repay me for all my kindness, not by loving obedience, but by lifting up his heel against me.” The infirmity of sincere disciples Jesus could patiently bear with: but the Judas-character-in which correct thinking and fine sentiment are combined with falseness of heart and practical laxity, in which to promise is put in place of performance, and to utter the becoming word about a matter is substituted for doing the appropriate deed-such a character His soul utterly abhorred. Who can doubt that it was not in vain that sincere disciples had been so long in the society of One who was so exacting in His ideal, and that they really did strive in after years to fulfil their Master’s will, and serve one another in love?

02.22. In Memoriam

In Memoriam; or, Fourth Lesson On the Doctrine of the Cross Mat 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luk 22:17-20; 1Co 11:23-26. The Lord's Supper is a monument sacred to the memory of Jesus Christ. "This do in remembrance of me." In Bethany Jesus had spoken as if He desired that Mary should be kept in remembrance in the preaching of His Gospel; in the supper chamber He expressed His desire to be remembered Himself. He would have Mary's deed of love commemorated by the rehearsal of her story; He would have His own deed of love commemorated by a symbolic action, to be often repeated throughout the ages to the end of the world. The rite of the Supper, besides commemorating, is likewise of use to interpret the Lord's death. It throws important light on the meaning of that solemn event. The institution of this symbolic feast was in fact the most important contribution made by Jesus during His personal ministry to the doctrine of atonement through the sacrifice of Himself. Therefrom more clearly than from any other act or word performed or spoken by Him, the twelve might learn to conceive of their Master's death as possessing a redemptive character. Thereby Jesus, as it were, said to His disciples: My approaching passion is not to be regarded as a mere calamity, or dark disaster, falling out contrary to the divine purpose or my expectation; not as a fatal blow inflicted by ungodly men on me and you, and the cause which is dear to us all; not even as an evil which may be overruled for good; but as an event fulfilling, not frustrating, the purpose of my mission, and fruitful of blessing to the world. What men mean for evil, God means for good, to bring to pass to save much people alive. The shedding of my blood, in one aspect the crime of wicked Jews, is in another aspect my own voluntary act. I pour forth my blood for a gracious end, even for the remission of sins. My death will initiate a new dispensation, and seal a new testament; it will fulfil the purpose, and therefore take the place, of the manifold sacrifices of the Mosaic ritual, and in particular of the Paschal lamb, which is even now being eaten. I shall be the Paschal Lamb of the Israel of God henceforth; at once protecting them from death, and feeding their souls with my crucified humanity, as the bread of eternal life.

These truths are very familiar to us, however new and strange they may have been to the disciples; and we are more accustomed to explain the Supper by the death, than the death by the Supper. It may be useful, however, here to reverse the process, and, imagining ourselves in the position of the twelve, as witnesses to the institution of a new religious symbol, to endeavor to rediscover therefrom the meaning of the event with which it is associated, and whose significance it is intended to shadow forth. Let us, then, take our stand beside this ancient monument, and try to read the Runic inscription on its weather-worn surface.

1. First, then, we perceive at once that it is to the death of Jesus this monument refers. It is not merely erected to His memory in general, but it is erected specially in memory of His decease. All things point forward to what was about to take place on Calvary. The sacramental acts of breaking the bread and pouring out the wine manifestly look that way. The words also spoken by Jesus in instituting the Supper all involve allusions to His death. Both the fact and the manner of His death are hinted at, by the distinction He makes between His body and His blood: "This is my body," "This is my blood." Body and blood are one in life, and become separate things only by death; and

not by every kind of death, but by one whose manner involves blood-shedding, as in the case of sacrificial victims. The epithets applied to the body and the blood point at death still more clearly. Jesus speaks of His body as “given”-as if to be slain or “broken” in sacrifice, and of His blood as “shed.” Then, finally, by describing the blood about to be shed as the blood of a new testament, the Saviour put it beyond all doubt what He was alluding to. Where a testament is, there must also be the death of the testator. And though an ordinary testator may die an ordinary death, the Testator of the new testament must die a sacrificial death; for the epithet new implies a reference to the old Jewish covenant, which was ratified by the sacrifice of burnt-offerings and peace-offerings of oxen, whose blood was sprinkled on the altar and on the people, and called by Moses “the blood of the covenant.”

2. The mere fact that the Lord’s Supper commemorates specially the Lord’s death, implies that that death must have been an event of a very important character. By instituting a symbolic rite for such a purpose, Jesus, as it were, said to His disciples and to us: “Fix your eyes on Calvary, and watch what happens there. That is the great event in my earthly history. Other men have monuments erected to them because they have lived lives deemed memorable. I wish you to erect a monument to me because I have died: not forgetful of my life indeed, yet specially mindful of my death; commemorating it for its own sake, not merely for the sake of the life whereof it is the termination. The memory of other men is cherished by the celebration of their birthday anniversaries; but in my case, better is the day of my death than the day of my birth for the purpose of a commemorative celebration. My birth into this world was marvelous and momentous; but still more marvelous and momentous is my exit out of it by crucifixion. Of my birth no festive commemoration is needed; but of my death keep alive the memory by the Holy Supper till I come again. remembering it well, you remember all my earthly history; for of all it is the secret, the consummation, and the crown.” But why, in a history throughout so remarkable, should the death be thus singled out for commemoration? Was it its tragic character that won for it this distinction? Did the Crucified One mean the Supper which goes by His Name to be a mere dramatic representation of His passion, for the purpose of exciting our feelings, and eliciting a sympathetic tear, by renewing the memory of His dying sorrows? So to think of the matter were to degrade our Christian feast to the level of the pagan festival of Adonis, “Whose annual wound in Lebanon allured The Syrian damsels to lament his fate In amorous ditties all a summer’s day.” Or was it the foul wrong and shameful indignity done to the Son of God by the wicked men who crucified Him that Jesus wished to have kept in perpetual remembrance? Was the Holy Supper instituted for the purpose of branding with eternal infamy a world that knew no better use to make of the Holy One than to nail Him to a tree, and felt more kindness even for a robber than for Him? Certainly the world well deserved to be thus held up to reprobation; but the Son of man came not to condemn sinners, but to save them; and it was not in His loving nature to erect an enduring monument to His own resentment or to the dishonor of His murderers. The blood of Jesus speaketh better things than that of Abel. Or was it because His death on the cross, in spite of its indignity and shame, was glorious, as a testimony to His invincible fidelity to the cause of truth and righteousness, that Jesus instructed His followers to keep it ever in mind, by the celebration of the new symbolic rite? Is the festival of the Supper to be regarded as a solemnity of the same kind as those by which the early church commemorated the death of the martyrs? Is the Coenâ Domini simply the natalitia of the great Protomartyr? So Socinians would have us believe. To the question why the Lord wished the memory of His crucifixion to be specially celebrated in His church the Racovian Catechism replies:

“Because of all Christ’s actions, it (the voluntary enduring of death) was the greatest and most proper to Him. For although the resurrection and exaltation of Christ were far greater, these were acts of God the Father rather than of Christ.” In other words, the death above all things deserves to be remembered, because it was the most signal and sublime act of witness-bearing on Christ’s part to the truth, the glorious copestone of a noble life of self-sacrificing devotion to the high and perilous vocation of a prophet. That Christ’s death was all this is of course true, and that it is worthy of remembrance as an act of martyrdom is equally true; but whether Jesus instituted the Holy Supper for the purpose of commemorating His death exclusively, principally, or at all as a martyrdom, is a different question. On this point we must learn the truth from Christ’s own lips. Let us return, then, to the history of the institution, to learn His mind about the matter.

3. Happily the Lord Jesus explained with particular clearness in what aspect He wished His death to be the subject of commemorative celebration. In distributing to His disciples the sacramental bread, He said, “This is my body, given, or broken, for you;” thereby intimating that His death was to be commemorated because of a benefit it procured for the communicant. In handing to the disciples the sacramental cup, He said, “Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, shed (for you and) for many for the remission of sins;” thereby indicating the nature of the benefit procured by His death, on account of which it was worthy to be remembered. In this creative word of the new dispensation Jesus represents His death as a sin-offering, atoning for guilt, and purchasing forgiveness of moral debt. His blood was to be shed for the remission of sins. In view of this function the blood is called the blood of the new testament, in apparent allusion to the prophecy of Jeremiah, which contains a promise of a new covenant to be made by God with the house of Israel-a covenant whose leading blessing should be the forgiveness of iniquity, and called new, because, unlike the old, it would be a covenant of pure grace, of promises unclogged with legal stipulations. By mentioning His blood and the new covenant together, Jesus teaches that, while annulling, He would at the same time fulfil the old, in introducing the new. The new covenant would be ratified by sacrifice, even as was the old one at Sinai, and remission of sin would be granted after blood-shedding. But in bidding His disciples drink the cup, the Lord intimates that after His death there will be no more need of sacrifices. The sin-offering of blood will be converted into a thank-offering of wine, a cup of salvation, to be drunk with grateful, joyful hearts by all who through faith in His sacrifice have received the pardon of their sins. Finally, Jesus intimates that the new covenant concerns the many, not the few-not Israel alone, but all nations: it is a gospel which He bequeaths to sinners of mankind.

Well may we drink of this cup with thankfulness and joy; for the “new covenant” (new, yet far older than the old), of which it is the seal, is in all respects well ordered and sure. Well ordered; for surely it is altogether a good and God-worthy constitution of things which connects the blessing of pardon with the sacrificial death of Him through whom it comes to us. It is good in the interests of righteousness: for it provides that sin shall not be pardoned till it has been adequately atoned for by the sacrifice of the sinner’s Friend; and it is just and right that without the shedding of the Righteous One’s blood there should be no remission for the unrighteous. Then this economy serves well the interest of divine love, as it gives that love a worthy career, and free scope to display its magnanimous nature, in bearing the burden of the sinful and the miserable. And yet once more, the constitution of the new covenant is admirably adapted to the great practical end aimed at by the scheme of redemption, viz. the elevation of a fallen, degraded race out of a state

of corruption into a state of holiness. The gospel of forgiveness through Christ's death is the moral power of God to raise such as believe it out of the world's selfishness, and enmities, and baseness, into a celestial life of devotion, self-sacrifice, patience, and humility. If by faith in Christ be understood merely belief in the opus operatum of a vicarious death, the power of such a faith to elevate is more than questionable. But when faith is taken in its true scriptural sense, as implying not only belief in a certain transaction, the endurance of death by one for others, but also, and more especially, hearty appreciation of the spirit of the deed and the Doer, then its purifying and ennobling power is beyond all question. "The love of Christ constraineth me;" and "I am crucified with Christ," as the result of such faith.

How poor is the Socinian scheme of salvation in comparison with this of the new covenant! In that scheme pardon has no real dependence on the blood of Jesus: He died as a martyr for righteousness, not as a Redeemer for the unrighteous. We are forgiven on repenting by a simple word of God. Forgiveness cost the Forgiver no trouble or sacrifice; only a word, or stroke of the pen signing a document, "Thus saith the Lord." What a frigid transaction! What cold relations it implies between the Deity and His creatures! How vastly preferable a forgiveness which means a giving for, and costs the Forgiver sorrow, sweat, pain, blood, wounds, death-a forgiveness coming from a God who says in effect: "I will not, to save sinners, repeal the law which connects sin with death as its penalty; but I am willing for that end to become myself the law's victim." Such a forgiveness is at once an act of righteousness and an act of marvelous love; whereas forgiveness without satisfaction, though at first sight it may appear both rational and generous, manifests neither God's righteousness nor His love. A Socinian God, who pardons without atonement, is destitute alike of a passionate abhorrence of sin and of a passionate love to sinners.

Jesus once said, "He loveth much who hath much forgiven him." It is a deep truth, but there is another not less deep to be put alongside of it: we must feel that our forgiveness has cost the Forgiver much in order to love Him much. It is because they feel this that true professors of the catholic faith exhibit that passionate devotion to Christ which forms such a contrast to the cold intellectual homage paid by the Deist to his God. When the catholic Christian thinks of the tears, agonies, bloody sweat, shame, and pain endured by the Redeemer, of His marred vision, broken heart, pierced side, lacerated hands and feet, his bosom burns with devoted love. The story of the passion opens all the fountains of feeling; and by no other way than the via dolorosa could Jesus have ascended the throne of His people's hearts. The new covenant inaugurated by Christ's death is sure as well as orderly. It is reliably sealed by the blood of the Testator. For, first, what better guarantee can we have of the good-will of God? "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us." Looking at the matter in the light of justice, again, this covenant is equally sure. God is not unrighteous, to forget His Son's labor of love. As He is true, Christ shall see of the travail of His soul. It cannot be otherwise under the moral administration of Jehovah. Can the God of truth break His word? Can the Judge of all the earth permit one, and especially His own Son, to give Himself up, out of purest love, to sorrow, and pain, and shame, for His brethren, without receiving the hire which He desires, and which was promised Him-many souls, many lives, many sinners saved? Think of it: holiness suffering for righteousness' sake, and yet not having the consolation of doing something in the way of destroying unrighteousness, and turning the disobedient to the obedience of the just; love, by the impulse of its nature, and by covenant obligations, laid under a necessity of

laboring for the lost, and yet doomed by the untowardness, or apathy, or faithlessness of the Governor of the universe to go unrewarded-love's labor lost, nobody the better for it, things remaining as before: no sinner pardoned, delivered from the pit and restored to holiness; no chosen people brought out of darkness into marvelous light! Such a state of things cannot be in God's dominions. The government of God is carried on in the interest of Holy Love. It gives love free scope to bear others' burdens: it arranges that if she will do so, she shall feel the full weight of the burden she takes upon her; but it also arranges, by an eternal covenant of truth and equity, that when the burden has been borne, the Burden-bearer shall receive His reward in the form He likes best-in souls washed, pardoned, sanctified, and led to everlasting glory by Himself as His ransomed brethren or children. The principle of vicarious merit involved in the doctrine that we are pardoned simply because Christ died for our sins, when looked at with unprejudiced eyes, commends itself to reason as well as to the heart. It means practically a premium held out to foster righteousness and love. This offered premium carried Jesus through His heavy task. It was because, relying on His Father's promise, He saw the certain joy of saving many before Him, that He endured the cross. It is the same principle, in a restricted application of it, which stimulates Christians to fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of their Lord. They know that, if they be faithful, they shall not live unto themselves, but shall benefit Christ's mystic body the church, and also the world at large. If the fact were otherwise, there would be very little either of moral fidelity or of love in the world. If the moral government of the universe made it impossible for one being to benefit another by prayer or loving pains, impossible for ten good men to be a shield to Sodom, for the elect to be a salt to the earth, men would give up trying to do it; generous concern about public well-being would cease, and universal selfishness become the order of the day. Or if this state of things should not ensue, we should only have darkness in a worse form: the inscrutable enigma of Righteousness crucified without benefit to any living creature-a scandal and a reproach to the government and character of God. If, therefore, we are to hold fast our faith in the divine holiness, justice, goodness, and truth, we must believe that the blood of Jesus doth most certainly procure for us the remission of sins; and likewise, that the blood of His saints, though neither available nor necessary to obtain for sinners the blessing of pardon before the divine tribunal-Christ's blood alone being capable of rendering us that service, and having rendered it effectually and once for all-is nevertheless precious in God's sight, and makes the people precious among whom it is shed, and is by God's appointment, in manifold ways, a source of blessing unto a world unworthy to number among its inhabitants men whom it knows not how to use otherwise than as lambs for the slaughter.

4. The sacrament of the Supper exhibits Christ not merely as a Lamb to be slain for a sin-offering, but as a Paschal Lamb to be eaten for spiritual nourishment. "Take, eat, this is my body." By this injunction Jesus taught the twelve, and through them all Christians, to regard His crucified humanity as the bread of God for the life of their souls. We must eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man spiritually by faith, as we eat the bread and drink the wine literally with the mouth. In regarding Christ as the Bread of Life, we are not to restrict ourselves to the one benefit mentioned by Him in instituting the feast, the remission of sins, but to have in view all His benefits tending to our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. Christ is the Bread of Life in all His offices. As a Prophet, He supplies the bread of divine truth to feed our minds; as a Priest, He furnishes the bread of righteousness to satisfy our troubled consciences; as a King, He presents Himself to us as an object of devotion, that shall fill our hearts, and whom we may worship without

fear of idolatry. As often as the Lord's Supper is celebrated we are invited to contemplate Christ as the food of our souls in this comprehensive sense. As often as we eat the bread and drink the cup we declare that Christ has been, and is now, our soul's food in all these ways. And as often as we use this Supper with sincerity we are helped to appropriate Christ as our spiritual food more and more abundantly. Even as a symbol or picture-mysticism and magic apart-the Holy Supper aids our faith. Through the eye it affects the heart, as do poetry and music through the ear. The very mysticism and superstition that have grown around the sacraments in the course of ages are a witness to their powerful influence over the imagination. Men's thoughts and feelings were so deeply stirred they could not believe such power lay in mere symbols; and by a confusion of ideas natural to an excited imagination they imputed to the sign all the virtues of the things signified. By this means faith was transferred from Christ the Redeemer, and the Spirit the Sanctifier, to the rite of baptism and the service of the mass. This result shows the need of knowledge and spiritual discernment to keep the imagination in check, and prevent the eyes of the understanding from being put out by the dazzling glare of fancy. Some, considering how thoroughly the eyes of the understanding have been put out by theories of sacramental grace, have been tempted to deny that sacraments are even means of grace, and to think that institutions which have been so fearfully abused ought to be allowed to fall into desuetude. This is a natural re-action, but it is an extreme opinion. The sober, true view of the matter is, that sacraments are means of grace, not from any magic virtue in them or in the priest administering them, but as helping faith by sense, and still more by the blessing of Christ and the working of His Spirit, as the reward of an intelligent, sincere, believing use of them.

This, then, is what we have learned from the monumental stone. The Lord's Supper commemorates the Lord's death; points out that death as an event of transcendent importance; sets it forth, indeed, as the ground of our hope for the pardon of sin; and finally exhibits Christ the Lord, who died on the Cross, as all to us which our spirits need for health and salvation-our mystic bread and wine. This rite, instituted by Jesus on the night on which He was betrayed, He meant to be repeated not merely by the apostles, but by His believing people in all ages till He came again. So we learn from Paul; so we might have inferred, apart from any express information. An act so original, so impressive, so pregnant with meaning, so helpful to faith, once performed, was virtually an enactment. In performing it, Jesus said in effect: "Let this become a great institution, a standing observance in the community to be called by my Name." The meaning of the ordinance determines the Spirit in which it should be observed. Christians should sit down at the table in a spirit of humility, thankfulness, and brotherly love; confessing sin, devoutly thanking God for His covenant of grace, and His mercy to them in Christ, loving Him who loved them, and washed them from their sins in His own blood, and who daily feedeth their souls with heavenly food, and giving Him all glory and dominion; and loving one another-loving all redeemed men and believers in Jesus as brethren, and taking the Supper together as a family meal; withal praying that an ever-increasing number may experience the saving efficacy of Christ's death. After this fashion did the apostles and the apostolic church celebrate the Supper at Pentecost, after Jesus had ascended to glory. Continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart. Would that we now could keep the feast as they kept it then! But how much must be done ere that be possible! The moss of Time must be cleared away from the monumental stone, that its inscription may become once more distinctly legible; the accumulated debris of a millennium and a half of theological

controversies about sacraments must be carted out of sight and mind; the truth as it is in Jesus must be separated from the alloy of human error; the homely rite of the Supper must be divested of the state robes of elaborate ceremonial by which it has been all but stifled, and allowed to return to congenial primitive simplicity. These things, so devoutly to be wished, will come at last-if not on earth, in that day when the Lord Jesus will drink new wine with His people in the kingdom of His Father.

02.23. Judas Iscariot

Judas Iscariot Mat 26:20-23; Mark 14:17-21; Luk 22:21-23; John 13:21-30.

Besides the feet-washing and the institution of the Supper, yet another scene occurred on the night preceding the Lord's death, helping to render it forever memorable. On the same night, during the course of the evening meal, Jesus exposed and expelled the false disciple, who had undertaken to deliver his Master into the hands of those who sought His life. Already, while occupied with the washing, He had made premonitory allusions to the fact that there was a traitor among the twelve, hinting that they were not all clean, and insinuating that there was one of them who knew and would not do. Having finished and explained the service of lowly love, He next proceeded to the unwelcome task of indicating distinctly to which of the disciples He had been alluding. With spirit troubled at thought of the painful duty, and shuddering in presence of such satanic wickedness, He introduced the subject by making the general announcement: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me." Thereafter, in answer to inquiries, He indicated the particular individual, by explaining that the traitor was he to whom He should give a sop or morsel after He had dipped it. The fact then announced was new to the disciples, but it was not new to their Master. Jesus had known all along that there was a traitor in the camp. He had even hinted as much a full year before. But, excepting on that one occasion, He had not spoken of the matter hitherto, but had patiently borne it as a secret burden on His own heart. Now, however, the secret may be hid no longer. The hour is come when the Son of man must be glorified. Judas, for his part, has made up his mind to be the instrument of betraying his Lord to death; and such bad work, once resolved on, should by all means be done without delay. Then Jesus wants to be rid of the false disciple's company. He desires to spend the few last hours of His life in tender, confidential fellowship with His faithful ones, free from the irritation and distraction caused by the presence of an undeclared yet deadly enemy. Therefore He does not wait till it pleases Judas to depart; He bids him go, asserting His authority over him even after he has renounced his allegiance and given himself up to the devil's service. Reaching the sop, He says to him in effect: "I know thee, Judas; thou art the man: thou host resolved to betray me: away, then, and do it." And then He says expressly: "That thou does, do quickly." It was an order to go, and go at once.

Judas took the hint. He "went immediately out," and so finally quitted the society of which he had been an unworthy member. One wonders how such a man ever got in-how he ever was admitted into such a holy fellowship-how he came to be chosen one of the twelve. Did Jesus not know the real character of this man when He chose Him? The words of our Lord, spoken just before, forbid us to think this. "I know," said He, while expounding the feet-washing, "whom I have chosen," meaning, evidently, to claim knowledge of them all, Judas included, at the time He chose them. Did He then choose Judas, knowing what he was, that He might have among the twelve one by whom He might be betrayed, and the Scriptures in that particular be fulfilled? So He seems to hint in the declaration just alluded to; for He goes on to say: "But that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me." But it is not credible that Iscariot was chosen merely to be a traitor, as an actor might be chosen by a theater manager to play the part of

Iago. The end pointed at in the scripture quoted might be ultimately served by his being chosen, but that end was not the motive of the choice. We may regard these two points as certain: on the one hand, that Judas did not become a follower of Jesus with treacherous intentions; and on the other, that Jesus did not elect Judas to be one of the twelve because He foreknew that he would eventually become a traitor.

If the choice of the false disciple was not due either to ignorance or to foreknowledge, how is it to be explained? The only explanation that can be given is, that, apart from secret insight, Judas was to all appearance an eligible man, and could not be passed over on any grounds coming under ordinary observation. His qualities must have been such, that one not possessing the eye of omniscience, looking on him, would have been disposed to say of him what Samuel said of Eliab: “Surely the Lord’s anointed is before him.” In that case, his election by Jesus is perfectly intelligible. The Head of the church simply did what the church has to do in analogous instances. The church chooses men to fill sacred offices on a conjunct view of ostensible qualifications, such as knowledge, zeal, apparent piety, and correctness of outward conduct. In so doing she sometimes makes unhappy appointments, and confers dignity on persons of the Judas type, who dishonor the positions they fill. The mischief resulting is great; but Christ has taught us, by His example in choosing Judas, as also by the parable of the tares, that we must submit to the evil, and leave the remedy in higher hands. Out of evil God often brings good, as He did in the case of the traitor.

Supposing Judas to have been chosen to the apostleship on the ground of apparent fitness, what manner of man would that imply? A vulgar, conscious hypocrite, seeking some mean by-end, while professedly aiming at a higher? Not necessarily; not probably. Rather such an one as Jesus indirectly described Judas to be when He made the reflection: “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.” The false disciple was a sentimental, plausible, self-deceived pietist, who knew and approved the good, though not conscientiously practicing it; one who, in ,aesthetic feeling, in fancy, and in intellect, had affinities for the noble and the holy, while in will and in conduct he was the slave of base, selfish passions; one who, in the last resource, would always put self uppermost, yet could zealously devote himself to well-doing when personal interests were not compromised-in short, what the Apostle James calls a two-minded man. In thus describing Judas, we draw not the picture of a solitary monster. Men of such a type are by no means so rare as some may imagine. History, sacred and profane, supplies numerous examples of them, playing an important part in human affairs. Balaam, who had the vision of a prophet and the soul of a miser, was such a man. Robespierre, the evil genius of the French Revolution, was another. The man who sent thousands to the guillotine had in his younger days resigned his office as a provincial judge, because it was against his conscience to pronounce sentence of death on a culprit found guilty of a capital offence. A third example, more remarkable than either, may be found in the famous Greek Alcibiades, who, to unbounded ambition, unscrupulousness, and licentiousness, united a warm attachment to the greatest and best of the Greeks. The man who in after years betrayed the cause of his native city, and went over to the side of her enemies, was in his youth an enthusiastic admirer and disciple of Socrates. How he felt towards the Athenian sage may be gathered from words put into his mouth by Plato in one of his dialogues-words which involuntarily suggest a parallel between the speaker and the unworthy follower of a greater than Socrates: “I experience towards this man alone (Socrates) what no one would believe me capable of, a sense

of shame. For I am conscious of an inability to contradict him, and decline to do what he bids me; and when I go away I feel myself overcome by the desire of popular esteem. Therefore I flee from him, and avoid him. But when I see him, I am ashamed of my admissions, and oftentimes I would be glad if he ceased to exist among the living; and yet I know well, that were that to happen, I should be still more grieved." The character of Judas being such as we have described, the possibility at least of his turning a traitor becomes comprehensible. One who loves himself more than any man, however good, or any cause, however holy, is always capable of bad faith more or less heinous. He is a traitor at heart from the outset, and all that is wanted is a set of circumstances calculated to bring into play the evil elements of his nature. The question therefore arises, What were the circumstances which converted Judas from a possible into an actual traitor? This is a question very hard indeed to answer. The crime committed by Iscariot, through which he has earned for himself "a frightful renown," remains, in spite of all the discussion whereof it has been the subject, still mysterious and unaccountable. Many attempts have been made to assign probable motives for the nefarious deed, some tending to excuse the doer, and others to aggravate his guilt; all more or less conjectural, and none perfectly satisfactory. As for the Gospel narratives, they do not explain, but merely record, the wickedness of Judas. The synoptical evangelists do indeed mention that the traitor made a bargain with the priests, and received from them a sum of money for the service rendered; and John, in his narrative of the anointing at Bethany, takes occasion to state that the faultfinding disciple was a thief, appropriating to his own uses money out of the common purse, of which he had charge. These facts, of course, show Iscariot to have been a covetous man. None but a man of greedy, covetous spirit could have taken money for such a service. A vindictive man, whose vanity had been wounded, or who fancied himself in some way wronged, might play the traitor for love of revenge, but he would scorn to be paid for his work. The petty pilfering from the bag was also a sure sign of a mean, sordid soul. Perhaps the very fact of his being the purse-bearer to the company of Jesus may be regarded as an indication that his heart hankered after greed. He got the bag to carry, we imagine, because the other disciples were all supremely careless about money matters, while he had decided proclivities towards finance, and showed a desire to have charge of the superfluous funds. All the rest would be only too glad to find a brother willing to take the trouble; and having imbibed the spirit of their Master's precept, Take no thought for the morrow, they would not think of presenting themselves as rival candidates for the office. The evangelists do therefore most distinctly represent Judas as a covetous man. But they do not represent his covetousness as the sole, or even as the principal, motive of his crime. That, indeed, it can hardly have been. For, in the first place, would it not have been a better speculation to have continued pursebearer, with facilities for appropriating its contents, than to sell his Master for a paltry sum not exceeding five pounds? Then what could induce a man whose chief and ruling passion was to amass money to become a disciple of Jesus at all? Surely following Him who had no place where to lay His head was not a likely way to money-making! Then, finally, how account for the repentance of the traitor, so great in its vehemence, though most unholy in its nature, on the hypothesis that his sole object was to gain a few pieces of silver? Avarice may make a man of splendid talents thoroughly mercenary and unscrupulous, as is said to have been the case with the famous Duke of Marlborough; but it is rarely, indeed, that a man given up to avaricious habits takes seriously to heart the crimes committed under their influence. It is the nature of avarice to destroy conscience, and to make all things, however sacred, venal. Whence, then, that mighty volcanic up heaving in the breast of

Judas? Surely other passions were at work in his soul when he sold his Lord than the cold and hardening love of gain!

Pressed by this difficulty, some have suggested that, in betraying Jesus, Judas was actuated principally by feelings of jealousy or spite, arising out of internal dissensions or imagined injuries. This suggestion is in itself not improbable. Offences might very easily come from various sources. The mere fact that Judas was not a Galilean, but a native of another province, might give rise to misunderstanding. Human sympathies and antipathies depend on very little things. Kinsmanship, a common name, or a common birthplace, have far more power than the grand bonds which connect us with all the race. In religion the same remark holds good. The ties of a common Lord, a common hope, and a common spiritual life, are feeble as compared with those of sect and sectional religious custom and opinion. Then who knows what offences sprang from those disputes among the disciples who should be the greatest in the kingdom? What if the man of Kerioth had been made to feel that, whoever was to be the greatest, he at least had no chance, not being a Galilean? The mean, narrow habits of Judas as treasurer would be a third cause of bad feeling in the apostolic company. Supposing his dishonesty to have escaped observation, his tendency to put the interest of the bag above the objects for which its contents were destined, and so to dole out supplies either for the company or for the poor grudgingly, would be sure to be noticed, and, being noticed, would certainly, in such an outspoken society, not fail to be remarked on.

These reflections show how ill-feeling might have arisen between Judas and his fellow-disciples; but what we have to account for is the hatred of the false disciple against his Master. Had Jesus, then, done any thing to offend the man by whom He was betrayed? Yes! He had seen through him, and that was offence enough! For, of course, Judas knew that he was seen through. Men cannot live together in close fellowship long without coming to know with what feelings they are regarded by each other. If I distrust a brother, he will find it out, even should I attempt to conceal it. But the guileless and faithful One would make no attempt at concealment. He would not, indeed, offensively obtrude His distrust on the notice of Judas, but neither would He studiously hide it, to make matters go smoothly between them. He who so faithfully corrected the faults of the other disciples would do His duty to this one also, and make him aware that he regarded his spirit and evil habits with disapprobation, in order to bring him to repentance. And what the effect of such dealing would be it is not difficult to imagine. On a Peter, correction had a most wholesome influence; it brought him at once to a right mind. In the case of a Judas the result would be very different. The mere consciousness that Jesus did not think well of him, and still more the shame of an open rebuke, would breed sullen resentment and ever-deepening alienation of heart; till at length love was turned to hatred, and the impenitent disciple began to cherish vindictive passions. The manner in which the betrayal was gone about supports the idea that the agent was actuated by malicious, revengeful feelings. Not content with giving such information as would enable the Jewish authorities to get their Victim into their hands, Judas conducted the band that was sent to apprehend his Master, and even pointed Him out to them by an affectionate salutation. To one in a vengeful mood that kiss might be sweet; but to a man in any other mood, even though he were a traitor, how abhorrent and abominable! The salutation was entirely gratuitous: it was not necessary for the success of the plot; for the military detachment was furnished with torches, and Judas could have indicated Jesus to them while he himself kept in the background. But that way would not

satisfy a bosom friend turned to be a mortal enemy.

Along with malice and greed, the instinct of self-preservation may have had a place among the motives of Judas. Perfidy might be recommended by the suggestions of selfish prudence. The traitor was a shrewd man, and believed that a catastrophe was near. He understood better than his single-minded brethren the situation of affairs; for the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. The other disciples, by their generous enthusiasms and patriotic hopes, were blinded to the signs of the times; but the false disciple, just because he was less noble, was more discerning. Disaster, then, being imminent, what was to be done? What but turn king's evidence, and make terms for himself, so that Christ's loss might be his gain? If this baseness could be perpetrated under pretense of provocation, why then, so much the better!

These observations help to bring the crime of Judas Iscariot within the range of human experience, and on this account it was worth our while to make them; for it is not desirable that we should think of the traitor as an absolutely unique character, as the solitary perfect incarnation of satanic wickedness. We should rather so think of his crime as that the effect of contemplating it on our minds shall be to make us, like the disciples, ask, Is it I? "Who can understand his errors? Keep back Thy servant from presumptuous sins." There have been many traitors besides Judas, who, from malice or for gain, have played false to noble men and noble causes; some of them perhaps even worse men than he. It was his unenviable distinction to betray the most exalted of all victims; but many who have been substantially guilty of his sin have not taken it so much to heart, but have been able to live happily after their deed of villainy was wrought.

Yet, while it is important for our warning not to conceive of Judas as an isolated sinner, it is also most desirable that we should regard his crime as an incomprehensible mystery of iniquity. It is in this light that the fourth evangelist would have us look at it. He could have told us much about the mutual relations of Judas and Jesus tending to explain the deed of the former. But he has not chosen to do so. The only explanation he gives of the traitor's crime is, that Satan had taken possession of him. This he mentions twice over in one chapter, as if to express his own horror, and to awaken similar horror in his readers. And to deepen the impression, after relating the exit of Judas, he adds the suggestive reflection that it took place after nightfall: "He then, having received the sop, went immediately out: and it was night." Fit time for such an errand!

Judas went out and betrayed his Lord to death, and then he went and took his own life. What a tragic accompaniment to the crucifixion was that suicide! What an impressive illustration of the evil of a double mind! To be happy in some fashion, Judas should either have been a better man or a worse. Had he been better, he would have been saved from his crime; had he been worse, he would have escaped torment before the time. As it was, he was bad enough to do the deed of infamy, and good enough to be unable to bear the burden of its guilt. Woe to such a man! Better for him, indeed, that he had never been born!

What a melancholy end was that of Judas to an auspicious beginning! Chosen to be a companion of the Son of man, and an eye and ear witness of His work, once engaged in preaching the gospel and casting out devils; now possessed of the devil himself, driven on by him to damnable deeds, and finally employed by a righteous Providence to take vengeance on his own crime. In view of this history, how shallow the theory that resolves all moral differences between men into the effect of circumstances! Who was ever better circumstanced for becoming good than Judas? Yet the

very influences which ought to have fostered goodness served only to provoke into activity latent evil.

What a bitter cross must the constant presence of such a man as Judas have been to the pure, loving heart of Jesus! Yet how patiently it was borne for years! Herein He is an example and a comfort to His true followers, and for this end among others had He this cross to bear. The Redeemer of men had a companion who lifted up his heel against Him, that in this as in all other respects He might be like unto, and able to succor, His brethren. Has any faithful servant of Christ to complain that his love has been requited by hatred, his truth with bad faith; or that he is obliged to treat as a true Christian one whom he more than suspects to be a hypocrite? It is a hard trial, but let him look unto Jesus and be patient

Chapter 60

02.24. The Dying Parent and the Little Ones

The Dying Parent and the Little Ones Section I - Words of Comfort and Counsel to the Sorrowing Children John 13:31-35; John 14:1-4, John 14:15-21. The exit of Judas into the darkness of night, on his still darker errand, was a summons to Jesus to prepare for death. Yet He was thankful for the departure of the traitor. It took a burden off His heart, and allowed Him to breathe and to speak freely; and if it brought Him, in the first place, near to His last sufferings, it brought Him also near to the ulterior joy of resurrection and exaltation to glory. Therefore His first utterance, after the departure took place, was an outburst of unfeigned gladness. When the false disciple was gone out, and the sound of his retiring footsteps had died away, Jesus said: “Now is the Son of man glorified: and God is glorified in Him; and God shall glorify Him in Himself, yea, He shall straightway glorify Him.” But while, by a faith which substantiated things hoped for, and made evident things not visible, Jesus was able to see in present death coming glory, He remembered that He had around Him disciples to whom, in their weakness, His decease and departure would mean simply bereavement and desolation. Therefore He at once turned His thoughts to them, and proceeded to say to them such things as were suitable to their inward state and their outward situation. In His last words to His own the Saviour employed two different styles of speech. First, He spoke to them as a dying parent addressing his children; and then He assumed a loftier tone, and spoke to them as a dying Lord addressing His servants, friends, and representatives. The words of comfort and counsel spoken by Jesus in the former capacity, we find in the passages cited from the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters of John’s Gospel; while the directions of the departing Lord to His future Apostles are recorded in the two chapters which follow. We have to consider in this chapter the dying Parent’s last words to His sorrowing children.

These, it will be observed, were not spoken in one continuous address. While the dying Parent spake, the children kept asking Him child’s questions. First one, then another, then a third, and then a fourth, asked Him a question, suggested by what He had been saying. To these questions Jesus listened patiently, and returned answer as He could. The answers He gave, and the things He meant to say without reference to possible interrogations, are mixed up together in the narrative. It will be convenient for our purpose to separate these from those, and to consider first, taken together, the words of comfort spoken by Jesus to His disciples, and then their questionings of Him, with the replies which these elicited. This method will make these words stand out in all their exquisite simplicity and appropriateness. To show how very simple and suitable they were, we may here state them in the fewest possible words. They were these: 1. I am going away; in my absence find comfort in one another’s love (John 13:31-35). 2. I am going away; but it is to my Father’s house, and in due season I will come back and take you thither (John 14:1-4). 3. I am going away; but even when I am away I will be with you in the person of my alter ego, the Comforter (John 14:15-21).

Knowing to whom He speaks, Jesus begins at once with the nursery dialect. He addresses His disciples not merely as children, but as “little children;” by the endearing name expressing His tender affection towards them, and His compassion for their weakness. Then He alludes to His

death in a delicate roundabout way, adapted to childish capacity and feelings. He tells them He is going a road they cannot follow, and that they will miss Him as children miss their father when he goes out and never returns. “Yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you.”

After this brief, simple preface Jesus went on to give His little ones His first dying counsel, viz. that they should love one another in His absence. Surely it was a counsel well worthy to come first! For what solace can be greater to orphaned ones than mutual love? Let the world be ever so dark and cheerless, while brothers in affliction are true brothers to each other in sympathy and reciprocal helpfulness, they have an unfailing well-spring of joy in the desert of sorrow. If, on the other hand, to all the other ills of life there be added alienation, distrust, antagonism, the bereaved are desolate indeed; their night of sorrow hath not even a solitary star to alleviate its gloom.

Anxious to secure due attention to a precept in itself most seasonable, and even among the disciples needing enforcement, Jesus conferred on it all the dignity and importance of a new commandment, and made the love enjoined therein the distinctive mark of Christian discipleship. “A new commandment,” said He, “I give unto you, that ye love one another;” thus, on that memorable night, adding a third novelty to those already introduced-the new sacrament and the new covenant. The commandment and the covenant were new in the same sense; not as never having been heard of before, but as now for the first time proclaimed with the due emphasis, and assuming their rightful place of supremacy above the details of Mosaic moral legislation and the shadowy rites of the legal religious economy. Now love was to be the outstanding royal law, and free grace was to antiquate Sinaitic ordinances. And why now? In both cases, because Jesus was about to die. His death would be the seal of the New Testament, and it would exemplify and ratify the new commandment. Hence He goes on to say, after giving forth that new law, “as I have loved you.” The past tense is not to be interpreted strictly here: the perfect must be taken as a future perfect so as to include the death which was the crowning act of the Saviour’s love. “Love one another,” Jesus would say, “as I shall have loved you, and as ye shall know that I have loved you when ye come to need the consolation of so loving each other.” So understanding His words, we see clearly why He calls the law of love new. His own love in giving His life for His people was a new thing on earth; and a love among His followers, one towards another, kindred in spirit and ready to do the same thing if needful, would be equally a novelty at which the world would stare, asking in wonder whence it came, till at length it perceived that the men who so loved had been with Jesus. The second word of comfort spoken by Jesus to the little ones He was about to leave was, in its general aspect, an exhortation to faith: “Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, and believe in me;” in its more special aspect a promise that He would return to take them to be with Him for ever. The exhortation embraces in its scope the whole interests of the disciples, secular and spiritual, temporal and eternal. Their dying Master recommends them first to exercise faith in God, mainly with reference to temporal anxieties. He says to them, in effect: “I am going to leave you, my children; but be not afraid. You shall not be in the world as poor orphans, defenceless and unprovided for; God my Father will take care of you; trust in Divine Providence, and let peace rule in your hearts.” Having thus exhorted them to exercise faith in God the Provider, Jesus next exhorts His little ones to believe in Himself, with special reference to those spiritual and eternal interests for the sake of which they had left all and followed Him. “Believing in God for food and raiment, believe in me too, and be assured that all I said to you about the kingdom and its joys

and rewards is true. Soon ye will find it very hard to believe this: it will seem to you as if the promises I made were deceptive, and the kingdom a dream and a hallucination. But do not allow such dark thoughts to take possession of your minds: recollect what you know of me; and ask yourselves whether it is likely that He whose companions you have been during these years would deceive you with romantic promises that were never to be fulfilled." The kingdom and its rewards; these were the things which Jesus had encouraged His followers to expect. Of these, accordingly, He proceeded next to speak, in the style suited to the character he had assumed-that, viz., of a dying parent addressing his children. "In my Father's house," said He, "are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you, and I will come again, and receive you unto myself." Such, in its more specific form, was the second word of consolation. What a cheering prospect it held out to the disciples! In the hour of despondency the little ones would think themselves orphans, without a home either in earth or in heaven. But their Friend assures them that they should not merely have a home, but a splendid one; not merely a humble shed to shelter them from the storm, but a glorious palace to reside in, in a region where storms were unknown-a house with a great many rooms in it, supplying abundant accommodation for them all, incomparably more capacious than the temple which had been the earthly dwelling-place of God. His own death, which would appear to them so great a calamity, would simply mean His going before to prepare for them a place in that splendid mansion, and in due season His departure would be followed by a return to take them to be with Himself. What was implied in preparing a place when He should come again, He did not explain. He only added, as if coaxing them to take a cheerful view of the situation, "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know;" meaning, Think whither I go, to the Father, and think of my death as merely the way thither: and so let not my absence from the world make you sad, nor my death seem something dreadful. To the student of New Testament theology, interested in tracing the resemblances and contrasts in different types of doctrine, this second word of consolation spoken by Christ to His disciples has special interest, as containing substantially the idea of a Forerunner, one of the striking thoughts of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The writer of that epistle tells his Hebrew readers that Jesus has gone into heaven not merely as a High Priest, but as a Forerunner, this being one of the novelties and glories of the new dispensation; for no high priest of Israel went into the Most Holy Place as a forerunner, but only as a substitute, going for the people into a place whither they might not follow him. Jesus, on the other hand, goes into the heavenly sanctuary, not only for us, but before us, going into a place whither we may follow Him; no place being screened off, barred, or locked against us. Similar is the thought which the fourth evangelist puts into the mouth of Jesus here, speaking as the great High Priest of humanity.

These child-like yet profound sayings of the Lord Jesus are not only cheering, but most stimulating to the imagination. The "many mansions" suggest many thoughts. We think with pleasure of the vast numbers which the many-mansioned house is capable of containing. We may too, harmlessly, though perhaps fancifully, with the saints of other ages, think of the lodgings in the Father's house as not only many in number, but also as many in kind, corresponding to the classes or ranks of the residents. But to some the most comfortable thought of all suggested by this pregnant poetic word is the certainty of an eternal life. To men who have doubted concerning the life beyond, the grand desideratum is not detailed information respecting the site, and the size, and the architecture of the celestial city, but to know for certain that there is such a city, that there is an house not made with hands eternal in the heavens. This desideratum is supplied in this word of Christ. For whatever the many mansions may mean besides, they do at the least imply that

there is a state of happy existence to be reached by believers, as He in whom they believe reached it, viz. through death. The life everlasting, whatever its conditions, is undoubtedly taught here. And it is taught with authority. Jesus speaks as one who knows, not (like Socrates) as one who merely has an opinion on the subject. At his farewell meeting with his friends before he drank the hemlock cup, the Athenian sage discussed with them the question of the immortality of the soul. On that question he strongly maintained the affirmative; but still only as one who looked on it as a fair subject for discussion, and knew that there was a good deal to be said on both sides. But Jesus does more than maintain the affirmative on the subject of the life to come. He speaks thereon with oracular confidence, offering to us not the frail raft of a probable opinion, whereon we may perilously sail down the stream of life towards death; but the strong ship of a divine word, wherein one may sail securely, for which Socrates and his companions sighed. And He so speaks with a full sense of the responsibility He thereby takes upon Himself. “If it were not so,” He remarked to His disciples, “I would have told you;” which is as much as to say, that one should not encourage such expectations as He had led them to entertain unless he were sure of his ground. It was not enough to have an opinion about the world to come: one who took the responsibility of asking men to leave this present world for its sake should be quite certain that it was a reality, and not a dream. What condescension to the weakness of the disciples is shown in this self- justifying reflection of their Lord! What an aid also it lends to our faith in the reality of future bliss! For such an one as Jesus Christ would not have spoken in this way unless He had possessed authentic information about the world beyond. In the third word of consolation, the leading thought is the promise of another Comforter, who should take the place of Him who was going away, and make the bereaved feel as if He were still with them. In the second word of comfort Jesus had said that He was going to provide a home for the little ones, and that then He would return and take them to it. In this third final word He virtually promises to be present with them by substitute, even when He is absent. “I will pray the Father,” He says, “and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever” (not for a season, as has been the case with me). Then He tells them who this wonderful Comforter is: His name is “the Spirit of Truth.” Then, lastly, He gives them to understand that this Spirit of Truth will be a Comforter to them, by restoring, as it were, the consciousness of His own presence, so that the coming of this other Comforter will just be, in a sense, His own spiritual return. “I will not leave you comfortless,” He assures them: “I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you;” promising thereby not a different thing, but the same thing which He had promised just before, in different terms. How the other Comforter would make Himself an alter ego of the departed one, He does not here distinctly explain. At a subsequent stage in His discourse He did inform His disciples how the wonder would be achieved. The Spirit would make the absent Jesus present to them again, by bringing to their remembrance all His words, by testifying of Him, and by guiding them into an intelligent apprehension of all Christian truth. All this, though not said here, is sufficiently hinted at by the name given to the new Paraclete. He is called the Spirit of Truth, not the Holy Spirit, as elsewhere, because He was to comfort by enlightening the minds of the disciples in the knowledge of Christ, so that they should see Him clearly by the spiritual eye, when He was no longer visible to the eye of the body. This spiritual vision, when it came, was to be the true effectual consolation for the absence of the Jesus whom the eleven had known after the flesh. It would be as the dawn of day, which banishes the fears and discomforts of the night. While the night lasts, all comforts are but partial alleviations of discomfort. A father’s hand and voice have a reassuring effect on the timid heart of his child, as they walk together by

night; but while the darkness lasts, the little one is liable to be scared by objects dimly seen, and distorted by fear-stricken fancy into fantastic forms. “In the night-time men (much more children) think every bush a thief;” and all can sympathize with the sentiment of Rousseau, “It is my nature to be afraid of darkness.” Light is welcome, even when it only reveals to us the precise nature and extent of our miseries. If it do not in that case drive sorrow away, it helps at least to make it calm and sober. Such cold comfort, however, was not what Jesus promised His followers. The Spirit of Truth was not to come merely to show them their desolation in all its nakedness, and to reconcile them to it as inevitable, by teaching them to regard their early hopes as romantic dreams, the kingdom of God as a mere ideal, and the death of Jesus as the fate that awaits every earnest attempt to realize that ideal. Miserable comfort this! to be told that all earnest religion must end in infidelity, and all enthusiasm in despair! The third word of consolation was introduced by an injunction laid by Jesus on His disciples. “If ye love me,” said He to them, “keep my commandments.” It is probable that the speaker meant here to set the true way of showing love over against an unprofitable, bootless one, which His hearers were in danger of taking; that, namely, of grieving over His loss. We may paraphrase the words so as to indicate the connection of thought somewhat as follows: “If ye love me, show not your love by idle sorrow, but by keeping my commandments, whereby ye shall render to me a real service. Let the precepts which I have taught you from time to time be your concern, and be not troubled about yourselves. Leave your future in my hands; I will look after it: for I will pray the Father, and he will send you another Comforter.” But this paraphrase, though true so far as it goes, does not exhaust the meaning of this weighty word. Jesus prefaces the promise of the Comforter by an injunction to keep His commandments, because He wishes His disciples to understand that the fulfilment of the promise and the keeping of the commandments go together. This truth is hinted at by the word “and,” which forms the link of connection between precept and promise; and it is reiterated under various modes of expression in the passage we are now considering. The necessity of moral fidelity in order to spiritual illumination is plainly taught when the promised Comforter is described as a Spirit “whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him.” It is still more plainly taught in the last verse of this section: “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.” As in His first great sermon (on the mount) Jesus had said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God;” so, in His farewell discourse to His own, He says in effect: Be pure in heart, and through the indwelling Spirit of Truth ye shall see me, even when I am become invisible to the world.

Life and light go together: such is the doctrine of the Lord Jesus, as of all Scripture. Keeping in mind this great truth, we comprehend the diverse issues of religious perplexities; in one resulting in the illuminism of infidelity; in another, in an enlightened, unwavering faith. The “illumination” which consists in the extinction of the heavenly luminaries of faith and hope is the penalty of not faithfully keeping Christ’s commandments; that which consists in the restoration of spiritual lights after a temporary obscuration by the clouds of doubt is the reward of holding fast moral integrity when faith is eclipsed, and of fearing God while walking in darkness. A man, e.g., who, having believed for a time the divinity of Christ and the life to come, ends by believing that Jesus was only a deluded enthusiast, and that the divine kingdom is but a beautiful dream, will not be found to have made any great effort to realize his own ideal, certainly not to have been guilty of the folly of suffering for it. To many, the creed which resolves all religion into impracticable ideals is very

convenient. It saves a world of trouble and pain; it permits them to think fine thoughts, without requiring them to do noble actions, and it substitutes romancing about heroism in the place of being heroes.

Section II - The Children's Question, and the Adieu John 13:36-38, John 14:5-7, John 14:22-31. The questions put successively by four of the little ones to their dying Parent now invite our attention. The first of these was asked by the disciple who was ever the most forward to speak his mind-Simon Peter. His question had reference to the intimation made by Jesus about His going away. Peter had noted and been alarmed by that intimation. It seemed to hint at danger; it plainly spoke of separation. Tormented with uncertainty, terrified by the vague presentiment of hidden peril, grieved at the thought of being parted from his beloved Master, he could not rest till he had penetrated the mystery; and at the very first pause in the discourse he abruptly inquired, "Lord, whither goest Thou?" thinking, though he did not say, "Where Thou goest, I will go."

It was to this unexpressed thought that Jesus directed His reply. He did not say where He was going; but, leaving that to be inferred from His studied reserve, and from the tone in which He spoke, He Simply told Peter: "Whither I go, thou cast not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me afterwards." By this answer He showed He had not forgotten that it was with children He had to deal. He does not look for heroic behavior on the part of Peter and his brother disciples at the approaching crisis. He does indeed expect that they shall play the hero by and by, and follow Him on the martyr's path bearing their cross, in accordance with the law of discipleship proclaimed by Himself in connection with the first announcement of His own death. But meantime He expects them to behave simply as little children, running away in terror when the moment of danger arrives.

While this was the idea Jesus had of Peter, it was not the idea which Peter had of himself. He thought himself no child, but a man every inch. Dimly apprehending what following his Master meant, he deemed himself perfectly competent to the task now, and felt almost aggrieved by the poor opinion entertained of his courage. "Why," he therefore asked in a tone of injured virtue, "Lord, why cannot I follow Thee now?" Is it because there is danger, imprisonment, death, in the path? If that be all, it is no good reason, for "I will lay down my life for Thy sake." Ah, that "why," how like a child; that self-confidence, what an infallible mark of spiritual weakness!

If the answer of Jesus to Peter's fist question was indirect and evasive, that which He gave to his second was too plain to be mistaken. "Wilt thou," He said, taking up the disciple's words, "Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me thrice." Better for Peter had he been content with the first reply! Yet no: not better, only pleasanter for the moment. It was good for Peter to be thus bluntly told what his Lord thought of him, and to be shown once for all his own picture drawn by an unerring hand. It was just what was needed to lead him to self-knowledge, and to bring on a salutary crisis in his spiritual history. Already more than once he had been faithfully dealt with for faults springing from his characteristic vices of forwardness and self-confidence. But such correction in detail had produced no deep impression, no decisive lasting effect on his mind. He was still ignorant of himself, still as forward, self-confident, and self-willed as ever, as the declaration he had just made most clearly showed. There was urgent need, therefore, for a lesson that would never be forgotten; for a word of correction that would print itself indelibly on the erring disciple's memory, and bear fruit throughout

his whole after life. And here it is at last, and in good season. The Lord tells His brave disciple that he will forthwith play the coward; He tells His attached disciple, to whom separation from his Master seems mofre dreadful than death, that he will, ere many hours are past, deny all acquaintance or connection with Him whom he so fondly loves. He tells him all this at a time when the prophecy must be followed by its fulfilment almost as fast as a flash of lightning is followed by its peal of thunder. The prediction of Jesus, so minutely circumstantial, and the denial of Peter, so exactly corresponding, both by themselves so remarkable, and coming so close together, will surely help to make each other impressive; and it will be strange indeed if the two combined do not, by the blessing of God, in answer to the Master's intercessory prayer, make of the fallen disciple quite another man. The result will doubtless prove the truth of another prophetic word reported by Luke as having been spoken by the Lord to His disciple on the same occasion. The chaff will be separated from the wheat in Peter's character; he will undergo a great change of spirit; and being converted from self-confidence and self-will to meekness and modesty, he will be fit at length to strengthen others, to be a shepherd to the weak, and, if needful, to bear his cross, and so follow his Master through death to glory. The second question proceeded from Thomas, the melancholy disciple, slow to believe, and prone to take sombre views of things. The mind of this disciple fastened on the statement wherewith Jesus concluded His second word of consolation: "Whither I go, the way ye know." That statement seemed to Thomas not only untrue, but unreasonable. For himself, he was utterly unconscious of possessing the knowledge for which the speaker had given His hearers credit; and, moreover, he did not see how it was possible for any of them to possess it. For Jesus had never yet distinctly told them whither He was going; and not knowing the terminus ad quem, how could any one know the road which led thereto? Therefore, in a dry, matter-of-fact, almost cynical tone, this second interlocutor remarked: "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way?" This utterance was thoroughly characteristic of the man, as we know him from John's portraiture. While the practical-minded Peter asks Jesus where He is going, determined if possible to follow Him, Thomas does not think it worth his while to make any such inquiry. Not that he is unconcerned about the matter. He would like well to know whither his Lord is bound; and, if it were possible, he would be as ready as his brother disciple to keep Him company. Danger would not deter him. He had said once before, "Let us go, that we may die with Him," and he could say the same thing honestly again; for though he is gloomy, he is not selfish or cowardly. But just as on that earlier occasion, when Jesus, disregarding the warnings of His disciples, resolved to go from Peraea to Judea on a visit to the afflicted family of Bethany, Thomas took the darkest view of the situation, and looked on death as the certain fate awaiting them all, so now he resigns himself to a hopeless, desponding mood. The thought of the Master's departure makes him so sad that he has no heart to ask questions concerning the why or the whitherward. He resigns himself to ignorance on these matters as an inevitable doom. Whither? whither? I know not; who can tell? The future is dark. The Father's house you spoke of, where in the universe can it be? Is there really such a place at all?

Even the question put by Thomas, "How can we know the way?" is not so much a question as an apology for not asking questions. It is not a demand for information, but a gentle complaint against Jesus for expecting His disciples to be informed. It is not the expression of a desire for knowledge, but an excuse for ignorance. The melancholy disciple is for the present hopeless of knowing either end or way, and therefore he is incurious and listless. Far from seeking light, he is rather in the humor to exaggerate the darkness. As Jonah in his angry mood indulged in querulousness, so

Thomas in his sadness delights in gloom. He waits not eagerly for the dawn of day; he rather takes pleasure in the night, as congenial to his present frame of mind. Good men of melancholic temperament are, at the best, like men walking amid the solemn gloom of a forest. Sadness is the prevailing feeling in their souls, and they are content to have occasional broken glimpses of heaven, like peeps of the sky through the leafy roof of the wood. But Thomas is so heavy-hearted that he hardly cares even for a glimpse of the celestial world; he looks not up, but walks through the dark forest at a slow pace, with his eyes fixed upon the ground. The argumentative proclivities of this disciple appear in his words as well as his proneness to despondency. Another man in despairing mood might have said: We know neither end nor way; we are utterly in the dark both as to whither you are going, and as to the road by which you are to go thither. But Thomas must needs reason; his mental habit leads him to represent one piece of ignorance as the necessary consequence of another: We know not the terminus ad quem, and therefore it is impossible that we can know the way. This man is afflicted with the malady of thought; he gives reasons for every thing, and he will demand reasons for every thing. Here he demonstrates the impossibility of a certain kind of knowledge; at another crisis we shall find him insisting on palpable demonstration that his Lord is indeed risen from the dead.

How does Jesus reply to the lugubrious speech of Thomas? Most compassionately and sympathetically, now as at another time. To the curious question of Peter He returned an evasive answer; to the sad- hearted Thomas, on the other hand, He vouchsafes information which had not been asked. And the information given is full even to redundancy. The disciple had complained of ignorance concerning the end, and especially concerning the way; and it would have been a sufficient reply to have said, The Father is the end, and I am the way. But the Master, out of the fulness of His heart, said more than this. With firm, emphatic tones He uttered this oracular response, meant for the ear not of Thomas alone, but of all the world: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me.”

Comparing this momentous declaration with the preceding word of consolation, we observe a change in the mode of presenting the truth. The Father Himself takes the place of the Father’s house with its many mansions, as the end; and Jesus, instead of being the guide who shall one day lead His children to the common home, becomes Himself the way. The kind Master alters His language, in gracious accommodation to childish capacities. Of Christians at the best it may be said, in the words of Paul, that now, in this present time-life, they see the heavenly and the eternal as through a glass, in enigmas. But the disciples at this crisis in their history were not able to do even so much. Jesus had held up before their eyes the brightly-polished mirror of a beautiful parable concerning a house of many mansions, and they had seen nothing there; no image, but only an opaque surface. The future remained dark and hidden as before. What, then, was to be done? Just what Jesus did. Persons must be substituted for places. Disciples weak in faith must be addressed in this fashion: Can ye not comprehend whither I am going? Think, then, to whom I go. If ye know nothing of the place called heaven, know at least that ye have a Father there. And as for the way to heaven, let that for you mean me. Knowing me, ye need no further knowledge; believing in me, ye may look forward to the future, even to death itself, without fear or concern. On looking more narrowly into the response given by Jesus to Thomas, we find it by no means easy to satisfy ourselves as to how precisely it should be expounded. The very fulness of this saying perplexes us; it is dark with excess of light. Interpreters differ as to how the Way, the Truth, and

the Life are to be distinguished, and how they are related to each other. One offers, as a paraphrase of the text: I am the beginning, the middle, and the end of the ladder which leads to heaven; another: I am the example, the teacher, the giver of eternal life; while a third subordinates the two last attributes to the first, and reads: I am the true way of life. Each view is true in itself, yet one hesitates to accept either of them as exhausting the meaning of the Saviour's words.

Whatever be the preferable method of interpreting these words of our Lord, two things at least are clear from them. Jesus sets Himself forth here as all that man needs for eternal salvation, and as the only Saviour. He is way, truth, life, every thing; and He alone conducts to the Father. He says to men in effect: "What is it you want? Is it light? I am the light of the world, the revealer of the Father: for this end I came, that I might declare Him. Or is it reconciliation you want? I by that very death which I am about to endure am the Reconciler. My very end in dying is to bring you who are for off nigh to God, as to a forgiving, gracious Father. Or is it life, spiritual, never-ending life, you seek? Believe in me, and ye shall never die; or though ye die, I will raise you again to enter on an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, eternal in the heavens. Let all who seek these things look to me. Look to me for light, not to rabbis or philosophers; not even to nature and providence. These last do indeed reveal God, but they do so dimly. The light of creation is but the starlight of theology, and the light of providence is but its moonlight, while I am the sunlight. My Father's Name is written in hieroglyphics in the works of creation; in providence and history it is written in plain letters, but so far apart that it takes much study to put them together, and so spell out the divine Name: in me the divine Name is written so that he may read who runs, and the wisdom of God is become milk for babes. Look to me also for reconciliation, not to legal sacrifices. That way of approaching God is antiquated now. I am the new, the living, the eternal way into the holy of holies, through which all may draw near to the divine presence with a true heart, in full assurance of faith. Look to me, finally, for eternal blessedness. I am He who, having died, shall rise again, and live forevermore, and shall hold in my hands the keys of Hades and of death, and shall open the kingdom of heaven to all believers." The doctrine that in Christ is the fulness of grace and truth is very comforting to those who know Him; but what of those who know Him not, or who possess only such an implicit, unconscious knowledge as hardly merits the name? Does the statement we have been considering exclude such from the possibility of salvation? It does not. It declares that no man cometh to the Father but by Christ, but it does not say how much knowledge is required for salvation. It is possible that some may be saved by Christ, and for His sake, who know very little about Him indeed. This we may infer from the case of the disciples themselves. What did they know about the way of salvation at this period? Jesus addresses them as persons yet in ignorance concerning Himself, saying: "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also." Nevertheless, He has no hesitation in speaking to them as persons who should be with Him in the Father's house. And what shall we say of Job, and the Syro-Phoenician woman, and the Ethiopian eunuch, and Cornelius, and we may add, after Calvin, the Syrian courtier Naaman? We cannot say more than the great theologian of Geneva has himself said concerning such cases: "I confess," he writes, "that in a certain respect their faith was implicit, not only as to the person of Christ, but as to His virtue and grace, and the office assigned Him by the Father. Meanwhile it is certain that they were imbued with principles which gave some taste of Christ, however slight." It is doubtful whether even so much can be said of Naaman; though Calvin, without evidence, and merely to meet the exigencies of a theory, argues that it would have been too absurd, when Elisha had spoken to him of little matters, to have been silent

on the most important subject. Or if we grant to Naaman the slight taste contended for, must we not grant it also, with Justin Martyr and Zwingli, to Socrates and Plato and others, on the principle that all true knowledge of God, by whomsoever possessed and however obtained, whether it be sunlight, moonlight, or starlight, is virtually Christian; in other words, that Christ, just because He is the only light, is the light of every man who hath any light in him? This principle, while it has its truth, may very easily be perverted into an argument against a supernatural revelation. Hence in its very first chapter, Of the Holy Scripture, the Westminster Confession broadly asserts that the light of nature and the works of creation and providence are not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and of His will which is necessary unto salvation. While strongly maintaining this truth, however, we must beware of being drawn into a tone of disparagement in speaking of what way be learnt of God from those lower sources. While walking in the sunlight, we rust not despise the dimmer luminaries of the night, or forget their existence, as in the day-time men forget the moon and the stars. By so doing we should be virtually disparaging the Scriptures themselves. For much that is in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, is but a record of what inspired men had learned from observation of God's works in creation, and of His ways in providence. All cannot, indeed, see as much there as they saw. On the contrary, a revelation was needed not only to make known truths lying beyond the teachings of natural religion, but even to direct men's dim eyes to truths which, though visible in nature, were in fact for the most part not seen. The Bible, in the quaint language of Calvin, is a pair of spectacles, through which our weak eyes see the glory of God in the world. Yet what is seen through the spectacles by weak eyes is in many passages just what might be seen by strong eyes without their aid-"nothing being placed there which is not visible in the creation."

These observations may help us to cherish hope for those whose opportunities of knowing Him who is "the way, the truth, and the life" are small. They do not, however, justify those who, having abundant facilities for knowing Christ, are content with the minimum of knowledge. There is more hope for the heathen than for such men. To their number no true Christian can belong. A genuine disciple may know little to begin with: this was the case even with the apostles themselves; but he will not be satisfied to be in the dark. He will desire to be enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, and will pray, "Lord, show us the Father."

Such was the prayer of Philip, the third disciple who took part in the dialogue at the supper-table. Philip's request, like Thomas's question, was a virtual denial of a statement previously made by Jesus. "If ye had known me," Jesus had said to Thomas, "ye should have known my Father also;" and then He had added, "and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him." This last statement Philip felt himself unable to homologate. "Seen the Father! would it were so! nothing would gratify us more: Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." In itself, the prayer of this disciple was most devout and praiseworthy. There can be no loftier aspiration than that which seeks the knowledge of God the Father, no better index of a spiritual mind than to account such knowledge the summum bonum, no more hopeful symptom of ultimate arrival at the goal than the candor which honestly confesses present ignorance. In these respects the sentiments uttered by Philip were fitted to gratify his Master. In other respects, however, they were not so satisfactory. The ingenuous inquirer had evidently a very crude notion of what seeing the Father amounted to. He fancied it possible, and he appears to have wished, to see the Father as he then saw Jesus-as an outward object of vision to the eye of the body. Then, supposing that to be his wish, how foolish

the reflection, “and it sufficeth us”! What good could a mere external vision of the Father do any one? And finally that same reflection painfully showed how little the disciples had gained hitherto from intercourse with Jesus. They had been with Him for years, yet had not found rest and satisfaction in Him, but had still a craving for something beyond Him; while what they craved they had, without knowing it, been getting from Him all along.

Such ignorance and spiritual incapacity so late in the day were very disappointing. And Jesus was disappointed, but, with characteristic patience, not irritated. He took not offence either at Philip’s stupidity, or at the contradiction he had given to His own statement (for He would rather be contradicted than have disciples pretend to know when they do not), but endeavored to enlighten the little ones somewhat in the knowledge of the Father. For this end He gave great prominence to the truth that the knowledge of the Father and of Himself, the Son, were one; that He that hath seen the Son hath seen the Father. The better to fix this great principle in the minds of His hearers, He put it in the strongest possible manner, by treating their ignorance of the Father as a virtual ignorance of Himself. “Have I,” He asked, “been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?” Then He went on to reason, as if to be ignorant of the Father was to be so far ignorant of Himself as in effect to deny His divinity. “Believest thou not,” He again asked, “that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?” and then He followed up the question with a reference to those things which went to prove the asserted identity-His words and His works. Nor did He stop even here, but proceeded next to speak of still more convincing proofs of His identity with the Father, to be supplied in the marvellous works which should afterwards be done by the apostles themselves in His Name, and through powers granted to them by Himself in answer to their prayers. The first question put by Jesus to Philip, “Hast thou not known me?” was something more than a logical artifice to make stupid disciples reflect on the contents of the knowledge they already possessed. It hinted at a real fact. The disciples had really not yet seen Jesus, for as long as they had been with Him. They knew Him, and they did not know Him: they knew not that they knew, nor what they knew. They were like children, who can repeat the Catechism without understanding its sense, or who possess a treasure without being capable of estimating its value. They were like men looking at an object through a telescope without adjusting the focus, or like an ignorant peasant gazing up at the sky on a winter night, and seeing the stars which compose a constellation, such as the Bear or Orion, yet not recognizing the constellation itself. The disciples were familiar with the words, parables, discourses, etc., spoken, and with the miraculous works done, by their Master, but they knew these only as isolated particulars; the separate rays of light emanating from the fountain of divine wisdom, power, and love in Jesus, had never been gathered into a focus, so as to form a distinct image of Him who came in the flesh to reveal the invisible God. They had seen many a star shine out in the spiritual heavens while in Christ’s company; but the stars had not yet assumed to their eye the aspect of a constellation. They had no clear, full, consistent, spiritual conception of the mind, heart, and character of the man Christ Jesus, in whom dwelt all the fulness of Godhead bodily. Nor would they possess such a conception till the Spirit of Truth, the promised Comforter, came. The very thing He was to do for them was to show them Christ; not merely to recall to their memories the details of His life, but to show them the one mind and spirit which dwelt amid the details, as the soul dwells in the body, and made them an organic whole, and which once perceived, would of itself recall to recollection all the isolated particulars at present lying latent in their consciousness. When the apostles had got that conception, they would know Christ indeed, the same Christ whom they had known before, yet different, a new Christ,

because a Christ comprehended-seen with the eye of the spirit, as the former had been seen with the eye of the flesh. And when they had thus seen Christ, they would feel that they had also seen the Father. The knowledge of Christ would satisfy them, because in Him they should see with unveiled face the glory of the Lord. The soul-satisfying vision of God being a future good to be attained after the advent of the Comforter, it could not have been the intention of Jesus to assure the disciples that they possessed it already, still less to force it on them by a process of reasoning. When He said, “From henceforth ye know Him (the Father), and have seen Him,” He evidently meant: “Ye now know how to see Him, viz. by reflecting on your intercourse with me. And the sole object of the statements made to Philip concerning the close relations between the Father and the speaker evidently was to impress upon the disciples the great truth that the solution of all religious difficulties, the satisfaction of all longings, was to be found in the knowledge of Himself. “Know me,” Jesus would say, “trust me, pray to me, and all shall be well with you. Your mind shall be filled with light, your heart shall be at rest; you shall have every thing you want; your joy shall be full.” A most important lesson this; but also one which, like Philip and the other disciples, all are slow to learn. How few, even of those who confess Christ’s divinity, do see in Him the true perfect Revealer of God! To many Jesus is one Being, and God is another and quite a different Being; though the truth that Jesus is divine is all the while honestly acknowledged. That great truth lies in the mind like an unfructifying seed buried deep in the soil, and we may say of it what has been said of the doctrine of the soul’s immortality: “One may believe it for twenty years, and only in the twenty-first, in some great moment, discover with astonishment the rich contents of this belief, the warmth of this naphtha spring.” Impressions of God have been received from one quarter, impressions of Christ from another; and the two sets of impressions lie side by side in the mind, incompatible, yet both receiving house-room. Hence, when a Christian begins to carry out consistently the principle that, Jesus being God, to know Jesus is to know God, he is apt to experience a painful conflict between a new and an old class of ideas about the Divine Being. Two Gods-a christianize God, and a sort of pagan divinity-struggle for the place of sovereignty; and when at last the conflict ends in the enthronement in the mind and heart of the God whom Jesus revealed, the day-dawn of a new spiritual life has arrived.

One most prominent idea in the conception of God as revealed by Jesus Christ is that expressed by the name Father. According to the doctrine of our Lord and Saviour, God is not truly known till He is thought of and heartly believed in as a Father; neither can any God who is not regarded as a Father satisfy the human heart. Hence His own mode of speaking concerning God was in entire accordance with this doctrine. He did not speak to men about the Deity, or the Almighty. Those epithets which philosophers are so fond of applying to the Divine Being, the Infinite, the Absolute, etc., never crossed His lips. No words ever uttered by Him could suggest the idea of the gloomy arbitrary tyrant before whom the guilty conscience of superstitious heathenism cowers. He spake evermore, in sermon, parable, model prayer, and private conversation, of a Father. Such expressions as “the Father,” “my Father,” “your Father,” were constantly on His tongue; and all He taught concerning God harmonized perfectly with the feelings these expressions were fitted to call forth.

Yet notwithstanding all His pains, and all the beauty of His utterances concerning the Being whom no man hath seen, Jesus, it is to be feared, has only imperfectly succeeded in establishing the worship of the Father. From ignorance or from preference, men still extensively worship God

under other names and categories. Some deem the paternal appellation too homely, and prefer a name expressive of more distant and ceremonious relations. The Deity, or the Almighty, suffices them. Philosophers dislike the appellation Father, because it makes the personality of God too prominent. They prefer to think of the Uncreated as an Infinite, Eternal Abstraction-an object of speculation rather than of faith and love. Legal-minded professors of religion take fright at the word Father. They are not sure what they have a right to use it, and they deem it safer to speak of God in general terms, which take nothing for granted, as the Judge, the Taskmaster, or the Lawgiver. The worldly, the learned, and the religious, from different motives, thus agree in allowing to fall into desuetude the name into which they have been baptized, and only a small minority worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

Superficial readers of the gospel may cherish the idea that the name Father, applied to God by Jesus, is simply or mainly a sentimental poetic expression, whose loss were no great matter for regret. There could not be a greater mistake. The name, in Christ's lips, always represents a definite thought, and teaches a great truth. When He uses the term to express the relation of the Invisible One to Himself, He gives us a glimpse into the mystery of the Divine Being, telling us that God is not abstract being, as Platonists and Arians conceived Him; not the absolute, incapable of relations; not a passionless being, without affections; but one who eternally loves, and is loved, in whose infinite nature the family affections find scope for ceaseless play-One in three: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three persons in one divine substance. Then again, when He calls God Father, in reference to mankind in general, as He does repeatedly, He proclaims to men sunk in ignorance and sin this blessed truth: "God, my Father, is your Father too; cherishes a paternal feeling towards you, though ye be so marred in moral vision that He might well not know you, and so degenerate that He might well be ashamed to own you; and I His Son am come, your elder brother, to bring you back to your Father's house. Ye are not worthy to be called His sons, for ye have ceased to bear His image, and ye have not yielded Him filial obedience and reverence; nevertheless, He is willing to be a Father unto you, and receive you graciously in His arms. Believe this, and become in heart and conduct sons of God, that ye may enjoy the full, the spiritual and eternal, benefit of God's paternal love." When, finally, He calls God Father, with special reference to His own disciples, He assures them that they are the objects of God's constant, tender, and effective care; that all His power, wisdom, and love are engaged for their protection, preservation, guidance, and final eternal salvation; that their Father in heaven will see that they lack no good, and will make all things minister to their interest, and in the end secure to them their inheritance in the everlasting kingdom. "Fear not," is His comforting message to His little chosen flock, "it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

We have now to notice the fourth and last of the children's questions, which was put by Judas, "not Iscariot" (he is otherwise occupied), but the other disciple of that name, also called Lebbaeus and Thaddeus. In His third word of consolation Jesus had spoken of a re-appearance (after His departure) specially and exclusively to "His own." "The world," He had said, "seeth me no more; but ye see me," that is, shall see after a little while. Now two questions might naturally be asked concerning this exclusive manifestation: How was it possible? and what was the reason of it? How could Jesus make Himself visible to His disciples, and yet remain invisible to all others? and granting the possibility, why not show Himself to the world at large? It is not easy to decide which of these two difficulties Judas had in his mind, for his question might be interpreted either way.

Literally translated, it was to this effect: “Lord, what has happened, that Thou art about to manifest Thyself unto us, and not unto the world?” The disciple might mean, like Nicodemus, to ask, “How can these things be?” or he might mean, “We have been hoping for the coming of Thy kingdom in power and glory, visible to the eyes of all men: what has led Thee to change Thy plans?” In either case the question of Judas was founded on a misapprehension of the nature of the promised manifestation. He imagined that Jesus was to reappear corporeally, after His departure to the Father, therefore so as to be visible to the outward eye, and not of this one or that one, but of all, unless He took pains to hide Himself from some while revealing Himself to others. Neither Judas nor any of his brethren was capable as yet of conceiving a spiritual manifestation, not to speak of finding therein a full compensation, for the loss of the corporeal presence. Had they grasped the thought of a spiritual presence, they could have had no difficulty in reconciling visibility to one with invisibility to another; for they would have understood that the vision could be enjoyed only by those who possessed the inward sense of sight.

How was a question dictated by incapacity to understand the subject to which it referred to be answered? Just as you would explain the working of the electric telegraph to a child. If your child asked you, Father, how is it that you can send a message by the telegraph to my uncle or aunt in America, so far, far away? you would not think of attempting to explain to him the mysteries of electricity. You would take him to a telegraph office, and bid him look at the man actually engaged in sending a message, and tell him, that as the man moved the handle, a needle in America pointed at letters of the alphabet, which, when put together, made up words which said just what you wished to say. In this way it was that Jesus answered the question of Judas. He did not attempt to explain the difference between a spiritual and a corporeal manifestation, but simply said in effect: Do you so and so, and what I have promised will come true. “If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” It is just the former statement repeated, in a slightly altered, more pointed form. Nothing new is said, because nothing new can be said intelligibly. The old promise is simply so put as to arrest attention on the condition of its fulfilment. “if a man love me, he will keep my words:” attend to that, my children, and the rest will follow. The divine Trinity-Father, Son, and Spirit-will verily dwell with the faithful disciple, who with trembling solicitude strives to observe my Commandments. As for those who love me not, and keep not my sayings, and believe not on me, it is simply impossible for them to enjoy such august company. The pure in heart alone shall see God.

Jesus had now spoken all He meant to say to His disciples in the capacity of a dying parent addressing his sorrowing children. It remained now only to wind up the discourse, and bid the little ones adieu. In drawing to a close, Jesus does not imagine that He has removed all difficulties and dispelled all gloom from the minds of the disciples. On the contrary, He is conscious that all He has said has made but a slight impression. Nevertheless, He will say no more in the way of comfort. There is, in the first place, no time. Judas and his band, the prince of this world, whose servants Judas and all his associates are, may now be expected at any moment, and He must hold Himself in readiness to go and meet the enemy. Then, secondly, to add any thing further would be useless. It is not possible to make things any clearer to the disciples in their present state by any amount of speech. Therefore He does not attempt it, but refers them for all other explanations to the promised Comforter, and proceeds to utter the words of farewell: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you,”-words touching at all times, unspeakably affecting in

the circumstances of the Speaker and hearers. We know not but they did more to comfort the dispirited little ones than all that had been said before. There is a pathos and a music in the very sound of them, apart from their sense, which are wonderfully soothing. We can imagine, indeed, that as they were spoken, the poor disciples were overtaken with a fit of tenderness, and burst into tears. That, however, would do them good. Sorrow is healed by weeping: the sympathy which melts the heart at the same time comforts it. This touching sympathetic farewell is more than a good wish: it is a promise-a promise made by One who knows that the blessing promised is within reach. It is like the cheering word spoken by David to brothers in affliction: “Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen twine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.” David spoke that word from experience, and even so does Jesus speak here. The peace He offers His disciples is His own peace-“my peace:” not merely peace of His procuring, but peace of His experiencing. He has had peace in the world, in spite of sorrow and temptation-perfect peace through faith. Therefore He can assure them that such a thing is possible. They, too, can have peace of mind and heart in the midst of untoward tribulation. The world can neither understand nor impart such peace, the only peace it knows any thing about being that connected with prosperity, which trouble can destroy as easily as a breath of wind agitates the calm surface of the sea. But there is a peace which is independent of outward circumstances, whose sovereign virtue and blessed function it is to keep the heart against fear and care. Such peace Jesus had Himself enjoyed; and He gives His disciples to understand that through faith and singleness of mind they may enjoy it also. The farewell word is not only a promise made by One who knows whereof He speaks, but the promise of One who can bestow the blessing promised. Jesus does not merely say: Be of good cheer; ye may have peace, even as I have had peace, in spite of tribulation. He says moreover, and more particularly, Such peace as I have had I bequeath to you as a dying legacy, I bestow on you as a parting gift. The inheritance of peace is made over to the little ones by a last will and testament, though, being minors, they do not presently enter into actual possession. When they arrive at their majority they shall inherit the promise, and delight themselves in the abundance of peace. The after-experience of the disciples proved that the promise made to them by their Lord had not been false and vain. The apostles, as Jesus foretold, found in the world much tribulation; but in the midst of all they enjoyed perfect peace. Trusting in the Lord, and doing good, they were without fear and without care. In every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, they made their requests known unto God; and the peace of God, which passeth understanding, did verily keep their hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Jesus had not yet said His last word to the little ones. Seeing in their faces the signs of grief, in spite of all that He had spoken to comfort them, He abruptly threw out an additional remark, which gave to the whole subject of His departure quite a new turn. He had been telling them, all through His farewell address, that though He was going away, He would come again to them, either personally or by deputy, in the body at last, in the Spirit meanwhile. He now told them, that apart from His return, His departure itself should be an occasion of joy rather than of sorrow, because of what it signified for Himself. “Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you:” extract comfort from that promise by all means. But “if ye loved me (as ye ought), ye would rejoice because I said, I go unto the Father,” forgetting yourselves, and thinking what a happy change it would be for me. Then he added: “For my Father is greater than I.” The connection between this clause and the foregoing part of the sentence is somewhat obscure, as is also its theological import. Our idea, however, is, that when Jesus spake these words He was thinking of

His death, and meeting an objection thence arising to the idea of rejoicing in His departure. “You are going to the Father,” one might have said, “yes; but by what a way!” Jesus replies: The way is rough, and abhorrent to flesh and blood; but it is the way my Father has appointed, and that is enough for me; for my Father is greater than I. So interpreting the words, we only make the speaker hint therein at a thought which we find Him plainly expressing immediately after in His concluding sentence, where He represents His voluntary endurance of death as a manifestation to the world of His love to the Father, and as an act of obedience to His commandment. And now, finally, by word and act, Jesus strives to impress on the little children the solemn reality of their situation. First, He bids them mark what He has told them of His departure, that when the separation takes place they may not be taken by surprise. “Now I have told you before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass ye might believe.” Then He gives them to understand that the parting hour is at hand. Hereafter He will not talk much with them; there will not be opportunity; for the prince of this world cometh. Then He adds words to this effect: “Let him come; I am ready for him. He has indeed nothing in me; no claim upon me; no power over me; no fault which he can charge against me. Nevertheless, I yield myself up into his hands, that all men may see that I love the Father, and am loyal to His will: that I am ready to die for truth, for righteousness, for the unrighteous.” Then, lastly, with firm, resolute voice, He gives the word of command to all to rise up from the couches on which they have been reclining, doubtless suiting His own action to the word: “Arise, let us go hence.” From the continuation of the discourse, as recorded by John, as well as from the statement made by him at the commencement of the eighteenth chapter of his Gospel (“When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth,” etc.), we infer that the company did not at this point leave the supper-chamber. They merely assumed a new attitude, and exchanged the recumbent for a standing posture, as if in readiness to depart. This movement was, in the circumstances, thoroughly natural. It fitly expressed the resolute temper of Jesus; and it corresponded to the altered tone in which He proceeded to address His disciples. The action of rising formed, in fact, the transition from the first part of His discourse to the second. Better than words could have done, it altered the mood of mind, and prepared the disciples for listening to language not soft, tender, and familiar as heretofore, but stern, dignified, impassioned. It struck the keynote, if we may so express it, by which the speaker passed from the lyric to the heroic style. It said, in effect: Let us have done with the nursery dialect, which, continued longer, would but enervate: let me speak to you now for a brief space as men who have got to play an important part in the world. Arise; shake off languor, and listen, while I utter words fitted to fire you with enthusiasm, to inspire you with courage, and to impress you with a sense of the responsibilities and the honors connected with your future position. So understanding the rising from the table, we shall be prepared to listen along with the disciples, and to enter on the study of the remaining portion of Christ’s farewell discourse, without any feeling of abruptness.

02.25.1. Dying Charge to the Future Apostles

Dying Charge to the Future Apostles Section I - The Vine and its Branches

John 15:1-15 The subject of discourse in these chapters is the future work of the apostles-its nature, honors, hardships, and joys. Much that is said therein admits of application to Christians in general, but the reference in the first place is undoubtedly to the eleven then present; and only by keeping this in mind can we get a clear idea of the import of the discourse as a whole. The first part of this charge to the future apostles has for its object to impress upon them that they have a great work before them. The keynote of the passage may be found in the words: “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.” Jesus would have His chosen ones understand that He expects more of them than that they shall not lose heart when He has left the earth. They must be great actors in the world, and leave their mark permanently on its history: they must, in fact, take His place, and be in His stead, and carry on the work He had begun, in His name and through His aid. To put their duty clearly before the minds of His disciples, Jesus made large use of a beautiful figure drawn from the vine-tree, which He introduced at the very outset of His discourse. “I am the true vine;” that is the theme, which in the sequel is worked out with considerable minuteness of detail-figure and interpretation being freely mixed up together in the exposition. The question has often been asked, What led Jesus to adopt this particular emblem as the vehicle of His thoughts? and many conjectural answers have been hazarded. In absence of information in the narrative, however, we must be content to remain in ignorance on this point, without attempting to supply the missing link in the association of ideas. This is no great hardship; for, after all, what does it matter how a metaphor is suggested (a thing which even the person employing the metaphor often does not know), provided it be in itself apt to the purpose to which it is applied? Of the aptness of the metaphor here employed there can be no doubt in the mind of any one who attentively considers the felicitous use which the speaker made of it.

Turning our attention, then, to the discourse of Jesus on His own chosen text, we cannot but be struck with the manner in which He hurries on at once to speak of fruit. We should have expected that, in introducing the figure of the vine, He would in the first place state fully in terms of the figure how the case stood. After hearing the words, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman,” we expect to hear, “and ye, my disciples, are the branches, through which the vine brings forth fruit.” That, however, is not said here; but the speaker passes on at once to tell His hearers how the branches (of which no mention has been made) are dealt with by the divine Husbandman; how the fruitless branches, on the one hand, are lopped off, while the fruitful ones are pruned that they may become still more productive. This shows what is uppermost in the mind of Jesus. His heart’s desire is that His disciples may be spiritually fruitful. “Fruit, fruit, my disciples,” He exclaims in effect; “ye are useless unless ye bear fruit: my Father desires fruit, even as I do; and His whole dealing with you will be regulated by a purpose to increase your fruitfulness.”

While urgent in His demand for fruit, Jesus does not, we observe, in any part of this discourse on the vine, indicate wherein the expected fruit consists. When we consider to whom He is speaking, however, we can have no doubt as to what He principally intends. The fruit He looks for is the spread of the gospel and the ingathering of souls into the kingdom of God by the disciples, in the discharge of their apostolic vocation. Personal holiness is not overlooked; but it is required rather as a means towards fruitfulness than as itself the fruit. It is the purging of the branch which leads to increased fertility. The next sentence ("Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you") it seems best to regard as a parenthesis, in which for a moment the figure of the vine is lost sight of. The mention of branches which, as unproductive, are cut off, recalls to the Lord's thoughts the case of one who had already been cut off-the false disciple Judas-and leads Him naturally to assure the eleven that He hopes better things of them. The process of excision had already been applied among them in one instance: therefore they should not be high-minded, but fear. But, on the other hand, as He had said before in connection with the feet-washing, that they were clean, with one exception; so now He would say they were all clean, without exception, through the word which He had spoken to them. As branches they might need pruning, but there would be no occasion for cutting off.

Having strongly declared the indispensableness of fruit-bearing in order to continued connection with the vine, Jesus proceeded next to set forth the conditions of fruitfulness, and (what we should have expected at the very commencement of the discourse) the relation subsisting between Himself and His disciples. "I am the vine," He said (to take the latter first), "ye are the branches." By this statement He explains why He is so urgent that His disciples should be fruitful. The reason is, that they are the media through which He Himself brings forth fruit, serving the same purpose to Him that the branches serve to the vine. His own personal work had been to choose and train them-to fill them, so to speak, with he sap of divine truth; and their work was now to turn that sap into grapes. The Father in heaven, by sending Him into the world, had planted Him in the earth, a new, mystic, spiritual vine; and He had produced them, the eleven, as His branches. Now His personal ministry was at an end; and it remained for the branches to carry on the work to its natural consummation, and to bring forth a crop of fruit, in the shape of a church of saved men believing in His name. If they failed to do this, His labor would be all in vain.

Returning now to the conditions of fruitfulness, we find Jesus expressing them in these terms: "Abide in me, and I in you." These words point to a dependence of the disciples on their Lord under two forms, which by help of the analogy of a tree and its branches it is easy to distinguish. The branch abides in the vine structurally; and the vine abides in the branch through its sap, vitally. Both of these abidings are necessary to fruit-bearing. Unless the branch be organically connected with the stem, the sap which goes to make fruit cannot pass into it. On the other hand, although the branch be organically connected with the stem, yet if the sap of the stem do not ascend into it (a case which is possible and common in the natural world), it must remain as fruitless as if it were broken off and lying on the ground.

All this is clear; but when we ask what do the two abidings signify in reference to the mystic vine, the answer is not quite so easy. The tendency here is to run the two into one, and to make the distinction between them merely nominal. The best way to come at the truth is to adhere as closely as possible to the natural analogy. What, then, would one say most nearly corresponded to the structural abiding of the branch in the tree? We reply, abiding in the doctrine of Christ, in the

doctrine He taught; and acknowledging Him as the source whence it had been learned. In other words, “Abide in me” means, Hold and profess the truth I have spoken to you, and give yourselves out merely as my witnesses. The other abiding, on the other hand, signifies the indwelling of the Spirit of Jesus in the hearts of those who believe. Jesus gives His disciples to understand that, while abiding in His doctrine, they must also have His Spirit abiding in them; that they must not only hold fast the truth, but be filled with the Spirit of truth. As thus distinguished, the two abidings are not only different in conception, but separable in fact. On the one hand, there may be Christian orthodoxy in the letter where there is little or no spiritual life; and there may, on the other hand, be a certain species of spiritual vitality, a great moral, and in some respects most Christian-like earnestness, accompanied with serious departure from the faith. The one may be likened unto a dead branch on a living tree, bleached, bark-less, moss-grown, and even in summer leafless, stretching out like a withered arm from the trunk into which it is inserted, and with which it still maintains an organic structural connection. The other is a branch cut off by pride or self-will from the tree, full of the tree’s sap, and clothed with verdure at the moment of excision, and foolishly imagining, because it does not wither at once, that it can live and grow and blossom independently of the tree altogether. Have such things never been since Christianity began? Alas, would it were so! In the grand primeval forest of the Church too many dead orthodoxies have ever been visible; and as for branches setting up for the themselves, their name is legion. The two abidings, which we have seen to be not only separable, but often separated, cannot be separated without fatal effects. The result ever is in the end to illustrate the truth of Christ’s words, “Without, or severed from, me ye can do nothing.” Dead orthodoxy is notoriously impotent. Feeble, timid, torpid, averse to any thing arduous, heroic, stirring in thought or conduct at best, it becomes at last insincere and demoralizing: salt without savor, fit only to be thrown out; worthless vine-wood, good for nothing except for fuel, and not worth much even for that purpose. Heresies, not abiding in the doctrine of Christ, are equally helpless. At first, indeed, they possess a spurious ephemeral vitality, and make a little noise in the world; but by and by their leaf begins to wither, and they bring forth no abiding fruit. The conception of a dead branch, applied to individuals as distinct from churches or the religious world viewed collectively, is not without difficulty. A dead branch on a tree was not always dead: it was produced by the vital force of the tree, and had some of the tree’s life in it. Does the analogy between natural and spiritual branches hold at this point? Not in any sense, as we believe, that would compromise the doctrine of perseverance in grace, nowhere taught more clearly than in the words of our Lord. At the same time, it cannot be denied that there is such a thing as abortive religious experience. There are blossoms on the tree of life which are blasted by spring frosts, green fruits which fall off ere they ripen, branches which become sickly and die. Jonathan Edwards, a high Calvinist, but also a candid, shrewd observer of facts, remarks: “I cannot say that the greater part of supposed converts give reason by their conversation to suppose that they are true converts. The proportion may perhaps be more truly represented by the proportion of the blossoms on a tree which abide and come to mature fruit, to the whole number of blossoms in spring.” The permanency of many spiritual blossoms is here denied, but the very denial implies an admission that they were blossoms. That some branches should become unfruitful, and even die, while others flourish and bring forth fruit, is a great mystery, whose explanation lies deeper than theologians of the Arminian school are willing to admit. Yet, while this is true, the responsibility of man for his own spiritual character cannot be too earnestly insisted on. Though the Father, as the husbandman, wields the pruning-knife, the process of purging cannot

be carried on without our consent and cooperation. For that process means practically the removal of moral hindrances to life and growth-the cares of life, the insidious influence of wealth, the lusts of the flesh, and the passions of the soul-evils which cannot be overcome unless our will and all our moral powers be brought to bear against them. Hence Jesus lays it upon His disciples as a duty to abide in Him, and have Him abiding in them, and resolves the whole matter at last, in plain terms, into keeping His commandments. If they diligently and faithfully do their part, the divine Husbandman, He assures them, will not fail to give them liberally all things needful for the most abundant fruitfulness. “Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” The doom of branches coming short in either of the two possible ways, is very plainly declared by Jesus. The doom of the branch which, while in Him structurally, beareth not fruit, either because it is absolutely dead and dry, or because it is afflicted with a vice which makes it barren, is to be taken away-judicially severed from the tree. The doom of the branch which will not abide in the vine, is not to be cut off-for that it does itself-but to be thrown out of the vineyard, there to lie till it be withered, and at length, at a convenient season, to be gathered, along with all its self-willed, erratic brethren, into a heap, and burned in a bonfire like the dry rubbish of a garden. In the latter portion of the discourse on the vine, Jesus expresses His high expectations with respect to the fruitfulness of the apostolic branches, and suggests a variety of considerations which, acting on the minds of the disciples as motives, might lead to the fulfilment of His hopes. As to the former, He gave the disciples to understand that He expected of them not only fruit, but much fruit, and fruit not only abundant in quantity, but good in quality; fruit that should remain, grapes whose juice should be worthy of preservation as wine in bottles; a church that should endure till the world’s end.

These two requirements, taken together, amount to a very high demand. It is very hard indeed to produce fruit at once abundant and enduring. The two requirements to a certain extent limit each other. Aiming at high quality leads to undue thinning of the clusters, while aiming at quantity may easily lead to deterioration in the quality of the whole. The thing to be studied is to secure as large an amount of fruit as is consistent with permanence; and, on the other hand, to cultivate excellence as far as is consistent with obtaining a fair crop which will repay labor and expense. This is, so to speak, the ideal theory of vine culture; but in practice we must be content with something short of the perfect realization of our theory. We cannot, for example, rigorously insist that all the fruit shall be such as can endure. Many fruits of Christian labor are only transient means towards other fruits of a permanent nature; and if we satisfy the law of Christ so far as to produce much fruit, some of which shall remain, we do well. The permanent portion of a man’s work must always be small in proportion to the whole. At highest, it can only bear such a proportion to the whole as the grape-juice bears to the grapes out of which it is pressed. A small cask of wine represents a much larger bulk of grapes; and in like manner the perennial result of a Christian life is very inconsiderable in volume compared with the mass of thoughts, words, and deeds of which that life was made up. One little book, for instance, may preserve to all generations the soul and essence of the thoughts of a most gifted mind, and of the graces of a noble heart. Witness that wondrous book the Pilgrim’s Progress, which contains more wine in it than may be found in the ponderous folios of some wordy authors, whose works are but huge wine-casks with very little wine in them, and sometimes hardly even the scent of it. To satisfy these two requirements, two virtues are above all needful, viz. diligence and patience-the one to insure quantity, the other to insure superior quality. One must know both how to labor and how to wait; never idle, yet never hurrying. Diligence alone will not suffice. Bustling activity does a great many

things badly, but nothing well. On the other hand, patience unaccompanied by diligence degenerates into indolence, which brings forth no fruit at all, either good or bad. The two virtues must go together; and when they do, they never fail to produce, in greater or less abundance, fruit that remaineth in a holy exemplary life whose memory is cherished for generations, in an apostolic church, in books or in philanthropic institutions, in the character of descendants, scholars, or hearers. When the two requirements are taken as applying to all believers in Christ, the term “much” must be understood relatively. It is not required of all indiscriminately to produce an absolutely large quantity of fruit, but only of those who, like the apostles, have been chosen and endowed to occupy distinguished positions. Of him to whom little is given shall little be required. For men of few talents it is better not to attempt much, but rather to endeavor to do well the little for which they have capacity. Aspiration is good in the abstract; but to aspire to exceed the appointed dimensions of our career, is to supply a new illustration of the old fable of the frog and the ox. The man who would be and do more than he is fit for, is worse than useless. He brings forth, not the sweet, wholesome fruits of the Spirit, but the inflated fruits of vanity, which, like the apples of Sodom, are fair and delicious to the eye and soft to the touch, but are yet full of wind, and, being pressed, explode like a puff-ball. The demand for much fruit, while very exacting as towards the apostles, to whom it in the first place refers, has a gracious aspect towards the world. The fruit which Jesus expected from His chosen ones was the conversion of men to the faith of the gospel-the ingathering of souls into the kingdom of God. A demand for much fruit in this sense is an expression of good-will to mankind, a revelation of the Saviour’s loving compassion for a world lying in sin, and error, and darkness. In making this demand, Jesus says in effect to His apostles: Go into the world, bent on evangelizing all the nations; be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it. Ye cannot bring too many to the obedience of faith; the greater the number of those who believe on me through your word, the better I shall be pleased. We have here, in short, but an echo of the impassioned utterances of that earlier occasion, when Jesus welcomed death as the condition of abundant fruitfulness, and the cross as a power by whose irresistible attraction He should draw all unto Him. From the high requirements of the Lord, we pass on to the arguments with which He sought to impress on the disciples the duty of bringing forth much and abiding fruit. Of these there are no less than six, grouped in pairs. The first pair we find indicated in the words: “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, and that ye may be my disciples.” In other words, Jesus would have His chosen ones remember that the credit, both of the divine Husbandman, and of Himself, the vine, largely depended on their behavior. The world would judge by results. If they, the apostles, abounded in fruitfulness, it would be remarked that God had not sent Christ into the world in vain; and their success would be ascribed to Him whose disciples they had been. If they failed, men would say: God planted a vine which has not thriven; and the vine produced branches which have borne no fruit; or in plain terms, Christ chose agents who have done nothing. The force of these arguments for fruitfulness is more obvious in the case of these apostles, the founders of the Church, than in reference to the present condition of the Church, when the honor of Christ and of God the Father seems to depend in a very small measure on the conduct of individuals. The whole stress then lay on eleven men. Now it is distributed over millions. Nevertheless, there is great need, even yet, for spiritually fruitful life in the Church, to uphold the honor of Christ’s name; for there is a tendency at the present time to look on Christianity as used up. The old vine stock is considered by many to be effete, and past fruit-bearing; and a new plant of renown is called for. This idea can be exploded effectually only in one way, viz. by the rising up

of a generation of Christians whose life shall demonstrate that the “true vine” is not one of the things that wax old and vanish away, but possesses eternal vitality, sufficient not only to produce new branches and new clusters, but to shake itself clear of dead branches, and of all the moss by which it may have become overgrown in the course of ages. A second pair of motives to fruitfulness we find hinted at in the words: “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be fulfilled.” Jesus means to say, that the continuance of His joy in the disciples, and the completion of their own joy as believers in Him, depended on their being fruitful. The emphasis in the first clause lies on the word “remain.” Jesus has joy in His disciples even now, though spiritually crude, even as the gardener hath joy in the clusters of grapes when they are green, sour, and uneatable. But He rejoices in them at present, not for what they are, but because of the promise that is in them of ripe fruit. If that promise were not fulfilled, He should feel as the gardener feels when the blossom is nipped by frost, or the green fruit destroyed by mildew; or as a parent feels when a son belies in his manhood the bright promise of his youth. He can bear delay, but He cannot bear failure. He can wait patiently till the process of growth has passed through all its stages, and can put up with all the unsatisfactory qualities of immaturity, for the sake of what they shall ripen into. But if they never ripen-if the children never become men, if the pupils never become teachers-then He will exclaim, in bitter disappointment: “Woe is me! my soul desired ripe fruit; and is this what I find after waiting so long?” In the second clause the stress lies on the word “fulfilled.” It is not said or insinuated that a Christian can have no joy till his character be matured and his work accomplished. The language of Jesus is quite compatible with the assertion that even at the very commencement of the spiritual life there may be a great, even passionate, outburst of joy. But, on the other hand, that language plainly implies that the joy of the immature disciple is necessarily precarious, and that the joy which is stable and full comes only with spiritual maturity. This is a great practical truth, which it concerns all disciples to bear in mind. Joy in the highest sense is one of the ripe fruits of the Holy Spirit, the reward of perseverance and fidelity. Rejoicing at the outset is good, so far as it goes; but all depends on the sequel. If we stop short and grow not, woe to us; for failure in all things, and specially in religion, is misery. If we be comparatively unfruitful, we may not be absolutely unhappy, but we can never know the fulness of joy; for it is only to the faithful servant that the words are spoken: “Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” The perfect measure of bliss is for the soldier who hath won the victory, for the reaper celebrating harvest-home, for the athlete who hath gained the prize of strength, skill, and swiftness. The two last considerations by which Jesus sought to impress on His disciples the duty of being fruitful, were the honorable nature of their apostolic calling, and the debt of gratitude they owed to Him who had called them, and who was now about to die for them. The dignity of the apostleship, in contrast to the menial position of the disciple, He described in these terms: “Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.” In other words, the disciples had been apprentices, the apostles would be partners: the disciples had been as government clerks; the apostles would be confidential ministers of the king: the disciples had been pupils in the school of Jesus; the apostles would be the treasurers of Christian truth, the reporters and expositors of their Master’s doctrine, the sole reliable sources of information concerning the letter and spirit of His teaching. What office could possibly be more important than theirs? and how needful that they should realize their responsibilities in connection with it!

While endeavoring to walk worthy of so high a vocation, it would become the apostles also to bear in mind their obligations to Him who had called them to the apostolic office. The due consideration of these would be an additional stimulus to diligence and fidelity. Hence Jesus is careful to impress on His disciples that they owe all they are and will be to Him. “Ye did not choose me, but I chose you,” He tells them. He wishes them to understand that they had conferred no benefit on Him by becoming His disciples: the benefit was all on their side. He had raised them from obscurity to be the lights of the world, to be the present companions and future friends and representatives of the Christ. Having done so much for them, He was entitled to ask that they would earnestly endeavor to realize the end for which He had chosen them, and to fulfil the ministry to which they were ordained.

One thing more is noteworthy in this discourse on the true vine-the reiteration of the commandment to love one another. At the commencement of the farewell address, Jesus enjoined on the disciples brotherly love as a source of consolation under bereavement; here He re-enjoins it once and again as a condition of fruitfulness. Though He does not say it in so many words, He evidently means the disciples to understand that abiding in each other by love is just as necessary to their success as their common abiding in Him by faith. Division, party strife, jealousy, will be simply fatal to their influence, and to the cause they represent. They must be such fast friends that they will even be willing to die for each other. Had Christians always remembered the commandment of love, on which Christ so earnestly insisted, what a different history the Church would have had! how much more fruitful she would have been in all the great results for which she was instituted!

Section II - Apostolic Tribulations and Encouragements John 15:18-27; John 16:1-15. From apostolic duties Jesus passed on to speak of apostolic tribulations. The transition was natural; for all great actors in God’s cause, whose fruit remains, are sure to be more or less men of sorrow. To be hated and evil entreated is one of the penalties of moral greatness and spiritual power; or, to put it differently, one of the privileges Christ confers on His “friends.”

Hatred is very hard to bear, and the desire to escape it is one main cause of unfaithfulness and unfruitfulness. Good men shape their conduct so as to keep out of trouble, and through excess of cowardly prudence degenerate into spiritual nonentities. It was of the first importance that the apostles of the Christian faith should not become impotent through this cause. For this reason Jesus introduces the subject of tribulation here. He would fortify His disciples for the endurance of sufferings by speaking of them beforehand. “These things,” saith He, in the course of His address on the unpleasant theme, as if apologizing for its introduction, “have I spoken unto you that ye should not be scandalized,” that is, be taken by surprise when the time of trouble came. To nerve the young soldiers of the cross, the Captain of salvation has recourse to various expedients, among which the first is to tell them, without disguise, what they have to expect, that familiarity with the dark prospect may make it less terrible. Of the world’s hatred Jesus speaks as an absolutely certain matter, not even deeming it necessary to assert its certainty, but assuming that as a thing of course: “If the world hate you”-as of course it will. Farther on He describes, without euphemism or circumlocution, the kind of treatment they shall receive at the world’s hands: “They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, but the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he offereth service unto God.” Harsh, appalling words; but since such things were to be, it was well to know the worst.

Jesus further tells His disciples that whatever they may have to suffer, they can be no worse off than He has been before them. “If the world hate you, ye know that it has hated me before you.” Poor comfort, one is disposed to say; yet it is not so poor when you consider the relative position of the parties. He who has already been hated is the Lord; they who are to be hated are but the servants. Of this Jesus reminds His disciples, repeating and recalling to their remembrance a word He had already spoken the same evening. The consideration ought at least to repress murmuring; and, duly laid to heart, it might even become a source of heroic inspiration. The servant should be ashamed to complain of a lot from which his Master is not, and does not wish to be, exempted; he should be proud to be a companion in tribulations with One who is so much his superior, and regard his experience of the cross not as a fate, but as a privilege. A third expedient employed by Jesus to reconcile the apostles to the world’s hatred, is to represent it as a necessary accompaniment of their election. This thought, well weighed, has great force. Love ordinarily rests on a community of interest. Men love those who hold the same opinions, occupy the same position, follow the same fashions, pursue the same ends with themselves; and they regard all who differ from them in these respects with indifference, dislike, or positive animosity, according to the degree in which they are made sensible of the contrast. Hence arises a dilemma for the chosen ones. Either they must forfeit the honor, privileges, and hope of their election, and descend into the dark world which is without God and without hope; or they must be content, while retaining their position as called out of darkness, to accept the drawbacks which adhere to it, and to be hated by those who love the darkness rather than the light, because their life is evil. What true child of light will hesitate in his choice? To show the disciples that they have no alternative but to submit patiently to their appointed lot as the chosen ones, Jesus enters yet more deeply into the philosophy of the world’s hatred. He explains that what in the first place will be hatred to them, will mean in the second place hatred to Himself; and in the last place, and radically, ignorance of and hostility to God His Father. In setting forth this truth, He takes occasion to make some severe reflections on the unbelieving world of Judea, in which He had Himself labored. He puts the worst construction on its unbelief; declares it to be utterly without excuse; accuses those who have been guilty of it, of hating Him without a cause, that is, of hating one whose whole character and conduct, words and works, should have won their faith and love; and in their hatred of Him He sees revealed a hatred of that very God for whose glory they professed to be so zealous.

How painful is the view here given of the world’s enmity to truth and its witnesses! One would like to see, in the bitterness with which the messengers of truth have been received (not excepting the case of Jesus), the result of a pardonable misunderstanding. And without doubt this is the origin of not a few religious animosities. There have been many sins committed against the Son of man, and those like-minded, which were only in a very mitigated degree sins against the Holy Ghost. Were it otherwise, alas for us all! For who has not persecuted the Son of man or His interest, cherishing ill-feeling and uttering bitter words against His members, if not against Him personally, under the influence of prejudice; yea, it may be, going the length of inflicting material injury on the apostles of unfamiliar, unwelcome truths, in obedience to the blind impulses of panic fear or selfish passion?

If there be few who have not in one way or another persecuted, there are perhaps also few of the persecuted who have not taken too sombre views of the guilt of their persecutors. Men who suffer for their convictions are greatly tempted to regard their opponents as in equal measure the

opponents of God. The wrongs they endure provoke them to think and speak of the wrong-doers as the very children of the devil. Then it gives importance to one's cause, and dignity to one's sufferings, to conceive of the former as God's, and of the latter as endured for God's sake. Finally, broadly to state the question at stake as one between God's friends and God's foes, satisfies both the intellect and the conscience-the former demanding a status quaestionis which is simple and easily understood; the latter, one which puts you obviously in the right, and your adversaries obviously in the wrong.

All this shows that much candor, humility, and patience of spirit, is needed before one can safely say, "He that hateth me hateth God." Nevertheless, it remains true that a man's real attitude towards God is revealed by the way in which he treats God's present work and His living servants. On this principle Jesus judged His enemies, though He cherished no resentment, and was ever ready to make due allowance for Ignorance. In spite of His charity, He believed and said that the hostility He had encountered sprang from an evil will, and a wicked, godless heart. He had in view mainly the leaders of the opposition who organized the mob of the ignorant and the prejudiced into a hostile army. These men He unhesitatingly denounced as haters of God, truth, and righteousness; and He pointed to their treatment of Himself as the conclusive evidence of the fact. His appearance and ministry among them had stripped off the mask, and shown them in their real character as hypocrites, pretending to sanctity, but inwardly full of baseness and impiety, who hated genuine goodness, and could not rest till they had got it flung out of the world and nailed to a cross. With the history and the sayings of Christ before our eyes, we must beware lest we carry apologies for unbelief too far.

Jesus having spoken, as in a brief digression, of His bitter experience in the past, very naturally goes on next to express the hope which He cherishes of a brighter future. Hitherto He has been despised and rejected of men, but He believes it will not always be so. The world, Jewish and Gentile, will ere long begin to change its mind, and the Crucified One will become an object of faith and reverence. This hope He builds on a strong and sure foundation, even the combined testimony of the Spirit of truth and of His own apostles. "But," saith He, His face brightening as He speaks, "when the Comforter (of whom He had spoken to His little ones, and to whom He now alludes as His own Comforter not less than theirs) is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of me." What results the Spirit would bring about by His testimony He does not here state. To that point He speaks shortly after, on discovering that His hearers have not apprehended His meaning, or at least have failed to find in His words any comfort for themselves. Meantime He hastens to intimate that the disciples as well as the Spirit of truth will have a share in the honorable work of redeeming from disgrace their Master's name and character. They also should bear witness, as they were well qualified to do, having been with Him from the beginning of His ministry, and knowing fully His doctrine and manner of life. In this future witness-bearing of the Spirit and of the apostles, Jesus sought comfort to His own heart under the depressing weight of a gloomy retrospect, and the immediate prospect of crucifixion. But not the less did He mean the disciples also to seek from the same quarter strength to encounter their tribulations. In truth, no considerations could tend more effectually to reconcile generous minds to a hard lot, than those implied in what Jesus had just said, viz. that the apostles would suffer in a cause favored by Heaven, and tending to the honor of Him whom they loved more than life. Who would not choose to be on the side for which the Divine Spirit fights,

even at the risk of receiving wounds? Who would not be happy to be reproached and evil-entreated for a name which is worthy to be above every name, especially if assured that the sufferings endured contributed directly to the exaltation of that blessed name to its rightful place of sovereignty? It was just such considerations which more than any thing else supported the apostles under their great and manifold trials. They learned to say: “For Christ’s sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. But what does it matter? The Church is spreading; believers are multiplying on every side, springing up an hundred-fold from the seed of the martyrs’ blood; the name of our Lord is being magnified. We will gladly suffer, therefore, bearing witness to the truth.”

Having premised these observations concerning the aids to endurance, Jesus proceeded at length to state distinctly, in words already quoted, what the apostles would have to endure. On these words we make only one additional remark, viz., that the disciples would learn from them not only the nature of their future tribulations, but the quarter whence they were to come. The world, against whose hatred their Master forewarns them in this part of His discourse, is not the irreligious, sceptical, easy-going, gross-living world of paganism. It is the world of antiChristian Judaism; of synagogue-frequenting men, accustomed to distinguish themselves from “the world” as the people of God, very zealous after a fashion for God’s glory, fanatically in earnest in their religious opinions and practices, utterly intolerant of dissent, relentlessly excommunicating all who deviated from established belief by a hair’s-breadth, and deeming their death no murder, but a religious service, an acceptable sacrifice to the Almighty. To this Jewish world is assigned the honor of representing the entire cosmos of men alienated from God and truth; and if hatred to the good be the central characteristic of worldliness, the honor was well earned, for it was among the Jews that the power of hating attained its maximum degree of intensity. No man could hate like a religious Jew of the apostolic age: he was renowned for his diabolic capacity of hating. Even a Roman historian, Tacitus, commemorates the “hostile odium” of the Jewish race against all mankind; and the experience of the Christian apostles fully justified the prominence given to the Jew by Jesus in discoursing on the world’s hatred. It was to the unbelieving Jews they mainly owed their knowledge of what the world’s hatred meant. The pagan world despised them rather than hated them. The Greek laughed, and the Roman passed by in contemptuous indifference, or at most opposed temperately, as one who would rather not. But the persevering, implacable, malignant hostility of the Jewish religionist!-it was bloodthirsty, it was pitiless, it was worthy of Satan himself. Truly might Jesus say to the Jews, with reference thereto, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.”

What a strange fruit was this wicked spirit of hatred to grow upon the goodly vine which God had planted in the holy land! Chosen to be the vehicle of blessing to the world, Israel ends by becoming the enemy of the world, “contrary to all men,” so as to provoke even the humane to regard and treat her as a nuisance, whose destruction from the face of the earth would be a common cause of congratulation. Behold the result of election abused! Peculiar favors minister to pride, instead of stirring up the favored ones to devote themselves to their high vocation as the benefactors of mankind; and a divine commonwealth is turned into a synagogue of Satan, and God’s most deadly foes are those of His own house. Alas! the same phenomenon has reappeared in the Christian Church. The world that is most opposed to Christ, Antichrist itself, is to be found not in heathendom, but in Christendom; not among the irreligious and the skeptical, but among

those who account themselves the peculiar people of God. The announcement made by Jesus concerning their future tribulations, produced, as was to be expected, a great sensation among the disciples. The dark prospect revealed by thy momentary lifting of the veil utterly appalled them. Consternation appeared in their faces, and sorrow filled their hearts. To be forsaken by their Master was bad enough, but to be left to such a fate was still worse, they thought. Jesus noticed the impression He had produced, and did what He could to remove it, and help the poor disciples to recover their composure.

First, He makes a sort of apology for speaking of such painful matters, to this effect: “I would gladly have been silent concerning your coming troubles, and I have been silent as long as possible; but I could not think of leaving you without letting you know what was before you, which accordingly I have done now, as the hour of my departure is at hand.” The kind feeling which dictated the statement thus paraphrased is manifest; but the statement itself appears inconsistent with the records of the other Gospels, from which we learn that the hardships connected with discipleship in general, and with the apostleship in particular, were a frequent subject of remark in the intercourse of Jesus with the twelve. The difficulty has been variously dealt with by commentators. Some admit the contradiction, and assume that such earlier discourses concerning persecutions as are found-e.g. in the tenth chapter of Matthew-are introduced by the evangelist out of their chronological order. Others insist on the difference between the earlier utterances and the present in respect to plainness: representing the former as vague and general, like the early illusions made by Jesus to His own death; the latter as particular, definite, and unmistakable, like the announcements which Jesus made respecting His passion towards the end of His ministry. A third class of expositors make the novelty of this discourse on the world’s hatred lie in the explanation given therein of its cause and origin; while a fourth class insist that the grand distinction between this discourse and all that went before is to be found in the fact that it is a farewell discourse, and therefore one which, owing to the situation, made quite a novel impression. Where so much difference of opinion prevails, it would be unbecoming to dogmatize. Our own opinion, however, is, that the peculiarity of the present utterance concerning apostolic tribulations lies in the manner or style, rather than in the matter. On former occasions, especially on the occasion of the trial mission of the twelve, Jesus had said much the same things: He had spoken of scourging in synagogues at least, if not of excommunication from them, and had alluded to death by violence as at least a possible fate for the apostles of the kingdom. But He had said all things in a different way. There He preached concerning persecution; here He makes an awfully real announcement. There is all the difference between that discourse and the present communication that there would be between a sermon on the text, “It is appointed unto men once to die,” and a special intimation to an individual, “This year thou shalt die.” The sermon may say far more about death than the intimation, but in how different a manner, and with what a different effect! The next expedient for curing grief to which Jesus has recourse is friendly remonstrance. He gently taunts the disciples for their silence, which He regards as a token of hopeless, despairing sorrow. “But now I go my way to Him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest Thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.” “Why,” He means to say, “are you so utterly cast down? have you no questions to ask me about my departure? You were full of questions at the first. You were curious to know whither I was going. I would be thankful to have that question asked over again, or indeed to have any question put to me, whether wise or foolish. The most childish interrogations would be better than the gloom of speechless despair.” As the

question, “Whither guest Thou?” had been sufficiently answered already, it might have been superfluous to ask it again. There were, however, other questions, neither superfluous nor impertinent, which the disciples might have taken occasion to ask from the communication just made to them concerning their future lot, and which they probably would have asked had they not been so depressed in spirit. “If,” they might have said, “it is to fare so ill with us after you go, why do not you stay? While you have been with us you have sheltered us from the world’s hatred, and you tell us that when you, our leader and head, are gone, that hatred will be directed against us, your followers. If so, how can we possibly regard your departure as any thing but a calamity?”

These unspoken questions Jesus proceeds in the next place to answer. He boldly asserts that whatever they may think, it is for their good that He should go away. The assertion, true in other respects also, is made with special reference to the work of the apostleship. In the early part of His farewell address, Jesus had explained to His disciples how His departure would affect them as private persons or individual believers. He had assured them that when “the Comforter” came, He would make them feel as if their departed Master were returned to them again; yea, as if He were more really present to them than ever He had been. Here His object is to show the bearing of His departure on their work as apostles, and to make them understand that His going away would be good for them as public functionaries. The proof of this assertion follows; its substance is to this effect: “When I leave you and go to my father, two desiderata of essential importance for the success of your work as apostles will be supplied. Then you will have receptive hearers, and you yourselves will be competent to preach. Neither of these desiderata exists for the present. The world has rejected me and my words; and you, though sincere, are very ignorant, and understand not what I have taught you. After my ascension, there will be a great alteration in both respects: the world will be more ready to hear the truth, and you will be able to declare it intelligently. The change cannot come till then; for it will be brought about by the work of the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, and He cannot come till I go.” In the section of His discourse of which we have given the general meaning, Jesus sketches in rapid outline, first the Spirit’s converting work in the world, and then His enlightening work in the minds of the apostles. The former He describes in these terms: “When He is come, He will convince (produce serious thought and conviction in) the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment.” Then He explains in what special aspects the Spirit will bring these great moral realities before men’s minds; and here He but expounds what He has already said concerning the Spirit’s testimony in His own behalf. He tells His disciples that the Comforter, witnessing for Himself in the hearts and consciences of men, will convince them of sin specially as unbelievers in Him; of righteousness in connection with His departure to the Father; and of judgment (to come), because the prince of this world is judged already (that is, shall have been, when the Comforter commences His work). The second and third explanatory remarks are enigmatical, and instead of throwing light on the subject in hand, seem rather to involve it in darkness. They have given rise to so much dispute and diversity of opinion, that to expatiate on them were vain, and to dogmatize presumption. One great point of dispute has been: What righteousness does Jesus allude to-His own, or that of sinners? Does He mean to say that the Spirit will convince the world, after He has left the earth, that He was a righteous man? or does He mean that the Spirit will teach men to see in the Crucified One the Lord their righteousness? Our own opinion is, that He means neither, and both. Righteousness is to be taken in its undefined generality: and the idea is, that the Spirit will make use of the exaltation of Christ to make men think earnestly on the whole subject of righteousness; to show them the utterly rotten character of

their own righteousness, whose crowning feat was to crucify Jesus; to bring home to their hearts the solemn truth that the Crucified One was the Just One; and ultimately to put them on a track for finding in Jesus their true righteousness, by raising in their minds the question, Why then did the Just One suffer? The meaning of the third explanatory remark we take to be to this effect: “When I am crucified, the god of this world shall have been judged. Both this world and its god, indeed, but the latter only finely and irreversibly-the world, though presently following Satan, being convertible. When I am ascended, the Spirit will use the then past judgment of Satan to convince men of a judgment to come; teaching them to see therein a prophecy of a final separation between me and all who obstinately persist in unbelief, and so, by the terrors of perdition, bringing them to repentance and faith.”

What Jesus says of the enlightening work of the Spirit on the minds of the disciples, amounts to this: He will fit you to be intelligent and trustworthy witnesses to me, and to be guides of the Church in doctrine and practice. For these high purposes two things would be necessary: that they should understand Christian truth, and that they should possess the gift of prophecy, so as to be able to foretell in its general outlines the future, for the warning and encouragement of believers. Both these advantages Jesus promises them as fruits of the Spirit’s enlightening influence. He assures them that, when the Comforter is come, He will guide them unto all the truth He had himself taught them, recalling things forgotten, explaining things not understood, developing germs into a system of doctrine which was entirely above their present power of comprehension. He further informs them that this same Spirit will show them things to come-such as the rise of heresies and apostasies, the coming of Antichrist, the conflict between light and darkness, and their final issue, as described in the Book of Revelation.

Such were the changes to be brought about in the world and in the disciples by the advent of the Comforter. Great beneficent changes truly; but why cannot they take place before Jesus leaves the world? The answer to this question is hinted at by Jesus, when He says of the Spirit: “He shall not speak of Himself,” and “He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.” The personal ministry of Jesus behoved to come to an end before the ministry of the Spirit began, because the latter is merely an application of the former. The Spirit does not speak as from Himself: He simply takes of the things relating to Christ, and shows them to men-to unbelievers, for their conviction and conversion; to believers, for their enlightenment and sanctification. But till Jesus had died, risen, ascended, the essentials about Him would remain incomplete; the materials for a gospel would not be ready to hand. There could be neither apostolic preaching, nor the demonstration of the Spirit with power accompanying it. It must be possible for the apostles and the Spirit to bear witness of One who, though perfectly holy, had been crucified, to show the world the heinousness of its sin. They must have it in their power to declare that God hath made that same Jesus whom they have crucified both Lord and Christ, exalted to heavenly glory, before their hearers can be pricked in the heart, and made to exclaim in terror, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Only after Jesus had ascended to glory, and become invisible to mortal eyes, could men be made to understand that He was not only personally a righteous man, but the Lord their righteousness. Then the question would force itself upon their minds: What could be the meaning of the Lord of glory becoming man, and dying on the cross? and by the teaching of the Spirit they would learn to reply, not as in the days of their ignorance, “He suffers for His own offences,” but, “Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; He was wounded for our transgressions.”

Finally, not till the apostles were in a position to say that their Lord was gone to heaven, could they bring to bear with full effect on the impenitent the doctrine of a judgment. Then they could say, Christ is seated on the heavenly throne a Prince and a Saviour to all who believe, but also a Judge to those who continue in rebellion and unbelief. “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.”

All this the disciples for the present did not understand. Of the Spirit’s work on the conscience of the world and in their own minds, and of the relation in which the third person of the Trinity stood to the second, they had simply no conception. Hence Jesus does not enlarge on these topics, but restricts Himself to what is barely necessary to indicate the truth. But the time came when the disciples did get to understand these matters, and then they fully appreciated the eulogium of their Lord on the dispensation of the Comforter. Then they acknowledged that the assertion was indeed true that it was expedient for them that He should go away, and smiled when they remembered that they had once thought otherwise; yea, they perceived that the word “expedient,” far from being too strong, was rather a weak expression, chosen in gracious accommodation to their feeble spiritual capacity, instead of the stronger one “indispensable.” Then they felt, as we imagine good men feel about death when they have got to heaven. On this side the grave “Timorous mortals start and shrink To cross the narrows sea; And linger, shivering, on the brink, And fear to launch away.” But to those on the other side how insignificant a matter must death seem, and how strange must it appear to their purged vision, that it should ever have been needful to prove to them that it was better to depart to heaven than to remain in a world of sin and sorrow!

02.25.2. Dying Charge to the Future Apostles

Dying Charge to the Future Apostles Section III - The Little While, and the End of the Discourse

John 16:16-33 The eulogium on the dispensation of the Comforter winds up with a paradox. Jesus has been telling His disciples that His departure will be beneficial for them in various respects, but particularly in this, that they shall attain thereafter to a clear, full comprehension of Christian truth. In effect, what He has said is: It is good for you that I go, for not till I become invisible physically, shall I be visible to you spiritually: I must be withdrawn from the eye of your flesh, before I can be seen by the eye of your mind. Hence He fitly ends His discourse on the Comforter by repeating a riddle, which He had propounded in a less pointed form in His first farewell address: “A little while, and ye no longer see me: and again a little while, and ye shall see me; because I go to the Father.” This riddle, like all riddles, is very simple when we have the key to it. As in that other paradoxical saying of Jesus, concerning losing and saving life, the principal word, “see,” is used in two senses,-first in a physical, and then, in the second clause, in a spiritual sense. Hence the possibility of one event, the departure of Christ to the Father, becoming a cause at once of not seeing and of seeing. When Jesus ascended to heaven, the disciples saw Him no more as they saw Him then in the supper-chamber. But immediately thereafter they began to see Him in another way. The idea of His life did sweetly creep into the eye and prospect of their soul. And the sight was satisfying: it justified the glowing language in which their Master had spoken of it before He left them. Though they saw Him no more in the flesh, yet, believing in Him, to quote the words of the Apostle Peter, they rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory. For the present, however, the disciples have no conception of the vision and the joy which await them. Their Lord’s words have no meaning for them; they are a riddle indeed, yea, a contradiction. Standing around the inspired speaker, they whisper remarks to each other concerning the strange enigmatical words He has just uttered about a little while, and about seeing and not seeing, and about going to the Father. The riddle has evidently served one purpose at least: it has roused the disciples out of the stupor of grief, and awakened for a little their curiosity. That, however, is the amount of the service it has rendered: it has created surprise, but it has conveyed no sense; the hearers are constrained to confess, “We cannot tell what He saith.” Yet we observe, they ask no questions of Jesus. They would like to do so at this point, but they do not feel able to take the liberty; restrained, we imagine, by respect for the lofty sustained tone in which their Master has been addressing them in the second part of His farewell discourse. Jesus, however, reads a question in their countenances, and kindly favors them with a word of explanation. That word does not, strictly speaking, explain the riddle. Jesus does not tell His disciples what the little while means, nor does He distinguish the two kinds of seeing: He leaves the enigma to be solved, as it only can be, by experience. All He attempts is to make it conceivable how the same event which in immediate prospect causes sorrow, may, after its occurrence, be a cause of joy. For this purpose He compares the crisis through which the disciples are about to pass, not, as we have already done, to the solemn event by which a Christian makes his exit out of this world into a better, but to the event with which human life begins. The comparison is apt to the purpose for which it is introduced; but we cannot

with certainty, not to say propriety, pursue it into detail. Interpreters who aspire to understand all mysteries and all knowledge, have raised many questions thereanent, such as: Who is represented by the mother in the parable-Christ, or the disciples? When does the sorrow begin, and when and in what does it end? The answers given to these questions are very various. According to one, Jesus Himself is the new man, and the sorrow He alludes to is His own death, viewed as the redemption of sinful humanity. Another will have it that Jesus represents His own disciples as with child of a spiritual Christ, who will be born when the Comforter comes. Most make the time of sorrow begin with Christ's passion, but there is much difference of opinion as to when it ends. One makes the joy date from the resurrection, which, after a little while of painful separation, restored Jesus to His sorrowing disciples; another extends the "little while" to Pentecost, when the Church was born into the world a new man in Christ; a third makes the little while a long while indeed, by making the words "I will see you again" refer to Christ's second coming, and to the blessed era when the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, for which the whole creation groans, shall at length come into being.

We do not think it necessary to pronounce on these disputed points. As little do we think it necessary to give the analogy a doctrinal turn, and find in it a reference to regeneration. What Jesus has in view throughout this part of His discourse is not the new birth, either of the disciples or of the Church, but the spiritual illumination of the apostles; their transition from the chrysalis into the winged state, from an ignorant implicit faith to a faith developed and intelligent; their initiation into the highest grade of the Christian mysteries, when they should see clearly things presently unintelligible, and be Epopts in the kingdom of heaven. For them, as for Christians generally (for there is a sense in which the experience of the apostles repeats itself in the spiritual history of many believers), this crisis is not less important than the initial one by which men pass from death into life. It is a great thing to be regenerated, but it is a not less great thing to be illuminated. It is a great, ever-memorable time that, when Christ first enters the heart, an object of faith and love; but it is an equally important crisis when Christ, after having departed perhaps for a season, leaving the mind clouded with doubt and the heart oppressed with sorrow, returns never to depart, driving away wintry frosts and darkness, and bringing light, gladness, summer warmth, and spiritual fruitfulness to the soul. Verily one might be content that Christ, as he first knew Him, should depart, for the sake of having his sorrow after a little while turned into such joy!

Having shown, by a familiar and pathetic analogy, the possibility of present sorrow being transmuted into great joy, Jesus proceeds next to describe, by a few rapid strokes, the characteristics of the state at which the apostles will ere long arrive. First among these He mentions an enlarged comprehension of truth; for it is to this He refers when He says, "In that day ye shall ask me nothing." He means that they will then ask Him no questions such as they had been asking all along, and especially that night-child's questions, asked with a child's curiosity, and also with a child's incapacity to understand the answers. The questioning spirit of childhood would be replaced by the understanding spirit of manhood. The truths of the kingdom would no longer, as heretofore, be inscrutable mysteries to them: they should have an unction from the Holy One, and should know all things.

Some think this too much to be said of any Christian, not even excepting the apostles themselves, while in the earthly state, and therefore argue that the day alluded to here is that of Christ's second coming, or of His happy reunion with His own in the kingdom of His Father. And without doubt it is

true that in that final day only shall Christians know as they are known, and have absolutely no need to ask any questions. Then, " 'Midst power that knows no limit, And wisdom free from bound, The beatific vision Shall glad the saints around," as it can never gladden them here below. Still, the statement before us has a relative truth in reference to this present life. While, in comparison with the perfect state, the clearest vision of any Christian is but a seeing in a glass darkly, the degree of illumination attained by the apostles might be described, without exaggeration, in contrast to their ignorance as disciples, as that of men who needed not any longer to ask questions. In promising His disciples that they would ere long attain this high degree, Jesus was but saying in effect, that as apostles they would be teachers, not scholars-doctors of divinity, with titles conferred by Heaven itself-capable of answering questions of young disciples, similar to those which they once asked themselves. The second feature of the apostolic illumination mentioned by Jesus is unlimited influence with God through prayer. Of this He speaks with much emphasis: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you." That is to say, the apostles were to have at command the whole power of God: the power of miracles, to heal diseases; of prophecy, to foretell things to come bearing on the Church's interest, and which it was desirable that believers should know; of providence, to make all events subservient to their well-being, and that of the cause in which they labored. The promise in its substance, though not in its miraculous accidents, is made to all who aspire to Christian manhood, and is fulfilled to all who reach it. In the next sentence, Jesus, if we mistake not, particularizes a third feature in the state of spiritual maturity to which He would have His disciples aspire. It is a heart enlarged to desire, ask, and expect great things for themselves, the Church, and the world. "Hitherto," He says to them, "have ye asked nothing in my name." There was a reason for this, distinct from the spiritual state of the twelve. The time had not yet come for asking any thing in Christ's name: they could not fitly or naturally make "Christ's sake" their plea till Christ's work was completed, and He was glorified. But Jesus meant more than this by His remark. He meant to say, what was in fact most true, that hitherto His disciples had asked little in any name. Their desires had been petty, their ideas of what to ask obscure and crude; any wishes of large dimensions they had cherished had been of a worldly character, and therefore such as God could not grant. They had been like children, to whom a penny appears greater than a thousand pounds does to a wealthy man. But Jesus hints, though He does not plainly say, that it will be otherwise with the apostles after the advent of the Comforter. Then they will be poor boys grown to rich merchants, whose ideas of enjoyment have enlarged with their outward fortunes. Then they will be able to pray such prayers as that of Paul in his Roman prison in behalf of the Ephesian Church, and of the Church in all ages; able to pray the Lord's prayer, and especially to say, "Thy kingdom come," with a comprehensiveness of meaning, a fervency of desire, and an assurance of faith, whereof at present they have simply no conception. Hitherto they have been but as children, asking of their father trifles, toys, pence: then they shall make large demands on the riches of God's grace, for themselves, the Church, and the world.

Along with this enlargement, Jesus promises, will come fullness of joy. What is asked, the Father will grant; and the answer to prayer will fill the cup of joy to the brim. Hope may be deferred for a season, but in the end will come the unspeakable joy of hope fulfilled. "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." So it turned out in the experience of the apostles. They had fulness of joy in the Holy Ghost, in His work in their own hearts and in the world. The law ought to hold good still. But why, then, is the cause of Christianity not progressing, but rather, one might almost say,

retrograding? We must answer this question by asking others: How many have large hearts cherishing comprehensive desires? How many with their whole soul desire for themselves above all things sanctification and illumination? How many earnestly, passionately desire the conversion of the heathen, the unity and peace and purity of the Church, the prevalence of righteousness in society at large? We are straitened in our own hearts, not in God. The farewell discourse is now at an end. Jesus has said to His disciples what time permits, and what they are able to hear. He does not imagine that He has conveyed much instruction to their minds, or that He has done much for them in the way of consolation. He has a very humble idea of the character and practical effect of the address He has just delivered. Casting a glance backwards at the whole, while perhaps specially alluding to what had been said just before, He remarks: “These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs.” A few parables or figurative sayings about the house of many mansions, and about the Divine Trinity coming to make their abode with the faithful, and about the vine and its branches, and about maternal sorrows and joys: such, in the speaker’s view, is the sum of His discourse.

Conscious of the inevitable deficiency not only of the present discourse, but of His whole past teaching, Jesus takes occasion for the third time to repeat the promise of future spiritual illumination, this time speaking of Himself as the illuminator, and representing the doctrine of the Father as the great subject of illumination. “The time cometh when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father.” The time referred to is still the era dating from the ascension. Shortly thereafter the disciples would begin to experience the fulfilment of Philip’s prayer, to understand what their Lord meant by His going to the Father, and to realize its blessed consequences for themselves. Then would their exalted Lord, through the Spirit of truth, speak to them plainly of these and all other matters; plainly in comparison with His present mystic, hidden style of speech, if not so plainly as to falsify the statements in other places of Scripture concerning the partiality and dimness of all spiritual knowledge in this earthly state of being. Of the good time coming Jesus has yet another thing to say; not a new thing, but an old thing said in a new, wondrously kind, and pathetic way. It has reference to the hearing of prayer, and is to this effect: “In the day of your enlightenment you will, as I have already hinted, pray not less than heretofore, but far more, and you will use my name as your plea to be heard. Let me once more assure you that you shall be heard. In support of this assurance, I might remind you that I will be in heaven with the Father, ever ready to speak a word in your behalf, saying, ‘Father, hear them for my sake, whose name they plead in their petitions.’ But I do not insist on this, not only because I believe you do not need to be assured of my continued interest in your welfare, but more especially because my intercession will not be necessary. My Father will not need to be entreated to hear you, the men who have been with me in all my temptations, who have loved me with leal-hearted affection, who have believed in me as the Christ, the Son of the living God, while the world at large has regarded me as an impostor and a blasphemer. For these services to His Son my Father loves you, is grateful to you-in a sense accounts Himself your debtor.” What heart, what humanity, what poetry is in all this!-poetry, and also truth; truth unspeakably comforting not only to the eleven faithful companions of Jesus, but to all sincere believers in Him.

Having alluded to the faith of His disciples-so meritorious, because so rare-Jesus takes occasion, in closing His discourse, and at the close of His life, solemnly to declare its truth. “I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again I leave the world, and go to the Father.” The first

part only of this statement the disciples believed; the second they did not yet understand: but Jesus puts both together, as the two halves of one whole truth, either of which necessarily implies the other. The declaration is a most momentous one: it sums up the history of Christ; it is the substance of the Christian faith; it asserts doctrines utterly incompatible with a merely human view of Christ's person, and makes His divinity the fundamental article of the creed.

These last words of Jesus burst on the disciples like a star suddenly shining out from the clouds in a dark night. At length one luminous utterance had pierced through the haze of their Master's mysterious discourse, and they fancied that now at last they understood its import. Jesus had just told them that He came forth from the Father into the world. That, at least, they understood; it was because they believed it that they had become disciples. Delighted to have heard something to which they could give a hearty response, they make the most of it, and inform their Master that the intelligible, plain speaking on His part, and the intelligent apprehending on theirs which He had projected into the future, were already in existence. "Lo," said they, with emphasis on the temporal particle, "now Thou speakest plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now are we sure that Thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask Thee: in this we believe that Thou camest forth from God."

Alas, how impossible it is for children to speak otherwise than as children! The disciples, in the very act of professing their knowledge, betray their utter ignorance. The statement beginning with the second "now" indicates an almost ludicrous misapprehension of what Jesus had said about their asking Him no questions in the day of their enlightenment. He meant they would not then need to ask questions as learners: they took Him to mean that He Himself had no need to be asked questions as to who He was and whence He came, His claim to a heavenly descent being already admitted, at least by them. And as to the inference drawn from that statement, "By this we believe," we can make nothing of it. After many attempts to understand the logic of the disciples, we must confess ourselves utterly baffled. The only way by which we can put a tolerable sense on the words, is to regard the phrase translated by "this" as an adverb of time, and to read "at this present moment: "Meanwhile, whatever additional light may be in store for us in the future, we even now believe that Thou camest forth from God. This translation, however, is not favored, or even suggested, by any of the critics. That the disciples did honestly believe what they professed to believe, was true. Jesus had just before admitted as much. But they did not understand what was involved in their belief. They did not comprehend that the coming of Jesus from the Father implied a going thither again. They had not comprehended that at the beginning of the discourse; they did not comprehend it when the discourse was finished; they would not comprehend it till their Lord had taken His departure, and the Spirit had come who should make all things plain. In consequence of this ignorance, their faith would not carry them through the evil hour that was now very near. The death of their Master, the first step in the process of His departure, would take them by surprise, and make them flee panic-stricken like sheep attacked by wolves. So Jesus plainly told them. "Do ye now believe?" He said; "behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone."

Stern fact sternly announced; but however stern, Jesus is not afraid to look it in the face. His heart is in perfect peace, for He has two great consolations. He has a good conscience: He can say, "I have overcome the world." He has held fast His moral integrity against incessant temptation. The prince of this world has found none of his spirit in Him, and for that very reason is going to crucify

Him. But by that proceeding Satan will not nullify, but rather seal, His victory. Outward defeat by worldly power will be but the index and measure of His spiritual conquest. The world itself knows well that putting Him to death is but the second best way of overcoming Him. His enemies would have been much better pleased if they had succeeded in intimidating or bribing Him into compromise. The ungodly powers of the world always prefer corruption to persecution as a means of getting rid of truth and righteousness; only after failing in attempts to debauch conscience, and make men venal, do they have recourse to violence.

Christ's other source of consolation in prospect of death is the approval of His Father: "I am not alone, because the Father is with me." The Father has been with Him all along. On three critical occasions-at the baptism, on the hill of transfiguration, in the temple a few days ago-the Father had encouraged Him with an approving voice. He feels that the Father is with Him still. He expects that He will be with Him when He is deserted by His chosen ones, and all through the awful crisis at hand, even in that darkest, bitterest moment, when the loss of His Father's sensible presence will extort from Him the cry: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" He expects that His Father will be with Him then, not to save Him from the sense of desertion (He would not wish to be saved from that, for He would know by experience that sorest of all sorrows, that in this, as in all other respects, He might be like His brethren, and be able to succor them when they are tempted to despair), but to sustain Him under the sore affliction, and enable Him with filial faith to cry "My God" even when complaining of being forsaken.

Free from all anxiety for Himself, Jesus bids His disciples also be of good cheer; and for the same reason why He Himself is without fear, viz., because He has overcome the world. He will have them understand that His victory is theirs too. "Be of good cheer: I have overcome the world, therefore so have ye in effect;"-such is His meaning. Men of Socinianizing tendencies would interpret the words differently. They would read: I have overcome the world, therefore so may ye. Follow my example, and manfully fight the battle of righteousness in spite of tribulations. The meaning is good enough, so far as it goes. It does nerve one for the battle of life to know that the Lord of glory has been through it before him. It is an inspiring thought that He has even been a combatant at all; for who would not follow when the divine Captain of salvation leads through suffering to glory? Then, when we think that this august combatant has been completely victorious in the fight, His example becomes still more cheering. His victory shows that the god of this world is not omnipotent; that it is always in the power of any one to overcome him simply by being willing to bear the cross. Looking at Jesus enduring the contradiction of sinners even unto death, and despising the shame of crucifixion, His followers get more heart to fight the good fight of faith. But while this is true, it is the smallest part of the truth. The grand fact is that Christ's victory is the victory of His followers, and insures that they too shall conquer. Jesus fought His battle not as a private person, but as a public character, as a representative man. And all are welcome to claim the benefits of His victory-the pardon of sin, power to resist the evil one, admission into the everlasting kingdom. Because Christ hath overcome, we may say to all, Be of good cheer. The victory of the Son of God in human nature is an available source of consolation for all who partake of that nature. It is the privilege of every man (as well as the duty) to acknowledge Christ as his representative in this great battle. "The Head of every man is Christ." All who sincerely recognize the relationship will get the benefit of it. Claim kindred with the High Priest, and you shall receive from Him mercy and grace to help in your hour of need. Lay it to heart that men are not isolated

units, every one fighting his own battle without help or encouragement. We are members one of another, and above all, we have in Christ an elder brother. We have at least a human relationship to Him, if not a regenerate one. Let us therefore look up to Him as our Head in all things: as our King, and lay down the weapons of our rebellion; as our Priest, and receive from Him the pardon of our sins; as our Lord, to be ruled by His will, defended by His might, and guided by His grace. If we do this, the accuser of the brethren will have no chance of prevailing against us. The words of St. John in the Apocalypse will be fulfilled in our history: “They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.”

02.26. The Intercessory Prayer

The Intercessory Prayer

John 17:1-26 The prayer uttered by Jesus at the close of His farewell address to His disciples, of unparalleled sublimity, whether we regard its contents or the circumstances amid which it was offered up, it was for years our fixed purpose to pass over in solemn, reverent silence, without note or comment. We reluctantly depart from our intention now, constrained by the considerations that the prayer was not offered up mentally by Jesus, but in the hearing and for the instruction of the eleven men present; that it has been recorded by one of them for the benefit of the Church in all ages; and that what it hath pleased God to preserve for our use we must endeavor to understand, and may attempt to interpret. The prayer falls naturally into three divisions, in the first of which Jesus prays for Himself, in the second for His disciples, and in the third for the Church which was to be brought into existence by their preaching. The prayer of Jesus for Himself (John 17:1-5) contains just one petition, with two reasons annexed. The petition is, “Father, the hour is come, glorify Thy Son;” in which the manner of address, simple, familiar, confidential, is noteworthy. “Father!”-such is the first word of the prayer, six times repeated in its course, with or without epithet attached, and the name which Jesus gives to Him to whom His prayer is addressed. He speaks to God as if He were already in heaven, as indeed He expressly says He is a little farther on: “Now I am no more in the world.” The significant phrase, “the hour is come,” is it not less worthy of notice. How much it expresses!-filial obedience, filial intimacy, filial hope and joy. The hour! It is the hour for which He has patiently waited, which He has looked forward to with eager expectation, yet has never sought to hurry on; the hour appointed by His Father, about which Father and Son have always had an understanding, and of which none but they have had any knowledge. That hour is come, and its arrival is intimated as a plea in support of the petition: “Thou knowest, Father, how patiently I have waited for what I now ask, not wearying in well-doing, nor shrinking from the hardships of my earthly lot. Now that my work is finished, grant me the desire of my heart, and glorify me.”

“Glorify me,” that is, “take me to be with Thyself.” The prayer of Jesus is that His Father would be pleased now to translate Him from this world of sin and sorrow into the state of glory He left behind when He became man. Thus He explains His own meaning when He repeats His request in a more expanded form, as given in the fifth verse: “And now, O Father, glorify Thou me with Thine own self, with the glory I had with Thee before the world was,” i.e. with the glory He enjoyed in the bosom of the Father before His incarnation as God’s eternal Son.

It is observable that in this prayer for Himself Jesus makes no allusion to His approaching sufferings. Very shortly after, in Gethsemane, He prayed: “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!” But here is no mention of the cup of sorrow, but only of the crown of glory. For the present heaven is in full view, and its anticipated glories make Him oblivious of every thing else. Not till He is gone out into the night do the sulphureous clouds begin to gather which overshadow the sky and shut out the celestial world from sight. Yet the coming passion, though

not mentioned, is virtually included in the prayer. Jesus knows that He must pass through suffering to glory, and that He must behave Himself worthily under the last trial, in order to reach the desired goal. Therefore the uttered prayer includes this unuttered one: “Carry me well through the approaching struggle; let me pass through the dark valley to the realms of light without flinching or fear.” The first reason annexed to the prayer is, “That Thy Son also may glorify Thee.” Jesus seeks His own glorification merely as a means to a higher end, the glorification of God the Father. And in so connecting the two glorifyings as means and end, He but repeats to the Father what He had said to His disciples in His farewell address. He had told them that it was good for them that He should go, as not till His departure would any deep impression be made on the world’s conscience with respect to Himself and His doctrine. He now tells His Father in effect: “It is good for Thy glory that I leave the earth and go to heaven; for henceforth I can promote Thy glory in the world better there than by a prolonged sojourn here.” To enforce the reason, Jesus next declares that what He desires is to glorify the Father in His office as the Saviour of sinners: “As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him.” Interpreted in the light of this sentence, the prayer means: “Thou sentest me into the world to save sinners, and hitherto I have been constantly occupied in seeking the lost, and communicating eternal life to such as would receive it. But the time has come when this work can be best carried on by me lifted up. Therefore exalt me to Thy throne, that from thence, as a Prince and a Saviour, I may dispense the blessings of salvation.”

It is important to notice how Jesus defines His commission as the Saviour. He represents it at once as concerning all flesh, and as specially concerning a select class, thus ascribing to His work a general and a particular reference, in accordance with the teaching of the whole New Testament, which sets forth Christ at one time as the Saviour of all men, at another as the Saviour of His people, of the elect, of His sheep, of those who believe. This style of speaking concerning the redeeming work of our Saviour it is our duty and our privilege to imitate, avoiding extremes, both that of denying or ignoring the universal aspects of Christ’s mission, and that of maintaining that He is in the same sense the Saviour of all, or that He will and must eventually save all. Both extremes are excluded by the carefully selected words of Jesus in His intercessory prayer. On the one hand, He speaks of all flesh as belonging to His jurisdiction as the Saviour of humanity at large as the mass into which the leaven is to be deposited, with a view to leavening the whole lump. On the other hand, there is an obvious restriction on the universality of the first clause in the terms of the second. The advocates of universal restoration have no support for their tenet here. They may indeed ask: If Jesus has power over all flesh, is it credible that He will not use it to the uttermost? In reply, we shall not seek to evade the question, by resolving the power claimed into a mere mediatorial sovereignty over the whole solely for the sake of a part, because we know that the elect part is chosen not merely for its own sake, but also for the sake of the whole, to be the salt of the earth, the light of the world, and the leaven to leaven the corrupt mass. We simply observe that the power of the Saviour is not compulsory. Men are not saved by force as machines, but by love and grace as free beings; and there are many whom brooding love would gather under its wings who prefer remaining outside to their own destruction. The essence of eternal life is defined in the next sentence of the prayer, and represented as consisting in the knowledge of the only true God, and of Jesus Christ His messenger, knowledge been taken comprehensively as including faith, love, and worship, and the emphasis lying on the objects of such knowledge. The Christian religion is here described in opposition to paganism on the one hand, with its many gods,

and to Judaism on the other, which, believing in the one true God, rejected the claims of Jesus to be the Christ. It is further so described as to exclude by anticipation Arian and Socinian views of the person of Christ. The names of God and of Jesus are put on a level as objects of religious regard, whereby an importance is assigned to the latter incompatible with the dogma that Jesus is a mere man. For eternal life cannot depend on knowing any man, however wise and good: the utmost that can be said of the benefit derivable from such knowledge is that it is helpful towards knowing God better, which can be affirmed not only of Jesus, but of Moses, Paul, John, and all the apostles.

It may seem strange that, in addressing His Father, Jesus should deem it needful to explain wherein eternal life consists; and some, to get rid of the difficulty, have supposed that the sentence is an explanatory reflection interwoven into the prayer by the evangelist. Yet the words were perfectly appropriate in the mouth of Jesus Himself. The first clause is a confession by the man Jesus of His own faith in God His Father as the supreme object of knowledge; and the whole sentence is really an argument in support of the prayer, Glorify Thy Son. The force of the declaration lies in what it implies respecting the existing ignorance of men concerning the Father and His Son. It is as if Jesus said: Father, Thou knowest that eternal life consists in knowing Thee and me. Look around, then, and see how few possess such knowledge. The heathen world knoweth Thee not-it worships idols: the Jewish world is equally ignorant of Thee in spirit and in truth; for, while boasting of knowing Thee, it rejects me. The whole world is overspread with a dark veil of ignorance and superstition. Take me out of it, therefore, not because I am weary of its sin and darkness, but that I may become to it a sun. Hitherto my efforts to illuminate the darkness have met with small success. Grant me a position from which I can send forth light over all the earth. But why does the Saviour here alone, in the whole Gospel history, call Himself Jesus Christ? Some see in this compound name, common in the apostolic age, another proof that this verse is an interpolation. Again, however, without reason, for the style in which Jesus designates Himself exactly suits the object He has in view. He is pleading with the Father to take Him to glory, that He may the more effectually propagate the true religion. What more appropriate in this connection than to speak of Himself objectively under the name by which He should be known among the professors of the true religion? The second reason pleaded by Jesus in support of His prayer, is that His appointed service has been faithfully accomplished, and now claims its guerdon “I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do. Now, therefore, glorify Thou me.” The great Servant of God speaks here not only with reference to the past, but by anticipation with reference to His passion already endured in purpose; so that the “I have finished” of the prayer is equivalent in meaning to the “It is finished” spoken from the cross. And what He says concerning Himself is true; the declaration, though one which no other human being could make without abatement, is on His part no exaggerated, boastful piece of self-laudation, but the sober, humble utterance of a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men. Nor can we say that the statement, though true, was ultroneous and uncalled-for. It was necessary that Jesus should be able to make that declaration; and though the fact declared was well known to God, it was desirable to proclaim in the hearing of the eleven, and unto the whole Church through their record, the grounds on which His claim to be rewarded with glory rested, for the strengthening of faith. For as our faith and hope towards God are based on the fact that Jesus Christ was able to make the declaration in question, so they are confirmed by the actual making of it, His protestation that He has kept His covenant of work being to us, as it were, a seal

of the covenant of grace, serving the same end as the sacrament of the Supper.

Having offered this brief petition for Himself, Jesus proceeded to pray for His disciples at much greater length, all that follows having reference to them mainly, and from the sixth to the twentieth verse referring to them exclusively. The transition is made by a special declaration, applying the general one of the preceding sentence to that part of Christ's personal work which consisted in the training of these men: "I have manifested Thy name unto the men whom Thou gavest me out of the world." After this introductory statement follows a short description of the persons about to be prayed for. Jesus gives His disciples a good character. First, scrupulously careful not to exaggerate the importance of the service He has rendered in training them for the apostolate, He acknowledges that they were good when He got them: "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them me:" they were pious, devout men, God-taught, God-drawn, God-given. Then He testifies that since they had been with Him they had sustained the character they had when they joined His company: "They have kept Thy word." And finally, He bears witness that the men whom His Father had given Him had been true believers in Himself, and had received all His words as the very truth of God, and Himself as one sent forth into the world by God. Here, surely, is a generous eulogy on disciples, who, while sincere and devoted to their Master, were, as we know, exceedingly faulty in conduct, and slow to learn.

Having thus generously praised His humble companions, Jesus intimates His intention to pray for them: "I pray for them." But the prayer comes not just yet; for some prefatory words must be premised, to give the prayer more emphasis when it does come. First, the persons prayed for are singled out as for the moment the sole objects of a concentrated solicitude. "I pray for them: I pray not for the world." The design of Jesus in making this statement is not, of course, to intimate the absolute exclusion of the world from His sympathies. Not exclusion, but concentration in order to eventual inclusion, is His purpose here. He would have His Father fix His special regards on this small band of men, with whom the fortunes of Christianity are bound up. He prays for them as a mother dying might pray exclusively for her children-not that she is indifferent to the interest of all beyond, but that her family, in her solemn situation, is for her the natural legitimate object of an absorbing, all-engrossing solicitude. He prays for them as the precious fruit of His life-labor, the hope of the future, the founders of the Church, the Noah's ark of the Christian faith, the missionaries of the truth to the whole world; for them alone, but for the world's sake-it being the best thing He can do for the world meantime to commend them to the Father's care.

What Jesus means to ask for the men thus singled out, we can now guess for ourselves. It is that His Father would keep them, now that He is about to leave them. But before the request come two reasons why it should be granted. The first is expressed in these terms: "They are Thine: and all mine are Thine, and Thine are mine; and I am glorified in them;"-and means in effect this: "It is Thy business, Thy interest, to keep these men. They are Thine; Thou gravest them me: keep Thine own. Although since they became my disciples they have been mine, that makes no difference: they are still Thine; for between me and Thee is no distinction of meum and tuum. Then I am glorified in them: my cause, my name, my doctrine, are to be henceforth identified with them; and if they miscarry, my interest will be shipwrecked. Therefore, as Thou values the honor of Thy Son, keep these men." The other reason why the request about to be proffered should be granted is: "And now I am no more in the world." The Master, about to depart from the earth, commends to His Father's care those whom He is leaving behind without a head. And now at length comes the

prayer for the eleven, ushered in with due solemnity by a new emphatic address to the Hearer of prayer: “Holy Father, keep in Thine own name those whom Thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.” The epithet “holy” suits the purport of the prayer, which is that the disciples may be kept pure in faith and practice, separate from all existing error and sin, that they may be eventually a salt to the corrupt world in which their Lord is about to leave them. The prayer itself embraces two particulars. The first is that the disciples may be kept in the name of the Father, which Jesus has manifested to them; that is, that they may continue to believe what He had taught them of God, and so become His instruments for diffusing the knowledge of the true God and the true religion throughout the earth. The second is, that they may be one, that is, that they may be kept in love to each other, as well as in the faith of the divine name; separate from the world, but not divided among themselves. These two things, truth and love, Jesus asks for His own, as of vital moment: truth as the badge of distinction between His Church and the world; love as the bond which unites believers of the truth into a holy brotherhood of witness-bearers to the truth. These two things the Church should ever keep in view as of co-ordinate importance: not sacrificing love to truth, dividing those who should be one by insisting on too minute and detailed a testimony; nor sacrificing truth to love, making the Church a very broad, comprehensive society, but a society without a vocation or raison d’être, having no truth to guard and teach, or testimony to bear.

Having commended His disciples to His Father’s care, Jesus next gives an account of His own stewardship as their Master, and protests that He has faithfully kept them in divine truth. He claims to have done His duty by them all, not even excepting Judas, in whose case He admits failure, but at the same time clears Himself of blame. The reference to the false disciple shows how conscientious He is in rendering His account. He feels, as it were, put on His defense with reference to the apostate; and supposing Himself to be asked the question, What have you to say about this man? He replies in effect: “I admit I have not been able to keep him from falling, but I have done all I could. The son of perdition is not lost through my fault.” We know how well entitled Jesus was to make this protestation. In the next part of the prayer Jesus defines the sense in which He asks that His disciples may be kept, and in doing this virtually offers new reasons why the petition should be heard. He commends them to His Father’s care as the depositaries of truth, worth keeping on that account, and needing to be kept, because of the world’s dislike of the truth. And He explains that by keeping He means not translation out of the world, but preservation in the world from its moral evil, their presence there as a salt being necessary, and their purity not less needful, that the salt might not be without savor and virtue. This explanation He meant not for the ear of His Father alone, but also for the ears of His disciples. He wished them to understand that two things were equally to be shunned-conformity to the world, and weariness of the world. They must abide in the truth, and they must abide in the world for the truth’s sake; mindful, for their consolation, that when they felt the world’s hatred most, they were doing most good, and that the weight of their cross was the measure of their influence. The keeping asked by Jesus for His own is but the continuance and perfecting of an existing moral condition. He needs not to ask His Father now for the first time to separate His disciples in spirit and character from the world. That they are already; that they were when first they joined His society; that they have continued to be. This, in justice to them, their Master is careful to state twice over in this portion of His prayer. “They,” He testifies, “are not of the world, even as I am not of the world,” putting them on a level with Himself with characteristic magnanimity, and not without truth; for the persons thus described, though in many respects defective, were very unworldly, caring nothing for the world’s

trinity-riches, honors, and pleasures-but only for the words of eternal life.

Yet, notwithstanding their sincerity, the eleven still needed not only keeping, but perfecting; and therefore their Master went on to pray for their sanctification in the truth, having in view not only their perseverance, growth, and maturity in grace as private Christians, but more especially their spiritual equipment for the office of the apostleship. Hence He goes on in the next breath to make mention of their apostolic vocation, showing that that is principally in His eye: “As Thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.” That they may be fitted for their mission is His intense desire. Hence He proceeds to speak of His own sanctification as a means towards their apostolic sanctification as the end, as if His own ministry were merely subordinate to theirs. For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.” Remarkable words, whose meaning is obscure, and has been much debated, but in which we may at least with confidence discover a singular display of condescension and love. Jesus speaks here like a parent who lives for the sake of His children, having a regard to their moral training in all His personal habits, denying Himself pleasures for their benefit, and making it His chief end and care to form their characters, perfect their education, and fit them for the duties of the position which they are destined to fill. The remainder of the prayer (with exception of the two closing sentences) respects the Church at large-those who should believe in Christ through the word of the apostles, heard from their lips, or reported in their writings. What Jesus desires for the body of believers is partly left to be inferred; for when He says, “I pray not for these alone,” He intimates that He desires for the parties next to be prayed for the same things He has already asked for his disciples: preservation in the truth, and from the evil in the world, and sanctification by the truth. The one blessing He expressly asks for the Church is “unity.” His heart’s desire for believers in Him is “that they all may be one.” His ideal of the Church’s unity is very high, its divine exemplar being the unity subsisting between the persons in the Godhead, and specially between the Father and the Son, and its ground the same divine unity: “one as we are one, and in us who are one,” bound together as closely and harmoniously by the common name into which they are baptized, and by which they are called. This unity, desirable for its own sake, Jesus specially desiderates, because of the moral power which it will confer on the Church as an institute for propagating the Christian faith: “That the world may believe that Thou hast sent me.” Now this end is one which cannot be promoted unless the unity of believers be in some way made manifest. A unity which is not apparent can have no effect on the world, but must needs be as a candle under a bushel, which gives no light, nay, ceases to be a light, and goes out. There can be no doubt, therefore, that our Lord had a visible unity in view; and the only question is how that is to be reached. The first and most obvious way is by union in one church organization, with appointed means for representing the whole body, and expressing its united mind; such, e.g., as the oecumenical councils of the early centuries. This, the most complete manifestation of unity, was exhibited in the primitive Church. In our day incorporating union on a great scale is not possible, and other methods of expressing the feeling of catholicity must be resorted to. One method that might be tried is that of confederation, whereby independent church organizations might be united after the fashion of the United States of America, or of the Greek republics, which found a centre of unity in the legislative and judicial assembly called the Amphictyonic Council. But whatever may be thought of that, one thing is certain, that the unity of believers in Christ must be made more manifest as an undeniable fact somehow, if the Church is to realize her vocation as a holy nation called out of darkness to show forth the virtues of Him whose name she bears, and win for Him the

world's homage and faith. It is true, indeed, that the unity of the Church does find expression in its creed; by which we mean not the sectional creed of this or that denomination, but the creed within the creeds, expressive of the catholic orthodoxy of Christendom, and embracing the fundamentals, and only the fundamentals, of the Christian faith. There is a Church within all the churches to which this creed is the thing of value, all else being, in the esteem of its members, but the husk containing the precious kernel. But the existence of that Church is a fact known by faith, not by sight: its influence is little felt by the world; and however thankful we may be for the presence in the midst of ecclesiastical organizations of this holy commonwealth, we cannot accept it as the realization of the ideal which the Saviour had in His mind when He uttered the words, "That they all may be one." In the next two sentences Jesus fondly lingers over this prayer, repeating, expanding, enforcing the petition in language too deep for our fathoming line, but which plainly conveys the truth that without unity the Church can neither glorify Christ, commend Christianity as divine, nor have the glory of Christ abiding on herself. And this is a truth which, on reflection, approves itself to reason. Wrangling is not a divine thing, and it needs no divine influence to bring it about. Anybody can quarrel; and the world, knowing that, has little respect for a quarrelling Church. But the world opens its eyes in wonder at a community in which peace and concord prevail, saying, Here is something out of the common course-selfishness and self-will rooted out of human nature: nothing but a divine influence could thus subdue the centrifugal forces which tend to separate men from each other. The endearing name Father, with which the next sentence begins, marks the commencement of a new final paragraph in the prayer of the great High Priest. Jesus at this point casts a glance forward to the end of things, and prays for the final consummation of God's purpose with regard to the Church: that the Church militant may become the Church triumphant; that the body of saints, imperfectly sanctified on earth, may become perfectly sanctified and glorified in heaven, with Himself where He will be, beholding His glory, and changed into the same image by the Spirit of God.

Then comes the conclusion, in which Jesus returns from the distant future to the present, and gathers in His thoughts from the Church at large to the company assembled in the supper-chamber, Himself and His disciples. These two closing sentences serve the same use in Christ's prayer that the phrase "for Christ's sake" serves in ours. They contain two pleas-the service of the parties prayed for, and the righteousness of the Being prayed to-the last coming first, embodied in the title, "O righteous Father." The services, merits, and claims of Jesus and His disciples are specifically mentioned as matters to which the righteous Father will doubtless attach the due weight. The world's ignorance of God is alluded to, to enhance the value of the acknowledgment which He has received from His Son and His Son's companions. That ignorance explains why Jesus deems it necessary to say, "I have known Thee." Even His knowledge was not a thing of course in such a world. It was an effort for the man Jesus to retain God in His knowledge, quite as much as to keep Himself unspotted from the world's corruptions. It was as hard for Him to know and confess God as Father in a world that in a thousand ways practically denied that Fatherhood, as to live a life of love amid manifold temptations to self-seeking. In truth, the two problems were one. To be light in the midst of darkness, love in the midst of selfishness, holiness in the midst of depravity, are in effect the same thing.

While pleading His own merit, Jesus forgets not the claims of His disciples. Of them He says in effect: They have known Thee at second- hand through me, as I have known Thee at first-hand by

direct intuition. Not content with this statement, He expatiates on the importance of these men as objects of divine care, representing that they are worth keeping, as already possessing the knowledge of God's name, and destined ere long to know it yet more perfectly, so that they shall be able to make it known as an object of homage to others, and God shall be able to love them even as He loved His own Son, when He was in the world faithfully serving His heavenly Father. "And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." Wonderful words to be uttered concerning mere earthen vessels!

02.27. The Sheep Scattered

The Sheep Scattered Section I - “All The Disciples Forsook Him, and Fled.”

Mat 26:36-41; Mat 26:55-56; Mat 26:69-75; John 18:15-18. From the supper-chamber, in which we have lingered so long, we pass into the outside world, to witness the behavior of the eleven in the great final crisis. The passages cited describe the part they played in the solemn scenes connected with their Master’s end. That part was a sadly unheroic one. Faith, love, principle, all gave way before the instincts of fear, shame, and self-preservation. The best of the disciples-the three who, as most reliable, were selected by Jesus to keep Him company in the garden of Gethsemane-utterly failed to render the service expected of them. While their Lord was passing through His agony, they fell asleep, as they had done before on the Mount of Transfiguration. Even the picked men thus proved themselves to be raw recruits, unable to shake off drowsiness while they did duty as sentinels. “What! could ye not watch with me one hour?” Then, when the enemy appeared, both these three and the other eight ran away panic-stricken. “All the disciples forsook Him, and fled.” And finally, that one of their number who thought himself bolder than his brethren, not only forsook, but denied his beloved Master, declaring with an oath, “I know not the man.” The conduct of the disciples at this crisis in their history, so weak and so unmanly, naturally gives rise to two questions: How should they have acted? and why did they act as they did-what were the causes of their failure?

Now, to take up the former of these questions first, when we try to form to ourselves a distinct idea of the course of action demanded by fidelity, it is not at once quite apparent wherein the disciples, Peter of course excepted, were at fault. What could they do when their Lord was apprehended, but run away? Offer resistance? Jesus had positively forbidden that just immediately before. On the appearance of the band of armed men, “when they which were about Him saw what would follow, they said unto Him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword?” Without waiting for a reply, one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. The fighting disciple, John informs us, was Simon Peter. He had brought a sword with him, one of two in the possession of the company, from the supper-chamber to Gethsemane, thinking it might be needed, and fully minded to use it if there was occasion; and, coward as he proved himself afterwards among the serving-men and maids, he was no such arrant coward in the garden. He used his weapon boldly if not skillfully, and did some execution, though happily not of a deadly character. Thereupon Jesus interposed to prevent further bloodshed, uttering words variously reported, but in all the different versions clearly inculcating a policy of non-resistance. “Put up again thy sword into his place,” He said to Peter, adding as His reason, “for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword;” which was as much as to say, “In this kind of warfare we must necessarily have the worst of it.” Then He went on to hint at higher reasons for non-resistance than mere considerations of prudence or expediency. “Thinkest thou,” He asked the warlike disciple, “that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?” He could meet human force by superior, divine, celestial force if He chose, but He did not choose; for to overpower His enemies would be to defeat His own purpose

in coming to the world, which was to conquer, not by physical force, but by truth and love and godlike patience; by drinking the cup which His Father had put into His hands, bitter though it was to flesh and blood.

Quite in harmony with these utterances in Gethsemane are the statements made by Jesus on the same subject ere He left the supper-room, as recorded by Luke. In the letter, indeed, these statements seem to point at a policy the very opposite of non-resistance. Jesus seems to say that the great business and duty of the hour, for all who are on His side, is to furnish themselves with swords: so urgent is the need, that he who wants a weapon must sell his garment to buy one. But the very emphasis with which He speaks shows that His words are not to be taken in the literal prosaic sense. It is very easy to see what He means. His object is by graphic language to convey to His disciples an idea of the gravity of the situation. “Now,” He would say, “now is the day, yea, the hour of battle: if my kingdom be one of this world, as ye have imagined, now is the time for fighting, not for dreaming; now matters have come to extremities, and ye have need of all your resources: equip yourselves with shoes and purse and knapsack, and above all, with swords and warlike courage.” The disciples did not understand their Lord’s meaning. They put a stupid, prosaic interpretation upon this part, as upon so many other parts, of His farewell discourse. So, with ridiculous seriousness, they said: “Lord, behold, here are two swords.” The foolish remark provoked a reply which should surely have opened their eyes, and kept Peter from carrying the matter so far as to take one of the swords with him. “It is enough,” said Jesus, probably with a melancholy smile on His face, as He thought of the stupid simplicity of those dear childish and childlike men: “It is enough.” Two swords: well, they are enough only for one who does not mean to fight at all. What were two swords for twelve men, and against a hundred weapons of offence? The very idea of fighting in the circumstances was preposterous: it had only to be broadly stated to appear an absurdity. The disciples, then, were not called on to fight for their Master, that He might not be delivered to the Jews. What else, then, should they have done? Was it their duty to suffer with Him, and, carrying out the professions of Peter, to go with Him to prison and to death? This was not required of them either. When Jesus surrendered Himself into the hands of His captors, He proffered the request that, while taking Him into custody, they should let His followers go their way. This He did not merely out of compassion for them, but as the Captain of salvation making the best terms for Himself and for the interests of His kingdom; for it was not less necessary to these that the disciples should live than that He Himself should die. He gave Himself up to death, that there might be a gospel to preach; He desired the safety of His disciples, that there might be men to preach it. Manifestly, therefore, it was not the duty of the disciples to expose themselves to danger: their duty lay rather, one would say, in the direction of taking care of their life for future usefulness.

Where, then, if not in failing to fight for or suffer with their Lord, did the fault of the eleven lie? It lay in their lack of faith. “Believe in God, and believe in me,” Jesus had said to them at the commencement of His farewell address, and at the critical hour they did neither. They did not believe that all would yet end well both with them and their Master, and especially that God would provide for their safety without any sacrifice of principle, or even of dignity, on their part. They put confidence only in the swiftness of their feet. Had they possessed faith in God and in Jesus, they would have witnessed their Lord’s apprehension without dismay, assured both of His return and of their own safety; and, as feeling might incline, would either have followed the officers of justice to

see what happened, or, averse to exciting and painful scenes, would have retired quietly to their dwellings until the tragedy was finished. But wanting faith, they neither calmly followed nor calmly retired; but faithlessly and ignominiously forsook their Lord, and fled. The sin lay not so much in the outward act, but in the inward state of mind of which it was the index. They fled in unbelief and despair, as men whose hope was blasted, from a man whose cause was lost, and whom God had abandoned to His enemies.

Having ascertained wherein the disciples were at fault, we have now to inquire into the causes of their misconduct; and here, at the outset, we recall to mind that Jesus anticipated the breakdown of His followers. He did not count on their fidelity, but expected desertion as a matter of course. When Peter offered to follow Him wheresoever He might go, He told him that ere cock-crowing next morning he would deny Him thrice. At the close of the farewell address He told all the disciples that they would leave Him alone. On the way to the Mount of Olives He repeated the statement in these terms: “All ye shall be offended because of me this night; for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.” And on all these occasions the tone in which He spoke was rather prophetic than reproachful. He expected His disciples to be panic-stricken, just as one should expect sheep to flee on the appearance of a wolf, or women to faint in presence of a scene of carnage. From this leniency we should infer that, in the view of Jesus, the sin of the disciples was one of infirmity; and that this was the view which He took thereof, we know from the words He addressed to the three drowsy brethren in Gethsemane. “Watch and pray,” He said to them, “that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” The kind judgment thus expressed, though pronounced with special reference to the shortcoming of Peter, James, and John in the garden, manifestly applies to the whole conduct of all the disciples (not even excepting Peter’s denial) throughout the terrible crisis. Jesus regarded the eleven as men whose attachment to Himself was above suspicion, but who were liable to fall, through the weakness of their flesh, on being exposed to sudden temptation. But what are we to understand by the weakness of the flesh? Mere instinctive love of life, dread of danger, fear of man? No; for these instincts continued with the apostles through life, without leading, except in one instance, to a repetition of their present misconduct. Not only the flesh of the disciples, but even the willing spirit, was weak. Their spiritual character at this season was deficient in certain elements which give steadiness to the good impulses of the heart, and mastery over the infirmities of sentient nature. The missing elements of strength were: forethought, clear perceptions of truth, self-knowledge, and the discipline of experience. For want of forethought it came to pass that the apprehension of their Lord took the eleven by surprise. This may seem hardly credible, after the frequent intimations Christ had given them of His approaching death; after the institution of the Supper, the farewell address, the reference to the traitor, the prophetic announcement concerning their own frailty, and the discourse about the sword, which was like a trumpet-peal calling to battle. Yet there can be no doubt that such was the fact. The eleven went out to Gethsemane without any definite idea of what was coming. These raw recruits actually did not know that they were on the march to the battle-field. The sleep of the three disciples in the garden is sufficient proof of this. Had the three sentinels been thoroughly impressed with the belief that the enemy was at hand, weary and sad though they were, they would not have fallen asleep. Fear would have kept them awake. “Know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.” The breakdown of the disciples at the final crisis was due in part also to the want

of clear perceptions of truth. They did not understand the doctrine concerning Christ. They believed their Master to be the Christ, the Son of the living God; but their faith was twined around a false theory of Messiah's mission and career. In that theory the cross had no place. So long as the cross was only spoken about, their theory remained firmly rooted in their minds, and the words of their Master were speedily forgotten. But when the cross at length actually came, when the things which Jesus had foretold began to be fulfilled, then their theory went down like a tree suddenly smitten by a whirlwind, carrying the woodbine plant of their faith along with it. From the moment that Jesus was apprehended, all that remained of faith in their minds was simply a regret that they had been mistaken: "We trusted that it had been He who should have redeemed Israel." How could any one act heroically in such circumstances? A third radical defect in the character of the disciples was self- ignorance. One who knows his weakness may become strong even at the weak point; but he who knows not his weak points cannot be strong at any point. Now the followers of Jesus did not know their weakness. They credited themselves with an amount of fidelity and valor which existed only in their imagination, all adopting as their own the sentiment of Peter: "Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee." Alas! they did not know how much fear of man was in them, how much abject cowardice in presence of danger. Of course, when danger actually appeared, the usual consequence of self-conscious valor followed. All these stout-hearted disciples forsook their Master, and fled. The last, and not the least, cause of weakness in the disciples was their inexperience of such scenes as they were now to pass through. Experience of war is one great cause of the coolness and courage of veteran soldiers in the midst of danger. Practical acquaintance with the perils of military life makes them callous and fearless. But Christ's disciples were not yet veterans. They were now but entering into their first engagement. Hitherto they had experienced only such trials as befall even the rawest recruits. They had been called on to leave home, friends, fishing-boats, and their earthly all, to follow Jesus. But these initial hardships do not make a soldier; no, nor even the discipline of the drill-sergeant, nor the donning of a uniform. For behold the green soft youth with his bright uniform brought face to face with the stern reality of battle. His knees smite each other, his heart sickens, perchance he faints outright, and is carried to the rear, unable to take any part in the fight. Poor lad, pity him, do not scorn him; he may turn out a brave soldier yet. Even Frederick the Great ran away from his first battle. The bravest of soldiers probably do not feel very heroic the first time they are under fire.

These observations help us to understand how it came to pass that the little flock was scattered when Jesus their shepherd was smitten. The explanation amounts in substance to a proof that the disciples were sheep, not yet fit to be shepherds of men. That being so, we do not wonder at the leniency of Jesus, to which reference has already been made. No one expects sheep to do any thing else than flee when the wolf cometh. Only in shepherds is craven fear severely reprehensible. Bearing this in mind, we shall more readily forgive Peter for denying his Lord in an unguarded moment, than for his cowardice at Antioch some years after, when he gave the cold shoulder to his Gentile brethren, through fear of the Jewish sectaries from Jerusalem. Peter was a shepherd then, and it was his duty to lead the sheep, or even to carry them against their inclination into the wide green pastures of Christian liberty, instead of tamely following those who, by their scrupulosity, showed themselves to be but lambs in Christ's flock. His actual behavior was very culpable and very mischievous. For though in reality not leading, but led, he, as an apostle, enjoyed the reputation and influence of a chief shepherd, and therefore had no option but either to lead or to mislead; and he did mislead, to such an extent that even Barnabas was carried away by

his dissimulation. It is a serious thing for the Church when those who are shepherds in office and influence are sheep in opinion and heart; leaders in name, led in fact.

Section II - Sifted as Wheat

Luk 22:31-32 This fragment of the conversation at the supper-table is important, as showing us the view taken by Jesus of the crisis through which His disciples were about to pass. In form an address to Peter, it is really a word in season to all, and concerning all. This is evident from the use of the plural pronoun in addressing the disciple directly spoken to. “Satan,” says Jesus, “hath desired to have (not thee, but) you:” thee, Simon, and also all thy brethren along with thee. The same thing appears from the injunction laid on Peter to turn his fall to account for the benefit of his brethren. The brethren, of course, are not the other disciples then present alone, but all who should believe as well. The apostles, however, are not to be excluded from the brotherhood who were to be benefited by Peter’s experience; on the contrary, they are probably the parties principally and in the first place intended.

Looking, then, at this utterance as expressive of the judgment of Jesus on the character of the ensuing crisis in the history of the future apostles, we find in it three noticeable particulars.

1. First, Jesus regards the crisis as a sifting-time for the disciples. Satan, the accuser of the brethren, skeptical of their fidelity and integrity, as of Job’s and of all good men’s, was to sift them as wheat, hopeful that they would turn out mere chaff, and become apostates like Judas, or at least that they would make a miserable and scandalous breakdown. In this respect this final crisis was like the one at Capernaum a year before. That also was a sifting-time for Christ’s discipleship. Chaff and wheat were then, too, separated, the chaff proving to be out of all proportion to the wheat, for “many went back, and walked no more with Him.” But alongside of this general resemblance between the two crises-the minor and the major we may call them-an important difference is to be observed. In the minor crisis, the chosen few were the pure wheat, the fickle multitude being the chaff; in the major, they are both wheat and chaff in one, and the sifting is not between man and man, but between the good and the bad, the precious and the vile, in the same man. The hearts of the eleven faithful ones are to be searched, and all their latent weakness discovered: the old man is to be divided asunder from the new; the vain, self-confident, self-willed, impetuous Simon son of Jonas, from the devoted, chivalrous, heroic, rock-like Peter. This distinction between the two crises implies that the later was of a more searching character than the earlier; and that it was so indeed, is obvious on a moment’s reflection. Consider only how different the situation of the disciples in the two cases! In the minor crisis, the multitude go, but Jesus remains; in the major, Jesus Himself is taken from them, and they are left as sheep without a shepherd. A mighty difference truly, sufficiently explaining the difference in the conduct of the same men on the two occasions. It was no doubt very disappointing and disheartening to see the mass of people who had lately followed their Master with enthusiasm, dispersing like an idle mob after seeing a show. But while the Master remained, they would not break their hearts about the defection of spurious disciples. They loved Jesus for His own sake, not for His popularity or for any other by-end. He was their teacher, and could give them the bread of eternal truth, which, and not the bread that perisheth, was what they were in quest of: He was their Head, their Father, their Elder Brother, their spiritual Husband, and they would cling to Him through all fortunes, with filial, brotherly, wifely fidelity, He being more to them than the whole world outside. If their prospects

looked dark even with Him, where could they go to be any better? They had no choice but to remain where they were.

Remain accordingly they did, faithfully, manfully; kept steadfast by sincerity, a clear perception of the alternatives, and ardent love to their Lord. But now, alas! when it is not the multitude, but Jesus Himself, that leaves them-not forsaking them, indeed, but torn from them by the strong hand of worldly power-what are they to do? Now they may well ask Peter's question, "To whom shall we go?" despairing of an answer. He whose presence was their solace at a trying, discouraging season, who at the worst, even when His doctrine was mysterious and His conduct incomprehensible, was more to them than all else in the world at its best; even He is rift from their side, and now they are utterly forlorn, without a master, a champion, a guide, a friend, a father. Worse still, in losing Him they lose not merely their best friend, but their faith. They could believe Jesus to be the Christ, although the multitude apostatized; for they could regard such apostasy as the effect of ignorance, shallowness, insincerity. But how can they believe in the Messiahship of one who is led away to prison in place of a throne; and instead of being crowned a king, is on His way to be executed as a felon? Bereft of Jesus in this fashion, they are bereft of their Christ as well. The unbelieving world asks them, "Where is thy God?" and they can make no reply.

"Christ and we against the world;" "Christ in the world's power, and we left alone:" such, in brief, was the difference between the two sifting seasons. The results of the sifting process were correspondingly diverse. In the one case, it separated between the sincere and the insincere; in the other, it discovered weakness even in the sincere. The men who on the earlier occasion stood resolutely to their colors, on the later fled panic-stricken, consulting for their safety without dignity, and, in one case at least, with shameful disregard of truth. Behold how weak even good men are without faith! With faith, however crude or ill-informed, you may overcome the whole world; without the faith that places God consciously at your side, you have no chance. Satan will get possession of you and sift you, and cause you to equivocate with Abraham, feign madness with David, dissemble and swear falsely or profanely with Peter. No one can tell how far you may fall if you lose faith in God. The just live justly, nobly, only by their faith.

2. Jesus regards the crisis through which His disciples are to pass as one which, though perilous, shall not prove deadly to their faith. His hope is that though they fall, they shall not fall away; though the sun of faith be eclipsed, it shall not be extinguished. He has this hope even in regard to Peter, having taken care to avert so disastrous a catastrophe. "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." And the result was as He anticipated. The disciples showed themselves weak in the final crisis, but not wicked. Satan tripped them up, but he did not enter into and possess them. In this respect they differed to toto coelo from Judas, who not only lost his faith, but cast away his love, and, abandoning his Lord, went over to the enemy, and became a tool for the accomplishment of their wicked designs. The eleven, at their worst, continued faithful to their Master in heart. They neither committed, nor were capable of committing, acts of perfidy, but even in fleeing identified themselves with the losing side. But Peter, what of him? was not he an exception to this statement? Well, he certainly did more than fail in faith; and we have no wish to extenuate the gravity of his offence, but would rather see in it a solemn illustration of the close proximity into which the best men may be brought with the worst. At the same time, it is only just to remark that there is a wide difference between denying Christ among the servants of the high priest, and betraying Him into the hands of the high priest himself for a sum of money. The latter act is the

crime of a traitor knave; the former might be committed by one who would be true to his master on all occasions in which his interests seemed seriously involved. In denying Jesus, Peter thought that he was saving himself by dissimulation, without doing any material injury to his Lord. His act resembled that of Abraham when he circulated the lying story about his wife being his sister, to protect himself from the violence of licentious strangers. That was certainly a very mean, selfish act, most unworthy of the father of the faithful. Peter's act was not less mean and selfish, but also not more. Both were acts of weakness rather than of wickedness, for which few, even among good men, can afford to throw stones at the patriarch and the disciple. Even those who play the hero on great occasions will at other times act very unworthily. Many men conceal and belie their convictions at the dinner-table, who would boldly proclaim their sentiments from the pulpit or the platform. Standing in the place where Christ's servants are expected to speak the truth, they draw their swords bravely in defense of their Lord; but, mixing in society on equal terms, they too often say in effect, "I know not the man." Peter's offence, therefore, if grave, is certainly not uncommon. It is committed virtually, if not formally, by multitudes who are utterly incapable of public deliberate treason against truth and God. The erring disciple was much more singular in his repentance than in his sin. Of all who in mere acts of weakness virtually deny Christ, how few, like him, go out and weep bitterly! That Peter did not fall as Judas fell, utterly and irrevocably, was due in part to a radical difference between the two men. Peter was at heart a child of God; Judas, in the core of his being, had been all along a child of Satan. Therefore we may say that Peter could not have sinned as Judas sinned, nor could Judas have repented as Peter repented. Yet, while we say this, we must not forget that Peter was kept from falling away by special grace granted to him in answer to his Master's prayers. The precise terms in which Jesus prayed for Peter we do not know; for the prayer in behalf of the one disciple has not, like that for the whole eleven, been recorded. But the drift of these special intercessions is plain, from the account given of them by Jesus to Peter. The Master had prayed that His disciple's faith might not fail. He had not prayed that he might be exempt from Satan's sifting process, or even kept from falling; for He knew that a fall was necessary, to show the self-confident disciple his own weakness. He had prayed that Peter's fall might not be ruinous; that his grievous sin might be followed by godly sorrow, not by hardening of heart, or, as in the case of the traitor, by the sorrow of the world, which worketh death: the remorse of a guilty conscience, which, like the furies, drives the sinner headlong to damnation. And in Peter's repentance, immediately after his denials, we see the fulfilment of his Master's prayer, special grace being given to melt his heart, and overwhelm him with generous grief, and cause him to weep out his soul in tears. Not by his piety or goodness of heart was the salutary result produced, but by God's Spirit and God's providence conspiring to that end. But for the cock-crowing, and the warning words it recalled to mind, and the glance of Jesus' eye, and the tender mercy of the Father in heaven, who can tell what sullen devilish humors might have taken possession of the guilty disciple's heart! Remember how long even the godly David gave place to the devil, and harbored in his bosom the demons of pride, falsehood, and impenitence, after his grievous fall; and see how far it was from being a matter of course that Peter, immediately after denying Christ, should come under the blessed influence of a broken and contrite spirit, or even that the spiritual crisis through which he passed had a happy issue at all. By grace he was saved, as are we all.

3. Jesus regards the crisis about to be gone through by His disciples as one which shall not only end happily, but result in spiritual benefit to themselves, and qualify them for being helpful to

others. This appears from the injunction He lays on Peter: “When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.” Jesus expects the frail disciple to become strong in grace, and so able and willing to help the weak. He cherishes this expectation with respect to all, but specially in regard to Peter, assuming that the weakest might and ought eventually to become the strongest; the last first, the greatest sinner the greatest saint; the most foolish the wisest, most benignant, and sympathetic of men.

How encouraging this genial, kindly view of moral shortcoming to such as have erred! The Saviour says to them in effect, There is no cause for despair: sin cannot only be forgiven, but it can even be turned to good account both for yourselves and for others. Falls, rightly improved, may become stepping-stones to Christian virtue, and a training for the office of a comforter and guide. How healing such a view to the troubled conscience! Men who have erred, and who take a serious thought of their sin, are apt to consume their hearts and waste their time in bitter reflections on their past misconduct. Christ gives them more profitable work to do. “When thou art converted,” He says to them, “strengthen thy brethren:” cease from idle regrets over the irrevocable past, and devote thyself heart and soul to labors of love; and let it help thee to forgive thyself, that from thy very faults and follies thou mayest learn the meekness, patience, compassion, and wisdom necessary for carrying on such labors with success. But while very encouraging to those who have sinned, Christ’s words to Simon contain no encouragement to sin. It is a favorite doctrine with some-that we may do evil that good may come; that we must be prodigals in order to be good Christians; that a mud bath must precede the washing of regeneration and the baptism of the soul in the Redeemer’s blood. This is a false, pernicious doctrine, of which the Holy One could not be the patron. Do evil that good may come, say you? And what if the good come not? It does not come, as we have seen, as a matter of course; nor is it the likelier to come that you make the hope of its coming the pretext for sinning. If the good ever come, it will come through the strait gate of repentance. You can become wise, gracious, meek, sympathetic, a burden-bearer to the weak, only by going out first and weeping bitterly. But what chance is there of such a penitential melting of heart appearing in one who adopts and acts on the principle that a curriculum of sin is necessary to the attainment of insight, self-knowledge, compassion, and all the humane virtues? The probable issue of such a training is a hardened heart, a seared conscience, a perverted moral judgment, the extirpation of all earnest convictions respecting the difference between right and wrong; the opinion that evil leads to good insensibly transforming itself into the idea that evil is good, and fitting its advocate for committing sin without shame or compunction.

“And dare we to this fancy give, That had the wild-oat not been sown, The soil, left barren, scarce had grown The grain by which a man may live?

Oh, if we held the doctrine sound, For life outliving heats of youth;

Yet who would preach it as a truth To those that eddy round and round?

Hold thou the good: define it well: For fear divine Philosophy Should push beyond her mark, and be Procuress to the lords of hell.” In Peter’s case good did come out of evil. The sifting time formed a turning-point in his spiritual history: the sifting process had for its result a second conversion more thorough than the first-a turning from sin, not merely in general, but in detail; from besetting sins, in better informed if not more fervent repentance, and with a purpose of new obedience less self-reliant, but just on that account more reliable. A child hitherto-a child of God, indeed, yet only a

child-Peter became a man strong in grace, and fit to bear the burden of the weak. Yet it is worthy of notice, as showing how little sympathy the Author of our faith had with the doctrine that evil may be done for the sake of good, that Jesus, while aware how Peter's fall would end, did not on that account regard it as desirable. He said not, "I have desired to sift thee," but assigns the task of sifting the disciple to the evil spirit who in the beginning tempted our first parent to sin by the specious argument, "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil," reserving to Himself the part of an intercessor, who prays that the evil permitted may be overruled for good. "Satan hath desired to have you:" "I have prayed for thee." What words could more strongly convey the idea of guilt and peril than these, which intimate that Simon is about to do a deed which is an object of desire to the evil one, and which makes it necessary that he should be specially prayed for by the Saviour of souls? Men must go elsewhere in quest of support for apologetic or pantheistic views of sin. But it may be thought that the reference to Satan tends in another way to weaken moral earnestness, by encouraging men to throw the blame of their falls on him. Theoretically plausible, this objection is practically contrary to fact; for the patrons of lax notions of sin are also the unbelievers in the personality of the devil. "The further the age has removed from the idea of a devil, the laxer it has become in the imputation and punishment of sin. The older time, which did not deny the temptations and assaults of the devil, was yet so little inclined on that account to excuse men, that it regarded the neglect of resistance against the evil spirit, or the yielding to him, as the extreme degree of guilt, and exercised against it a judicial severity from which we shrink with horror. The opposite extreme to this strictness is the laxity of recent criminal jurisprudence, in which judges and physicians are too much inclined to excuse the guilty from physical or psychical grounds, while the moral judgment of public opinion is slack and indulgent. It is undeniable that to every sin not only a bad will, but also the spell of some temptation, contributes; and when temptation is not ascribed to the devil, the sinner does not on that account impute blame to his bad will, but to temptations springing from some other quarter, which he does not derive from sin, but from nature, although nature tempts only when under the influence of sin. The world and the flesh are indeed powers of temptation, not through their natural substance, but through the influence of the bad with which they are infected. But when, as at present, the seduction to evil is referred to sensuality, temperament, physical lusts and passions, circumstances, or fixed ideas, monomanias, etc., guilt is taken off the sinner's shoulders, and laid upon something ethically indifferent or simply natural." The view presented by Jesus of His disciple's fall cannot therefore be charged with weakening the sense of responsibility; on the contrary, it is a view tending at once to inspire hatred of sin and hope for the sinner. It exhibits sin about to be committed as an object of fear and abhorrence; and, already committed, as not only forgivable, being repented of, but as capable of being made serviceable to spiritual progress. It says to us, on the one hand, Trifle not with temptation, for Satan is near, seeking thy soul's ruin-"fear, and sin not;" and, on the other hand, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous,"-despair not: forsake thy sins, and thou shalt find mercy.

Section III - Peter and John John 18:15-18; John 19:25-27.

Though all the disciples, without exception, forsook Jesus at the moment of His apprehension, two of them soon recovered their courage sufficiently to return from flight, and follow after their Master as He was being led away to judgment. One of these was Simon Peter, ever original both in good and in evil, who, we are told, followed Jesus "afar off unto the high priest's palace, to see the end."

The other, according to the general, and we think correct, opinion of interpreters, was John. He is indeed not named, but merely described as another, or rather the other, disciple; but as John himself is our informant, the fact is almost certain evidence that he is the person alluded to. “The other disciple,” who “was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest,” is the well-known unnamed one who so often meets us in the fourth Gospel. Had the man whose conduct was so outstanding been any other than the evangelist, he would certainly not have remained nameless in a narrative so minutely exact, that even the name of the servant whose ear Peter cut off is not deemed too insignificant to be recorded.

These two disciples, though very different in character, seem to have had a friendship for each other. On various occasions besides the present we find their names associated in a manner suggestive of a special attachment. At the supper-table, when the announcement concerning the traitor had been made, Peter gave the disciple whom Jesus loved a sign that he should ask who it should be of whom He spake. Three times in the interval between the resurrection and the ascension the two brethren were linked together as companions. They ran together to the sepulchre on the resurrection morning. They talked together confidentially concerning the stranger who appeared at early dawn on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, when they were out on their last fishing expedition, the disciple whom Jesus loved, on recognizing the Risen One, saying unto Peter, “It is the Lord.” They walked together shortly after on the shore, following Jesus-Peter by commandment, John by the voluntary impulse of his own loving heart. An intimacy cemented by such sacred associations was likely to be permanent, and we find the two disciples still companions after they had entered on the duties of the apostleship. They went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer; and, having got into trouble through the healing of the lame man at the temple gate, they appeared together before the ecclesiastical tribunal, to be tried by the very same men, Annas and Caiaphas, who had sat in judgment upon their Lord, companions now at the bar, as they had been before in the palace, of the high priest.

Such a friendship between the two disciples as these facts point to, is by no means surprising. As belonging to the inner circle of three whom Jesus honored with His confidence on special occasions, they had opportunities for becoming intimate, and were placed in circumstances tending to unite them in the closest bonds of spiritual brotherhood. And, notwithstanding their characteristic differences, they were fitted to be special friends. They were both men of marked originality and force of character, and they would find in each other more sources of interest than in the more commonplace members of the apostolic band. Their very peculiarities, too, far from keeping them apart, would rather draw them together. They were so constituted that each would find in the otter the complement of himself. Peter was masculine, John was feminine, in temperament; Peter was the man of action, John the man of thought and feeling; Peter’s part was to be a leader and a champion, John’s was to cling, and trust, and be loved; Peter was the hero, and John the admirer of heroism. In their respective behavior at this crisis, the two friends were at once like and unlike each other. They were like in this, that they both manifested a generous solicitude about the fate of their Master. While the rest retired altogether from the scene, they followed to see the end. The common action proceeded in both probably from the same motives. What these motives were we are not told, but it is not difficult to guess. A certain influence may be assigned, in the first place, to natural activity of spirit. It was not in the nature either of Peter or of John to be listless and passive while such grave events were going on. They could not sit at home

doing nothing while their Lord was being tried, sentenced, and treated as a malefactor. If they cannot prevent, they will at least witness, His last sufferings. The same irrepressible energy of mind which, three days after, made these two disciples run to see the empty grave, now impels them to turn their steps towards the judgment-hall to witness the transactions there.

Besides activity of mind, we perceive in the conduct of the two disciples a certain spirit of daring at work. We learn from the Acts of the Apostles, that when Peter and John appeared before the council in Jerusalem, the rulers were struck with their boldness. Their boldness then was only what was to be expected from men who had behaved as they did at this crisis. By that time, it is true, they had, in common with all their brethren, experienced a great spiritual change; but yet we cannot fail to recognize the identity of the characters. The apostles had but grown to such spiritual manhood as they gave promise of in the days of their discipleship. For it was a brave thing in them to follow, even at a distance, the band which had taken Jesus a prisoner. The rudiments at least of the martyr character were in men who could do that. Mere cowards would not have acted so. They would have eagerly availed themselves of the virtual sanction given by Jesus to flight, comforting their hearts with the thought that, in consulting for their safety, they were but doing the duty enjoined on them. But the conduct of the two brethren sprang, we believe, mainly from their ardent love to Jesus. When the first paroxysm of fear was past, solicitude for personal safety gave place to generous concern about the fate of one whom they really loved more than life. The love of Christ constrained them to think not of themselves, but of Him whose hour of sorrow was come. First they slacken their pace, then they halt, then they look round; and as they see the armed band nearing the city, they are cut to the heart, and they say within themselves, “We cannot leave our dear Master in His time of peril; we must see the issue of this painful business.” And so with anguished spirit they set out towards Jerusalem, Peter first, and John after him. The two brethren, companions thus far, diverged widely on arriving at the scene of trial and suffering. John clung to his beloved Lord to the last. He was present, it would appear, at the various examinations to which Jesus was subjected, and heard with his own ears the judicial process of which he has given so interesting an account in his Gospel. When the iniquitous sentence was executed, he was a spectator. He took his stand by the foot of the cross, where he could see all, and not only be seen, but even be spoken to, by his dying Master. There he saw, among other things, the strange phenomenon of blood and water flowing from the spear-wound in the Saviour’s side, which he so carefully records in his narrative. There he heard Christ’s dying words, and among them those addressed to Mary of Nazareth and himself: to her, “Woman, behold thy son;” to him, “Behold thy mother.”

John was thus persistently faithful throughout. And Peter, what of him? Alas! what need to tell the familiar story of his deplorable weakness in the hall or inner court of the high priest’s palace? how, having obtained an entrance through the street door by the intercession of his brother disciple, he first denied to the portress his connection with Jesus; then repeated his denial to other parties, with the addition of a solemn oath; then, irritated by the repetition of the charge, and perhaps by the consciousness of guilt, a third time declared, not with a solemn oath, but with the degrading accompaniment of profane swearing, “I know not the man;” then, finally, hearing the cock crow, and catching Jesus’ eye, and remembering the words, “Before the cock crow thou shalt deny me thrice,” went out to the street and wept bitterly!

What became of Peter after this melancholy exhibition we are not informed. In all probability he retired to his lodging, humbled, dispirited, crushed, there to remain overwhelmed with grief and shame, till he was roused from stupor by the stirring tidings of the resurrection morn. This difference in conduct between the two disciples corresponded to a difference in their characters. Each acted according to his nature. It is true, indeed, that the circumstances were not the same for both parties, being favorable for one, unfavorable for the other. John had the advantage of a friend at court, being somehow known to the high priest. This circumstance gained him admission into the chamber of judgment, and gave him security against all personal risk. Peter, on the other hand, not only had no friends at court, but might not unnaturally fear the presence there of personal foes. He had made himself obnoxious by his rash act in the garden, and might be apprehensive of getting into trouble in consequence. That such fears would not have been altogether groundless, we learn from the fact stated by John, that one of the persons who charged Peter with being a disciple of Jesus was a kinsman of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, and that he brought his charge against the disciple in this form: “Did I not see thee in the garden with Him?” It is therefore every way likely that the consciousness of having committed an offence which might be resented, made Peter anxious to escape identification as one of Christ’s disciples. His unseasonable courage in the garden helped to make him a coward in the palace-yard.

Making all due allowance for the effect of circumstances, however, we think that the difference in the behavior of the two disciples was mainly due to a difference in the men themselves. Though he had been guilty of no imprudence in the garden, Peter, we fear, would have denied Jesus in the hall; and, on the other hand, supposing John had been placed in Peter’s position, we do not believe that he would have committed Peter’s sin. Peter’s disposition laid him open to temptation, while John’s, on the other hand, was a protection against temptation. Peter was frank and familiar, John was dignified and reserved; Peter’s tendency was to be on hail fellow-well-met terms with everybody, John could keep his own place and make other people keep theirs. It is easy to see what an important effect this distinction would have on the conduct of parties placed in Peter’s position. Suppose John in Peter’s place, and let us see how he might have acted. Certain persons about the court, possessing neither authority nor influence, interrogate him about his connection with Jesus. He is neither afraid nor ashamed to acknowledge his Lord, but nevertheless he turns away and gives the interrogators no answer. They have no right to question him. The spirit which prompts their questions is one with which he has no sympathy, and he feels that it will serve no good purpose to confess his discipleship to such people. Therefore, like his Master when confronted with the false witnesses, he holds his peace, and withdraws from company with which he has nothing in common, and for which he has no respect. To protect himself from inconvenient interrogation by such dignified reserve, is beyond Peter’s capacity. He cannot keep people who are not fit company for him at their distance; he is too frank, too familiar, too sensitive to public opinion, without respect to its quality. If a servant-maid ask him a question about his relation to the Prisoner at the bar, he cannot brush past her as if he heard her not. He must give her an answer; and as he feels instinctively that the animus of the question is against his Master, his answer must needs be a lie. Then, unwarned by this encounter of the danger arising from too close contact with the hangers-on about the palace, the foolish disciple must involve himself more inextricably into the net, by mingling jauntily with the servants and officers gathered around the fire which has been kindled on the pavement of the open court. Of course he has no chance of escape here; he is like a poor fly caught in a spider’s web. If these men, with the insolent tone of court menials, charge

him with being a follower of the man whom their masters have now got into their power, he can do nothing else than blunder out a mean, base denial. Poor Peter is manifestly not equal to the situation. It would have been wiser in him to have staid at home, restraining his curiosity to see the end. But he, like most men, was to learn wisdom only by bitter experience. The contrast we have drawn between the characters of the two disciples suggests the thought, What a different thing growth in grace may be for different Christians! Neither John nor Peter was mature as yet, but immaturity showed itself in them in opposite ways. Peter's weakness lay in the direction of indiscriminate cordiality. His tendency was to be friends with everybody. John, on the other hand, was in no danger of being on familiar terms with all and sundry. It was rather too easy for him to make a difference between friends and foes. He could take a side, and keep it; he could even hate with fanatical intensity, as well as love with beautiful womanly devotion. Witness his proposal to call down fire from heaven to consume the Samaritan villages! That was a proposal which Peter could not have made; it was not in his nature to be so truculent against any human being. So far, his good nature was a thing to be commended, if in other respects it laid him open to temptation. The faults of the two brethren being so opposite, growth in grace would naturally assume two opposite forms in their respective experiences. In Peter it would take the form of concentration; in John, of expansion. Peter would become less charitable; John would become more charitable. Peter would advance from indiscriminate goodwill to a moral decidedness which should distinguish between friends and foes, the Church and the world; John's progress, on the other hand, would consist in ceasing to be a bigot, and in becoming imbued with the genial, humane, sympathetic spirit of his Lord. Peter, in his mature state, would care much less for the opinions and feelings of men than he did at the present time; John, again, would care much more.

We add a word on the question, Was it right or was it wrong in these two disciples to follow their Lord to the place of judgment? In our view it was neither right nor wrong in itself. It was right for one who was able to do it without spiritual harm; wrong for one who had reason to believe that, by doing it, he was exposing himself to harm. The latter was Peter's case, as the former seems to have been John's. Peter had been plainly warned of his weakness; and, had he laid the warning to heart, he would have avoided the scene of temptation. By disregarding the warning, he wilfully rushed into the tempter's arms, and of course he caught a fall. His fall reads a lesson to all who, without seeking counsel of God or disregarding counsel given, enter on undertakings beyond their strength.

02.28. The Shepherd Restored

The Shepherd Restored Section I - Too Good News to be True Mat 28:17; Mark 16:11-15; Luk 24:11, Luk 24:13-22, Luk 24:36-42; John 20:20, John 20:24-29. The black day of the crucifixion is past; the succeeding day, the Jewish Sabbath, when the Weary One slept in His rock-hewn tomb, is also past; the first day of a new week and of a new era has dawned, and the Lord is risen from the dead. The Shepherd has returned to gather His scattered sheep. Surely a happy day for hapless disciples! What rapturous joy must have thrilled their hearts at the thought of a reunion with their beloved Lord! with what ardent hope must they have looked forward to that resurrection morn! So one might think; but the real state of the case was not so. Such ardent expectations had no place in the minds of the disciples. The actual state of their minds at the resurrection of Christ rather resembled that of the Jewish exiles in Babylon, when they heard that they were to be restored to their native land. The first effect of the good news was that they were as men that dreamed. The news seemed too good to be true. The captives who had sat by the rivers of Babylon, and wept when they remembered Zion, had ceased to hope for a return to their own country, and indeed to be capable of hoping for any thing. “Grief was calm and hope was dead” within them. Then, when the exiles had recovered from the stupor of surprise, the next effect of the good tidings was a fit of over-joy. They burst into hysteric laughter and irrepressible song.

Very similar was the experience of the disciples in connection with the rising of Jesus from the dead. Their grief was not indeed calm, but their hope was dead. The resurrection of their Master was utterly unexpected by them, and they received the tidings with surprise and incredulity. This appears from the statements of all the four evangelists. Matthew states that on the occasion of Christ’s meeting with His followers in Galilee after He was risen, some doubted, while others worshipped. Mark relates that when the disciples heard from Mary Magdalene that Jesus was alive, and had been seen of her, “they believed not;” and that when the two disciples who journeyed toward Emmaus told their brethren of their meeting with Jesus on the way, “neither believed they them.” He further relates how, on a subsequent occasion, when Jesus Himself met with the whole eleven at once, He “upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen.” In full accordance with these statements of the two first evangelists are those of Luke, whose representation of the mental attitude of the disciples towards the resurrection of Jesus is very graphic and animated. According to him, the reports of the women seemed to them “as idle tales, and they believed them not.” The two brethren vaguely alluded to by Mark as walking into the country when Jesus appeared to them, are represented by Luke as sad in countenance, though aware of the rumors concerning the resurrection; yea, as so depressed in spirits, that they did not recognize Jesus when He joined their company and entered into conversation with them. The resurrection was not a fact for them: all they knew was that their Master was dead, and that they had vainly trusted that it had been He who should have redeemed Israel. The same evangelist also Informs us that on the first occasion when Jesus presented Himself in the midst of His disciples, they did recognize the resemblance of the apparition to their deceased Lord, but thought it was only His ghost, and accordingly were

terrified and affrighted; insomuch that, in order to charm away their fear, Jesus showed them His hands and feet, and besought them to handle His body, and so satisfy themselves that He was no ghost, but a substantial human being, with flesh and bones like another man.

Instead of general statements, John gives an example of the incredulity of the disciples concerning the resurrection, as exhibited in its extreme form by Thomas. This disciple he represents as so incredulous, that he refused to believe until he should have put his finger into the prints of the nails, and thrust his hand into the wound made by the spear in the Saviour's side. That the other disciples shared the incredulity of Thomas, though in a less degree, is implied in the statement made by John in a previous part of his narrative, that when Jesus met His disciples on the evening of the day on which He rose, "He showed unto them His hands and His side." The women who had believed in Christ had no more expectation of His resurrection than the eleven. They set forth towards the sepulchre on the morning of the first day of the week, with the intention of embalming the dead body of Him whom they loved. They sought the living among the dead. When the Magdalene, who was at the tomb before the rest, found the grave empty, her idea was that some one had carried away the dead body of her Lord. When the incredulity of the disciples did at length give place to faith, they passed, like the Hebrew exiles, from extreme depression to extravagant joy. When the doubt of Thomas was removed, he exclaimed in rapture, "My Lord and my God!" Luke relates that when they recognized their risen Lord, the disciples "believed not for joy," as if toying with doubt as a stimulus to joy. The two disciples with whom Jesus conversed on the way to Emmaus, said to each other when He left them, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?" In yet another most important respect did the eleven resemble the ancient Hebrew exiles at the time of their recall. While their faith and hope were palsied during the interval between the death and the resurrection of Jesus, their love remained in unabated vitality. The expatriated Jew did not forget Jerusalem in the land of strangers. Absence only made his heart grow fonder. As he sat by the rivers of Babylon, listless, motionless, in abstracted dreamy mood, gazing with glassy eyes on the sluggish waters, the big round tears stole quietly down his cheeks, because he had been thinking of Zion. The exile of poetic soul did not forget what was due to Jerusalem's honor. He was incapable of singing the Lord's songs in the hearing of a heathen audience, who cared nothing for their meaning, but only for the style of execution. He disdained to prostitute his talents for the entertainment of the voluptuous oppressors of Israel, even though thereby he might procure his restoration to the beloved country of his birth, as the Athenian captives in Sicily are said to have done by reciting the strains of their favorite poet Euripides in the hearing of their Sicilian masters. The disciples were not less true to the memory of their Lord. They were like a "widow indeed," who remains faithful to her deceased husband, and dotes on his virtues, though his reputation be at zero in the general esteem of the world. Call Him a deceiver who might, they could not believe that Jesus had been a deceiver. Mistaken He as well as they might have been, but an impostor-never! Therefore, though He is dead and their hope gone, they still act as men who cherish the fondest attachment to their Master whom they have lost. They keep together like a bereaved family, with blinds down, so to speak, shutting and barring their doors for fear of the Jews, identifying themselves with the Crucified, and as His friends dreading the ill-will of the unbelieving world. Admirable example to all Christians how to behave themselves in a day of trouble, rebuke, and blasphemy, when the cause of Christ seems lost, and the powers of darkness for the moment have all things their own way. Though faith be eclipsed and hope extinguished, let the heart ever be loyal to its true Lord! The

state of mind in which the disciples were at the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, is of great moment in an apologetic point of view. Their despair after their Lord's crucifixion gives great weight to the testimony borne by them to the fact of His resurrection. Men in such a mood were not likely to believe in the latter event except because it could not reasonably be disbelieved. They would not be lightly satisfied of its truth, as men are apt to be in the case of events both desired and expected: they would skeptically exact superabundant evidence, as men do in the case of events desirable but not expected. They would be slow to believe on the testimony of others, and might even hesitate to believe their own eyes. They would not be able, as M. Renan supposes, to get up a belief in the resurrection of Jesus, from the simple fact that His grave was found empty on the third day after His death, by the women who went to embalm His body. That circumstance, on being reported, might make a Peter and a John run to the sepulchre to see how matters stood; but, after they had found the report of the women confirmed, it would still remain a question how the fact was to be explained; and Mary Magdalene's theory, that some one had carried off the corpse, would not appear at all improbable.

These inferences of ours, from what we know concerning the mental condition of the disciples, are fully borne out by the Gospel accounts of the reception they gave to the risen Jesus at His first appearances to them. One and all of them regarded these appearances skeptically, and took pains to satisfy themselves, or made it necessary that Jesus should take pains to satisfy them, that the visible object was no ghostly apparition, but a living man, and that man none other than He who had died on the cross. The disciples doubted now the substantiality, now the identity, of the person who appeared to them. They were therefore not content with seeing Jesus, but at His own request handled Him. One of their number not only handled the body to ascertain that it possessed the incompressibility of matter, but insisted on examining with skeptical curiosity those parts which had been injured by the nails and the spear. All perceived the resemblance between the object in view and Jesus, but they could not be persuaded of the identity, so utterly unprepared were they for seeing the Dead One alive again; and their theory at first was just that of Strauss, that what they saw was a ghost or spectra. And the very fact that they entertained that theory makes it impossible for us to entertain it. We cannot, in the face of that fact, accept the Straussian dogma, that "the faith in Jesus as the Messiah, which by His violent death had received an apparently fatal shock, was subjectively restored by the instrumentality of the mind, the power of imagination and nervous excitement." The power of imagination and nervous excitement we know can do much. It has often happened to men in an abnormal, excited state to see projected into outward space the creations of a heated brain. But persons in a crazy state like that-subject to hallucination-are not usually cool and rational enough to doubt the reality of what they see; nor is it necessary in their case to take pains to overcome such doubts. What they need rather, is to be made aware that what they think they see is not a reality: the very reverse of what Christ had to do for the disciples, and did, by solemn assertion that He was no spirit, by inviting them to handle Him, and so satisfy themselves of His material substantiality, and by partaking of food in their presence. When we keep steadily before our eyes the mental condition of the eleven at the time of Christ's resurrection, we see the transparent falsehood and absurdity of the theft theory invented by the Jewish priests. The disciples, according to this theory, came by night, while the guards were asleep, and stole the dead body of Jesus, that they might be able to circulate the belief that He was risen again. Matthew tells that even before the resurrection the murderers of our Lord were afraid this might be done; and then, to prevent any fraud of this kind, they applied to Pilate to have

a guard put upon the grave, who accordingly contemptuously granted them permission to take what steps they pleased to prevent all resurrectionary proceedings on the part either of the dead or of the living, scornfully replying, “Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can.” This accordingly they did, sealing the stone and setting a watch. Alas! their precautions prevented neither the resurrection nor belief in it, but only supplied an illustration of the folly of those who attempt to manage providence, and to control the course of the world’s history. They gave themselves much to do, and it all came to nothing. Not that we are disposed to deny the astuteness of these ecclesiastical politicians. Their scheme for preventing the resurrection was very prudent, and their mode of explaining it away after hand very plausible. The story they invented was really a very respectable fabrication, and was certain to satisfy all who wanted a decent theory to justify a foregone conclusion, as in fact it seems to have done; for, according to Matthew, it was commonly reported in after years. It was not improbable that soldiers should fall asleep by night on the watch, especially when guarding a dead body, which was not likely to give them any trouble; and in the eyes of the unbelieving world, the followers of the Nazarene were capable of using any means for promoting their ends. But granting all this, and even granting that the Sanhedrists had been right in their opinion of the character of the disciples, their theft theory is ridiculous. The disciples, even if capable of such a theft, so far as scruples of conscience were concerned, were not in a state of mind to think of it, or to attempt it. They had not spirit left for such a daring action. Sorrow lay like a weight of lead on their hearts, and made them almost as inanimate as the corpse they are supposed to have stolen. Then the motive for the theft is one which could not have influenced them then. Steal the body to propagate a belief in the resurrection! What interest had they in propagating a belief which they did not entertain themselves? “As yet they knew not the Scriptures, that He must rise again from the dead;” nor did they remember aught that their Master had said on this subject before His decease. To some this latter statement has appeared hard to believe; and to get over the difficulty, it has been suggested that the predictions of our Lord respecting His resurrection may not have been so definite as they appear in the Gospels, but may have assumed this definite form after the event, when their meaning was clearly understood. We see no occasion for such a supposition. There can be no doubt that Jesus spoke plainly enough about His death at least; and yet His death, when it happened, took the disciples as much by surprise as did the resurrection. One explanation suffices in both cases. The disciples were not clever, quick-witted, sentimental men such as Renan makes them. They were stupid, slow-minded persons; very honest, but very unapt to take in new ideas. They were like horses with blinders on, and could see only in one direction-that, namely, of their prejudices. It required the surgery of events to insert a new truth into their minds. Nothing would change the current of their thoughts but a damwork of undeniable fact. They could be convinced that Christ must die only by His dying, that He would rise only by His rising, that His kingdom was not to be of this world, only by the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost and the vocation of the Gentiles. Let us be thankful for the honest stupidity of these men. It gives great value to their testimony. We know that nothing but facts could make such men believe that which nowadays they get credit for inventing. The apologetic use which we have made of the doubts of the disciples concerning the resurrection of Christ is not only legitimate, but manifestly that which was intended by their being recorded. The evangelists have carefully chronicled these doubts that we might have no doubt. These things were written that we might believe that Jesus really did rise from the dead; for the apostles attached supreme importance to that fact, which they had doubted in the

days of their disciple hood. It was the foundation of their doctrinal edifice, an essential part of their gospel. The Apostle Paul correctly summed up the gospel preached by the men who had been with Jesus, as well as by himself, in these three items: “that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried; and that He rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures.” All the eleven thoroughly agreed with Paul’s sentiment, that if Christ were not risen, their preaching was vain, and the faith of Christians was also vain. There was no gospel at all, unless He who died for men’s sins rose again for their justification. With this conviction in their minds, they constantly bore witness to the resurrection of Jesus wherever they went. So important a part of their work did this witness-bearing seem to them, that when Peter proposed the election of one to fill the place of Judas he singled it out as the characteristic function of the apostolic office. “Of these men,” he said, “which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, . . . must one become a witness with us of His resurrection.” With this supreme value attached to the fact of Christ’s rising again in apostolic preaching, it is our duty most heartily to sympathize. Modern unbelievers, like some in the Corinthian church, would persuade us that it does not matter whether Jesus rose or not, all that is valuable in Christianity being quite independent of mere historical truth. With these practically agree many believers addicted to an airy spiritualism, who treat mere supernatural facts with contemptuous neglect, deeming the high doctrines of the faith as alone worthy of their regard. To persons of this temper such studies as those which have occupied us in this chapter seem a mere waste of time; and if they spoke as they feel, they would say, “Let these trifles alone, and give us the pure and simple gospel.” Intelligent, sober, and earnest Christians differ toto caelo from both these classes of people. In their view Christianity is in the first place a religion of supernatural facts. These facts occupy the principal place in their creed. They know that if these facts are honestly believed, all the great doctrines of the faith must sooner or later be accepted; and, on the other hand, they clearly understand that a religion which despises, not to say disbelieves, these facts, is but a cloudland which must soon be dissipated, or a house built on sand which the storm will sweep away. Therefore, while acknowledging the importance of all revealed truth, they lay very special stress on revealed facts. Believing with the heart the precious truth that Christ died for our sins, they are careful with the apostles to include in their gospel these items of fact, that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day.

Section II - The Eyes of the Disciples Opened Mark 16:14; Luk 24:25-32, Luk 24:44-46; John 20:20-23.

Jesus showed Himself alive after His passion to His disciples in a body, for the first time, on the evening of His resurrection day. It was the fourth time He had made Himself visible since He rose from the dead. He had appeared in the morning first of all to Mary of Magdala. She had earned the honor thus conferred on her by her pre-eminent devotion. Of kindred spirit with Mary of Bethany, she had been foremost among the women who came to Joseph’s tomb to embalm the dead body of the Saviour. Finding the grave empty, she wept bitter tears, because they had taken away her Lord, and she knew not where they had laid Him. Those tears, sure sign of deep true love, had not been unobserved of the Risen One. The sorrows of this faithful soul touched His tender heart, and brought Him to her side to comfort her. Turning round in distress from the sepulchre, she saw Him standing by, but knew Him not. “Jesus saith to her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing Him to be the gardener, replies, Sir, if thou hast borne Him hence, tell me

where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary." Startled with the familiar voice, she looks more attentively, and forthwith returns the benignant salutation with an expressive word of recognition, "Rabboni." Thus "to holy tears, in lonely hours, Christ risen appears." The second appearance was vouchsafed to Peter. Concerning this private meeting between Jesus and His erring disciple we have no details: it is simply mentioned by Paul in his Epistle to the Corinthians, and by Luke in his Gospel; but we can have no doubt at all as to its object. The Risen Master remembered Peter's sin; He knew how troubled he was in mind on account of it; He desired without delay to let him know he was forgiven; and out of delicate consideration for the offender's feelings He contrived to meet him for the first time after his fall, alone. In the course of the day Jesus appeared, for the third time, to the two brethren who journeyed to Emmaus. Luke has given greater prominence to this third appearance than to any other in his narrative, probably because it was one of the most interesting of the anecdotes concerning the resurrection which he found in the collections out of which he compiled his Gospel. And, in truth, any thing more interesting than this beautiful story cannot well be imagined. How vividly is the whole situation of the disciples brought before us by the picture of the two friends walking along the way, and talking together of the things which had happened, the sufferings of Jesus three days ago, and the rumors just come to their ears concerning His resurrection; and as they talked, vibrating between despair and hope, now brooding disconsolately on the crucifixion of Him whom till then they had regarded as the Redeemer of Israel, anon wondering if it were possible that He could have risen again! Then how unspeakably pathetic the behavior of Jesus throughout this scene! By an artifice of love He assumes the incognito, and, joining the company of the two sorrowful men, asks them in a careless way what is the subject about which they are talking so sadly and seriously; and on receiving for reply a question expressive of surprise that even a stranger in Jerusalem should not know the things which have come to pass, again asks dryly and indifferently, "What things?" Having thereby drawn out of them their story, He proceeds in turn to show them that an intelligent reader of the Old Testament ought not to be surprised at such things happening to one whom they believed to be Christ, taking occasion to expound unto them "in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself," without saying that it is of Himself He speaks. On the arrival of the travellers at the village whither the two brethren were bound, the unknown One assumes the air of a man who is going farther on, as it would not become a stranger to thrust himself into company uninvited; but receiving a pressing invitation, He accepts it, and at last the two brethren discover to their joy whom they have been entertaining unawares. This appearing of Jesus to the two brethren by the way was a sort of prelude to that which He made on the evening of the same day in Jerusalem to the eleven, or rather the ten. As soon as they had discovered whom they had had for a guest, Cleopas and his companion set out from Emmaus to the Holy City, eager to tell the friends there the stirring news. And, behold, while they are in the very act of telling what things were done in the way, and how Jesus became known to them in the breaking of bread, Jesus Himself appeared in the midst of them, uttering the kindly salutation, "Peace be unto you!" He is come to do for the future apostles what He has already done for the two friends: to show Himself alive to them after His passion, and to open their understandings that they might understand the Scriptures, and see that, according to what had been written before of the Christ, it behooved Him to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day.

While the general design of the two appearances is the same, we observe a difference in the order of procedure followed by Jesus. In the one case He opened the eyes of the understanding first,

and the eyes of the body second; in the other, He reversed this order. In His colloquy with the two brethren He first showed them that the crucifixion and the rumored resurrection were in perfect accordance with Old Testament Scriptures, and then at the close made Himself visible to their bodily eyes as Jesus risen. In other words, He first taught them the true scriptural theory of Messiah's earthly experience, and then He satisfied them as to the matter of fact. In the meeting at night with the ten, on the other hand, he disposed of the matter of fact first, and then took up the theory afterwards. He convinced His disciples, by showing them His hands and His feet, and by eating food, that He really was risen; and then He proceeded to show that the fact was only what they ought to have expected as the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy. In thus varying the order of revelation, Jesus was but adapting His procedure to the different circumstances of the persons with whom He had to deal. The two friends who journeyed to Emmaus did not notice any resemblance between the stranger who joined their company and their beloved Lord, of whom they had been thinking and speaking. "Their eyes were holden, that they should not know Him." The main cause of this, we believe, was sheer heaviness of heart. Sorrow made them unobserving. They were so engrossed with their own sad thoughts that they had no eyes for outward things. They did not take the trouble to look who it was that had come up with them; it would have made no difference though the stranger had been their own father. It is obvious how men in such a mood must be dealt with. They can get outward vision only by getting the inward eye first opened. The diseased mind must be healed, that they may be able to look at what is before them, and see it as it is. On this principle Jesus proceeded with the two brethren. He accommodated Himself to their humor, and led them on from despair to hope, and then the outward senses recovered their perceptive power, and told who the stranger was. "You have heard," He said in effect, "a rumor that He who was crucified three days ago is risen. You regarded this rumor as an incredible story. But why should you? You believe Jesus to be the Christ. If He was the Christ, His rising again was to be expected as much as the passion, for both alike are foretold in the Scriptures which ye believe to be the Word of God." These thoughts having taken hold of their minds, the hearts of the two brethren begin to burn with the kindling power of a new truth; the day-dawn of hope breaks on their spirit; they waken up as from an oppressive dream; they look outward, and, lo, the man who has been discoursing to them is Jesus Himself! With the ten the case was different. When Jesus appeared in the midst of them, they were struck at once with the resemblance to their deceased Master. They had been listening to the story of Cleopas and his companion, and were in a more observing mood. But they could not believe that what they saw really was Jesus. They were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit-the ghost or spectre of the Crucified. The first thing to be done in this case, therefore, manifestly was to allay the fear awakened, and to convince the terrified disciples that the being who had suddenly appeared was no ghost, but a man: the very man He seemed to be, even Jesus Himself. Not till that has been done can any discourse be profitably held concerning the teaching of the Old Testament on the subject of Messiah's earthly history. To that task accordingly Jesus forthwith addressed Himself, and only when it was successfully accomplished did He proceed to expound the true Messianic theory.

Something analogous to the difference we have pointed out in the experience of the two and the ten disciples in connection with belief in the resurrection may be found in the ways by which different Christians now are brought to faith. The evidences of Christianity are commonly divided into two great categories-the external and the internal; the one drawn from outward historical facts,

the other from the adaptation of the gospel to man's nature and needs. Both sorts of evidence are necessary to a perfect faith, just as both sorts of vision, the outward and the inward, were necessary to make the disciples thorough believers in the fact of the resurrection. But some begin with the one, some with the other. Some are convinced first that the gospel story is true, and then perhaps long after waken up to a sense of the importance and preciousness of the things which it relates. Others, again, are like Cleopas and his companion; so engrossed with their own thoughts as to be incapable of appreciating or seeing facts, requiring first to have the eyes of their understanding enlightened to see the beauty and the worthiness of the truth as it is in Jesus. They may at one time have had a kind of traditional faith in the facts as sufficiently well attested. But they have lost that faith, it may be not without regret. They are skeptics, and yet they are sad because they are so, and feel that it was better with them when, like others, they believed. Yet, though they attempt it, they cannot restore their faith by a study of mere external evidences. They read books dealing in such evidences, but they are not much impressed by them. Their eyes are holden, and they know not Christ coming to them in that outward way. But He reveals Himself to them in another manner. By hidden discourse with their spirits He conveys into their minds a powerful sense of the moral grandeur of the Christian faith, making them feel that, true or not, it is at least worthy to be true. Then their hearts begin to burn: they hope that what is so beautiful may turn out to be objectively true; the question of the external evidences assumes a new interest to their minds; they inquire, they read, they look; and, lo, they see Jesus revived, a true historical person for them: risen out of the grave of doubt to live for evermore the sun of their souls, more precious for the temporary loss; coming "Apparelled in more precious habit, More moving, delicate, and full of life, Into the eye and prospect of their soul, than ever He did before they doubted." From these remarks on the order of the two revelations made by Jesus to His disciples-of Himself to the eye of their body, and of the scriptural doctrine of the Messiah to the eye of their mind-we pass to consider the question, What did the latter revelation amount to? What was the precise effect of those expositions of Scripture with which the risen Christ favored His hearers? Did the disciples derive therefrom such an amount of light as to supersede the necessity of any further illumination? Had Jesus Himself done the work of the Spirit of Truth, whose advent He had promised before He suffered, and led them into all truth? Certainly not. The opening of the understanding which took place at this time did not by any means amount to a full spiritual enlightenment in Christian doctrine. The disciples did not yet comprehend the moral grounds of Christ's sufferings and resurrection. Why He underwent these experiences they knew not; the words "ought" and "behooved" meant for them as yet nothing more than that, according to Old Testament prophecies rightly understood, the things which had happened might and should have been anticipated. They were in the same state of mind as that in which we can conceive the Jewish Christians to whom the Epistle to the Hebrews was addressed to have been after perusing the contents of that profound writing. These Christians were ill grounded in gospel truth: they saw not the glory of the gospel dispensation, nor its harmony with that which went before, and under which they had been themselves educated. In particular, the divine dignity of the Author of the Christian faith seemed to them incompatible with His earthly humiliation. Accordingly, the writer of the epistle set himself to prove that the divinity, the temporary humiliation, and the subsequent glorification of the Christ were all taught in the Old Testament Scriptures, quoting these liberally for that purpose in the early chapters of his epistle. He did, in fact, by his written expositions for his readers, what Jesus did by His oral expositions for His hearers. And what shall we say was the

immediate effect of the writer's argument on the minds of those who attentively perused it? This, we imagine, that the crude believer on laying down the book would be constrained to admit: "Well, he is right: these things are all written in the Scriptures of the Messiah; and therefore no one of them, not even the humiliation and suffering at which I stumble, can be a reason for rejecting Jesus as the Christ." A very important result, yet a very elementary one. From the bare concession that the real life of Jesus corresponded to the ideal life of the Messiah as portrayed in the Old Testament, to the admiring, enthusiastic, and thoroughly intelligent appreciation of gospel truth exhibited by the writer himself in every page of his epistle, what a vast distance! Not less was the distance between the state of mind of the disciples after Jesus had expounded to them the things in the law, and the prophets, and the psalms concerning Himself, and the state of enlightenment to which they attained as apostles after the advent of the Comforter. Now they knew the alphabet merely of the doctrine of Christ; then they had arrived at perfection, and were thoroughly initiated into the mystery of the gospel. Now a single ray of light was let into their dark minds; then the daylight of truth poured its full flood into their souls. Or we may express the difference in terms suggested by the narrative given by John of the events connected with this first appearance of the risen Jesus to His disciples. John relates, that, at a certain stage in the proceedings, Jesus breathed on the disciples, and said unto them, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." We are not to understand that they then and there received the Spirit in the promised fulness. The breath was rather but a sign and earnest of what was to come. It was but an emblematic renewal of the promise, and a first installment of its fulfilment. It was but the little cloud like a man's hand that portended a plenteous rain, or the first gentle puff of wind which precedes the mighty gale. Now they have the little breath of the Spirit's influence, but not till Pentecost shall they feel the rushing wind. So great is the difference between now and then: between the spiritual enlightenment of the disciples on the first Christian Sabbath evening, and that of the apostles in after days.

It was but the day of small things with these disciples yet. The small things, however, were not to be despised; nor were they. What value the ten set on the light they had received we are not indeed told, but we may safely assume that their feelings were much of kin to those of the two brethren who journeyed towards Emmaus. Conversing together on the discourse of Jesus after His departure, they said one unto another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?" The light they had got might be small, but it was new light, and it had all the heart-kindling, thought-stirring power of new truth. That conversation on the road formed a crisis in their spiritual history. It was the dawn of the gospel day; it was the little spark which kindles a great fire; it deposited in their minds a thought which was to form the germ or centre of a new system of belief; it took away the veil which had been upon their faces in the reading of the Old Testament, and was thus the first step in a process which was to issue in their beholding with open face, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, and in their being changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Lord the Spirit. Happy the man who has got even so far as these two disciples at this time!

Some disconsolate soul may say, Would that happiness were mine! For the comfort of such a forlorn brother, let us note the circumstances in which this new light arose for the disciples. Their hearts were set a- burning when they had become very dry and withered: hopeless, sick, and life-weary, through sorrow and disappointment. It is always so: the fuel must be dry that the spark may take hold. It was when the people of Israel complained, "Our bones are dried and our hope is

lost, we are cut off for our parts," that the word went forth: "Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel." So with these disciples of Jesus. It was when every particle of the sap of hope had been bleached out of them, and their faith had been reduced to this, "We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel," that their hearts were set burning by the kindling power of a new truth. So it has been in many an instance since then. The fire of hope has been kindled in the heart, never to be extinguished, just at the moment when men were settling down into despair; faith has been revived when a man seemed to himself to be an infidel; the light of truth has arisen to minds which had ceased to look for the dawn; the comfort of salvation has returned to souls which had begun to think that God's mercy was clean gone for ever. "When the Son of man cometh shall He find faith on the earth?"

There is nothing strange in this. The truth is, the heart needs to be dried by trial before it can be made to burn. Till sorrow comes, human hearts do not catch the divine fire; there is too much of this world's life-sap in them. That was what made the disciples so slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken. Their worldly ambition prevented them from learning the spirituality of Christ's kingdom, and pride made them blind to the glory of the cross. Hence Jesus justly upbraided them for their unbelief and their mindless stupidity. Had their hearts been pure, they might have known beforehand what was to happen. As it was, they comprehended nothing till their Lord's death had blighted their hope and blasted their ambition, and bitter sorrow had prepared them for receiving spiritual instruction.

Section III - The Doubt of Thomas

John 20:24-29

"Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came" on that first Christian Sabbath evening, and showed Himself to His disciples. One hopes he had a good reason for his absence; but it is at least possible that he had not. In his melancholy humor he may simply have been indulging himself in the luxury of solitary sadness, just as some whose Christ is dead do now spend their Sabbaths at home or in rural solitudes, shunning the offensive cheerfulness or the drowsy dullness of social worship. Be that as it may, in any case he missed a good sermon; the only one, so far as we know, in the whole course of our Lord's ministry, in which He addressed Himself formally to the task of expounding the Messianic doctrine of the Old Testament. Had he but known that such a discourse was to be delivered that night! But one never knows when the good things will come, and the only way to make sure of getting them is to be always at our post. The same melancholy humor which probably caused Thomas to be an absentee on the occasion of Christ's first meeting with His disciples after He rose from the dead, made him also skeptical above all the rest concerning the tidings of the resurrection. When the other disciples told him on his return that they had just seen the Lord, he replied with vehemence: "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my fingers into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." He was not to be satisfied with the testimony of his brethren: he must have palpable evidence for himself. Not that he doubted their veracity; but he could not get rid of the suspicion that what they said they had seen was but a mere ghostly appearance by which their eyes had been deceived. The skepticism of Thomas was, we think, mainly a matter of temperament, and had little in common with the doubt of men of rationalistic

proclivities, who are inveterately incredulous respecting the supernatural, and stumble at every thing savoring of the miraculous. It has been customary to call Thomas the Rationalist among the twelve, and it has even been supposed that he had belonged to the sect of the Sadducees before he joined the society of Jesus. On mature consideration, we are constrained to say that we see very little foundation for such a view of this disciple's character, while we certainly do not grudge modern doubters any comfort they may derive from it. We are quite well aware that among the sincere, and even the spiritually-minded, there are men whose minds are so constituted that they find it very difficult to believe in the supernatural and the miraculous: so difficult, that it is a question whether, if they had been in Thomas's place, the freest handling and the minutest inspection of the wounds in the risen Saviour's body would have availed to draw forth from them an expression of unhesitating faith in the reality of His resurrection. Nor do we see any reason à priori for asserting that no disciple of Jesus could have been a person of such a cast of mind. All we say is, there is no evidence that Thomas, as a matter of fact, was a man of this stamp. Nowhere in the Gospel history do we discover any unreadiness on his part to believe in the supernatural or the miraculous as such. We do not find, e.g. that he was skeptical about the raising of Lazarus: we are only told that, when Jesus proposed to visit the afflicted family in Bethany, he regarded the journey as fraught with danger to his beloved Master and to them all, and said, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." Then, as now, he showed Himself not so much the Rationalist as the man of gloomy temperament, prone to look upon the dark side of things, living in the pensive moonlight rather than in the cheerful sunlight. His doubt did not spring out of his system of thought, but out of the state of his feelings.

Another thing we must say here concerning the doubt of this disciple. It did not proceed from unwillingness to believe. It was the doubt of a sad man, whose sadness was due to this, that the event whereof he doubted was one of which he would most gladly be assured. Nothing could give Thomas greater delight than to be certified that his Master was indeed risen. This is evident from the joy he manifested when he was at length satisfied. "My Lord and my God!" that is not the exclamation of one who is forced reluctantly to admit a fact he would rather deny. It is common for men who never had any doubts themselves to trace all doubt to bad motives, and denounce it indiscriminately as a crime. Now, unquestionably, too many doubt from bad motives, because they do not wish and cannot afford to believe. Many deny the resurrection of the dead, because it would be to them a resurrection to shame and everlasting contempt. But this is by no means true of all. Some doubt who desire to believe; nay, their doubt is due to their excessive anxiety to believe. They are so eager to know the very truth, and feel so keenly the immense importance of the interests at stake, that they cannot take things for granted, and for a time their hand so trembles that they cannot seize firm hold of the great objects of faith-a living God; an incarnate, crucified, risen Saviour; a glorious eternal future. Theirs is the doubt peculiar to earnest, thoughtful, pure-hearted men, wide as the poles asunder from the doubt of the frivolous, the worldly, the vicious: a holy, noble doubt, not a base and unholy; if not to be praised as positively meritorious, still less to be harshly condemned and excluded from the pale of Christian sympathy-a doubt which at worst is but an infirmity, and which ever ends in strong, unwavering faith. That Jesus regarding the doubt of the heavy-hearted disciple as of this sort, we infer from His way of dealing with it. Thomas having been absent on the occasion of His first appearing to the disciples, the risen Lord makes a second appearance for the absent one's special benefit, and offers him the proof desiderated. The introductory salutation being over, He turns Himself at once to the doubter,

and addresses him in terms fitted to remind him of his own statement to his brethren, saying: “Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.” There may be somewhat of reproach here, but there is far more of most considerate sympathy. Jesus speaks as to a sincere disciple, whose faith is weak, not as to one who hath an evil heart of unbelief. When demands for evidence were made by men who merely wanted an excuse for unbelief, He met them in a very different manner. “A wicked and adulterous generation,” He was wont to say in such a case, “seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given unto it but the sign of the Prophet Jonas.”

Having ascertained the character of Thomas’s doubt, let us now look at his faith. The melancholy disciple’s doubts were soon removed. But how? Did Thomas avail himself of the offered facilities for ascertaining the reality of his Lord’s resurrection? Did he actually put his fingers and hand into the nail and spear wounds? Opinions differ on this point, but we think the probability is on the side of those who maintain the negative. Several things incline us to this view. First, the narrative seems to leave no room for the process of investigation. Thomas answers the proposal of Jesus by what appears to be an immediate profession of faith. Then the form in which that profession is made is not such as we should expect the result of a deliberate inquiry to assume. “My Lord and my God!” is the warm, passionate language of a man who has undergone some sudden change of feeling, rather than of one who has just concluded a scientific experiment. Further, we observe there is no allusion to such a process in the remark made by Jesus concerning the faith of Thomas. The disciple is represented as believing because he has seen the wounds shown, not because he has handled them. Finally, the idea of the process proposed being actually gone through is inconsistent with the character of the man to whom the proposal was made. Thomas was not one of your calm, cold-blooded men, who conduct inquiries into truth with the passionless inpartiality of a judge, and who would have examined the wounds in the risen Saviour’s body with all the coolness with which anatomists dissect dead carcasses. He was a man of passionate, poetic temperament, vehement alike in his belief and in his unbelief, and moved to faith or doubt by the feelings of his heart rather than by the reasonings of his intellect. The truth, we imagine, about Thomas was something like this. When, eight days before, he made that threat to his brother disciples, he did not deliberately mean all he said. It was the whimsical utterance of a melancholy man, who was in the humor to be as disconsolate and miserable as possible. “Jesus risen! the thing is impossible, and there’s an end of it. I won’t believe except I do so and so. I don’t know if I shall believe when all’s done.” But eight days have gone by, and, lo, there is Jesus in the midst of them, visible to the disciple who was absent on the former occasion as well as to the rest. Will Thomas still insist on applying his rigorous test? No, no! His doubts vanish at the very sight of Jesus, like morning mists at sunrise. Even before the Risen One has laid bare His wounds, and uttered those half-reproachful, yet kind, sympathetic words, which evince intimate knowledge of all that has been passing through His doubting disciple’s mind, Thomas is virtually a believer; and after he has seen the ugly wounds and heard the generous words, he is ashamed of his rash, reckless speech to his brethren, and, overcome with joy and with tears, exclaims, “My Lord and my God!”

It was a noble confession of faith-the most advanced, in fact, ever made by any of the twelve during the time they were with Jesus. The last is first; the greatest doubter attains to the fullest and firmest belief. So has it often happened in the history of the Church. Baxter records it as his

experience, that nothing is so firmly believed as that which hath once been doubted. Many Thomases have said, or could say, the same thing of themselves. The doubters have eventually become the soundest and even the warmest believers. Doubt in itself is a cold thing, and, as in the case of Thomas, it often utters harsh and heartless sayings. Nor need this surprise us; for when the mind is in doubt the soul is in darkness, and during the chilly night the heart becomes frozen. But when the daylight of faith comes, the frost melts, and hearts which once seemed hard and stony show themselves capable of generous enthusiasm and ardent devotion.

Socinians, whose system is utterly overthrown by Thomas's confession naturally interpreted, tell us that the words "My Lord and my God" do not refer to Jesus at all, but to the Deity in heaven. They are merely an expression of astonishment on the part of the disciple, on finding that what he had doubted was really come to pass. He lifts up his eyes and his hands to heaven, as it were, and exclaims, My Lord and my God! it is a fact: The crucified Jesus is restored to life again. This interpretation is utterly desperate. It disregards the statement of the text, that Thomas, in uttering these words, was answering and speaking to Jesus, and it makes a man bursting with emotion speak frigidly; for while the one expression "My God" might have been an appropriate utterance of astonishment, the two phrases, "My Lord and my God," are for that purpose weak and unnatural.

We have here, therefore, no mere expression of surprise, but a profession of faith most appropriate to the man and the circumstances; as pregnant with meaning as it is pithy and forcible. Thomas declares at once his acceptance of a miraculous fact, and his belief in a momentous doctrine. In the first part of his address to Jesus he recognizes that He who was dead is alive: My Lord, my beloved Master! it is even He-the very same person with whom we enjoyed such blessed fellowship before He was crucified. In the second part of his address he acknowledges Christ's divinity, if not for the first time, at least with an intelligence and an emphasis altogether new. From the fact he rises to the doctrine: My Lord risen, yea, and therefore my God; for He is divine over whom death hath no power. And the doctrine in turn helps to give to the fact of the resurrection additional certainty; for if Christ be God, death could have no power over Him, and His resurrection was a matter of course. Thomas having reached the sublime affirmation, "My God," has made the transition from the low platform of faith on which he stood when he demanded sensible evidence, to the higher, on which it is felt that such evidence is superfluous.

We have now to notice, in the last place, the remark made by the Lord concerning the faith just professed by His disciple. "Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." This reflection on the blessedness of those who believe without seeing, though expressed in the past tense, really concerned the future. The case supposed by Jesus was to be the case of all believers after the apostolic age. Since then no one has seen, and no one can believe because he has seen, as the apostles saw. They saw, that we might be able to do without seeing, believing on their testimony. But what does Jesus mean by pronouncing a beatitude on those who see not, yet believe?

He does not mean to commend those who believe without any inquiry. It is one thing to believe without seeing, another thing to believe without consideration. To believe without seeing is to be capable of being satisfied with something less than absolute demonstration, or to have such an inward illumination as renders us to a certain extent independent of external evidence. Such a faculty of faith is most needful; for if faith were possible only to those who see, belief in Christianity

could not extend beyond the apostolic age. But to believe without consideration is a different matter altogether. It is simply not to care whether the thing believed be true or false. There is no merit in doing that. Such faith has its origin in what is base in men-in their ignorance, sloth, and spiritual indifference; and it can bring no blessing to its possessors. Be the truths credited ever so high, holy, blessed, what good can a faith do which receives them as matters of course without inquiry, or without even so much as knowing what the truths believed mean? The Lord Jesus, then, does not here bestow a benediction on credulity. As little does He mean to say that all the felicity falls to the lot of those who have never, like Thomas, doubted. The fact is not so. Those who believe with facility do certainly enjoy a blessedness all their own. They escape the torment of uncertainty, and the current of their spiritual life flows on very smoothly. But the men who have doubted, and now at length believe, have also their peculiar joys, with which no stranger can intermeddle. Theirs is the joy experienced when that which was dead is alive again, and that which was lost is found. Theirs is the rapture of Thomas when he exclaimed, with reference to a Saviour thought to be gone for ever, “My Lord and my God.” Theirs is the bliss of the man who, having dived into a deep sea, brings up a pearl of very great price. Theirs is the comfort of having their very bygone doubts made available for the furtherance of their faith, every doubt becoming a stone in the hidden foundation on which the superstructure of their creed is built, the perturbations of faith being converted into confirmations, just as the perturbations in the planetary motions, at first supposed to throw doubt on Newton’s theory of gravitation, were converted by more searching inquiry into the strongest proof of its truth.

What, then, does the Lord Jesus mean by these words? Simply this: He would have those who must believe without seeing, understand that they have no cause to envy those who had an opportunity of seeing, and who believed only after they saw. We who live so far from the events, are very apt to imagine that we are placed at a great disadvantage as compared with the disciples of Jesus. So in some respects we are, and especially in this, that faith is more difficult for us than for them. But then we must not forget that, in proportion as faith is difficult, it is meritorious, and precious to the heart. It is a higher attainment to be able to believe without seeing, than to believe because we have seen; and if it cost an effort, the trial of faith but enhances its value. We must remember, further, that we never reach the full blessedness of faith till what we believe shines in the light of its own self-evidence. Think you the disciples were happy men because they had seen their risen Lord and believed? They were far happier when they had attained to such clear insight into the whole mystery of redemption, that proof of this or that particular fact or doctrine was felt to be quite unnecessary. To that felicity Jesus wished His doubting disciple to aspire; and by contrasting his case with that of those who believe without seeing, He gives us to know that it is attainable for us also. We, too, may attain the blessedness of a faith raised above all doubt by its own clear insight into divine truth. If we are faithful, we may rise to this from very humble things. We may begin, in our weakness, with being Thomases, clinging eagerly to every spar of external evidence to save ourselves from drowning, and end with a faith amounting almost to sight, rejoicing in Jesus as our Lord and God, with a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

02.29. The Under-Shepherds Admonished

The Under-Shepherds Admonished Section I - Pastoral Duty

John 21:15-17

“I go a-fishing,” said Simon to his companions, some time after they and he had returned from Jerusalem to the neighborhood of the Galilean lake. “We also go with thee,” replied Thomas and Nathanael, and James and John, and two others unnamed, making with Peter seven, probably all of the eleven who were fishermen by trade. One and all went on that fishing expedition con amore. It was an expedition, we presume, in the first place, in quest of food, but it was something more. It was a return to dear old ways, amid familiar scenes, which called up pleasing reminiscences of bygone times. It was a recreation and a solace, most welcome and most needful to men who had passed through very painful and exciting experiences; a holiday for men fatigued by sorrow, and surprise, and watching. Every student with overtasked brain, every artisan with over strained sinews, can conceive the abandon with which those seven disciples threw themselves into their boats, and sailed out into the depths of the Sea of Tiberias to ply their old craft.

Out on the waters that night, what were these men’s thoughts? From the significant allusion made by Jesus to Peter’s youth in the colloquy of next morning, we infer they were something like the following: “After all, were it not better to be simple fishermen than to be apostles of the Christian religion? What have we got by following Jesus? Certainly not what we expected. And have we any reason to expect better things in the future? Our Master has told us that our future lot will be very much like His own-a life of sorrow, ending probably in martyrdom. But here, in our native province of Galilee, pursuing our old calling, we might think, believe, act as we pleased, shielded by obscurity from all danger. Then how delightfully free and independent this rustic life by the shores of the lake! In former days, ere we left our nets and followed Jesus, we girded ourselves with our fishermen’s coats, and walked whither we would. When we shall have become apostles, all that will be at an end. We shall be burdened with a heavy load of responsibility; obliged continually to think of others, and not to please ourselves; liable to have our personal liberty taken away, yea, even our very life.” In putting such words into the mouths of the disciples, we do not violate probability; for such feelings as the words express are both natural and common in view of grave responsibilities and perils about to be incurred. Perhaps no one ever put his hand to the plough of an arduous enterprise, without indulging for at least a brief space in such a looking back. It is an infirmity which easily besets human nature.

Yet, natural as it comes to men to look back, it is not wise. Regretful thoughts of the past are for the most part delusive; they were so, certainly, in the case of the disciples. If the simple life they left behind them was so very happy, why did they leave it? Why so prompt to forsake their nets and their boats, and to follow after Jesus? Ah! fishing in the blue waters of the Sea of Galilee did not satisfy the whole man. Life is more than meat, and the kingdom of God is man’s chief end. Besides, the fisherman’s life has its drawbacks, and is by no means so romantic as it seems at the distance of years. You may sometimes go out with your nets, and toil all night, and catch nothing.

This was what actually happened on the present occasion. “That night they caught nothing.” The circumstance probably helped to break the spell of romance, and to waken the seven disciples out of a fond dream. Be that as it may, there was One who knew all their thoughts, and who would see to it that they did not indulge long in the luxury of reactionary feeling. “When the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore.” He is come to show Himself for the third time to His disciples-not, as before, to convince them that He is risen, but to induce them to dedicate their whole minds and hearts to their future vocation as fishers of men, and as under-shepherds of the flock, preparatory to His own departure from the world. His whole conduct on this occasion is directed to that object. First, He gives them directions for catching a great haul of fish, to remind them of their former call to be His apostles, and to be an encouraging sign or symbol of their success in their apostolic work. Then He invites them to dine on fish which He had procured, roasted on a fire of His own kindling on the shore, to cure them of earthly care, and to assure them that if they seek to serve the kingdom with undivided heart, all their wants will be attended to. Finally, when the morning meal is over, He enters into conversation, in the hearing of all, with the disciple who had been the leader in the night adventure on the lake, and addresses him in a style fitted to call forth all his latent enthusiasm, and intended to have a similar effect on the minds of all present. On the surface, the words spoken by Jesus to Peter seem to concern that disciple alone; and the object aimed at appears to be to restore him to a position as an apostle, which he might not unnaturally think he had forfeited by his conduct in the high priest’s palace. This, accordingly, is the view commonly taken of this impressive scene on the shore of the lake. And whether we agree with that view or not, we must admit that, for some reason or other, the Lord Jesus wished to recall to Peter’s remembrance his recent shortcomings. Traces of allusion to past incidents in the disciple’s history during the late crisis are unmistakable. Even the time selected for the conversation is significant. It was when they had dined that Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him; it was after they had supped Jesus gave His disciples His new commandment of love, and that Peter made his vehement protestation of devotion to his Master’s cause and person. The name by which the risen Lord addressed His disciple-not Peter, but Simon son of Jonas-was fitted to remind him of his weakness, and of that other occasion on which, calling him by the same name, Jesus warned him that Satan was about to sift him as wheat. The thrice-repeated question, “Lovest thou me?” could not fail painfully to remind Peter of his threefold denial, and so to renew his grief. The form in which the question was first put-“Lovest thou me more than these?”-contains a manifest allusion to Peter’s declaration, “Though all shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended.” The injunction, “Feed my sheep,” points back to the prophetic announcement made by Jesus on the way to the Mount of Olives, “All ye shall be offended because of me this night; for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad,” and means, Suffer not the sheep to be scattered, as ye were for a season scattered yourselves. The injunction, “Feed my lambs,” associated with the first question, “Lovest thou me more than these?” makes us think of the charge, “When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren;” the idea suggested in both cases being the same, viz. that the man who has fallen most deeply, and learned most thoroughly his own weakness, is, or ought to be, best qualified for strengthening the weak-for feeding the lambs.

Notwithstanding all these allusions to Peter’s fall, we are unable to acquiesce in the view that the scene here recorded signified the formal restoration of the erring disciple to his position as an apostle. We do not deny that, after what had taken place, that disciple needed restoration for his

own comfort and peace of mind. But our difficulty is this: Had he not been restored already? What was the meaning of that private meeting between him and Jesus, and what its necessary result? Who can doubt that after that meeting the disciple's mind was at ease, and that thereafter he was at peace, both with himself and with his Master? Or if evidence is wanted of the fact, look at Peter's behavior on recognizing Jesus from the boat, as He stood on the shore in the gray morning, casting himself as he was into the sea, in his haste to get near his beloved Lord. Was that the behavior of a man afflicted with a guilty conscience? But it may be replied, There was still need for a formal public restoration, the scandal caused by Peter's sin being public. This we doubt; but even granting it, what then? Why did the restoration not take place sooner, at the first or second meeting in Jerusalem? Then, does the scene by the shores of the lake really look like a formal transaction? Can we regard that casual, easy, familiar meeting and colloquy after breakfast with two-thirds of the disciples as an ecclesiastical diet, for the solemn purpose of restoring a fallen brother to church fellowship and standing? The idea is too frigid and pedantic to be seriously entertained. Then one more objection to this theory remains to be stated, viz. that it fails to give unity to the various parts of the scene. It may explain the questioning to which Jesus subjected Peter, but it does not explain the prophetic reference to his future history with which He followed it up. Between "I allow you, notwithstanding past misdemeanors, to be an apostle," and "I forewarn you that in that capacity you shall not have the freedom of action in which you rejoiced in former days," there is no connection traceable. Peter's fall did not suggest such a turn of thought; for it sprang not from the love of freedom, but from the fear of man. Not the restoration of Peter to a forfeited position, but his recall to a more solemn sense of his high vocation, do we find in this scene. Not "I allow you," but "I urge you," seems to us to be the burthen of Christ's words to this disciple, and through him to all his brethren. By all considerations He would move them to address themselves heart and soul to their apostolic work, and let boats and nets and every thing else alone for ever. "By the memory of thine own weakness," He would say to Simon for that end; "by my forgiving love, and thy gratitude for it; by the need of brother disciples, which thine own past frailty may teach thee to understand and compassionate; by the ardent attachment which I know you cherish towards myself: by these and all kindred considerations, I charge thee, on the eve of my departure, be a hero, play the man, be strong for others, not for thyself, 'feed the flock of God, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly.' Shrink not from responsibility, covet not ease, bend thy neck to the yoke, and let love make it light. Sweet is liberty to thy human heart; but patient, burden-bearing love, though less pleasant, is far more noble."

Such being the message which Jesus meant for all present, Peter was most appropriately selected as the medium for conveying it. He was an excellent text on which to preach a sermon on self-consecration. His character and conduct supplied all the poetry, and argument, and illustration necessary to give pathos and point to the theme. How dear to his impetuous, passionate spirit, unrestrained freedom! And what heart is not touched by the thought of such a man schooling his high, mettlesome soul into patience and submission? The young, frolicsome, bounding fisherman, girding on his coat, and going hither and thither at his own sweet will; the aged saintly apostle, meek as a lamb, stretching forth his arms to be bound for the martyr's doom: what a moving contrast! Had that passionate man, in some senses the strongest character among the twelve, been in other senses the weakest, then who could better illustrate men's need of shepherding? Had he learnt his own weakness, and through his knowledge thereof grown stronger? Then how better state the general duty of the strong to help the weak, than by assigning to this particular

disciple the special duty of taking care of the weakest? To say to Peter, “Feed my lambs,” was to say to all the apostles, “Feed my sheep.” In requiring Peter to show his love by performing the part of shepherd to the little flock of believers, Jesus adapted His demand to the spiritual capacity of the disciple. Love to the Saviour does not necessarily take the form of feeding the sheep; in immature and inexperienced disciples, it rather takes the form of being sheep. It is only after the weak have become strong, and established in grace, that they ought to become shepherds, charging themselves with the care of others. In laying on Peter and his brethren pastoral duties, therefore, Jesus virtually announces that they have now passed, or are about to pass, out of the category of the weak into the category of the strong. “Hitherto,” He virtually says to them, “ye have been as sheep, needing to be guided, watched over, and defended by the wisdom and courage of another. Now, however, the time is arrived when ye must become shepherds, able and willing to do for the weak what I have done for you. Hitherto ye have left me to care for you; henceforth you must accustom yourselves to be looked to as guardians, even as I have been by you. Hitherto ye have been as children under me, your parent; henceforth ye must yourselves be parents, taking charge of the children. Hitherto ye have been as raw recruits, liable to panic, and fleeing from danger; henceforth ye must be captains superior to fear, and by your calm determination inspire the soldiers of the cross with heroic daring.” In short, Jesus here in effect announces to Peter and to the rest that they are now to make the transition from boyhood to manhood, from pupilage to self-government, from a position of dependence and exemption from care to one of influence, authority, and responsibility, as leaders and commanders in the Christian community, doing the work for which they have been so long under training. Such a transition and transformation did accordingly take place shortly after in the history of the disciples. They assumed the position of Christ’s deputies or substitutes after His ascension, Peter being the leading or representative man, though not the Pope, in the infant Church; and their character was altered to fit them for their high functions. The timid disciples became bold apostles. Peter, who weakly denied the Lord in the judgment-hall, heroically confessed Him before the Sanhedrin. The ignorant and stupid disciples, who had been continually misunderstanding their Master’s words, became filled with the spirit of wisdom and understanding, so that men listened to their words as they had been wont to listen to the words of Jesus Himself.

We have said that love to Christ does not impose on all His disciples the duty of a shepherd; showing itself rather in by far the larger number in simply hearing the shepherd’s voice and following him, and generally in a willingness to be guided by those who are wiser than themselves. We must add, that all who are animated by the spirit of love to the Redeemer, will be either shepherds or sheep, actively useful in caring for the souls of others, or thankfully using the provision made for the care of their own souls. Too many, however, come under neither designation. Some are sheep indeed, but sheep going astray; others are neither sheep nor shepherds, being self-reliant, yet indisposed to be helpful; too self-willed to be led, yet disinclined to make their strength and experience available for their brethren, utilizing all their talents for the exclusive service of their own private interests. Such men are to be found in Church and State, sedulously holding back from office and responsibility, and severely criticizing those who have come under the yoke; animadverting on their timidity and bondage, as unbroken colts, it they could speak, might animadvert on the tameness of horses in harness, the bits and bridles that form a part of church harness, in the shape of formulas and confessions, coming in for a double share of censure.Now, it is all very well to be wild colts, rejoicing in unrestrained liberty, for a season in

youth; but it will not do to be spurning the yoke all one's lifetime. "Ye, then, that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please yourselves." It is no doubt most agreeable to be free from care, and to walk about unfettered in opinion and action, and, shaking off those who would hang on our skirts, to live the life of gods, careless of mankind. But it is not the chief end of any man, least of all of a wise and strong man, to be free from care or trouble. He who has a Christian heart must feel that he is strong and wise for the sake of others who want strength and wisdom; and he will undertake the shepherd's office, though shrinking with fear and trembling from its responsibilities, and though conscious also that in so doing he is consenting to have his liberty and independence greatly circumscribed. The yoke of love which binds us to our fellows is sometimes not easy, and the burden of caring for them not light; but, on the whole, it is better and nobler to be a drudge and a slave at the bidding of love, than to be a free man through the emancipating power of selfishness. Better Peter a prisoner and martyr for the gospel, than Simon inculcating on his Lord the selfish policy, "Save Thyself," or lying in luxurious ease on the hill of Transfiguration, exclaiming, "Lord, it is good to be here." Better Peter bound by others, and led whither he would not, as a good shepherd to be sacrificed for the sheep, than Simon girding on his own garment, and walking along with the careless jaunty air of a modern pococurantist. A life on the ocean wave, a life in the woods, a life in the mountains or in the clouds, may be fine to dream and sing of; but the only life out of which genuine heroism and poetry comes, is that which is spent on this solid prosaic earth in the lowly work of doing good. Note now, finally, the evidence supplied in Peter's answers to his Lord's questions, that he is indeed fitted for the responsible work to which he is summoned. It is not merely that he can appeal to Jesus Himself, as one who knows all things, and say, "Thou knowest that I love Thee;" for, as we have already hinted, every sincere disciple can do that. Two specific signs of spiritual maturity are discernible here, not to be found in those who are weak in grace, not previously found in Peter himself. There is, first, marked modesty-very noticeable in so forward a man. Peter does not now make any comparisons between himself and his brethren as he had done previously. In spite of appearances, he still protests that he does love Jesus; but he takes care not to say, "I love Thee more than those." He not only does not say this, but he manifestly does not think it: the bragging spirit has left him; he is a humble, subdued, wise man, spiritually equipped for the pastorate, just because he has ceased to think himself supremely competent for it. The second mark of maturity discernible in Peter's replies is godly sorrow for past shortcoming: "Peter was grieved because He (Jesus) said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me?" He was grieved because by the threefold interrogation he was reminded that the threefold denial of which he had been guilty afforded ground for calling his love in question. Observe particularly the feeling produced by this delicate reference to his former sins. It was grief, not irritation, anger, or shame. There is no pride, passion, vanity in this man's soul, but only holy, meek contrition; no sudden coloring is observable in his countenance, but only the gracious softened expression of a penitent, chastised spirit. The man who can so take allusions to his sins is not only fit to tend the sheep, but even to nurse the lambs. He will restore those who have fallen in a spirit of meekness. He will be tender towards offenders, not with the spurious charity which cannot afford to condemn sin strongly, but with the genuine charity of one who has himself received mercy for sins sincerely repented of. By his benignant sympathy sinners will be converted unto God in unfeigned sorrow for their offences, and in humble hope of pardon; and by his watchful care many sheep will be kept from ever straying from the fold.

Section II - Pastor Pastorum

John 21:19-22 To be a dutiful under-shepherd is, in another view, to be a faithful sheep, following the Chief Shepherd whithersoever He goes. Pastors are not lords over God's heritage, but mere servants of Christ, the great Head of the Church, bound to regard His will as their law, and His life as their model. In the scene by the lake Jesus took pains to make His disciples understand this. He did not allow them to suppose that, in committing to their pastoral charge His flock, He was abdicating His position as Shepherd and Bishop of souls. Having said to Peter, "Feed my lambs," "Feed my sheep," He said to him, as His final word, "Follow me." It is implied in the narrative, that while Jesus said this, He arose and walked away from the spot where the disciples had just taken their morning meal. Whither He went we are not told, but it may have been towards that "mountain in Galilee," the preappointed rendezvous where the risen Saviour met "above five hundred brethren at once." The sheep have doubtless been wending thither to meet their divine Shepherd, as in a secluded upland fold; and it is more than possible that the object of the journey in which Peter is invited to join his Master, is to introduce him to the flock which had just been committed to his care. Be this as it may, Peter obeyed the summons, and rose at once to follow Jesus. His first impression probably was that he was to be the solitary attendant of his Lord, and a natural wish to ascertain the state of the case led him to look behind to see what his companions were doing. On turning round, he observed the disciple whom Jesus loved, and whom he too loved, following close in his footsteps; and the question forthwith rose to his lips, "Lord, and what of this man?" The question was elliptical, but it meant: John is coming after us; Is the same lot in store for him that you have prophesied for me? Shall he too be bound and led whither he would not; or shall he, as the disciple most dearly beloved, be exempted from the hardships I am fated to endure? That another and a happier fortune was reserved for John seemed, we believe, probable to Peter. He could not but recall to mind that memorable scene in which John's mother made her ambitious request for her two sons; and in spite of what Jesus had said to them about tasting of His cup, and being baptized with His baptism, he, Peter, might well imagine that John's desire would be fulfilled, and that he would live to see the kingdom come, and to share its glories; especially as one and all of the disciples, down to the very last day of their Lord's sojourn on earth, still expected the kingdom to be restored to Israel very soon. If such was Peter's thought, it is not surprising that he should ask, if not with envy, at least with a sadder sense of his own loss, "Lord, what of this man?" Adversity is hard to bear at best, but hardest of all when personal ill-fortune stands in glaring contrast with the prosperity of a brother who started on his career at the same time, and with no better prospects than the man whom he has far outstripped in the race. To such considerations, however, Jesus paid little respect in His reply to Peter's question. "If I will," He said, "that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me." "How stern and unfeeling!" one is tempted to exclaim. Might not Jesus at least have reminded Simon, for his comfort, of the words He once uttered to James and John: "Ye shall drink of my cup"? Would it not have helped Peter more cheerfully to follow his Master in the arduous path of the cross, to have told him that, in whatever manner John might die, he too would have to suffer for the gospel; that his life, whether long or short, would be full of tribulation; that participation in the glory of the kingdom did not depend on longevity; that, in fact, the first to die would be the first to enter into glory? But no, it might not be. To administer such comfort would have been to indulge the disciple's weakness. One who has to play a soldier's part must be trained with military rigor. Effeminacy, sighing after happiness, brooding over the felicity we have missed, are out of place in an apostle's character; and Jesus, to whom such dispositions are most abhorrent, will take good care not to give them any

countenance. He will have all His followers, and specially the heads of His people, to be heroes-“Ironsides,” prompt to do bidding, fearless of danger, patient of fatigue, without a trace of selfish softness. He will give no quarter even to natural weaknesses, disregards present pain, cares not how we smart under rebuke, provided only He gain His end-the production of character temptation-proof. Having this end in view, Jesus took no trouble to correct Peter’s misapprehensions about his brother disciple. Misapprehensions, we say, for such they indeed were. John did not tarry till the Lord came in the sense in which Peter understood the words. He lived, indeed, till the close of the first Christian century, therefore long after the Lord’s coming to execute judgment on Jerusalem. But except for the longevity he enjoyed, the last of the apostles was in no respect to be envied. The Church was militant all his days: he took part in many of its battles, and received therein many scars. Companion with Peter in the Church’s first conflict with the world, he was a prisoner in Patmos for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ, after Peter had fallen asleep. One might perhaps say that, owing to temperament, the life of John was less stirring than that of his brother apostle. He was a man of less impetuosity, though not of less intensity; and there was, perhaps, not so much in his character provocative of the world’s opposition. Both by his virtues and by his infirmities Peter was predestined to be the champion of the faith, the Luther of the apostolic age, giving and receiving the hardest blows, and bearing the brunt of the battle. John, on the other hand, was the Melanchthon among the apostles, without, however, Melanchthon’s tendency to yield; and as such, enjoyed probably a quieter, and, on the whole, more peacefull life. But this difference between the two men was, after all, quite subordinate; and, all things considered, we may say that John drank not less deeply of Christ’s cup than did Peter. There was nothing glorious or enviable in his lot on earth, except the vision in Patmos of the glory yet to be revealed. Yet while all this was clear to His prescient eye, Jesus did not condescend to give any explanations concerning the appointed lot of the beloved disciple, but allowed Peter to think what he pleased about the future of his friend. “If I will,” He said, “that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?” not meaning to give any information, as contemporary believers imagined, but rather refusing to give any in the bluntest and most peremptory manner. “Suppose”-such is the import of the words-“Suppose it were my pleasure that John should remain on the earth till I return to it, what is that to thee? Suppose I were to grant him to sit on my right hand in my Messianic kingdom, what, I ask again, is that to thee? Suppose John were not to taste of death, but, surviving till my second advent, were, like another Elijah, to be wafted directly into heaven, or to be endowed in his body with the power of an endless life, still what is that to thee? Follow thou Me.” The emphatic repetition of this injunction is very significant. It shows, for one thing, that when Jesus said to Peter, “Feed my sheep,” He had no intention of making him a pastor of pastors, a shepherd or bishop over his fellow-disciples. In Roman Catholic theology the lambs are the lay members of the church, and the sheep are the under shepherds-the whole body of the clergy, the Pope excepted. How strange, if this be true, that Peter should be checked for looking after one of the flock, and asking so simple a question as that, “Lord, and what shall this man do?” Jesus replies to him as if he were a busybody, meddling with matters with which he had no concern. And, indeed, busybodyism was one of Peter’s faults. He was fond of looking after and managing other people; he tried once and again to manage the Lord Himself. Curiously enough, it is from this apostle that the Church gets the needful warning against the too common vice just named. “Let none of you,” he writes in his first epistle, “suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters;” literally, as a bishop intruding into another’s

diocese. Evidently the frequent rebukes administered to Peter by his Master had made a lasting impression on him. Heavy as was the load of responsibility laid upon this disciple at this time, it did not amount to any thing so formidable as that involved in being a visible Christ, so to speak, to the whole Church. Neither Peter nor any other man is able to bear that burden, and happily no one is required to do so. The responsibility of even the highest in the Church is restricted within comparatively narrow limits. The main business, even of the chief under-shepherds, is not to make others follow Christ, but to follow Him themselves. It is well that our Lord made this plain by the words addressed to the representative man among the apostles; for Christians of active, energetic, and earnest natures are very apt to have very exaggerated ideas of their responsibilities, and to take on themselves the care of the whole world, and impose on themselves the duty of remedying every evil that is done under the sun. They would be defenders-general of the faith wherever assailed, redressers-general of all wrongs, curates-general of all souls. There is something noble as well as quixotic in this temper; and it were not the best sign of a man's moral earnestness if he had not at some time of his life known somewhat of this fussy, over-zealous spirit. Still it should be understood that the Head of the Church imposes on no man such unlimited responsibility, and that, when self-imposed, it does not conduce to a man's real usefulness. No one man can do all other men's work, and no one man is responsible for all other men's errors and failures; and each man contributes most effectually and surely to the good of the whole by conducting his own life on godly principles. The world is full of evils-scepticism, superstition, ignorance, immorality, on every side-a sight saddening in the extreme. What, then, am I to do?" This one thing above all: Follow thou Christ. Be thou a believer, let who will be infidels. Let thy religion be reasonable, let who will pin their faith to a fallible human authority, and place their religion in fantastic ritualisms and gross idolatries. Be thou holy, an example of sobriety, justice, and godliness, though all the world should become a sweltering chaos of impurity, fraud, and impiety. Say with Joshua of old, "If it seem good unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." The repeated injunction, "Follow thou me," whilst restricting individual responsibility, prescribes undivided attention to personal duty. Christ demands of His disciples that they follow Him with integrity of heart, without distraction, without murmuring, envy, or calculations of consequences. Peter was, it is to be feared, not yet up to the mark in this respect. There was yet lingering in his heart a vulgar hankering after happiness as the chief end of man. Exemption from the cross still appeared to him supremely desirable, and he probably fancied that special favor on Christ's part towards a particular disciple would show itself in granting such exemption. He did not yet understand that Christ oftenest shows special favor to His followers by making them in a remarkable degree partakers of His bitter cup and His bloody baptism. The grand enthusiasm of Paul, which made him desire to know Jesus in the fellowship of His sufferings, had not yet taken possession of Simon's breast. When an arduous and perilous piece of service was to be done, those who were selected to be the forlorn hope seemed to him objects of pity rather than of envy. Far from volunteering for such a service, he would rather congratulate himself on having escaped it; and the highest conceivable virtue, in case one were so unlucky as not to escape, would, in his opinion, be submission to the inevitable. Peter was deficient also as yet in the military virtue of unquestioning obedience to orders, which is the secret of an army's strength. A general says to one, Go, and he Goeth; to another, Come, and he cometh: he appoints to one corps its station here, and to another its station there; and no one ventures to ask why, or to make envious comparisons. There is an

absolute surrender of the individual will to the will of the commander; and so far as thoughts of preference are concerned each man is a machine, having a will, a head, a hand, a heart, only for the effective performance of his own appointed task. Peter had not yet attained to this pitch of self-abnegation. He could not do simply what he was bidden, but must needs look round to see what another was doing. Nor let us think this a small offence in him. It was a breach of discipline which could not be overlooked by the Commander of the faithful. Implicit obedience is as necessary in the Church as it is in the army. The old soldier Loyola understood this, and hence he introduced a system of military discipline into the constitution of the so called “Society of Jesus.” And the history of that society shows the wisdom of the founder; for whatever we may think of the quality of the work done, we cannot deny the energy of the Jesuitic fraternity, or the devotion of its members. Such devotion as the Jesuit renders to the will of his spiritual superior Christ demands of all His people; and to none except Himself can it be rendered without impiety. He would have every believer give himself up to His will in cheerful, exact, habitual obedience, deeming all His orders wise, all His arrangements good, acknowledging His right to dispose of us as He pleases, content to serve Him in a little place or in a large one, by doing or by suffering, for a long period or a short, in life or by death, if only He be glorified. This is our duty, and it is also our blessedness. So minded, we shall be delivered from all care of consequences, from ambitious views of our responsibilities, from imaginary grievances, from envy, fretfulness and the restlessness of self-will. We shall no longer be distracted or tormented with incessant looking round to see what is become of this or that fellow-disciple, but be able to go on with our own work in composure and peace. We shall not trouble ourselves either about our own future or about that of any other person, but shall healthily and happily live in the present. We shall get rid for ever of fear, and care, and scheming, and disappointment, and chagrin, and, like larks at heaven’s gate, sing:

“Father, I know that all my life Is portioned out by Thee, And the changes that will surely come I do not fear to see; But I ask Thee for a present mind, Intent on serving Thee.

I would not have the restless will That hurries to and fro, Seeking for some great thing to do, Or secret thing to know;

I would be treated as a child, And guided where I go.”

Thus, brother, “go thou thy way till the end be;” and “thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.”

02.30. Power From On High

Power From On High Mat 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luk 24:47-53; Acts 1:1-8. From Galilee the disciples, of their own accord or by direction, found their way back to Jerusalem, where their risen Lord showed Himself to them once more, and for the last time, to give them their final instructions, and to bid them farewell. Of this last meeting no distinct notice is taken in the Gospels. Each of the synoptical evangelists, however, has preserved some of the last words spoken by Jesus to His disciples ere He ascended to heaven. Among these we reckon the closing verses of Matthew's Gospel, where we read: "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Of this last word Mark gives, in the close of his Gospel, an abbreviated version, in these terms: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation." In Luke's narrative the words spoken by Jesus on the occasion of His final appearance to the eleven are so interwoven with those which He spoke to them on the evening of His resurrection day, that, but for the supplementary and more circumstantial account given by the same author in the Book of the Acts, we should never have thought of making a distinction, far less have known where to place the boundary line. On comparing the two accounts, however, we can see that words spoken at two different times are construed together into one continuous discourse; and we have no great difficulty in determining what belongs to the first appearance and what to the last. According to the Book of Acts, Jesus, in His last conversation with His disciples, spoke to them of their apostolic duties as witnesses unto Himself and preachers of His gospel; of the promise of the Spirit, whose descent was to fit them for their work; and of what they should do till the promise should be fulfilled. Now these are just the topics adverted to in the verses cited from the last chapter of Luke's Gospel. There is first the apostolic commission to preach repentance and remission of sins in the name of Jesus among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem; and a virtual injunction laid on the disciples to be faithful witnesses to all things they had seen and heard in their Lord's company, and especially to His resurrection from the dead. Then there is the renewal of this promise, here called the "promise of my Father." Then, finally, there is the direction to wait for the promised blessing in the holy city: "But tarry ye at Jerusalem until ye be clothed with power from on high." All these sayings bear internal evidence of being last words, from their fitness to the situation. It was natural and needful that Jesus should thus speak to His chosen agents at the hour of His final departure, giving them instructions for their guidance in their future apostolic labors, and in the short interval that was to elapse before those labors began. Even the business-like brevity and matter-of-fact tone of these last words betray the occasion on which they were uttered. On first thoughts, we should perhaps have expected a more pathetic style of address in connection with a farewell meeting; but, on reflection, we perceive that every thing savoring of sentimentality would have been beneath the dignity of the situation. In the farewell address before the passion, pathos was in place; but in the farewell words before the ascension, it would have been misplaced. In the former case, Jesus was a parent speaking His last words of counsel and comfort to His sorrowing children; in the latter, He

was “as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch;” and His manner of speech was adapted to the character He sustained. And yet the tone adopted by Jesus in His last interview with the eleven was not purely magisterial. The Friend was not altogether lost in the Master. He had kind words as well as commands for His servants. What could be kinder and more encouraging than that word: “And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world “? And is there not an accent of friendship in that utterance, in which Jesus, now about to ascend to glory, seems by anticipation to resume the robe of divine majesty, which He laid aside when He became man: “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth”? Why does He say that now? Not for the purpose of self- exaltation; not to put a distance between Himself and His quondam companions, and, as it were, degrade them from the position of friends to that of mere servants. No; but to cheer them on their way through the world as the messengers of the kingdom; to make them feel that the task assigned them was not, as it might well seem, an impossible one. “I have all power,” saith He in effect, “in heaven, and jurisdiction over all the earth: go ye therefore into all the world, making disciples of all the nations, nothing doubting that all spiritual influences and all providential agencies will be made subservient to the great errand on which I send you.”

Jesus had kind actions as well as kind words for His friends at parting. There was indeed no farewell kiss, or shaking of hands, or other symbolic act in use among men who bid each other adieu; but the manner of the ascension was most gracious and benignant towards those whom the ascending One left behind. Jesus moved upwards as if lifted from the earth by some celestial attraction, with His face looking downwards upon His beloved companions, and with His hand stretched out in an attitude of benediction. Hence the eleven grieved not for their Lord’s disappearance. They marvelled indeed, and gazed eagerly and wonderingly towards the skies, as if trying to penetrate the cloud which received their Master’s person; but the parting left no sadness behind. They bowed their heads in worship towards the ascended Christ, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, as if they had gained, not lost a friend, and as if the ascension were not a sunset but a sunrise-as indeed it was, not for them alone, but for the whole world. Of that miraculous event, by which our High Priest passed within the veil into the celestial sanctuary, we may not speak. Like the transfiguration, it is a topic on which we know not what to say; an event not to be explained, but to be devoutly and joyfully believed, in company with the kindred truth declared by the two men in white apparel to the disciples, who said: “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing into heaven? This same Jesus, which was taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.” Wherefore we pass from the ascension to make some observations on the great commission given by the Lord to His apostles for the last time, just before He was taken up into glory. That commission was worthy of Him from whom it emanated, whether we regard Him as Son of God or as Son of man. “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation.” Surely this is the language of a Divine Being. What mere man ever entertained a plan of beneficence embracing the whole human race within its scope? and who but one possessing all power in heaven and on earth could dare to hope for success in so gigantic an undertaking? Then how full of grace and love the matter of the commission! The errand on which Jesus sends His apostles is to preach repentance and remission of sins in His name, and to make a peaceful conquest of the world to God by the word of reconciliation through His death. Such philanthropy approves itself to be at once divine and most intensely human. And mark, as specially characteristic of the gracious One, the direction, “beginning at Jerusalem.” The

words indicate a plan of operations adapted at once to the circumstances of the world, and to the capacities and idiosyncrasies of the agents; but they do more. They open a window into the heart of Jesus, and show Him to be the same who prayed on the cross: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” Why begin at Jerusalem? Because “Jerusalem sinners” most need to repent and to be forgiven; and because Jesus would show forth in them at the outset the full extent of His long-suffering, for a pattern to them who should afterwards believe, in Samaria, Antioch, and the uttermost parts of the earth.

It was in every way a commission worthy of Jesus, as the Son of God and Saviour of sinners, to give. But what a commission for poor Galilean fishermen to receive! what a burden of responsibility to lay upon the shoulders of any poor mortal! Who is sufficient for these things? Jesus knew the insufficiency of His instruments. Therefore, having invested them with official authority, He proceeded to speak of an investment with another kind of power, without which the official must needs be utterly ineffectual. “And, behold,” He said, “I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye at Jerusalem till ye be clothed with power from on high.”

‘‘Power from on high :” the expression has a mystical sound, and its sense seems difficult to define; yet the general meaning is surely plain enough. The thing signified is not altogether or chiefly a power to work miracles, but just what Jesus had spoken of at such length in his farewell address before His death. “Power from on high “means: All that the apostles were to gain from the mission of the Comforter-enlightenment of mind, enlargement of heart, sanctification of their faculties, and transformation of their characters, so as to make them whetted swords and polished shafts for subduing the world unto the truth; these, or the effect of these combined, constituted the power for which Jesus directed the eleven to wait. The power, therefore, was a spiritual power, not a magical; an inspiration, not a possession; a power which was not to act as a blind fanatical force, but to manifest itself as a spirit of love and of a sound mind. After the power descended, the apostles were to be not less rational, but more; not mad, but sober-minded; not excited rhapsodists, but calm, clear, dignified expositors of divine truth, such as they appear in Luke’s history of their ministry. In a word, they were to be less like their past selves and more like their Master: no longer ignorant, childish, weak, carnal, but initiated into the mysteries of the kingdom, and habitually under the guidance of the Spirit of grace and holiness.

Such being the power promised, it was evidently indispensable to success. Vain were official titles-apostles, evangelists, pastors, teachers, rulers; vain clerical robes, without this garment of divine power to clothe the souls of the eleven. Vain then, and equally vain now. The world is to be evangelized, not by men invested with ecclesiastical dignities and with parti-colored garments, but by men who have experienced the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and who are visibly endued with the divine power of wisdom, and love, and zeal. As the promised power was indispensable, so it was in its nature a thing simply to be waited for. The disciples were directed to tarry till it came. They were neither to attempt to do without it, nor were they to try to get it up. And they were wise enough to follow their instructions. They fully understood that the power was needful, and that it could not be got up, but must come down. All are not equally wise. Many virtually assume that the power Christ spake of can be dispensed with, and that in fact it is not a reality, but a chimera. Others, more devout, believe in the power, but not in man’s impotence to invest himself with it. They try to get the power up by working themselves and others into a frenzy of excitement. Failure sooner or later convinces both parties of their mistake, showing the one that to produce spiritual

results something more than eloquence, intellect, money, and organization are required; and showing the other that true spiritual power cannot be produced, like electric sparks, by the friction of excitement, but must come sovereignly and graciously down from on high.

02.31. Waiting

Waiting

Acts 1:12-14

After that the Lord was parted from them, and carried up into heaven, the eleven returned to Jerusalem, and did as they had been commanded. They assembled together in an upper room in the city, and, in company with the believing women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and His kinsmen and other brethren, amounting in all to one hundred and twenty, waited for Power and for Light as men who wait for the dawn; or as men who have come to see a panorama wait for the lifting of the curtain that hides from view scenes which their eyes have not seen, nor their ears heard of, nor hath it entered into their hearts to conceive. These verses from the first chapter of the “Acts” show us the disciples and the rest in the act of so waiting.

How solemn is the situation of these men at this crisis in their history! They are about to undergo a spiritual transformation; to pass, so to speak, from the chrysalis to the winged state. They are on the eve of the great illumination promised by Jesus before His death. The Spirit of Truth is about to come and lead them into all Christian truth. The day-star is about to arise in their hearts, after the dreary, pitchy night of mental perplexity and despairing sorrow through which they have recently passed. They are about to be endowed with power of utterance and of character proportional to their enlarged comprehension of the words and work of Christ, so that men hearing them shall be amazed, and say one to another: “Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And now hear we every man in our own tongue wherein we were born the wonderful works of God.” With a dim presentiment of what is coming, with hearts which throb and swell under the excitement of expectation, and heaving with wondering thoughts of the great things about to be revealed, they sit there in that upper room for ten long days, and wait for the promise of the rather. Verily it is an impressive, a sublime scene. But how do they wait? Do they sit still and silent, Quaker fashion, all that time expecting the descent of the Power? No; the meeting in the upper room was not a Quaker meeting. They prayed, they even transacted business; for in those days Peter stood up and proposed the election of a new apostle in the room of Judas, gone to his own place. Nor was their meeting a dull one, as those may imagine who have never passed through any great spiritual crisis, and to whom waiting on God is a synonym for listless indolence. The hundred and twenty believers did not, we may be sure, suffer from ennui. Prayers and supplications alone filled up many blessed hours. For to men in the situation of the disciples prayer is not the dull “devotional” form with which we in these degenerate days are too familiar. It is rather a wrestling with God, during which hours passed unobserved, and the day breaks before one is aware. “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication.” They prayed without fainting, without wearying, with one heart and mind.

Besides praying, the waiting disciples doubtless spent part of their time in reading the Scriptures. This is not stated; but it may be assumed as a matter of course, and it may also be inferred from the manner in which Peter handled Old Testament texts in his address to the people on the day of

Pentecost. That Pentecostal sermon bears marks of previous preparation. It was in one sense an extempore effusion, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, but in another it was the fruit of careful study. Peter and his brethren had, without doubt, reperused all those passages which Jesus had expounded on the evening of the day on which He rose from the dead, and among them that psalm of David, whose words the apostle quoted in his first gospel sermon, in support of the doctrine of Christ's resurrection. We may find evidence of the minute, careful attention bestowed on that and other Messianic portions of Scripture in the exactness with which the quotation is given. The four verses of the psalm stand word for word in Peter's discourse as they do in the original text-a fact all the more remarkable that New Testament speakers and writers do not, as a rule, slavishly adhere to the ipsissima verba in their Old Testament citations, but quote texts somewhat freely. The spiritual exercises of those ten days would be further diversified by religious conversation. The reading of Scripture would naturally give rise to comments and queries. The brethren who had been privileged to hear Jesus expound the things which were written in the law, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning Himself, on the night of His resurrection-day, would not fail to give their fellow-believers the benefit of instructions through which their own understandings had been opened. Peter, who was so prompt to propose the election of a new witness to the resurrection of Jesus, would be not less prompt to tell the company in the upper room what the risen Jesus had said about these Old Testament texts. He would freely speak to them of the meaning Jesus taught him to find in the sixteenth Psalm just as he took the liberty of doing afterwards in addressing the multitude in the streets of Jerusalem. When that psalm had been read, he would say: "Men and brethren, thus and thus did the Lord Jesus interpret these words ;" just as, when the 109th Psalm had been read, he stood up and said: "Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas: for it is written, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein; and his bishopric let another take. Wherefore" let us choose another to fill his place.

Thus did the brethren occupy themselves during these ten days. They prayed, they read the Scriptures, they conferred together on what they read and on what they expected to see. So they continued waiting with one accord in one place till the day of Pentecost was fully come, when suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, filling all the house where they were sitting; and there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. Then the promise was fulfilled, the Power had come down from on high, in a manner illustrating the words of the prophet: "Since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside Thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him." The events of Pentecost were the answer to the prayers offered up during those ten days, which we may call the incubation period of the Christian Church. And that the lesson of encouragement to be learned from this fact may not be lost, it may be well to remember that the prayers of those assembled in the upper room were not essentially different from the prayers of saints at any other period in the Church's history. They had reference to much the same objects. The eleven and the others prayed for the promised Power, for additional light on the meaning of Scripture, for the coming of the divine kingdom on earth. And while they prayed for these things, we believe, with peculiar fervor, they did not pray for them with extraordinary intelligence. Of them, perhaps more emphatically than of most, it might be said that they knew not what to pray for as they ought. They had very indistinct ideas, we believe, of the "power," of its

nature, and of the effects it was to produce. That they had crude, and even erroneous ideas of the “kingdom,” we know; for it is recorded that on the very day of His ascension they asked Jesus the question, “Dost Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” In this brief question three gross misconceptions are contained. It is assumed that Christ was to reign personally on the earth, a great king, like David. The disciples had no idea whatever of an ascension into heaven. Then the kingdom they expect is merely a national Jewish one. “Dost Thou,” they ask, “restore the kingdom to Israel?” Finally, the kingdom looked for by them is political, not spiritual: it is not a new creation, but a kingdom of earth restored from a present prostrate condition to former power and splendor. The notions of the eleven concerning the kingdom continued to be much the same to the day of Pentecost as they had been on the day of the ascension. It is true that Jesus had, in His reply to their question, made a statement which, if rightly understood, was fitted to correct their misconceptions. Formally a declinature to give information on the subject about which the disciples were curious, that reply afforded a sufficiently clear and full explanation of the real state of the case. When He spoke of the power which they should receive, Jesus not obscurely hinted that the work of inaugurating the kingdom was to be done by the apostles as His commissioners, not by Himself in person. And the same thing is implied in the words, “Ye shall be witnesses unto me,” for witnesses would be needed only for one who was himself unseen. By connecting the “power” with the descent of the Holy Ghost, Jesus in effect corrected the third mistake of the eleven concerning the kingdom-the notion, viz., that it was to be of a political nature. Power arising out of a baptism of the Spirit is moral, not political, in its character; and a kingdom founded through such power is not a kingdom of this world, but one whose subjects and citizens consist of men believing the truth: “of the truth,” as Jesus Himself put it in speaking of His kingdom before Pilate. And, in the last place, the words, “Witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth,” were certainly fitted to banish from the minds of the eleven the dream of a merely national Jewish kingdom. If it was but the kingdom of Israel that was to be restored, to what purpose bear witness to Jesus to the world’s end? Such witness-bearing speaks to a kingdom of a universal nature, embracing people of every tongue and kindred under heaven. From the reply of their Lord the disciples might thus have gathered the true idea of the kingdom, as one founded on faith in Christ; presided over by a king, no longer present bodily, but omnipresent spiritually; not limited to one country, but embracing all who were of the truth in all parts of the world. This great idea, however, they did not take out of the words on which we have been commenting. They were to learn the nature of the kingdom, not from the teaching of Jesus, but from the events of providence. The panorama of the kingdom of God was to be hid from their eyes till the curtain was lifted in three distinct historical movements-the ascension, the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost on the multitude who had come to keep the feast, and the conversion of Samaritans and the Gentiles. The first of these movements had already taken place when the disciples assembled themselves together in the upper room to wait for the promise of the Father. Jesus had ascended, so that they now knew that the seat of empire, the capital of the kingdom, was to be in heaven, not in Jerusalem. This was a valuable piece of knowledge, but it was not all that was needed. Only a small part of the panorama was yet visible to the spectators, and they were still in the dark as to the nature and extent of the coming kingdom. They expected to see a panorama of a new Palestine, not of a new heaven and a new earth wherein should dwell righteousness; and they doubtless continued to cherish this expectation till the curtain was uplifted, and facts showed what they had unwittingly been praying for, when they at length learned

that the Hearer of prayer not only does for His people what they ask, but far above what they even think. This waiting scene, looked at in relation to the subsequent events recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, not to say the whole history of the Church, suggests another observation. We may learn therefrom what significance may lie in things apparently very insignificant. We had occasion to make this remark in connection with the first meeting of Jesus with five of those who afterwards became members of the chosen band of twelve, and we think it seasonable to repeat it here now. To the contemporary Jewish world that meeting in the upper room, if they knew of its existence, would appear a very contemptible matter, yet it was the only thing of perennial interest in Judea at the time. The hope of Israel, yea, of the world, lay in that small congregation. For small as it was, God was with those who formed it. Infidels who believe not in supernatural influence smile at such words; but even they must acknowledge that some source of power was centred in that little community, for they multiplied with a rapidity surpassing that of the Israelites in Egypt. Those who reject divine influence impose on themselves the burden of a very laborious explanation of the fact. For those who believe in that influence it is enough to say the little flock grew great, not by might, nor by power of this world, but by God's Spirit. It was their Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom. And now, in taking leave of those men with whom we have so long held goodly fellowship, it may be well here to indicate in a sentence, by way of résumé, the sum of the teaching they had received from their Master. By such a summary, indeed, it is impossible to convey an adequate idea of the training for their future career which they had enjoyed, seeing that by far the most important part of that training consisted in the simple fact of being for years with such an one as Jesus. Yet it may be well to let our readers see at a glance that, unsystematic and occasional as was the instruction communicated by Jesus to His disciples, therein differing utterly from the teaching given in theological schools, yet in the course of the time during which He and they were together lessons of priceless worth were given by the Divine Master to His pupils on not a few subjects of cardinal importance. To enumerate the topics, as far as possible in the order in which they have been considered in this work, Jesus gave His disciples lessons on the nature of the divine kingdom; on prayer; on religious liberty, or the nature of true holiness; on His own Person and claims; on the doctrine of the cross and the import of His death; on humility and kindred virtues, or on the right Christian temper required of disciples both in their private life and in their ecclesiastical life; on the doctrine of self-sacrifice; on the leaven of Pharisaism and Sadduceeism, and the woes it was to bring on the Jewish nation; on the mission of the Comforter, to convince the world and to enlighten themselves. The teaching conveyed, assuming that we have even an approximately correct account of it in the Gospels, was fitted to make the disciples what they were required to be as the apostles of a spiritual and universal religion: enlightened in mind, endowed with a charity wide enough to embrace all mankind, having their conscience tremulously sensitive to all claims of duty, yet delivered from all superstitious scruples, emancipated from the fetters of custom, tradition, and the commandments of men, and possessing tempers purged from pride, self-will, impatience, angry passions, vindictiveness, and implacability. That they were slow to learn, and even when their Master left them were far from perfect, we have frankly admitted; still they were men of such excellent moral stuff, that it might be confidently anticipated that having been so long with Jesus they would prove themselves exceptionally good and noble men when they came before the world as leaders in a great movement, called to act on their own responsibility. Not, certainly, as we believe, without the aid of the promised power from on high, not without the enlightening, sanctifying influence of the Paraclete; yet even those who have no

faith in supernatural influence must admit on purely psychological grounds, that men who had received such an exceptional training were likely to acquit themselves wisely, bravely, heroically as public characters. According to the actual narrative in the Acts of the Apostles, they did so acquit themselves. According to a well-known school of critics, they acquitted themselves very poorly indeed-in a manner utterly unworthy of their great Master. Which view is the more credible, that of the evangelist Luke, or that of Dr. Baur?

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