

POPULAR EXPOSITOR

OF

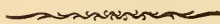
THE GOSPELS AND ACTS,

FOR

PULPIT, SUNDAY-SCHOOL, AND FAMILY.

LUKE.

ALFRED NEVIN, L. B., D. D.



ZIEGLER & McCURDY,
PHILADELPHIA, PA. : CINCINNATI, O. ; ST. LOUIS, MO. ;
SPRINGFIELD, MASS.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1872, by

ZIEGLER & McCURDY,

In the Office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington, D. C.

SYNOPSIS OF THE LIFE OF JESUS.

I.

HIS BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD.

TIME: About thirteen and a half years.

An angel appears to Mary, Luke i. 26-38; also to Joseph, Matt. i. 18-25; Jesus born at Bethlehem, Luke ii. 1-7; his circumcision and presentation in the temple, Luke ii. 21-38; the visit of the Magi, Matt. ii. 1-12; flight into Egypt, Matt. ii. 13-23; at twelve years of age Jesus goes to the Passover, Luke ii. 41-52; his genealogy on the side of Joseph, Matt. i. 1-17; on that of His mother, Luke iii. 22-38.

II.

ANNOUNCEMENT AND INTRODUCTION OF OUR LORD'S PUBLIC MINISTRY.

TIME: About one year.

Jesus comes to John to be baptized, Matt. iii. 13-17; Mark i. 9-11; Luke iii. 21-23; is tempted of the devil, Matt. iv. 1-11; Mark i. 12, 13; Luke iv. 1-13; is testified to by John, John i. 19-34; gains disciples, John i. 35-51; attends a marriage at Cana, where He performs His first miracle, John ii. 1-11; goes down to Capernaum, John ii. 12.

III.

OUR LORD'S FIRST PASSOVER, AND THE EVENTS OF HIS MINISTRY UNTIL THE SECOND.

TIME: One year.

Jesus attends the Passover, and drives the traders out of the temple, John ii. 13-25; discourses with Nicodemus, John iii. 1-21; remains in Judea and baptizes, John iii. 22-24; is further testified to by John the Baptist, John iii. 25-36; departs into Galilee, Matt. iv. 12; Mark i. 14; Luke iv. 14; John iv. 1-3; discourses with the woman of Samaria, John iv. 4-42; teaches in Galilee, Matt. iv. 17; Mark i. 14, 15; Luke iv. 14, 15; John iv. 43-45; heals the son of a nobleman at Cana, John iv. 46-54; is rejected by his fellow-townsmen of Nazareth, Luke iv. 16-29; takes up His abode at Capernaum, Matt. iv. 13-16; Luke iv. 30, 31; calls Peter, Andrew, James and John, at the time of the miraculous draught of fishes, Matt. iv. 18-22; Mark i. 16-20; Luke v. 1-11; heals a demoniac in the synagogue at Capernaum, Mark i. 21-28; Luke iv. 31-37; heals Peter's wife's mother and many others, Matt. viii. 14-17; Mark i. 29-34; Luke iv. 38-41; goes with His disciples throughout Galilee, Matt. iv. 23-25; Mark i. 35-39; Luke iv. 42-44; heals a leper, Matt. viii. 2-4; Mark i. 40-45; Luke v. 12-16; returns to Capernaum, where He heals a paralytic, Matt. ix. 2-8; Mark ii. 1-12; Luke v. 17-26; calls Matthew, Matt. ix. 9; Mark ii. 13, 14; Luke v. 27, 28.

IV.

FROM OUR LORD'S SECOND PASSOVER UNTIL THE THIRD.

TIME: *One year.*

Jesus goes up to Jerusalem to the feast of the passover, John v. 1; heals an infirm man at the pool of Bethesda, John v. 2-9; his discourse with the Jews consequent thereon, John v. 10-47; on His way back to Galilee, His disciples pluck ears of grain on the Sabbath, for which act He justifies them against the charge of the Pharisees, Matt. xii. 1-8; Mark ii. 23-28; Luke vi. 1-5; heals a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath, Matt. xii. 9-14; Mark iii. 1-6; Luke vi. 6-11; withdraws to the sea of Tiberias, whither He is followed by multitudes, Matt. xii. 15-21; Mark iii. 7-12; ascends a mountain and spends the whole night in prayer, Luke vi. 12; chooses and ordains the Twelve, Matt. x. 2-4; Mark iii. 13-19; Luke vi. 13-19; delivers the Sermon on the Mount, Matt. ch. v.-vii.; Luke vi. 20-49; heals the centurion's servant at Capernaum, Matt. viii. 5-13; Luke vi. 1-10; raises the widow's son at Nain, Luke vii. 11-17; receives a message from John the Baptist, Matt. xi. 2-6; Luke vii. 18-23; discourses with the multitude respecting John, Matt. xi. 7-19; Luke vii. 24-35; upbraids Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum, Matt. xi. 20-30; sits at meat with a Pharisee, when His feet are anointed by a woman who had been a sinner, Luke vii. 36-50; makes with the Twelve a second circuit in Galilee, Luke viii. 1-3; heals a demoniac, at which the scribes and Pharisees blaspheme, Matt. xii. 22-37; Mark iii. 19-30; Luke xi. 14, 15, 17-23; refuses a sign to the scribes and Pharisees, and reproves them for their unbelief, Matt. xii. 38-45; Luke xi. 16, 24-30; is sought by His mother and brethren, Matt. xii. 46-50; Mark iii. 31-35; Luke viii. 19-21; dines with a Pharisee, Luke xi. 37; and reproves the scribes and Pharisees for their hypocrisy, Luke xi. 38-54; warns His disciples and the multitude against the leaven of the Pharisees, Luke xii. 1-12; refuses to act as umpire in secular disputes, Luke xii. 13-15; pronounces the parable of the rich fool, Luke xii. 16-21; exhorts to reliance upon God, and to watchfulness, Luke xii. 22-53; reproves the people for their unbelief, Luke xii. 54-59; pronounces the parable of the barren fig tree, Luke xiii. 6-9; and of the sower, Matt. xiii. 1-23; Mark iv. 1-25; Luke viii. 4-18; and of the tares, Matt. xiii. 24-30; and other parables, Matt. xiii. 31-53; Mark iv. 26-34; crosses the lake and stills the tempest, Matt. viii. 18-27; Mark iv. 35-41; Luke viii. 22-25, ix. 57-61; heals the two demoniacs of Gadara, Matt. viii. 28-34, ix. 1; Mark v. 1-21; Luke viii. 26-40; is entertained by Levi, Matt. ix. 10-17; Mark ii. 15-22; Luke v. 29-39; raises Jairus' daughter and heals the woman with a bloody flux, Matt. ix. 18-26; Mark v. 22-43; Luke viii. 41-56; heals two blind men and casts out a dumb spirit, Matt. ix. 27-34; is again rejected at Nazareth, Matt. xiii. 54-58; Mark vi. 1-6; makes a third circuit in Galilee and commissions and sends forth the Twelve, Matt. ix. 35-38, x. 1, 5-42, xi. 1; Mark vi. 6-13; Luke ix. 1-6; retires with the Twelve across the lake, and feeds five thousand, Matt. xiv. 13-21; Mark vi. 30-44; Luke ix. 10-17; John vi. 1-14; walks upon the water, Matt. xiv. 22-36; Mark vi. 45-56; John vi. 15-21; discourses with the multitude on the true bread of life, John vi. 22-71, vii. 1.

V.

FROM OUR LORD'S THIRD PASSOVER UNTIL HIS FINAL DEPARTURE FROM GALILEE AT THE FESTIVAL OF TABERNACLES.

TIME: *Six Months.*

Jesus justifies His disciples for eating with unwashed hands, Matt. xv. 1-20; Mark vii. 1-23; goes into the coast of Tyre and Sidon, where He heals the daughter of the Syro-Phœnician woman, Matt. xv. 21-28; Mark vii. 24-30; returns to Decapolis and heals

a deaf and dumb man, and feeds four thousand, Matt. xv. 29-38; Mark vii. 31-37, viii. 1-9; refuses a sign to the Pharisees and Sadducees, Matt. xv. 39, xvi. 1-4; Mark viii. 10-12; cautions the disciples against the leaven of the Pharisees, Matt. xvi. 4-12; Mark viii. 13-21; heals a blind man at Bethsaida, Mark viii. 22-26; departs to the region of Cesarea Philippi, and receives from Peter and the disciples the profession of their faith, Matt. xvi. 13-20; Mark viii. 27-30; Luke ix. 18-21; foretells His own death and resurrection, Matt. xvi. 21-28; Mark viii. 31-38, ix. 1; Luke ix. 22-27; is transfigured, Matt. xvii. 1-13; Mark ix. 2-13; Luke ix. 28-36; heals a demoniac whom His disciples could not cure, Matt. xvii. 14-21; Mark ix. 14-29; Luke ix. 37-43; again foretells His own death and resurrection, Matt. xvii. 22, 23; Mark ix. 30-32; Luke ix. 43-45; returns to Capernaum and miraculously provides tribute-money, Matt. xvii. 24-27; Mark ix. 33; exhorts His disciples to humility and brotherly love, Matt. xviii. 1-35; Mark ix. 33-50; Luke ix. 46-50; instructs and sends forth the Seventy, Luke x. 1-16; takes His final departure from Galilee and goes up to the feast of tabernacles, John vii. 2-10; Luke ix. 51-56; passes through Samaria where he cleanses ten lepers, Luke xvii. 11-19.

VI.

FEAST OF TABERNACLES AND OUR LORD'S SUBSEQUENT ACTS UNTIL
HIS ARRIVAL AT BETHANY, SIX DAYS BEFORE THE
FOURTH PASSOVER.

TIME: *Six months wanting six days.*

Jesus attends the feast of tabernacles, and teaches publicly, John vii. 11-53, viii. 1; takes occasion from their charge against the woman taken in adultery, to rebuke the Pharisees, John viii. 2-11; reproves in a further discourse the Jews, who in consequence attempt to stone Him, John viii. 12-59; pronounces the parable of the good Samaritan, Luke x. 25-37; visits Martha and Mary at Bethany, Luke x. 38-42; teaches His disciples again how to pray, Luke xi. 1-13; receives the Seventy on their return and rejoices in their spiritual knowledge, Luke x. 17-24; heals at Jerusalem on the Sabbath a man who was born blind, at which the Pharisees are highly displeased, John ix. 1-41, x. 1-21; is present in Jerusalem at the feast of dedication, after which he retires beyond Jordan, John x. 22-42; raises Lazarus from the dead at Bethany, John xi. 1-46; again retires from Jerusalem in consequence of the murderous designs of the chief priests and Pharisees, John xi. 47-54; is followed by multitudes beyond Jordan, and heals an infirm woman on the Sabbath, Matt. xix. 1, 2; Mark x. 1; Luke xiii. 10-21; teaches on His way to Jerusalem, Luke xiii. 22-35; dines with a chief Pharisee on the Sabbath, Luke xiv. 1-24; shows what is required of true disciples, Luke xiv. 25-35; pronounces the parables of the lost sheep, the prodigal son, the unjust steward, and the rich man and Lazarus, Luke xv. 1-32, xvi. 1-31; inculcates forbearance and faith, Luke xvii. 1-10; predicts the suddenness of His final coming, Luke xvii. 20-37; pronounces the parables of the importunate widow, and the Pharisee and publican, Luke xviii. 1-14; gives precepts respecting divorce, Matt. xix. 3-12; Mark x. 2-12; receives and blesses little children, Matt. xix. 13-15; Mark x. 13-16; Luke xviii. 15-17; answers the inquiry of the rich young man, and pronounces the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, Matt. xix. 16-30, xx. 1-16; Mark x. 17-31; Luke xviii. 18-30; foretells a third time His death and resurrection, Matt. xx. 17-19; Mark x. 32-34; Luke xviii. 31-34; replies to the ambitious request of James and John, Matt. xx. 20-28; Mark x. 35-45; heals two blind men near Jericho, Matt. xx. 39-44; Mark x. 46-52; Luke xviii. 35-43, xix. 1; visits Zaccheus and utters the parable of the ten pounds, Luke xix. 2-28; arrives at Bethany six days before the passover, John xi. 55-57, xii. 1, 9-11.

VII.

OUR LORD'S PUBLIC ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM, AND THE SUBSEQUENT
TRANSACTIONS BEFORE THE FOURTH PASSOVER.

TIME: *Four days.*

Jesus makes His public entry into Jerusalem, Matt. xxi. 1-11, 14-17; Mark xi. 1-11; Luke xix. 29-44; John xii. 12-19; curses the barren fig tree and cleanses a second time the temple, Matt. xxi. 12, 13, 18, 19; Mark xi. 12-19; Luke xix. 45-48; His authority questioned by the chief priests, on which He pronounces the parable of the two sons, Matt. xxi. 23-32; Mark xi. 27-33; Luke xx. 1-8; and of the wicked husbandmen, Matt. xxi. 33-46; Mark xii. 1-12; Luke xx. 9-19; and of the marriage of the king's son, Matt. xxii. 1-14; replies to the question of the lawfulness of giving tribute to Cæsar, Matt. xxii. 15-22; Mark xii. 13-17; Luke xx. 20-26; teaches the Sadducees the doctrine of the resurrection, Matt. xxii. 23-33; Mark xii. 18-27; Luke xx. 27-40; is questioned by a lawyer as to what is the great commandment of the law, Matt. xxii. 34-40; Mark xii. 28, 34; proposes a question to the Pharisees respecting the relation of Christ to David, Matt. xxii. 41-46; Mark xii. 35-37; Luke xx. 41-44; pronounces woes upon the Pharisees, and laments over Jerusalem, Matt. xxiii. 1-39; Mark xii. 38-40; Luke xx. 45-47; commends the widow who cast two mites into the treasury, Mark xii. 41-44; Luke xxi. 1-4; foretells the destruction of the temple, Matt. xxiv. 1-42; Mark xiii. 1-37; Luke xxi. 5-36; exhorts to watchfulness in reference to His final coming, Matt. xxiv. 43-51; pronounces the parables of the ten virgins and five talents, Matt. xxv. 1-30; describes the scenes of the last judgment, Matt. xxv. 13-46; sups at Bethany, Matt. xxvi. 1-16; Mark xiv. 1-9; Luke xxii. 1, 2; John xii. 2-8; is betrayed by Judas Iscariot, Matt. xxvi. 14-16; Mark xiv. 10, 11; Luke xxi. 3-6; prepares to eat the passover, Matt. xxvi. 17-19; Mark xiv. 12-16; Luke xxii. 7-13.

VIII.

FOURTH PASSOVER; OUR LORD'S PASSION AND THE ACCOMPANYING
CIRCUMSTANCES UNTIL THE END OF THE JEWISH SABBATH.

TIME: *Two days.*

Jesus eats the passover with His disciples, Matt. xxvi. 20; Mark xiv. 17; Luke xxii. 14-18; washes their feet, John xiii. 1-20; points out Judas as the traitor, Matt. xxvi. 21-35; Mark xiv. 18-21; Luke xxii. 21-23; John xiii. 21-35; foretells Peter's fall, Matt. xxvi. 31-35; Mark xiv. 27-31; Luke xxii. 31-38; John xiii. 36-38; institutes the Lord's Supper, Matt. xxvi. 26-29; Mark xiv. 22-25; Luke xxii. 19, 20; 1 Cor. xi. 23-25; comforts His disciples, John xiv. 1-31; declares Himself to be the true Vine, John xv. 1-27; promises the Comforter, John xvi. 1-33; prays for His disciples and other believers, John xvii. 1-26; goes forth to Gethsemane where He is in a dreadful agony; Matt. xxvi. 30, 36-46; Mark xiv. 26, 32-42; Luke xxii. 39-46; John xviii. 1; is betrayed and made prisoner, Matt. xxvi. 47-56; Mark xiv. 43-52; Luke xxii. 47-53; John xviii. 2-12; is brought before Caiaphas and denied by Peter, Matt. xxvi. 57, 58, 69-75; Mark xiv. 53, 54, 66-72; Luke xxii. 54-62; John xviii. 13-18, 25-27; is brought before the sanhedrim and condemned and mocked, Matt. xxvi. 59-68; Mark xiv. 55-65; Luke xxii. 63-71; John xviii. 19-24; is led away to Pilate, Matt. xxvii. 1, 2, 11-14; Mark xv. 1-5; Luke xxiii. 1-5; John xviii. 28-38; is sent to Herod, Luke xxiii. 6-12; is delivered by Pilate to be crucified, Matt. xxvii. 26-30; Mark xv. 15-19; John xix. 1-3; is led away to Calvary, Matt. xxvii. 31-34; Mark xv. 20-23; Luke xxiii. 26-33; John xix. 16, 17; is crucified, Matt. xxvii. 35-38; Mark xv. 24-28; Luke xxiii. 33-38; John xix. 18-24; is mocked on the cross, Matt. xxvii. 39-44; Mark xv. 29-32; Luke xxiii.

35-43; expires on the cross, Matt. xxvii. 45-50; Mark xv. 33-37; Luke xxiii. 44-46; is taken down from the cross and buried, Matt. xxvii. 57-61; Mark xv. 42-47; Luke xxiii. 50-56; John xix. 31-42.

IX.

OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION, SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES AND ASCENSION.

TIME: *Forty days.*

The women visit the sepulchre, Matt. xxviii. 1; Mark xvi. 2-4; Luke xxiv. 1-3; John xx. 1, 2; vision of angels in the sepulchre, Matt. xxviii. 5-7; Mark xvi. 5-7; Luke xxiv. 4-8; Jesus meets the women on their way back to the city, Matt. xxviii. 8-10; Mark xvi. 8; Peter and John run to the sepulchre, Luke xxiv. 12; John xx. 3-10; Jesus shows Himself to Mary Magdalene at the sepulchre, Mark xvi. 9-11; John xx. 11-18; the report of the watch, Matt. xxviii. 11-15; Jesus is seen by Peter, 1 Cor. xv. 5; and by the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, Mark xvi. 12, 13; Luke xxiv. 13-35; shows himself the same evening to the disciples, Thomas being absent, Mark xvi. 14-18; Luke xxiv. 36-40; John xx. 19-23; 1 Cor. xv. 5; and again one week after, Thomas being present, John xx. 24-29; shows Himself to seven of them at the Sea of Tiberias, John xxi. 1-24; meets above 500 brethren on a mountain in Galilee, Matt. xxviii. 16, 20; 1 Cor. xv. 6; is seen of James, and then of all the Apostles, 1 Cor. xv. 7; Acts i. 3-8; ascends to heaven, Mark xvi. 19, 20; Luke xxiv. 50-53; Acts i. 9-12.

PREFACE

TO THE GOSPEL OF LUKE.

It is not easy to determine *when* or *where* this Gospel was written. There is a tradition that it was published in Achaia, whither it had been transmitted from Cæsarea. All that can satisfactorily be ascertained as to its date is, that it was written shortly before the death of Paul, A. D. 65.

The Evangelist, by whom it was written, also wrote the *Acts of the Apostles*. Both books are properly successive parts of one Christian history. Considering that we owe to the pen of Luke so large a portion of the New Testament, the source of our hope and instruction in all truth, our information concerning him, apart from the uncertain traditions preserved by the early Christian writers, is exceedingly small. His Greek name, *Loukas*, is a familiar contraction of a fuller form, either Lucilius or Lucanus. He is recorded by the best ecclesiastical historians to have been a Syrian, born at Antioch, a city at the time of his birth the third among the most renowned of the civilized world, and afterward remarkable as the second center of Christian organization after Jerusalem, and the first locality to give the name to the new religion. (Acts xi. 26.) He has been supposed, and not without reason, to have been the brother "whose praise was in the gospel throughout all the churches," and of whom it is said (2 Cor. viii. 18) that he was sent to Corinth with Titus to make the collection there for the poor saints at Jerusalem. By some it has been maintained, with confidence, that the unnamed disciple from Emmaus (Luke xxiv. 18), to whom the risen Jesus appeared, was the modest Luke himself. There is reason to suppose that he was not a Jew, but a converted Gentile; and if this be so, unless we except the book of Job, he is the only Gentile who has been permitted to contribute a book to the Bible.

Luke was Paul's companion in his travels. This he indicates by the employment of the first person plural in his narrative. We trace their course together, from Alexandria Troas, through Samothrace, to Philippi; then back again to Troas, down the coast of Asia Minor to Tyre, Cæsarea, and Jerusalem. When Paul, appealing to Cæsar, departed to Rome, through voyage, shipwreck and journey, Luke was his companion. And when the Apostle, just before his martyrdom, writes from his Roman prison to Timothy—"only Luke is with me," is his touching testimony to our faithful Evangelist.

Luke was by profession a physician. Paul, in his Epistle to the Colossians (iv. 14), alludes to him as "the beloved physician." We recognize the physician by the minute accuracy with which he describes certain diseases. It would seem as if he had felt the necessity of transferring to his Master the very calling to which his own life had been hitherto devoted, while depicting to us, far oftener than the other Evangelists, the great Physician who came not only to "minister" (Matt. xx. 28), but "who went about doing good" (Acts x. 38), who felt compassion for all diseases, both of mind and body, and whose power was present to heal. (Luke v. 17.)

The literary character of Luke is evinced not only by his profession, but by his style of composition. He seems to have had more learning than any other of the Evangelists, and his language is more varied, copious and pure. His Greek education is apparent from the philological excellence of his writings, which present the purest Greek in the whole New Testament. On account of the simplicity of his manner, and his artlessness and power of fixing attention and exciting the affections, many have thought him, as a writer, capable of standing the competition with the most celebrated historians of Greece itself.

The Gospel of Luke has indubitable evidence of genuineness. It was certainly extant at an early period, and from the first received by the Church as of Divine authority. *Lardner* thinks that there are a few allusions to it, in some of the Apostolical fathers, especially in *Hermas* and *Polycarp*, and in *Justin Martyr* there are passages evidently taken from it, but the earliest author, who actually mentions Luke's Gospel, is *Irenæus*, and he cites so many peculiarities in it, all agreeing with the Gospel which we now have, that he alone is sufficient to prove its genuineness. His testimony, however, is supported by *Clement of Alexandria*, *Tertullian*, *Origen*, *Eusebius*, *Jerome*, *Chrysostom* and many others.

Luke's Gospel has the following, among other distinctive peculiarities: 1. While *Matthew* and *Mark* narrate with the authority of original witnesses their own collection of evangelical facts, and *John* furnishes his own individual reminiscences, *Luke*, as his preface shows, is the critical historian, who, having examined original witnesses and documents, discriminates, selects and arranges them in historic form. 2. Whilst *Matthew* relates his history according to *chronological order*, *Luke* relates his according to a *classification* of events—a fact which accounts for the diversity in the order of time noticeable in these two Evangelists. 3. *Luke's Gospel* has the predominant feature of *universality*; for whilst *Matthew* presents *Christ* to us as the Messiah of Israel, and *Mark* announces the Gospel of the Son of God, *Luke* represents the Son of man appearing indeed in Israel, but for the benefit of the whole race of man. 4. *Matthew* and *Mark* show us who *Jesus was*; *Luke* informs us *how he became what he was*, pointing us successively to the unborn (ii. 22), the infant (iii. 16), the child (ii. 27), the boy, (ii. 40), and the man (iii. 22). 5. This Gospel contains many things which are not found in the other Gospels, the principal among which are the following:

1. The vision of Zacharias, and conception of Elizabeth,	i. 5-25
2. The salutation of the Virgin Mary,	26-33
3. Mary's visit to Elizabeth,	39-56
4. The birth of John the Baptist, and hymn of Zacharias,	57-80
5. The decree of Cæsar Augustus,	ii. 1-3
6. The birth of Christ at Bethlehem,	4-7
7. The appearance of angels to the shepherds,	8-20
8. The circumcision of Christ,	21-
9. The presentation of Christ in the temple,	22- 4
10. The account of Simeon and Anna,	25-38
11. Christ found among the doctors,	41-52
12. Date of beginning of John's ministry,	iii. 1-2
13. Success of John's ministry,	10-15
14. Genealogy of Mary,	23-38
15. Christ preaching and rejected at Nazareth,	iv. 15-30
16. Particulars in the call of Simon, James, and John,	v. 1-10
17. Christ's discourse in the plain,	vi. 17-49
18. Raising of the widow's son at Nain,	vii. 11-17
19. Woman in Simon's house,	36-50
20. Women who ministered to Christ,	viii. 1- 3

21. James and John desiring fire to come down,	ix. 51-56
22. Mission of seventy disciples,	x. 1-16
23. Return of seventy disciples,	17-24
24. Parable of the Good Samaritan,	25-37
25. Christ in the house of Martha and Mary,	38-42
26. Parable of friend at midnight,	xi. 5- 8
27. Christ dining in a Pharisee's house,	37-54
28. Discourse to an innumerable multitude,	xii. 1-53
29. Murder of the Galileans,	xiii. 1- 5
30. Parable of the barren fig-tree,	6- 9
31. Case of the woman diseased eighteen years,	10-20
32. Question on the few that be saved,	22-30
33. Reply to the Pharisee's warning about Herod,	31-33
34. Case of a dropsical man,	xiv. 1- 6
35. Parable of the lowest room,	7-14
36. Parable of the great supper,	15-24
37. Difficulties of Christ's service,	25-35
38. Parables of the lost sheep and piece of money,	xv. 1-10
39. Parable of the prodigal son,	11-22
40. Parable of the unjust steward,	xvi. 1-18
41. Parable of the rich man and Lazarus,	19-31
42. Instruction to disciples,	xvii. 1-10
43. Healing of ten lepers,	12-19
44. Question and answer about coming of God's kingdom,	20-37
45. Parable of the importunate widow,	xviii. 1- 8
46. Parable of the Pharisee and Publican,	9-14
47. Calling of Zaccheus,	xix. 2-10
48. Parable of the pounds,	11-28
49. Christ weeping over Jerusalem,	41-44
50. Special warning to Peter,	xxii. 31-32
51. Direction to buy sword,	35-38
52. Appearance of an angel, and bloody sweat in garden,	43-44
53. Pilate sends Christ to Herod,	xxiii. 6-16
54. Women deplore Christ's suffering,	27-32
55. The penitent thief,	39-43
56. The appearance of Christ to the disciples going to Emmaus,	xxiv. 13-35
57. Circumstances attending Christ's appearance to the eleven,	37-49
58. Christ's departure in the act of blessing,	50-53

The Gospel of Luke has a complete beginning, middle and end. The beginning, i.-iv. 13. The middle, iv. 13-xxii. 1. The end, xxii. 1-xxiv. 53.

I. The *Beginning* embraces the prelude to the ministry. 1. The birth of the forerunner, and of the Messiah. The Messiah's childhood and growth. 2. The forerunner's announcement and ministry until his imprisonment. 3. The Messiah's baptism, genealogy and temptation.

II. The *Middle* embraces the Messiah's ministry. 1. His Galilean ministry (mainly) iv. 14-ix. 51. 2. His Perea ministry, ix. 51-xviii. 30. 3. His last journey to Jerusalem, and closing ministry there, xviii. 31-xxi. 38.

III. The *End* embraces the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension, xxii. 1-xxiv. 53.

CHAPTER I.

1 *The preface of Luke to his whole gospel.* 5 *The conception of John the Baptist,* 26 *and of Christ.* 39 *The prophecy of Elizabeth, and of Mary, concerning Christ.* 57 *The nativity and circumcision of John.* 67 *The prophecy of Zacharias, both of Christ,* 76 *and of John.*

FORASMUCH as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, 2. ^aEven as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the words: 3. ^bIt seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, ^cmost excellent Theophilus, 4. ^dThat thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.

^aHeb. ii. 3; 1 Peter v. 1; 2 Peter xi. 16; 1 John i. 1. ^bMark i. 1; John xv. 27. ^cActs xv. 19, 25, 28; 1 Cor. vii. 40. ^dActs xi. 4. ^eActs i. 1. ^fJohn xx. 31.

The phrase, "the Gospel according to Luke," here signifies the unwritten, oral, Christ-history possessed by the Church, as shaped and recorded by Luke. The ancient titles do not say the Gospel by Luke, or Matthew, for that would obscure the fact that the body of Gospel facts was accumulated before the Gospel books were written.

Luke dedicated his Gospel, as he did also the Acts of the Apostles, to *Theophilus* (verse 3). This name signifies a *lover of God*. Some take it not for a proper, but a common name, denoting every one that loves God. It is strongly probable, however, that it designated a particular person of rank and distinction, perhaps a governor. Some indications are given in the Gospel about him. He was not an inhabitant of Palestine, for the Evangelist minutely describes the position of places which to such an one would be well known. It is so with Capernaum (iv. 31), Nazareth (i. 26), Arimathea (xxiii. 51), the country of the Gadarenes (viii. 26), the distance of Mount Olivet and Emmaus from Jerusalem (xxiv. 13; Acts i. 12). By the same test he probably was not a Macedonian (Acts xvi. 12), nor an Athenian, nor a Cretan. (Acts xxvii. 8, 12.) The strong probability is, that he was a native of Italy, and perhaps an inhabitant of Rome. He had become a convert to Christianity. The words *most excellent*, ordinarily indicated respect for official dignity, but in this instance they expressed as well regard for elevated moral character. Theophilus, though a nobleman, had been *instructed* (verse 4, the same word in the Greek from which

catechumen and *catechize* are derived) in religion, by some of God's servants; probably orally, as this was then the principal means of disseminating truth, inasmuch as written books were then few and expensive, but Luke wished him to know the history of the Lord still more perfectly. Not for Theophilus alone, however, was this Gospel written; he was a representative man for every Christian reader. Neither the Gospel nor the Acts can be viewed as a private letter to him. In a similar way, Cicero addressed his treatises on Old Age and Friendship to Atticus; Horace addressed his Art of Poetry to the Pisos, and Plutarch addressed his treatise on Divine Delay to Cynius.

Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth, &c. Different persons in that age, some perhaps with good intent, others imprudently and inconsiderately, had undertaken to write histories of Jesus. But as these persons had not been directed by the Spirit of God, neither had witnessed the events they had related, but had written from "report," their accounts contained errors which required correction by a true narrative. Such disjointed and fragmentary accounts would not supply the wants of the Church, and especially of such persons as *Theophilus*, who, living, at a distance from the scene of the events, would be more likely to be imposed upon by fallacious or erroneous statements, or confused and perplexed by contradictions and inconsistencies, than others having better opportunities for arriving at the truth, by their intimacy with those who had themselves seen our Lord, or had become well acquainted with the facts of His history, from persons who had enjoyed that privilege. It therefore *seemed good* to Luke to furnish a more extended, complete and accurate narrative, which he felt himself able to do, not only because *he had perfect understanding of all things from the very first*, or from the earliest part of our Saviour's life, partly from his familiarity with Paul, and partly from his conversation with the other Apostles, who were eye and ear witnesses of the things he was about to relate—but also, and mainly, because he was

under the directing influence of the Holy Spirit. Without this inspiration, indeed, his history would never have been reckoned a part of the Bible. He well knew the weakness of man's memory, and the readiness with which a history alters its shape both by additions and alterations, when it depends only on word of mouth and report, and therefore, as if to rebuke all trust in unwritten traditions, he takes care to *write*. It is evident that the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, even if written previous to the publication of that of Luke, were not included in the many defective sketches or summaries to which Luke refers—not only because the former was written by one who was an eye-witness, and Mark drew his materials directly from Peter, if even he did not write, as it is quite probable he did, under his immediate supervision, but also because Matthew's Gospel as yet was in the Hebrew language, and Mark's was published in distant Italy, so that neither probably was yet in circulation in the locality where Luke was conversant. It has been remarked that Luke did not *take in hand*, nor Matthew, nor Mark, nor John, but the Divine Spirit supplying them with abundance of all words and matter, they accomplished what they began without any effort.

In order. These words may refer to the order of time, or of things, or of both. They probably denote the arrangement of the facts of the history in a connected form, not so much chronologically, however, as in reference to the general plan or outline of the work. Luke, like the other Evangelists, often disregards the order of time, and groups together his incidents from their general resemblance, or to produce a given effect on the mind of his reader.

That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, &c. The great benefit that has accrued to the world by receiving the Word of God, even by His own appointment committed to *writing*, we are not able to estimate as the value thereof deserves. (Ex. xxiv. 4; Hos. viii. 12; Rev. i. 11, xiv. 13.) God is only a worthy witness of Himself in His Word, and by His Spirit (Isa. lix. 21), which give mutual testimony one to the other, and work that assurance

of faith in His children, that no human demonstration can make, nor persuasions and enforcements of the world can remove. (John vi. 63; Prov. i. 23; 2 Sam. xxiii. 2; Jer. xxxi. 33; Rev. xxii. 17, 18.)

It is evidence at once of the wisdom and the goodness of God, that, in order to confirm our faith in the Gospel, He raised up a sufficient number of witnesses to attest the infallible certainty of all that it contains. The Evangelists did not write anything but what they either heard or saw themselves, or received from those who had seen or heard it. To be "witnesses chosen before of God" of the doings and sayings of Jesus was the very essence and object of the Apostolic office. (Acts x. 41, i. 8, 22, xxvi. 16.) They were to be eye-witnesses of the facts, in order to be *ministers*, or official rehearsers of the history. In accordance with this is the bold declaration of Peter at a later day: "We have not followed cunningly devised fables but were eye-witnesses." (2 Peter i. 16.) On equally strong ground does John, near the close of the first century, later, in fact, than the publication of this Gospel, place his own testimony: "That which was from the beginning, which we have *heard*, which we have *seen with our eyes*, which we have *looked upon*, and our *hands have handled* declare we unto you." (1 John i. 1.) Such declarations afford no room, no interval of time, no chance for the intervention of fabricators for forming traditions, legends, or myths. Our Gospels are the plain records of the statements of actual spectators, and well would it be for infidels to reflect that they cannot now possibly be as good judges in the matter as those who lived at the time, and who were thus competent to determine whether the things *which were most surely believed among them* were true or false.

It is important, also, that all should remember that Christianity came before mankind in the shape of *facts*. The first preachers did not go up and down the world, proclaiming an elaborate, artificial system of abstruse doctrines and deep principles. They made it their first business to tell men great plain facts. They went about, telling a sin-laden world that the Son of God had come down to earth,

and lived for us, and died for us, and risen again.

How should we value everything that concerns the Lord Jesus! With Him none of our earthly friends can be compared, and therefore we should desire to know everything about Him that we can. It is affecting to hear how the poor heathen, when first converted, value the Word of God. Before the missionaries in the South Sea Islands could print the Bible in the language of the people, the poor natives eagerly listened to all that was read aloud on the Sabbath, and many wrote down upon the leaves of the trees the texts they had heard, and studied them wherever they went, till they knew them by heart. We are without excuse if we remain ignorant of the history of our Lord. Let us not forget, however, for what purpose we read: that we may learn to love Jesus.

⁵ ¶ There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia; and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.

⁶ Matt. ii. 1. ⁷ Chron. xxiv. 10, 19; Neh. xii. 4, 17.

Here properly commences Luke's Gospel, the preceding verses constituting what may be called the preface. *In the days of Herod*—Herod, surnamed "the Great." Eras in the Old and New Testament are marked by the life or times of some principal man. *A certain priest named Zacharias, &c.* The opening scene is laid in the village of Hebron, and in the family of a venerable pair, whose solitary home was enlivened by the unexpected prospect of a son, destined, from the mysterious circumstances of His birth, to fill no secondary place in the Church and the world. The burden of the story turns so much on the character and office of this child of promise, that his parentage is passed over with a slight and incidental notice; and almost the only memorials transmitted to posterity of the two individuals who had the honor of giving birth to the precursor of Messiah, are comprised in the knowledge of their names, and in the honorable testimony borne to their piety and worth. But data are not wanting at the same time to establish the high respectability of the Baptist's family.

The sacerdotal order to which both Zacharias and Elizabeth are said to have belonged, enjoyed in Judea all the rank

and consideration which in other countries attaches to an ancient and noble pedigree. Not only did the priests form a distinct order, chargeable with the exclusive performance of offices which have ever been reckoned the most dignified of all employments; but as their honors and immunities flowed through certain families, and were unattainable to any beyond that pale, either by purchase or the greatest personal merits, there was thus drawn between them and every other class of society, a line of demarcation, which none could pass without previously establishing the certainty of their descent from the lineage of Aaron. In consequence of this provision, a knowledge of family history was among the Jews a principal object both of private and public attention.

Zacharias signifies whom Jehovah remembers, and Elizabeth, God her oath, or my God hath sworn. Of the course of Abia. (See 2 Chron. xxxv. 10; also on verse 8.) As Zacharias was married, marriage, which was not improper for the priest under the law, cannot be so for the minister of Christ under the Gospel. (1 Tim. iv. 1-3.)

⁶ And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

⁷ Gen. vii. 1, xvii. 1; 1 Kings ix. 4; 2 Kings xx. 3; Job i. 1; Acts xxiii. 1; Phil. iii. 6.

Commandments mean the moral law, and ordinances, the ritual. They were *righteous*, both as being justified by the righteousness of Christ, which is imputed to all believers, and as having the righteousness which is wrought inwardly in believers by the Holy Ghost for their sanctification. These two sorts of righteousness are never disjoined. This aged couple believed in the *promise* of a Saviour, and thus became partakers of His righteousness. They were pardoned and sanctified. Though still subject to sin, they indulged in no sinful *habits*. They made conscience of every known duty, and endeavored to obey every divine precept. They were strict, exact, punctual. Their obedience was marked by *universality*; they *walked in*, that is, kept, or obeyed, *all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord*—all the duties of religion which were made known to them. Their obedience was also characterized by *blamelessness*. That they were

still subject to sin, we shall soon find proof. (See verses 18-20.) "Many sins," says an old writer, "may be in him that has true grace; but he that has truth of grace cannot allow himself in any sin."

7. And they had no child, because that Elizabeth was barren, and they both were *now* well stricken in years.

Barrenness was thought a very heavy affliction by the Jews, yet Zacharias gave no countenance to the practice of polygamy or divorce, by taking another wife, the latter of which especially was common at that time, though by the pious Jews generally disapproved. The foundation of the feeling that the want of children was a calamity lay, perhaps, in the hope which each married couple may have entertained of being the progenitors of the expected Messiah.

8. And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before ^{the} God in the order of his course, 9. According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.

¹ Chron. xxiv. 19; 2 Chron. viii. 14. xxxi. 2. ¹ Ex. xxx. 7, 8; 1 Sam. ii. 28; 1 Chron. xxiii. 13; 2 Chron. xxix. 11.

At the time of his being favored with the angelic vision, Zacharias was on duty, and in order to understand the nature and mode of appointment to the office he was discharging, it is necessary to observe that, owing to the immense number of priests who were scattered over all parts of Judea, amounting to about a tenth part of the whole population, a system of rotation was established, according to which every family of the twenty-four courses into which the sacerdotal order was divided, repaired to Jerusalem by turns twice a year—the period of service, which began always on the Sabbath, lasting for a week. At first there was no regular division of duty—the members of each family whose weekly turn it was to attend, taking indiscriminately, or arranging among themselves, the several parts of the ceremonial; but as some offices came to be regarded as more honorable than others, and unseemly contests sometimes occurred, it was ordained that the same method by which the courses were originally determined, should be resorted to for assigning to each particular priest his part in the service of the temple; that it should be decided by lot, which, for instance, was to carry out the ashes, to feed the fire, or to

attend the altar of incense. In this latter service, which consisted in the offering of fragrant spices on an altar never stained with blood, and which was the most honorable of all, as it introduced the functionary alone into the holy place, Zacharias was employed on this memorable occasion.

The most minute circumstances are under the Lord's control, and are often the beginnings of very great events. The service of offering the incense was performed twice every day, just before the morning and evening sacrifice; that is, at nine in the morning and three in the afternoon, and the time of offering the incense was also the time of prayer—sweet fumes of the ascending incense being indeed representative of the prayers of the people ascending to God.

10. ¹ And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.

² Lev. xvi. 17; Heb. iv. 14-16 Rev. viii. 3, 4.

When the priest entered the holy place to offer the incense, a service which was performed by placing incense in a vase or cup, called the *enser*, upon the golden altar, with burning coals beneath, producing by its smoke a powerful perfume, filling the temple with its fragrance, the sound of a small bell notified the assembled people that the time of prayer was come. When this was heard, the priests and Levites, who had not taken their stations, hastened to do so; the space in the court between the great altar of burnt-offerings and the porch of the Lord's house was cleared, and the people, in the different courts of the temple, "stood and prayed."

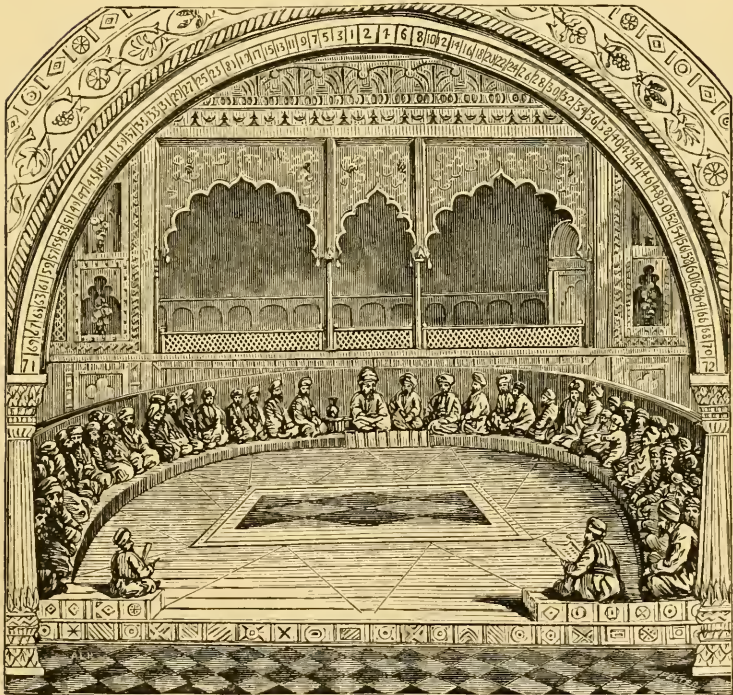
11. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of ^{the} altar of incense.

¹ Ex. xxx. 1; Lev. xvi. 13; Rev. viii. 3, ix. 13.

The altar of incense stood close by the vail which divided the holy place from the most holy; on the north stood the table of shew-bread; on the south the golden candlestick; and as the priest entered with his face to the west, the angel must have stood to the north, or near the table of shew-bread. Whether the angel was already visible when Zacharias came in, or afterward suddenly appeared, has been questioned. When we are nearest God, the good angels are



HIGH PRIEST AT THE ALTAR OF INCENSE.



THE SANHEDRIN IN COUNCIL.

nighest us. Especially are they present with us in our private devotion and public worship.

12. And when Zacharias saw *h*m, *h*e was troubled, and fear fell upon him.
Verse 29, li. 9, 10; Judg. vi. 22; Job iv. 14, 15; Dan x. 7; Acts x. 4; Rev. i. 17.

The idea of an angelic visitant, so familiar to his people in their early history, had from disuse become a strange matter to them. In the *presence* of angels they believed in the fullest extent; but of their *manifested* presence there had long ceased to be any authentic examples. The experience of this righteous man here tallies exactly with that of other saints under similar circumstances—Moses at the burning bush, and Daniel at the river of Hiddekel; the women at the sepulchre, and John at the isle of Patmos. How are we to account for this fear in seeing visions of things belonging to another world? It arises from our inward sense of weakness, guilt and corruption.

13. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias; for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.
Verses 60, 63.

The attempt to calm the trepidation of Zacharias shows us that holy angels really pity our frailties, and suggest comfort to us. To what *prayer* did the angel refer? Was it the prayer which Zacharias, probably offered frequently, that he might not go down childless to the grave? or was it, as some suppose, the national prayer offered by him in his ministerial capacity for the appearance of the Messiah? It will be observed that the angel afterward goes on to explain that this son was to be Christ's appointed harbinger, thus laying the stress rather upon the fact of Messiah's coming, than of a son being born to Zacharias. Both these blessings were soon to be bestowed.

14. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.—Verse 58.

Well might a father rejoice at the birth of such a son! His very name, *John*, signifying "the grace or favor of God," showed that God would bless him, and make him a blessing. The giving of significant names to children has been an ancient and pious practice: names which carried a remembrance either of duty or of mercy in them. When a child has been born, it has very seldom been known

whether it would become a curse or a blessing. There has often been great joy at the birth of children, who have lived to do great harm, and even to break their parents' hearts. When Cain was born Eve rejoiced, saying, "I have gotten a man from the Lord," little knowing or thinking how wicked a man he would be. Other children who have excited little interest at their birth, or even in their boyhood, have lived not only to rejoice their parents, but to save souls from eternal death. We cannot tell when we look upon young children what they will become, but we may offer up our earnest prayer that they may be a comfort and not a sorrow, a blessing and not a curse. A child of prayer and faith is likely to be a source of comfort to his parents. Were proper attention paid to this point, there would be fewer *disobedient* children in the world, and the number of *broken-hearted* parents would be lessened. But what can be expected from the majority of matrimonial connections, *begun* without the *fear* of God, and carried on without His *love*?

15. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. 16. And many of the children of Israel shall be turned to the Lord their God. 17. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.
Num. vi. 3; Judg. xiii. 4; Chap. vii. 33. Jer. i. 5; Gal. i. 15. Mal. iv. 5, 6. Mal. iv. 5; Matt. xi. 14; Mark ix. 12.

Great in the sight of the Lord, that is, really or truly great, God would regard him as such. They are *little* men in the sight of the Lord, whatever importance their riches and reputation may give them in the sight of men, who live in the world to little purpose, render little service to God, and bring little glory to His name. *Drink neither wine nor strong drink*. Wine was the juice of the grape. The kind of wine commonly used in Judea was a light wine, often not stronger than cider in this country. It was the common drink of all classes of the people. Why then was John to drink no wine? Because he was a Nazarite. (See Numb. vi.) Jewish ceremonies have ceased since the Lord Jesus has made known to us the Gospel, yet it is our duty in all things to be devoted to the service of God, and

separated from the sinful pleasures of an ungodly world. Our modern temperance societies are properly a Christian Nazarism. They are a moral *enterprise*, aiming to raise the public practice to a standard of temperance by exhibiting an abstinence from even an otherwise innocent measure of indulgence. *Strong drink*, among the Jews (as distilled spirits were not then known), was probably nothing more than fermented liquors, or a drink obtained from fermented dates, figs, and the juice of the palm, or the lees of wine, mingled with sugar, and having the property of intoxicating. The words denote all exhilarating liquors besides wine. *Filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb*—that is, *before his birth*, or *from his very birth*, the plenary influence of the Holy Spirit should be upon and in his spirit. There is no Scripture ground for supposing that a child, even before birth, is no possible subject of sanctifying power.

Many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. The Jewish people at this time were sunk in formalism and sin. (See Matt. iii. 5, 6; Mark i. 5; Luke iii. 7.) *Go before him in the spirit and power of Elias. Him,* that is, *before the Lord their God.* An evident reference to the last of the prophets—Mal. iii. 1, iv. 5, 6—whose words are thus indorsed by the angel. This seems to be a clear ascription of the Divine title to the Messiah before whom John was to go. There was a great resemblance between John the Baptist and the prophet Elijah, under whose name he was predicted by Malachi, iv. 5. *In spirit.* Both were clothed in hair-cloth, with leathern girdles around their loins, and dwelt much in the wilderness. Both were faithful and courageous in times of universal corruption. John came also in the *power* of the great prophet, denouncing speedy vengeance from heaven unless men repented. *Turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, &c.* The fathers here are the holy ancestry of degenerate Israel, who had, as it were, been offended with the apostasy of their descendants. John would so infuse a better spirit into this generation that a reconciliation should take place between the holy *olden time* and the fallen *present*. *The disobedient. Unbelief and disobedience* are so intimately con-

nected, that the same word in the sacred writings often serves for *both*. *To the wisdom of the just*, the original preposition implies not only the entering upon, but continuance in the state of wisdom, or true religion, here predicated of the just: *to make ready a people for the Lord*, by fitting men to receive Christ upon His own terms and conditions. Though the Son of God was coming into the world to shed His blood to save sinners, yet it was necessary that one should go before Him to *turn* the hearts of men toward Him. What a proof this of the wickedness of the human heart! Every one is an enemy of God until he is converted.

18. And Zacharias said unto the angel, ¹Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years. 19. And the angel answering said unto him, I am ²Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings. 20. And, behold, ³thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season. ⁴Gen. xvii. 17. ⁵Dan. viii. 16, and ix. 21, 22, 23; Matt. xvii. 10; Heb. i. 14. ⁶Ezek. iii. 26, and xxiv. 27.

Zacharias was so much astonished at the message of the angel, that he asked of him by what sign he should know that this thing, so far above the ordinary course of nature, should come to pass. *And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel*—"The might of the strong God," a name peculiarly appropriate now, as pointing out that *all-prevalent power* by which the *strong God* could accomplish every purpose, and *subdue* all things to Himself. *Stand in the presence of God.* To stand or dwell in the presence of a sovereign is an oriental idiom, importing the most eminent and dignified station at court. Why was it wrong in him to desire a sign? Because he had already had one. It was sinful in Zacharias not to believe after he had seen the glorious angel. Unbelief is a great sin, for it is an insult to the truth of God. It was, therefore, both a sign and a judgment that Zacharias was told he should be dumb.

21. And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple. 22. And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless. 23. And it came to pass, that, as soon as ¹the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house. 24. And after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying, 25. Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men. ²Kings xi. 5; 1 Chron. ix. 25. ³Gen. xxx. 23; Isa. iv. 1, liv. 1, 4.

The priest, it is said, was not accustomed to remain in the temple more than half an

hour commonly. When Zacharias came out, it was expected that, according to the custom of the priest after the service of the temple was finished, he would dismiss the people with the beautiful words recorded in Numbers vi. 24-7, but *he could not speak*. His excited aspect showed that something had happened to him in the sacred place, and the people suspecting that he had seen an appearance or spectre, he made signs to show them what he had seen in the temple. Zacharias, though he ceased to speak, did not cease to minister in the temple. It is the duty of ministers of the Gospel to remain at their work until they are entirely unfitted for it.

His own house. This is generally thought to have been Hebron. What a history he had to unfold to Elizabeth! For he was able to inform her in writing. What a proof she beheld of the power of God in the dumbness of her husband! We should take notice of God's dealings with others. (Ps. cviii. 43.) *He hid herself five months, saying, &c.* How humbly and gratefully Elizabeth beheld on this occasion! She acknowledged the goodness of the Lord in having condescended to look upon her affliction, for she had been exposed to much reproach on account of having no child. It might be that this strict seclusion was adopted partly for the better securing opportunities of devotion to one so peculiarly circumstanced, and partly for the purpose of avoiding wine or strong drink, or coming in contact with anything unclean, as became the destined mother of a Nazarite. But it might have been done, too, in accordance with the manners of her country, as it is probable that the ladies of ancient Palestine observed the custom which prevails among other Eastern females of the present day, who, from motives of delicacy hide themselves from the public, for some time before the birth of their first child.

Thus hath the Lord, &c. A holy minister named *Rutherford*, in one of his letters, written two hundred years ago, says, that one of the things which most showed him his own wickedness by nature, was his feeling more disposed to call upon the Lord in trouble, than to thank him when delivered.

26. And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, 27. To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David: and the virgin's name was Mary. 28. And the angel came in unto her, and said, *Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.* 29. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. 30. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. 31. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name JESUS. 32. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: 33. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. 34. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? 35. And the angel answered and said unto her, *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.* 36. And, behold, thy cousin Elizabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. 37. For with God nothing shall be impossible. 38. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

^cMatt. i. 18; chap. ii. 4, 5. ^dDan. ix. 23. x. 19. ^eJudg. vi. 12. ^fVerse 12. ^gIsa. vii. 14; Matt. i. 21. ^hChap. ii. 21. ⁱMark v. 27. ^k2 Sam. vii. 11, 12; Ps. cxxxiii. 11; Isa. ix. 6, 7, xvi. 5; Jer. xxiii. 5; Rev. iii. 7. ^lDan. ii. 14, vii. 14, 27. ^mMc. iv. 7; John xii. 34; Heb. i. 8. ⁿMatt. i. 20. ^oMatt. xiv. 33, xxvi. 63, 64; Mark i. 1; John i. 34, xx. 26; Acts viii. 37; Rom. i. 4. ^pGen. xviii. 14; Jer. xxxii. 17; Zech. viii. 6; Matt. xix. 26; Mark x. 27; chap. xviii. 27; Rev. iv. 21.

The angel Gabriel. God appointed that his Son should be born six months after John. An evil angel was the first author of our ruin; a good angel, though he could not be the author of our restoration, yet was made the joyful reporter of it. It was the same angel who had, many hundred years before, declared to the prophet Daniel the coming of Messiah (Dan. ix. 21-7), that now came to Mary. *A city of Galilee.* As Joseph and Mary were both of the family of David, the patrimonial estate of which lay in Bethlehem, it seems as if the family residence should have been in that city and not in Nazareth, for we find that even after the return from the captivity the several families went to reside in those cities to which they originally belonged (See Neh. ii. 3.) But it is probable that the holy family removed to Galilee, for fear of exciting the jealousy of Herod, who had usurped that throne to which they had an indisputable right.

To a virgin espoused, &c. At length the moment is come which is to give a son to a virgin, a Saviour to the world, a pattern to mankind, a sacrifice to sinners, a temple to the Divinity, and a new principle to the new world. The Son of God comes to humble the proud, and to honor poverty, weakness and contempt. He chooses an obscure place for the mystery which is most glorious to

his humanity, its union with the Divinity ; and for that which is most *degrading* (his sufferings and death), He will choose the greatest city. *Of the house of David.* Mary was descended from King David, who had lived more than a thousand years before, and she was engaged to be married to a man called Joseph, also descended from King David. It had been prophesied that the Son of God should be born among David's family. Isaiah calls the Saviour "A rod out of the stem of Jesse" (Isa. ix. 1), for Jesse was the father of David. Jesse was like a tree, of which Jesus was a rod or branch.

Hail!—a word of salutation, equivalent to *Peace be with thee*, or, *Joy be with thee*, *thou art highly favored*, thou that are designated as the happy individual to whom the great honor is to pertain of giving birth to the world's Redeemer—the *Lord is with thee*—as the word "is" is not in the original, this passage may be rendered either "the Lord is with thee," or "the Lord be with thee," implying the prayer of the angel that all blessings from God might descend and rest upon her—*blessed art thou among women*, not *above* women, but *among* women, that is, "thou art the most happy of women." The Roman Catholics allege that the words "highly favored" mean "full of grace," and say, that Mary can now impart grace, and that the angel worshiped her. The original word, however, does not signify *full of grace*, but *freely beloved*, and it is perfectly plain that the angel's address was a salutation and not a prayer. Besides, we know that Mary was but a creature, and even a sinful creature, and hence, however great the distinction she enjoyed in being selected to be the mother of the Messiah, it is idolatry to treat her as the Lord.

She was troubled, &c. Mary was afraid and perplexed at the speech of the angel, it was so unexpected and extraordinary, and, with her sense of humility, the honor was so undeserved. The angel therefore desired her not to fear, and then informed her of the wonderful event about to happen. The Saviour, so long expected, was to be her son. He was to be called "Jesus," which signifies Saviour, and is the same

name as Joshua. He was to be "great," distinguished, or illustrious, great in respect to His person and His offices ; He was to be called the son of the highest, that is, He was to be the Son of the infinitely exalted God ; He was to receive from the Lord God the throne of his father David, that is, God would settle upon Him a spiritual kingdom, of which the earthly one of David, from whom He was lineally descended, was a type : *he was to reign over the house of Jacob forever* : as this was the name by which the ancient people of God were known, this was in effect saying that He should reign over His own Church and people forever, and of *his kingdom there was to be no end*—He should reign among His people on earth until the end of time, and still be their King in heaven. He should be the only King that shall never lay aside his diadem and robes, and that shall never die.

How shall this be? Some would render this as if she would be resolved whether this birth were to be produced in a common or a miraculous manner. But we think it is more natural to suppose that she understood the former words as an intimation that the effect was immediately to take place, to which her present circumstances seemed, humanly speaking, an invincible objection. *The Holy Ghost*, &c. As the Messiah came to redeem sinners—to make atonement for *others*, and not for Himself—it was necessary that His human nature should be pure, and freed from the corruption of the fall. Hence a body was to be prepared for Him, not by ordinary generation, but by the direct power of God. His body was to be miraculously formed by the power of the Holy Ghost, though born of a human mother. The phrase, *that holy thing*, shows the purity and immaculateness of Christ's human nature. Jesus had flesh and blood like ourselves (Heb. ii. 14), and He was subject to all our bodily weaknesses ; He needed food and sleep ; He suffered pain ; He shed tears, and sweat drops of blood ; but He was *without sin* (Heb. iv. 15.) He was "holy, harmless, undefiled." (Heb. vii. 26.) *Shall be called the Son of God.* The angel did not give the appellation *Son of God* to the *Divine nature of Christ*, but to that *holy person or thing*

which was to be born of the virgin, by the energy of the Holy Spirit. The *Divine nature could not* be born of the virgin, the human nature *was* born of her. The phrase does not mean constituted and made, but evidenced and declared. Christ was God before He assumed flesh, even from eternity; but His taking flesh in this manner would evidence Him to be the Son of God. To confirm Mary's confidence in what he had told her, the angel mentioned the wonderful conception of her cousin Elizabeth, and reminded her of the almighty power of God. The result was, that she was willing to bear the trial. She knew that many would disbelieve her story, and treat her with contempt; nevertheless, in expression of her resignation to the will of God, and of her faith in the promise, she said: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word*. All disputations with God, after His will is made known and understood, arise from infidelity and unbelief. God often makes those suffer most deeply whom He designs to honor most highly. When he intends that persons should do much good to souls (and this is one of the highest honors) He often permits suspicion to be cast upon their character, but at length He establishes their innocence.

^{39.} And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill-country with haste, into a city of Judah. Josh. xxi. 9, 10, 11

In those days, that is, soon after she had received the extraordinary message from the angel, before mentioned, as soon as she could conveniently fit herself out for the journey. *Went into the hill-country*. The portion of Palestine originally allotted to the tribe of Judah was divided in accordance with its natural features into the southern district, or the plain bordering on the Mediterranean sea; the hill-country of Judah, running through the center from north to south; and the district of Judah.

With haste, such as results from zeal and eager desire. The intimation which the angel had given respecting Elizabeth greatly impressed the mind of Mary, and created a strong desire to visit and confer with that aged relative, under the very peculiar circumstances in which she was placed. There were grounds on which

she might suspect the actual relation between these extraordinary circumstances. She could not but know what had happened to Zacharias at the temple, and if, as would seem from her not being already apprised of the fact, the particulars of the vision had not yet become equally notorious, the information given by the angel pointed, as coming from him, a connecting link which she would be anxious to trace more fully. If we may suppose Hebron to have been Elizabeth's residence, Mary's journey would be about one hundred miles. *Into a city of Judah*; probably Hebron, the city of the priests (Josh. xxi. 14), situated in the tribe of Judah. This was the chief city in that part of Judea, as may be gathered from 2 Sam. ii.

^{40.} And entered into the house of Zacharias and saluted Elizabeth.

Here were the two wonders of the world met under one roof, to communicate their joys to each other, and to strengthen each other's faith. How interesting that interview between those two holy women! There was a great difference between their ages. Elizabeth was very old; Mary was not old; it is probable she was quite young. Yet she was far more highly honored than her aged relative. The old are often envious of the young, but the pious Elizabeth was ready to do honor to Mary. *Saluted Elizabeth*. The salutations of the Jews were usually of a religious character, at least in form, and were attended with much ceremony. They were various, such as, "Be thou blessed of Jehovah," "God be with you," "Peace be with you." (See Ruth ii. 4; Judges xix. 20; 2 Sam. xx. 9; Ps. cxxix. 8.) To the last mentioned form, which was the most common, striking allusion is made by our Saviour. (John xiv. 27.)

^{41.} And it came to pass, that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost:

No sooner had Mary spoken than the child in the womb of Elizabeth leaped, as if transported with joy, or sensible of the approach of Him whose forerunner he was appointed to be, and already offering Him involuntary homage. The reference to the movement of the child by Luke, in connection with the words of Elizabeth, verse 44, shows that it was attributed to a

secret and powerful spiritual influence. The expression, *Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost*, seems to have been the accomplishment of the promise made by the angel, verse 15. This expression attaches the weight of inspiration to the words Elizabeth uttered in reply to Mary's salutation.

42. And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, *Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.*—Judg. v. 24; verse 28.

With a loud voice, such as testified the greatness of the emotion of her mind. *Blessed*, &c., repeating the words of the angel, verse 28, of which she had probably been informed by Mary, in the present interview, esteeming it the highest honor among mothers to be the mother of the Messiah. Both had been highly favored—but Mary most. Mary was *blessed*, not so much for carrying Christ in her womb by sense, as for bearing Him in her heart by faith. *And blessed is the fruit of thy womb*; alluding, probably, to the child's being the promised seed in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed, and who for that reason was blessed Himself. (Ps. lxxii. 17.) While we cannot but own that we are more *favored* of God than we deserve, let us by no means envy others who are *more highly* favored than we are.

43. And whence *is this* to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

If Elizabeth had not been extraordinarily inspired, she could not so much as have suspected that Mary was to be the mother of the Messiah, but this being revealed to her, she was greatly struck with the honor that was done her by the visit. Her son, the Baptist, used the same language of humility. (Matt. iii. 14.) Elizabeth seems to have been the first one who employed this title, *My Lord*, of such common use among Christians.

44. For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.

“Thou certainly bringest some extraordinary tidings, some extraordinary blessings with thee, for *as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears*, not only my heart leaped for joy, but *the babe in my womb did so, too.*” The reference is to verse 41, where the verb used denotes something more than the natural movements of the

unborn child. It seems most plainly accordant with the mind of the inspired writer, that upon this occasion the unborn harbinger salutes with joy the unborn Messiah at his first approach. This would serve very much to strengthen Mary's faith, and would be in part the fulfillment of the prediction. (Ps. xcvi. 8, 9.)

45. And blessed is she **that believed*; for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.—*Or, *which believed that there.*

The language of Elizabeth here passes from the second to the third person, but the expression, although in form indefinite, was designed to apply directly to Mary, and commended her for her faith and humility, when she received the message from *the Lord*, by His angel. Mary's faith is made to stand in contrast with Zacharias' unbelief; but this is done in such a manner as to show the great decorum which the Spirit of God, as well as the rules of modesty and piety, taught Elizabeth to observe, when the faults of a husband were in question. *For there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.* The invariable certainty of God's promises, is the true ground of faith, and the source of happiness to those who build upon them. *Blessed* is every one that *believes*. It was a good answer that was once given by a poor woman, when, to a minister who asked her, “What is faith?” she replied, “I am ignorant; I cannot answer well; but I think faith is taking God at His word.”

46. And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, **1 Sam. ii. 1; Ps. xxxiv. 2, 3 and xxxv. 9; Hab. iii. 18.*

Though there was much to try Mary in her present circumstances, for many people would not believe her account of the angel's visit, and would treat her with scorn, yet she was filled with joy, because she enjoyed the favor of the Lord, thus showing us how faith can enable us to rejoice in the midst of trials. Having heard Elizabeth speak, she likewise was filled with the Holy Ghost, and under His influence uttered extempore this hymn, remarkable for the beauty of its style, the sublimity of its sentiments, and the spirit of piety which runs through the whole of it; and manifesting the deep sense she had of her own unworthiness, and the goodness of God in choosing her to the

high honor of being the Messiah's mother. This song properly consists of three parts: 1. In verses 49-50, Mary praises God for what He had done for *herself*. 2. In verses 51-3, she praises Him for what He had done, and would do, against the oppressors of *his people*, and that He *exalts the humble*, and brings low the proud. 3. In verses 53-56, she praises Him for what He had done, and would do, for His *Church*.

47. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

She seems to turn her thoughts here to Christ Himself, who was to be born of her, as the angel had told her He should be the Son of the Highest, whose name should be called *Jesus*, the Saviour. And she rejoiced in hope of salvation through faith in Him, which is a blessing common to all true believers, more than in being His mother in the flesh, which was an honor peculiar to her. (See Matt. xii. 50; Luke xi. 27, 28.) In this language Mary confesses herself a sinner, for none but sinners need a *Saviour*. Those that have Jesus for their God and Saviour, have great reason to rejoice—to *rejoice in spirit*; that is, to rejoice as Christ did, with spiritual joy. (Luke x. 21.)

48. For he hath regarded the low estate of his hand-maiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

¹1 Sam. i. 11; Ps. cxxxviii. 6. ²Mal. iii. 12; chap. xi. 27.

All the blessedness she had, she felt she could claim only on a different basis from that of personal merit—it was because the Lord had *regarded her low estate*; in the most tender and compassionate manner visiting her in her humiliation, in which besides her poor outward condition, she was also conscious of inward poverty, which could discover no pre-eminence in herself, in virtue of which such happiness should have fallen to her lot. *For, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed*. There are several other passages in the Scriptures in which the word here rendered *blessed* should rather be rendered *happy* than *blessed*. (See Prov. xxxi. 28; Mal. iii. 12; 1 Tim. i. 11, vi. 15; James v. 11; Rom. xx. 6.) This utterance of exuberant joy was first used by Leah on the birth of Asher. (Gen. xxx. 13.) Mary knew that whatever men thought of her then, that *all generations* would “call her blessed,” as the mother of the Saviour,

thus invested by Heaven with a high and lasting honor above all her sex. *The blessed or happy virgin* was the character by which alone Mary wished to be known. It is worthy of note, that Mary is invariably called in the sacred narrative *Mary*, without any of those titles of reverence or superstition, such as *Queen of Heaven*, *Mother of God*, &c., by which men, trying to adorn her incomparable dignity, have sown the seeds of Mariolatry. The words of Mary show that she regarded the blessings of the Messiah's advent, as reaching to the end of time.

49. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things: and holy is his name.

¹Ps. lxxi. 19, cxxvi. 2, 3, cxi. 9.

He that is mighty, beyond all our conceptions, even the Almighty God, to whom this strange event is not only possible, but easy. *Hath done to me great things*, probably having especially now in her eye her miraculous conception of the Messiah, it is the *power of the highest* that appears in this. *Holy, i. e., revered, is his name*. Personal blessings are here lost sight of in the Divine glory and goodness which they serve to reveal to her view. Hannah said in her song, *There is none holy as the Lord*, which she explains in the next words, *for there is none beside thee*. (1 Sam. ii. 2.) Glorious things may be expected from Him who is both *mighty* and *holy*, who can do everything, and will do everything well and for the best.

50. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.

¹Gen. xvii. 7; Ex. xx. 6; Ps. ciii. 17, 18.

From a contemplation of God's goodness to her, Mary's mind reaches forth to a grateful recognition of the Divine mercy to others. God's exuberant kindness has ever manifested itself in acts of mercy to all those who feared or revered His name. He has regarded them with peculiar favor. But He manifested His mercy, as He had never done before, in that event with which Mary knew her name would be perpetually connected—in sending His Son to bring in an everlasting righteousness, and work out an everlasting salvation for them that look up to Him with an eye of filial fear, and this *from generation to generation*, literally for *generations of generations*, that is, throughout all time.

51. ^aHe hath shewed strength with his arm; ^bhe hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. ^cPs. xcvi. 1, cxviii. 15; Isa. xl. 10, li. 9. iii. 10. ^dPs. xxxiii. 10; 1 Peter v. 5.

With his arm. He hath shown the greatness of His power. God's great power is represented by His *finger*, His greater power with His *hand*, and His omnipotence by His *arm*. The plague of lice was the *finger* of God. (Ex. vii. 18.) The plagues in general were wrought by His *hand*. (Ex. iii. 20.) And the destruction of Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea was brought to pass by His *arm*. (Ex. xv. 16.) *He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.* Here the proud and haughty persecutors of God's people are especially referred to, such as Pharaoh, Sennacherib, Antiochus Epiphanes and others, whose cruelties were a matter of historical record, but all are meant who are puffed up with pride, who wish to be noticed in preference to all others, and feel sovereign contempt for all but themselves. Such men are *scattered*, like a defeated army, or like the chaff which the wind blows away. (See 2 Cor. x. 5; Ps. ii. 1-3.)

52. ^aHe hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.

^b1 Sam. ii. 6, &c.; Job v. 11; Ps. cxlii. 6.

Seats, literally, *thrones*. There is probably an allusion in particular to the removal of *Saul* from the throne of Israel, and the establishment of the kingdom in the person and family of David. But as Mary spoke *prophetically*, this saying may also allude to future events. *And exalted them of low degree.* In the revolutions and overturnings by which the proud and mighty were brought low, persons of obscure condition were raised up to the occupancy of their thrones and seats of power. (See 2 Sam. vii. 8; 1 Chron. xvii. 7; Ps. lxxviii. 70; Neh. xxi. 7.)

53. ^aHe hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.

^b1 Sam. ii. 5; Ps. xxxiv. 10.

He hath fed the poor and needy, who came to Him with humble hearts, and not unfrequently withholden from those who came to Him with lofty hearts, and insatiable desires, what they asked, or taken away their riches by fire or flood, thus *sending them away empty*. (Rev. iii. 17, 18.) The original word strictly signifies *hath sent* or *turned them out of doors*, and very beautifully represents God as the great Proprietor of all, and the greatest of men

as His tenants at will, whom He can strip and turn out whenever He pleases. The language is to be understood mainly in a spiritual sense. Poverty and hunger are here opposed to wealth and fullness, just as dominion and power, in the preceding context, were contrasted with lowliness of birth and condition. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness." Such hungry souls shall never be sent empty away.

54. He hath holpen his servant Israel, ^ain remembrance of his mercy;—^bPs. xcvi. 3; Jer. xxxi. 3, 20.

The word rendered *he hath holpen*, which is an old English form for *hath helped*, properly signifies, to interpose in favor of a person in great necessity or extreme danger, and also to hold by the hand, to sustain from falling, or to lift up when fallen, and so to afford aid or help. Sad had been the humiliation of Israel, God's covenant people, from a high to a low estate had he been brought, but the time of his exaltation has now arrived. God has blessed them with a Saviour, who lived in the faith, hope and expectation of the promised Messiah. Those that were sunk under the burdens of a broken covenant of innocence, are *helped up* by the blessings of a renewed covenant of grace. The Messiah was also to be a great blessing to all who should become the seed of Abraham by faith. (Gal. iii. 7.) *In remembrance of his mercy*; that is, that He might show Himself mindful of the mercy promised to Israel. (See verse 72.)

55. ^aAs he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.

^bGen. xvii. 19; Ps. cxxxii. 11; Rom. iv. 28; Gal. iii. 16.

This is a reference to the covenant God made with Abraham (Gen. xv. 18), which covenant proceeded from God's eternal mercy, and in which salvation was promised to all the nations of the earth. (Gen. xii. 3; xxii. 18.) This covenant was in one form or other given to *all the fathers*. We have here a remarkable proof that Mary's expectations concerning the Messiah's appearance were not of an exclusive, but of a universal nature. It was designed that in Him all the nations of the earth should be blessed. The closing words *for ever*, are to be joined in sense with *his seed*, being equivalent to *throughout all generations*. What God hath spoken to the

fathers, he will make good to their seed, even their seed's seed forever.

56. And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house.

This must have been a few days before the birth of John. (See verse 36.) Having, to her unspeakable satisfaction and great comfort, found all things as the angel had told her, Mary returned to Nazareth, to keep silence before Joseph, as she had broken silence before Elizabeth. She still wished retirement, and therefore did not remain at the home of her relative, when the birth of her child of promise would draw a great deal of company to the house. After Mary's return home, those events seem to have occurred, concerning the difficulties and conduct of Joseph in respect of her, which are recorded in Matt. i. 18, 19. *Her own house.* If the supposition just referred to be correct, the house here spoken of must have been her own, as she was yet unmarried.

57. Now Elizabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son.

This birth was six months previous to that of the Messiah. *Full time came*, exactly according to the prediction of the angel, *that she should be delivered*, though this child was conceived in the womb by a miracle, he continued in the womb according to the ordinary course of nature, as did our Saviour also. Promised mercies are to be expected when the full time for them is come, and not before. How great an event is the birth of a child! It exceeds in importance the creation of the sun. The sun sees not its own light, feels not its own heat, and is destined to be extinguished; but the little babe that has just been brought into the world, has a rational soul which must live in rapture or in woe, when the heavens pass away, and the elements melt with fervent heat.

58. And her neighbors and her consins heard how the Lord had showed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her.—Verse 14.

Her kinsfolk and relations having heard that the Lord in so illustrious and remarkable a manner had magnified His mercy to her, came together to testify their joy, and sincerely congratulate her on the happy occasion. Too little on such occasions are the power and goodness of God gratefully recognized. To rejoice

with those whom God has favored, and to congratulate them on the advantages which He has granted to them, is a duty which humanity, charity and religion call upon us to fulfill.

59. And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father.
Gen. xvii. 12; Lev. xii. 3.

On the eighth day (from the birth of the child inclusive), which was the day, in the patriarchal and Mosaic law (see Gen. xvii. 12; Lev. xii. 3), for the circumcision of the male offspring. This day was fixed because the mother was considered as unclean seven days (Lev. xii. 1, 2), and until that time the child was too weak to endure the pain of circumcision. *They came*, probably to the house of Zacharias, for no particular place was prescribed, and no particular person as performer of the rite. *To circumcise the child.* Circumcision, as a rite of the Jewish religion, consisted in cutting around the flesh of the foreskin of all males. The instrument used was a knife, a razor, or even a sharp stone. (Exod. iv. 25; Josh. v. 3.) This rite was established as the token of God's covenant with Abraham (Gen. xvii. 9-14), who immediately subjected himself and all his family to its observance. By this rite all the natural male descendants of Abraham were separated from all the rest of the world. The precept of circumcision was renewed to Moses (Exod. xii. 44; Lev. xii. 3; John vii. 22, 23), requiring that all should submit to it who would partake of the paschal sacrifice. (Exod. xii. 43-48.) This was enjoined with great solemnity. The Jews have always been very scrupulous in the observance of this rite or ceremony, though it was omitted in their journey through the wilderness for obvious reasons. *They called*, were then naming, were about to name, or *would* have named. This is frequently the sense of the imperfect tense here used. There is no direction that the child should be named on the day of its circumcision, but this was always done (though in some instances the name was given at its birth), probably because God changed the names of Abraham and Sarah when the rite was instituted. Girls were not named until they were weaned. *Zacharias, after the name of his*

father. *Zacharias*, signifying the remembrance of God, pointed at God's mercy in remembering him, and his duty in remembering God.

60. And his mother answered and said, ^bNot so; but he shall be called John.—^bVerse 13.

The answer of Elizabeth was decided and emphatic. In determining that the child should be called *John*, as this was the name which the angel desired should be given him (verse 13), she might have been influenced by revelation, or *Zacharias* might have explained the whole affair to her in writing. The Jews made it a part of religion to give suitable and significant names to their children.

61. And they said unto her, There is none of thy kind that is called by this name.

A feeling of pride or admiration leads men to perpetuate the virtues of their illustrious ancestors by reviving their names in the person of a descendant, and as these are often repeated in the course of successive generations, they become a kind of inheritance in the tribe, with which it is understood to be improper for the members of another to interfere. That this feeling was prevalent among the ancient Jews, is abundantly evident from many parts of their history; from the genealogical tree which *Josephus* has drawn of his own family, in which, through a long line of progenitors who had borne the highest honors of their country, we may observe the same names frequently recurring, and these exclusively such as pertained to the male branches of his house; and, in short, from a variety of incidents, all manifesting the predilection of that people for perpetuating the memory of their most distinguished forefathers, and the extreme reluctance they felt to admit any names among them that had not been formerly familiar, or known at least, in their families. With these circumstances in our knowledge, we can be at no loss to account for the surprise and dissatisfaction expressed by the assembled relatives of *Zacharias* and *Elizabeth*, on discovering that they had determined, by mutual consent, and for reasons which they did not explain, to deviate from established usage in the intended designation of their son.

But the relations themselves, in proposing to give the child the name of *Zacharias*, departed as widely from prevailing customs, which made it usual to call a son, not after his father, but after his grandfather, great-grandfather, or some honored member of the family. It is probable that *Lightfoot* is right in his conjecture, that respect for the character and age of the father, who could have no prospect of another son, were the motive, that made his friends desirous of seeing his name perpetuated in the person of his child. But both of the parents expressed their determination to give him the name of *John*.

62. And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called.

Wishing to know the mind of *Zacharias* in the matter, whose office it properly was to name the child, they *made signs* to him—literally *nodded*, or *winked with the eye*. From this kind of inquiry we may conclude with certainty he was deaf as well as dumb, otherwise they might have *asked* him, and obtained his answer in this way.

63. And he asked for a writing-table, and wrote, saying, ³His name is John. And they marvelled all.
³Verse 13.

The *writing-table*, or tablet, was used much like a slate, for temporary use. Sometimes it was of lead, the writing on which was formed with a bodkin or stylus and could be beaten out when no longer needed. Sometimes it was composed of a thin board covered with wax, on which, also, the characters were traced with a metal stylus, and often it was merely a small, clean board, on which the writing was formed with chalk.

And wrote, saying, his name is *John*. Not, "it shall be so," or, "I would have it so," but "it is so"—*his name is John*. The matter is determined already, the angel had given him that name. (Verse 13.) *John* was a very appropriate name for him who was to be the first preacher of the kingdom of grace, and who was to point out Him from whose fullness we receive grace for grace. (John i. 16.) As *Zacharias*, when he could not *speak*, wrote, so ministers, who are prevented by disease or persecution, from preaching, may yet be doing good so long as they have strength to write. Many of the martyrs in prison wrote letters to their

friends, which were of great use. Paul himself did so. *Bunyan* wrote his "Pilgrim's Progress" when shut up in Bedford jail, for righteousness' sake. Our religious literature has been greatly enriched by contributions from good men in their affliction. *And they marvelled all*—they wondered, were amazed. Had not Zacharias been deaf as well as dumb, and heard the previous conversation, there would have been nothing strange in this coincidence with the name given by his wife.

64. ^kAnd his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God.
^kVerse 20.

His mouth was opened, not by the force of joyful emotion, nor by his breaking a voluntary silence, but by a miracle, whereby the prediction of the angel (verse 20), was fulfilled at exactly the right time. No sooner had he recovered his speech, than, with an audible, articulate voice, he praised God in holy raptures, before even addressing his friends or his wife, although he had not interchanged a word with them from the time he returned from Jerusalem (verse 23), nine months before. As the want of faith had produced the dumbness, so the act of faith reproduced the speech. His first use of his recovered faculty was not to utter a complaint, but a doxology: a proof that the cure had taken place in his soul also. When God *opens our lips*, our mouths must *show forth His praise*. We might as well be without speech as not use it in *praising God*, for our tongue is most *our glory* when it is employed for *God's glory*.

65. And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad through out all the hill-country of Judea.—^oOr, things. ^lVerse 31.

In view of the miraculous operations which had been witnessed, a feeling, partaking of religious awe and veneration, pervaded all the inhabitants of Hebron and its environs; and *all these sayings*, or, things, which must have produced a deep sensation, were everywhere talked about. The inhabitants of this *hill-country* seem to have been an open, honest-hearted, generous people, who were easily led to acknowledge the interposition of God, and to rejoice in the comfort and welfare of each other. The *fear*, which now spread only through the hill-country of Judea, afterward filled the heart of all Jerusalem.

It was undoubtedly kept up, as well as the expectation of some greater thing to follow, by the unusual manner in which the child John was brought up. We perceive in this event how God can bring good out of evil. Zacharias by unbelief had become dumb, but his gaining his speech again must have helped others to believe.

66. And all they that heard them ^mlaid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be! And ⁿthe hand of the Lord was with him.
^mChron. ii. 19, 51. ⁿGen. xxxix. 2: Ps. lxxx. 17, and lxxxix. 21; Acts xi. 21.

The extraordinary circumstances connected with the birth of John were all ordered by Providence, that he, who was the Messiah's forerunner, might not seem an obscure and ordinary man, but one that was the peculiar object of the decrees and counsels of heaven, and that the attention of his countrymen being awakened by this magnificent manner of his introduction into the world, he might execute the duties of his ministry with greater advantage, and effectually prepare the people for receiving the Messiah, who was soon to appear in person. And this effect *was* produced. The people began to wonder and conjecture, saying, *What manner of child shall this be?* *Laid them up in their hearts*, *i. e.*, pondered over them, and sought their import. It argues a vain spirit and temper of mind when we pass over the observation of God's wonderful acts with a slight regard. The true reason why we so little admire the wonderful works of God, is that we so little consider them. (Ps. xxviii. 5.) *And the hand of the Lord was with him*, that is, the help of God, the love and favor of God to support him, the power and providence of God to protect, preserve and prosper him. When our hearts are with the Lord, then His heart and His helping hand will be with us.

67. And his father, Zacharias, ^owas filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying,—^oJoel ii. 28.

Filled with the Holy Ghost, &c.—brought under the influence of Divine inspiration. God not only forgave him his unbelief and distrust, but as a *specimen of abounding grace* toward believers, He endued him with a more than ordinary measure of the Holy Spirit, supernaturally enlightening his mind in the knowledge of Divine things, and even of future events. The prophetic hymn consists of two parts.

Part first, 68-75, predicts, under Jewish images, the power and safety of Messiah's kingdom. Part second, 76-79, in an address to the infant John, predicts his preparatory office as herald of the Messiah's manifestation, and His glorious kingdom of human salvation on earth and in heaven.

68. *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for she hath visited and redeemed his people.*
 1 Kings i. 45; Ps. xli. 13, lxvii. 18, cvii. 48. *Exod. iii. 16, iv. 31; Ps. cxi. 9; chap. vii. 16.*

It will be observed that it is not for his own particular and private mercy, namely, the recovery of his speech, that Zacharias blessed God, though for that blessing he was undoubtedly very thankful, but for universal mercies bestowed upon His Church and people. *The Lord God of Israel*—who is also the God of the spirits of all flesh. Jehovah was in a peculiar sense the God of Israel. (Rom. ix. 4.) But this did not forbid the induction of other nations into like relationship and privileges. Israel, as a chosen people, was a type of the people of God, to be called out of all nations and ages, whom God had a particular eye to in sending the Saviour.

God is praised for two grand benefits He had granted to His people. 1. He has *visited* them. 2. He has *ransomed* them. He speaks by the Spirit of prophecy, which calls things that *are not*, as though they *were*, because they are absolutely determined by the Most High, and shall be all fulfilled in their season. God had often sent to His people by His prophets, and had still kept up a correspondence with them, but now He himself made them a visit, for Christ was *Immanuel, God with us, God manifest in the flesh*. He has *redeemed* His people. Doubtless Zacharias discerned much of the true nature and glory of the Messiah's kingdom. The object of Christ's visit was the redemption of a lost world. This implies that miserable thralldom and bondage which we were under to sin and Satan, and expresses the stupendous love of Jesus, in ransoming us by His precious blood. *His people* refers primarily to the Jews, and then to all the spiritual seed of Abraham. (Gal. iii. 7.) In Christ, according to promise,

all the families of the earth were to be blessed. (Gen. xii. 3, xxii. 18.)

69. *And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David;—Ps. cxxxii. 17.*

Horn of salvation is a metaphorical expression taken from beasts, whose strength, defence, and victory over other animals, lies chiefly in their horns, as also the beauty and glory of several of them, the property likewise of the ancients consisting chiefly in their flocks and herds. The chief import of the words *horn of salvation*, in which the abstract is put for the concrete, is, that Christ is a great, glorious and powerful Saviour to His Church and people. *In the house of his servant David*, or, in the family lineage; as we say, the house of Bourbon, or of Brunswick. In verse 32, the angel stated that Mary was of the *family of David*, and Zacharias, who, from the nature of his office, must have been well acquainted with the public genealogical tables, attests the same thing.

70. *As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets which have been since the world began:*
 Jer. xxiii. 5, 6, and xxx. 10; Dan. ix. 24, Acts iii. 21; Rom. i. 2.

There is here the same reference as by Mary, verse 55. *As he spake, i. e.*, as he promised. *By the mouth, &c.* It was God that spake by His servants. (2 Peter i. 21.) *Holy prophets*. Those by whom the prophecies of salvation by Christ were uttered were persons who dared not deceive, and who aimed at promoting holiness among men. They were all *holy*, so far as this term is applicable to frail and erring man. Balaam, who was a very bad man, does not constitute an exception to this remark, for, as it was against his will he was forced to bless Israel (Num. xxiii. 8-10, 19-24, xxiv. 3-9), and utter a remarkable Messianic prediction (Num. xxiv. 17), he cannot properly be regarded as a prophet in the sense here meant. The words rendered, *since the world began*, literally mean, *from the beginning of ages*, the promise being made to Adam (Gen. iii. 15), that *the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head*, and to Abraham and the other patriarchs, that in their *seed all nations of the earth should be blessed*. (See Acts x. 43.)

71. *That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;*

That we, the true Church of God, consisting of all faithful believers, whether of the old or new dispensation, *should be saved*; literally, *salvation* (i. e., the means of salvation) *from our enemies*, the construction being continued from verse 69, the intermediate verse being parenthetical. *From our enemies*, spiritual as well as temporal, invisible as well as visible, and *from the hand of all that hate us*, from sin, Satan and his angels, all adverse power, and death.

72. *To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant*; 73. *The oath which he swore to our father Abraham.*
Lev. xxvi. 42; Ps. cxviii. 3, and cv. 8, 9, and cvi. 45; Ezek. xvi. 60, verse 51. ^aGen. xii. 3; xvii. 4; xxii. 16, 17; Heb. vi. 13, 17.

To perform the mercy, is to be referred to verse 69, on which this phrase depends. *The mercy*, the Lord Jesus Christ, the mercy of mercies, is a free, full, suitable, reasonable and satisfying mercy. The origin of our salvation was God's free, undeserved compassion and goodness. The word *promised* in our common version is unnecessarily supplied. *The mercy to our fathers*. The fulfillment of the promises concerning Messiah, is not only a matter of rejoicing for the present, and a source of hope for the future, but also a healing balm for past sorrows. The fathers had, for generations, wept over the decay of their nation, and were now living with God to look down from heaven upon the fullness of the time. (Luke xx. 37, 38; John viii. 56.) *His holy covenant* is explained in verse 73, which is put with it in explanatory opposition. *The oath* is the object of *remember*. *The oath which He swore to our father Abraham*—by which oath He confirmed the covenant before mentioned, that, as the Apostle observes (Heb. vi. 17, 18), by two immutable things, God's promise given in the covenant, an oath, in either of which, much more in both, *it was impossible for God to lie*, all that should truly embrace the covenant, by complying with the conditions of it, in repentance, faith, and new obedience, might have strong consolation in life, in death, and forever.

74. *That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear.*—Rom. vi. 18, 22; Heb. ix. 14.

By the words, *that he would grant us*, we are not to understand the *matter* of the

oath, but the *purpose* for which God once swore it, and was now about to fulfill it. *Being delivered out of the hands of our enemies*, especially our spiritual enemies—the devil, the world, and the flesh—the guilt, power and consequences of our sins, *might serve Him*, might worship and glorify Him, in and with our body and spirit which are His, *without fear*, that is, in a state of holy safety, with holy security and serenity of mind, as those that are *quiet from the fears of evil*.

75. *In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.*
1 Peter. xxiii. 39, 40; Eph. iv. 24; 2 Thes. xxiii. 13; 2 Tim. i. 9; Titus ii. 12; 1 Peter i. 15; 2 Peter i. 4.

In holiness—toward God, in devotedness to His glory, conformity to His image, subjection to His authority, and obedience to His will. *And righteousness*—toward our fellow-creatures, that is, in the continual exercise of truth, justice, mercy and charity. The two tables of the law, love to God, and love to man, cannot be divorced. He that *talks of holiness*, and *does unjustly* the while, is but a hypocrite. (Eph. iv. 24.) *Before him*, conscious we are in His presence, and under the continual notice of His eye, setting Him always before us, and aiming to please Him in everything.

76. *And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways.*
^aIsa. xl. 3; Mal. iii. 1, iv. 5; Matt. xi. 10; verse 17.

Zacharias, as a prophet of God, now addresses the child in language of great beauty and spiritual richness. He always places the Messiah in a more prominent position than His forerunner. *Shalt be called*, refers not only to the reality, but universal acknowledgment of His high prophetic character. *The prophet of the Highest*, or Most High. *Prophet* has two acceptations: 1. A person who *foretells future events*; and, 2. A *teacher* of men in the things of God. (1 Cor. xiv. 3.) John was a prophet in *both* senses; he proclaimed the mercy which *should be communicated*, announced the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and *taught* men how to leave their sins, and how to find the salvation of God. (See chap. iii. 5–14.) He had the honor of being the *last* and *clearest* prophet of the old covenant, and the *first* of the new. *For thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways*; thou shalt be an herald and harbinger to the Most High; thou shalt go

before the face of the Messiah, and by thy severe reproofs and powerful exhortations, shalt prepare His way before Him, and make men fit and ready to receive this mighty Saviour.

77. To give knowledge of salvation unto his people *by the remission of their sins.

*Mark i. 4; chap. iii. 3. *Or, for.

The teaching of John was to be the science of salvation. Men are ignorant, and they must be instructed. Human science may be profitable in *earthly* matters, but cannot profit the *soul*. No science but that which comes from God can ever save a soul from the power, guilt and pollution of sin. (Heb. viii. 11, 12.) *By the remission of their sins.* Remission of sins is the doctrine in which the Christian religion justly glories, as that most necessary and fundamental point in which every other religion fails. The heathen here confesses himself to be in the dark. The blood of bulls and goats cannot wash away the sins of the Jew; and his oblations, since the truth is come which they were intended to prefigure, are preposterous and impious.

78. Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the Day-spring from on high hath visited us,

*Num. xxiv. 17; Isa. xi. 1; Zech. iii. 8, vi. 12; Mal. iv. 2.

Through the tender mercy of our God, literally, *the bowels of mercy*, a strong Hebraism, implying God's tender compassions for mankind, immersed as they are in sins and miseries. (See Isa. lxiii. 15; Phil. ii. 1; Col. iii. 12, in which this expression is used.) *Day-spring.* The dawning of the celestial day hath visited us from on high. Here is doubtless a reference to such texts as Mal. iv. 2, and Isa. lx. 1-3, and possibly to Jer. xxiii. 5, and Zech. iii. 8. The original Hebrew word in these passages signifies that part of the heavens where the light begins to rise. (Compare Rev. vii. 2.) *The dawning of the day* seems, therefore, a very literal version, and beautifully describes the Gospel dispensation which dawned in the ministry of John the Baptist, and which was as superior to the patriarchal or Mosaic, with their types and shadows, as the light of the rising sun is superior to that of the moon and stars. *Hath visited us.* (See note on verse 68.) Jesus Christ is the true Sun of Righteousness. His doctrine is to the souls of men what *light* is to their bodies.

79. *To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.—^dIsa. lx. 2, xlii. 7; ^eMatt. iv. 16; Acts xxvi. 18.

In darkness and in the shadow of death. Such phrase describes with peculiar propriety the ignorant and miserable state of the Gentile world, and perhaps the former part of the verse may refer to them; but as Christ's preaching to the Jews in Galilee is said (Matt. iv. 14-16) to be an accomplishment of Isa. lx. 1, 2, to which Zacharias here seems to refer, we must not confine the sense of it merely to the Gentiles, for indeed the sad character and circumstances of the Jews at this time too well suited the representation here made. (Isa. lx. 2, lx. 1.) *To guide our feet into the way of peace.* The light of the day-spring is *directing*, it guides us into the way of making our peace with God, or keeping up a comfortable communion, that *way of peace* from which, as sinners, we have wandered, and *have not known* (Rom. iii. 17), nor could ever have known of ourselves.

80. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel.—Chap. ii. 40. *Matt. iii. 1, xi. 7.

As John *grew* in bodily stature, he also *waxed strong in spirit*, in courage, understanding, and purposes of good, in the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit; his judgment matured, and he gave indications not only of superior natural abilities and energy of mind, but also of strong faith, vigorous holy affections, great fortitude and resolution in the cause of God, a superiority to groveling desires and pursuits, and a victory over the fear and love of the world. All this was doubtless the result of secret prayer and meditation. *And was in the deserts*, not strictly deserts, but the rural region, little inhabited, of his native *hill-country*. Such retirement naturally prevented any such intimacy with Christ, in their childhood and youth, as might possibly have occasioned some suspicion as to the impartiality of the testimony which John afterward bore Him. (See John i. 31.)

Till the day of his showing unto Israel. Till the time of his *manifestation*—till he was thirty years of age, before which time the law did not permit a man to enter into the public ministry. (Numb. iv. 3.; see also chap. iii. 23.) *The day* was the

time referred to in Matt. iii. 1; Luke iii. 2. Many a one is qualified for great usefulness who yet is buried alive, and many are long so buried who are designed, and are thereby being prepared, for so much greater usefulness at last.

What a magnificent preparation was that which we have just contemplated for the great Founder of our religion! What an exalted idea must it give us of His dignity and importance to have a forerunner and a harbinger, such as John, to proclaim His approach to the world, and

call upon all mankind to attend to Him! The fact that John was holy from his birth is suggestive of the importance of early piety. How acceptable to God is the offering up of our early years!

"A flower, when offered in the bud,
Is no mean sacrifice."

How bitter is the remembrance of a childhood and youth of wickedness! The history of the Church shows that a very large majority of those who die Christians were converted in their youth.

1. To whom was the preface of this Gospel addressed? 2. Who was Theophilus? 3. Who was Zacharias? 4. What is said of him and his wife? 5. Who appeared to him in the temple? 6. What did the angel say to him? 7. For what purpose was the angel Gabriel sent to Nazareth? 8. Explain verse 28. 9. What effect had the appearance of the angel on Mary? 10. What did the angel say to her? 11. What does *Zacharias* signify? 12. What, Elizabeth? 13. Why was their child called John? 14. What did Zacharias do when his tongue was loosed? 15. What did his father prophesy?

CHAPTER II.

1 *Augustus taxeth all the Roman empire.* 6 *The nativity of Christ.* 8 *One angel relateth it to the shepherds: 13 many sing praises to God for it.* 21 *Christ is circumcised.* 22 *Mary purified.* 28 *Simeon and Anna prophesy of Christ: 40 who increaseth in wisdom.* 46 *questioneth in the temple with the doctors,* 51 *and is obedient to his parents.*

AND it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. — *Or, enrolled.

In those days, that is, about the time in which John was born and Christ conceived, in the manner as related in the preceding chapter. *Went out a decree*—was issued an edict, *from Cæsar Augustus.* "*Cæsar*" was the family name of the then reigning master of the Roman empire, and "*Augustus*" the name which he assumed at his accession. *All the world,* denotes not merely the country of the Jews, but the whole Roman empire. *Should be taxed,* that is, enrolled, or a census of them taken, probably, also, a registry of their property made, whether for the purpose of levying a poll-tax, or of recruiting the army.

2. (*And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)—Acts v. 37.

Cyrenius is a Greek form of the Roman

name Quirinus, whose full name is *Publius Sulpicius Quirinus.*

It has long been objected that the *taxing* (or census, registration, or enrollment) under *Cyrenius*, here said to have taken place at the time of our Lord's birth, and in the reign of Herod, did not really occur till ten years later, in the time of his son Archelaus, and that this is the only census taken by the Romans in Judea of which we have any information. But this objection is baseless. What Luke affirms is, that, in or about the time of our Lord's birth, a decree for a general registration was issued by Augustus, in consequence of which Joseph went, accompanied by Mary, to Bethlehem, to be registered there. In recording this, it seems to have occurred to the Evangelist that, in order to prevent confusion, he should specify that the registration, *though then decreed, was not executed, or not carried out to its full results till some years later when Cyrenius was president,* and therefore he interposes parenthetically the information, that this registration, though decreed, was not fully made until "*Cyrenius was governor of Syria.*" Prof.

A. W. Zumpt, of Berlin, has assigned good reasons, based on combining a great number of passages from the Roman literature of those times, for believing that Cyrenius was *twice* governor of Syria, and that the enrollment question was made in his first governorship, which dates from B. C. 4 to B. C. 1, when he was succeeded by M. Lollius. He proves that Cyrenius was honored with a triumph for subduing a tribe of Cilicians; by another train of passages He shows that Cilicia belonged under the governorship of Syria, so that Cyrenius must have *then* been governor of Syria; and by another series of deductions he shows that this triumph must have taken place before A. D. 1 or 2.

3. And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

Into his own city. When the census was made in any country, the inhabitants were obliged to attend in the cities to which they belonged. The Jews, however, in carrying out the edict, were left to their own peculiar customs and usages. The policy of Rome, as well as the religious scruples of the Jews, demanded this. For this reason, instead of appearing in the cities where they resided, or to whose jurisdiction the places of their abode belonged, they appeared according to their families, every one in his native city, or the place where his paternal inheritance lay, to be there enrolled. *All went to be taxed.* The obedience of the Jews to this decree is a plain proof, that they were now dependent on the Romans, and the *sceptre* was *departing from Judah*.

4. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David;) 5. To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

¹ Sam. xvi. 1, 4; John vii. 42. ² Matt. 1. 16; chap. i. 27. ³ Matt. i. 18; chap. i. 27.

Went up. Bethlehem was indeed high ground, but anciently any going from an inferior province or city to one of greater or of more political importance, was *going up*. *From Galilee, &c.* In the time of our Lord all Palestine was divided into three provinces, Judea, Samaria and Galilee. The last included the whole northern section of the country, namely, the ancient territories of Issachar, Zebulon, Asher and Naphtali. *Out of the city of Nazareth.* Nazareth was a very obscure place. It is not

mentioned in the Old Testament, but occurs first in Matt. ii. 23. *Unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem;* (because he was of the house and lineage of David.) *The city of David,* the place where the royal David was born and had spent his boyhood. The words *house and lineage* are designed to give full and emphatic expression to Joseph's real descent from David. The name *Bethlehem* anciently signified the *town or house of bread*; in modern Arabic it seems to signify the *house or place of flesh*.

To be taxed, to enroll himself, *with Mary.* These words are not to be joined in sense with *to be taxed*, but simply denote accompaniment. *His espoused wife.* The propriety of this expression appears from Matt. i. 25, where we are told Joseph knew not his wife till she brought forth her first-born son—they did not enter upon the full relations and duties of man and wife until after the birth of Jesus. *Being great with child.* It may seem strange that Mary, in this condition, should undertake such a journey—about sixty miles. Perhaps, the persons to be registered being classed in the roll, according to their lineage, Mary might judge it proper on this occasion to claim her descent from David, in order to her being publicly acknowledged as one of his posterity, and the rather as she knew in what relation she stood to the yet unborn Messiah. Possibly, though, according to the Roman custom, women could be enrolled without their personal appearance, the emperor may have given particular and exact orders with regard to the *family of David*, as it had been the royal family, and was still talked of as designed to be so, that he might know its number and strength.

At all events, by this visit various ends of Providence were in a most remarkable manner served: 1. Jesus instead of being brought forth in Nazareth, as seemed likely, was born in Bethlehem, thus fulfilling the ancient and important prophecy. (Micah v. 2.) 2. By the birth of Christ in Bethlehem, He was proved to be of the *seed of David*. And this was a material thing, requiring such an authentic proof as this. *Justin Martyr* and *Tertullian*, two of the earliest advocates of the Christian



THE SHEPHERD'S FIELD, BETHELEHEM.



religion, appeal to these *rolls* or *records* of the *Roman empire*, for the proof of Christ's being born of the house of David. 3. It also thus appeared that Christ was made *under the law*, for He became a subject of the Roman empire as soon as He was born, a *servant of rulers*. (Isa. xlix. 7.) Thus we see, as we look at the edict of the emperor, and these results from it, how *man proposes and God disposes*, and how Providence orders all things for the fulfilling of the Scriptures, and makes use of the projects men have for the serving their own purposes, quite beyond their intention, to serve His own.

6. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

We are not informed how long they had been in Bethlehem before Mary's delivery. Perhaps a short time only elapsed between their arrival and the event alluded to.

7. And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling-clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.—Matt. i. 25.

In the East there is built, in or near to a town, generally with a stable attached, a *caravanserai* or *khan*, in which a person who comes to the town and has no friends to receive him into their houses, may seek accommodation, stay as long as he pleases, generally without payment, but is only provided with lodging for himself and beast, if he has any, and with water from a well on the premises. The people of Bethlehem, in order to prevent their hospitality from becoming oppressive by reason of the numerous visits of strangers, built a *khan* in or near the town. To this large structure Joseph and Mary repaired for accommodation. That they did so would seem to imply that they really were strangers in this the native seat of the family to which they belonged, or that, as they clearly came very late, they may have found the friends they had at Bethlehem already overburdened with guests.

And she brought forth her first-born son. These words assert the virginity of the mother of Jesus until the time of His birth. "He was born of the virgin Mary." The word *first-born* does not necessarily imply that Mary was subsequently the mother of other children than Jesus. (See on Matt. i. 25.) And wrapped him in swad-

ding clothes. This binding with bandages or cloth was studiously attended to by the ancients, lest the tender frame of the infant might acquire, through weakness or an accidental wrench, any distortion.

How great was the humiliation of the Son of God, in the manner of His introduction into our world! Let us remember why He came. It was not to enjoy Himself, but to save us. In order to save us, two things were necessary—that He should obey the law of God which we had broken, and that He should suffer the punishment due to us for breaking it. Hence, He was always placed in suffering circumstances from the beginning to the close of His earthly career. Poverty and contempt nursed Him in His infancy. The most splendid palace on earth would have been too humble an abode for Him whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, but instead of opening His infant eyes in a palace, He opened them in a stable. And as He walked through this world, at each step His way became rougher; as his *first* bed was a *manger*; his *last* was a *cross*. We cannot be, in heart and life, the followers of this self-denying Saviour, unless we are content with the portion of this world's good which He sees fit to bestow upon us, however small, unless we are willing to lay down, without repining, our worldly blessings, however dear, and to acknowledge heartily and sincerely, that we had rather be "rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom," than rank among the wealthiest, or take our place among the noblest of the world.

8. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

¹Gen. xxxi. 39, 40; Ex. iii. 1, 2; 1 Sam. xvii. 34, 35; Ps. xxviii. 70, 71; Ezek. xxxiv. 8. ²Or, the night watches.

In the same country, *i. e.*, in the region near Bethlehem. The Gentile magi were brought from afar, but these shepherds are brought from nigh. *Abiding in the field*, both day and night, whether in tents or in the open air is uncertain, but the word *abiding* seems to indicate that near by the fold were temporary tents or booths, for the convenience of the shepherds. *Keeping watch over their flock by night*. The expression seems to indicate that they were stationed at various posts, and perhaps relieved one another. The

original word may be more literally rendered *watching the watches of the night, i. e.*, each one keeping watch (which ordinarily consisted of three hours) in his turn. The sheep were not confined under a covered fold by night, it being regarded more conducive to the excellence of the wool to let them remain under the open sky by night as well as by day. It was necessary to watch the sheep in the field, to guard them against the wolves, foxes, and other beasts of prey common there. As Abraham, David and Moses, to whom the promise of the Messiah was first made, were shepherds, so was the completion of this promise first revealed to shepherds.

Fabricius gives a catalogue of no less than one hundred and thirty-six different opinions concerning the day of Christ's birth. It has been placed in every month of the year. The Egyptians place it in *January*—*Wagenseil* and *Wiesler* in *February*—*Bochart* and *Paulus* in *March*—some mentioned by *Clement* of *Alexandria*, and *Greswell* and *Alford* in *April*—the *Alexandrian Church* in *May*—*Epiphanius* speaks of some who placed it in *June*—*Lichtenstein* places it in *July* or *December*—*Strong* and *Lardner* place it in *August*—*Lightfoot*, *Webster* and *Wilkinson* place it in *September*—*Scaliger*, *Casaubon* and *Calvisius* and *Archbishop Newcome* in *October*, others in *November*. *Dr. Robinson* places it in autumn; *Clinton* in spring; and *Andrews* between the middle of *December*, 749, to the middle of *January*, 750 A. U. The fixing of the nativity of Christ on the 25th of *December*, was really done at *Rome*, and was transmitted from thence over the *Eastern Church*. "The authority for the selection of that day was the government record of the *taxing*, or census of *Cyrenius*, said to be in the imperial archives at *Rome*. But the authenticity of these records is too untenable to allow any weight to the argument." "Pope *Julius I.*" says *Dr. Adam Clarke*, "was the person who made this alteration, and it appears to have been done for this reason: The sun now began his return toward the northern tropic, ending the winter, lengthening the short days, and introducing the Spring. All this was probably deemed emblematic

cal of the rising of the Sun of Righteousness on the darkness of this world, and causing the day-spring from on high to visit mankind."

The widely conflicting views which have been stated as to the day of our Saviour's birth, are most manifestly attributable to the absence of all certain evidence as to the precise date of that event. Revelation is silent on this point. The tradition of the Church is widely diverse and discrepant. There are no data upon which any calculations may be based, and hence everything rests on mere conjecture. The question is one of little importance, even for those who observe the day, as the celebration of a public event is not necessarily confined to the day of the year on which it occurred. It is happy for us that the particular day on which Jesus was born, is not necessary to be ascertained in order to our salvation, nor at all material to true religion. It is sufficient for us to know that, in the *fullness of time*, just when He was most needed, and when the Jewish and Gentile world was fully prepared for this central fact and turning point in history, the Saviour was born, was made flesh, and dwelt among us, assumed our nature, and in consequence thereof is become an all-sufficient Saviour and Redeemer, in whom *whosoever believeth* with a right faith *shall not perish, but have eternal life*.

9. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid.—*Chap. i. 12.*

The angel of the Lord—no particular angel is specified. *Came upon them*, in a sudden and unexpected manner; the original words might be rendered, *stood over them*, that is, appeared in a visible form, standing in the air over their heads. *And the glory of the Lord shone round about them*. Not only a great light, but such a glorious splendor as used to represent the presence of God—the *Shechinah* surrounded them with its effulgence. *And they were sore afraid*—thrown into consternation at so uncommon and so awful an appearance. (See on i. 12.)

The fact that the shepherds, whilst in their calling, were chosen to receive the first intelligence of the salvation of a world, teaches us that God often meets

men in the paths of their worldly employment. He sanctified the astronomy of the *wise men*, writing the lesson He wished to teach them, on the glittering alphabet with which their studies had made them especially conversant. It was from the sheepfold David was taken to be anointed king, and from his father's barn that Gideon was called to deliver Israel. It was when Zacharias was burning incense in the temple, that the angel of the Lord promised him gladness and joy in a son. Matthew was sitting at "the receipt of custom," when called to follow Christ; and the fishermen, Peter, James and John, were casting a net into the sea, when our Lord called them to be "fishers of men." It is remarkable, that on all the more important occasions in our Lord's life, on which His lowliness and humiliation are signally manifested, there is always (or generally), in conjunction with this, some august exhibition of His Godhead. Though born in a stable, angels sang of His glory. When receiving baptism (a sinner's rite) at a sinner's hand, the heavens were opened, and a sublime voice from "the excellent glory" attested His Divinity. He wept with the sisters in Bethany; but with a word of omnipotence, summoned the sheeted dead from the tomb. Calvary, with its crown of thorns, the gash of the spear, the criminal's torture, the malefactor associates, shows us *a dying man*; but a blackened sun, riven rocks, the earth trembling to support its Creator's cross, were nature's glorious testimonies that He who hung in ignominy on that tree, was "*The mighty God*."

10. And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

¹Gen. xii. 3; Matt. xxviii. 19; Mark i. 15; verses 31, 32; chap. xxiv. 47; Col. i. 23.

Fear not. As if he had said, "The design of my appearing to you hath nothing terrible in it, but the contrary; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy." The original expression here is peculiar: *I announce, or evangelize, unto you good tidings*, which shall be matter of great joy to all people, literally, to all the people. As these shepherds were representatives of the Jews, so Israel is the people to whom is the immediate joy, yet it redounds to all the world besides. In verse 14, *good will*

is proclaimed to all men. (See Matt. xxviii. 19.)

11. ¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David ²a Saviour, ³which is Christ the Lord.

¹Isa. ix. 6; ²Matt. i. 21; ³Matt. i. 16 and xvi. 16; chap. i. 43; Acts ii. 36 and x. 36; Phil. ii. 11.

Unto you, not only the shepherds and the Jews, to whom the Gospel was first preached, but all mankind—to *you men*, not to *us* angels. He took not on Him our nature. There is a reference to Isa. ix. 6. *This day*, at this time. *In the city of David*, the true place for the birth of David's royal son. This reference to Bethlehem would recall Micah v. 2, which, according to Matt. ii. 5, 6, was, in those days, universally understood to refer to Messiah. *A Saviour*. The word thus rendered properly denotes such a Saviour as perfectly frees us from all evil and danger, and is the author of perpetual salvation.

Christ. The Greek word signifies, *Anointed*. (See on Matt. i. 1.) *Christ the Lord*—not the Christ of the Lord, as He is called, chap. ii. 26, but the Messiah, who, equally with the Jehovah of the Old Testament, bears the name *Lord*. (Comp. chap. xxiii. 2 and Acts ii. 36.) The Greek word rendered *Lord* corresponds to the Hebrew *Jehovah*; and the application of this word to Christ in this sense receives much strength from the fact that in verse 9 the same Greek word is used twice of Jehovah. It is certain that the Lordship of Christ must be considered in a mere *spiritual* sense, as He never set up any *secular* government upon earth, nor commanded any to be established in His name, and there is certainly no spiritual government but that of God.

12. And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

They might have expected to find Him dressed in splendid robes, lying in state, in the best house in the town, with a numerous train of attendants. As if, therefore, at once and forever, to rectify the common notions of earthly glory which prevailed, and which they may have in some degree shared, connected with the appearance of this great personage, the angel forewarned them that they should find the babe in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger, and made this the particular signal by which they should

distinguish Him. The designation of the city of David, which they knew to be Bethlehem, as the place of the child's birth, gave them the general direction which they were to take. As Jesus came into our world as a *babe*, we learn that He is able to sympathize with us from the beginning of our life, and that His errand was one of tenderness and love. He came, not to *condemn*, but to *save*.

13. ¹And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, ²Gen. xxviii. 12, xxxii. 1, 2; Ps. ciii. 20, 21, cxlviii. 2; Dan. vii. 10; Heb. i. 14; Rev. v. 11.

A *multitude of the heavenly host*, or army, called *an host*, partly for their number and partly for their order. This is a usual appellation of the angels, who are represented as the body guard of the Lord. (Comp. 1 Kings xxii. 19; Dan. vii. 10; 2 Chron. xviii. 18; Ps. ciii. 21; Matt. xxvi. 35.) These angels were not silent witnesses; they sang a song, whose very words are handed down to us. It is the only song sung by angels upon *earth* that we ever heard. (See next verse.) What gratitude and joy these heavenly beings appeared to have felt on this occasion! The reasons of this were, their *love to God*, who, through this wonderful event, was to be glorified in a pre-eminent manner, and, their *benevolence to man*, who, by this same event, was to be redeemed, and become the subject of a glorious and endless salvation.

14. ¹Glory to God in the highest, and on earth ²peace, good will toward man; ³Chap. xix. 35; Eph. i. 6 and iii. 10, 21; Rev. v. 13. ⁴Isa. lvii. 19; chap. i. 79; Rom. v. 1; Eph. ii. 4, 7; Col. i. 20. ⁵John iii. 16; Eph. ii. 4, 7; 2 Thes. ii. 16; 1 John iv. 9, 10.

The heavenly host take up the announcement of the angel (verses 10, 11), repeating it in substance, and confirming and stating it more distinctly as a message of glad tidings. In their song there is a threefold correspondence: 1. Between *glory and peace*; 2. Between *in the highest and on earth*; and 3. Between *God and good will toward man*. The shouts of a multitude are generally broken into short sentences, and are commonly elliptical, which is the cause of some ambiguity in these words, which may be understood in different senses. Some read the phrase *Glory to God*, *Glory is to God*; others, *Let there be glory to God*. By some, *in the highest* is supposed to refer to the Jewish threefold heavens, so that the meaning is, "this

glory ascends to the *highest*." Some read the whole doxology thus: *Glory to God in the highest*—that is, in heaven—and *on earth peace, yea, favor, toward men*. Others understand it as signifying, hat the *good will*, or favor, which was now shown to men, is the *glory of God in the highest*, and is the *peace and happiness of those who dwell on earth*. According to others, the sense is, "Glory be to God among the angels in heaven for sending the Messiah—and peace or salvation on earth among men of His good pleasure, *i. e.*, among God's chosen people in whom He is well pleased."

From the words, considered in a doctrinal point of view, we learn, 1. That the birth of Christ is an event which, above all others, brings glory to God, giving such a display of several of His perfections as had never been made before, particularly of His *holiness and justice*, in requiring such a sacrifice as was hereby to be prepared for the expiation of human guilt, and His *mercy* in providing and accepting it, His *wisdom* in devising such a plan for the redemption of lost man, and His *power* in executing it. 2. It brings *peace on earth*, that is, peace to man, peace with God, through the atonement and mediation of Christ, peace of conscience, as the consequence of knowing that we have peace with God, and peace with one another. 3. It displays the *good will*, the benevolence, the love of God to man, as no other of His works or dispensations ever did, or could do. (See 1 John iv. 7, &c.; John iii. 16.) If the angels, who are not otherwise interested in the incarnation of Christ than as it affords the brightest display of the Divine attributes, adore and glorify God on account of it, how much more should man do this, for whose salvation this astonishing interposition of love was designed?

15. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, ²the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.—²Gr., *the men, the shepherds*.

The good shepherds waited but to hear the close of the angels' song, and when all again was dark and silent, they hurried away, leaving their flocks behind, to witness at Bethlehem that which the Lord had made known unto them. Those who delay to seek Jesus, when the messengers of God bring them glad tidings of

salvation, risk their present safety and their eternal happiness. *And see this thing which is come to pass.* Observe: not, let us go and see whether this thing *be* come to pass, which the Lord hath made known, but, let us go and see this thing which *is* come pass. They never for an instant questioned the certainty and the reality of all that had been revealed to them. What an instance of that true faith which is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen!" This is the faith which we ought to exercise. Instead of questioning, doubting and reasoning, we ought, in all child-like simplicity, to believe and act.

16. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

How must Mary and Joseph have been delighted, and how must their faith have been strengthened, by the visit of the shepherds! Though overlooked by the world, the holy child was honored by these poor men. Even now there are only comparatively a few who acknowledge Him as their Lord and Master, and these few are generally poor, like the shepherds of Bethlehem. Here, as usual in the history of the Nativity, the name of Mary comes before that of her husband.

17. And when they had seen *it* they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

The saying, that is, the appearance of the angels and the prediction by which they had been induced to visit the place where the infant Jesus was. *Made known abroad*: this publication was probably confined to a comparatively small circle, consisting of persons who at day-break may have been in the neighborhood. The shepherds were the first evangelists among men. Such as have found Christ to their comfort, and tasted that the Lord is gracious to themselves, cannot but recommend Him to the love and admiration of others.

18. And all they that heard *it* wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

Wondered, that is, *conversed with amazement* concerning the statements of the angelic ministrations related by the shepherds. We are not told how many, if any of them, visited Mary, and obtained personal information respecting the child, but it is clear that their wonder and

curiosity were strongly excited by what had been told them respecting Him. None who heard were unmoved, yet the contrast between those first hearers and Mary, verse 19, forces upon us the conclusion, that their wonder was less deep and salutary than her silent pondering. It is one thing to *wonder*, and another to *believe*. Neither the hearing of Christ with the outward ear, nor the seeing Him by the outward eye, will suffice for salvation.

19. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.—*Gen.* xxxvii. 11; chap. i. 66; ver. 51.

All these things, the whole train of events, the miraculous birth of John, the annunciation of the angel to herself, the appearance of the angels to the shepherds, and the visit of the shepherds to her. *Pondered* means *weighed*. She *kept*, literally, *noted* or *watched closely*, *all these things*, and *weighed* them, kept them in active remembrance, compared them, reflected upon them. This is the way in which sermons should be heard, and the Bible should be read. We should not listen to sermons, that they may amuse, or merely entertain us. (*Ezek.* xxxiii. 31, 32.) Neither should we listen to God's Word as a person looks in a glass, and then goes away and forgets what he has seen. (*James* i. 24.) Such hearers soon lose the good impressions they have received, and continue worldly-minded and ungodly. (See *Ps.* i. 2.)

20. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

This conduct on their part indicates that the supposition is true, that they piously waited for the hope of Israel, the Messiah, and furnishes a beautiful example of their pious fidelity in their vocation. Their extraordinary experience did not withdraw them from their daily and ordinary duties, but enabled them to perform them with increased gladness of heart. They probably fell asleep, before the beginning of our Lord's public ministry, with the recollection of this night in their hearts, and a frame of mind like that of the aged Simeon. Their names, unknown on earth, are written in heaven, and their experience is the best example of the first beatitude, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

21. "And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

"Gen. xvii. 12; Lev. xii. 6; chap. i. 59. "Matt. i. 21, 25; chap. i. 31.

And when eight days, &c., that is, not when the eighth day was ended, but when it was come. The law had appointed that every male should be circumcised at eight days old, or on the eighth day after its birth. (Gen. xvii. 12; see notes on chap. i. 59.) *For the circumcising of the child.* It is obvious, that for one at least of the purposes for which all the other children of Abraham received this rite, as the symbol of the renewing of a corrupt nature, and the putting away the lusts of the flesh, it was to our Lord wholly unnecessary. His spotless purity needed no symbol of the putting off of the sinful Adam. Why, then, did the Saviour subject Himself to this rite?

The rite of circumcision was the initiatory rite of the Jewish religion. When, therefore, the infant Saviour submitted to this important rite, it was in effect, saying that He acknowledged Himself as of the seed of Abraham (Heb. ii. 16); that He would be made in the *likeness*, not only of *flesh*, but of *sinful* flesh (Rom. viii. 3); that "in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto *his* brethren," sin only excepted (Heb. ii. 17); that He came not to destroy the law, or the prophets, but to fulfill them (Matt. v. 17). And this, it is evident, would be perfectly intelligible to the Jews, however it may need explanation to us, for it was most clearly understood that, as the Apostle expresses it, every man who was circumcised was "a debtor to do the whole law." (Gal. v. 3; see Ex. xxi. 6.) He who was made of a woman, came also at the appointed time under the law of circumcision. (Gal. iv. 4; Rom. v. 15.)

His name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb. (See chap. i. 31.) According to Gen. xxi. 3, 4, the performance of circumcision, and the bestowing of a name, had been simultaneous from the very origin of the rite. The name *Jesus* is the Greek form of the Hebrew *Joshua*, which may be variously analyzed, but always with the same essential meaning, that of *Saviour* or

salvation, and with reference to *Jehovah* as its author. (See Num. xiii. 8, 16; 1 Chron. vii. 47; Neh. viii. 17; Matt. i. 21.) Some contend that the word *Jah*, or *Jehovah*, enters into the composition of the name. *Jesus* is the proper name of our Lord; that of *Christ* (signifying *Anointed*) identifies Him with the promised *Messiah* (John i. 41), the name given to the long-promised Prophet and King whom the Jews had been taught by the prophets to expect. (See ii. 11.)

22. And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord; 23. (As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;) 24. And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons.

"Lev. xii. 3-6. "Ex. xiii. 2, and xxii. 29, and xxiv. 19; Num. iii. 13. "Lev. xii. 2, 6, 8.

Days of her purification, that is, thirty-three days after what was termed the seven days of her uncleanness—forty days in all, for that was the time appointed by the law, during which the mother was held ceremonially impure, and remained in her own house. (Lev. xii. 1-8.) As Jesus, whom it behooved to fulfill all righteousness, was circumcised, though perfectly free from sin, so His mother submitted to the purification prescribed by the law, notwithstanding she was free from the pollutions common in other births. It was evident, indeed, that she was a mother, but her miraculous conception was not generally known. *They brought him to Jerusalem.* Up to this time they had remained at Bethlehem, and thither also they returned after the presentation in the temple. *To present him to the Lord. (As it is written in the law of the Lord, every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord.)* And to offer a sacrifice, &c. In remembrance of the deliverance from Egypt, when the destroying angel spared the first-born of the Israelites, it was ordered that the eldest son of every family should be consecrated to the Lord (Num. iii. 13), and they were to be redeemed from the service of the sanctuary, by the payment of five shekels (Num. xviii. 16). The tribe of Levi afterward took the place of the first-born thus dedicated and redeemed, and was set apart for God's special service. (Num. iii. 12.) A pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons, was

the offering required from the poor. (Lev. xii. 6, 8.) Those in better circumstances were commanded to bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a turtle-dove, or a young pigeon, for a sin-offering. God looks for something from every one, not from every one alike. Where there is a willing mind, it shall be accepted according to what a person hath. (2 Cor. viii. 12.)

25. And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Ghost was upon him.
† Isa. xl. 1; Mark xv. 43; verse 38.

Of *Simeon*, we know certainly no more than what is here recorded. It was not the design of Luke to refer to Simeon's worldly standing, but only his eminent religious attainments. *He was just and devout*, just in dealings toward men, devout in dealings toward God. The same distinction holds here, as in the words *holiness* and *righteousness*. (Chap. i. 75.)

Waiting for the consolation of Israel—a common phrase among ancient and modern Jews, to denote Messiah. The prophets often introduce the promise of Messiah's coming to comfort the people of God in their afflictions. The time of Messiah's appearance had been revealed to Daniel, as consisting of what, in prophetic language, is denominated *seventy weeks*, that is, every week being seven years, four hundred and ninety years; reckoning from the order issued to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem. However much the Jews misunderstood many other prophecies relating to the reign of this extraordinary personage, what concerned both the time and the place of His first appearance seems to have been pretty well understood by the bulk of the nation. From this chapter, as well as from the other accounts of that period still extant, it is evident that the expectation of this great deliverer was then general among them. It is a point of some consequence to the cause of Christianity, that both the time and the place of our Lord's birth coincided with the interpretations then commonly given of the prophecies by the Jews themselves, His contemporaries. (See Matt. ii. 3-6.)

26. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.—† Ps. lxxxix. 48; Heb. xl. 5.

God, in reward of his piety, favored him so highly as to assure him by a particular revelation, the method of which is not stated, that he should not die till he had seen the Messiah. *See death*, or, as it is elsewhere expressed, *taste death*. (Matt. xvi. 28; Heb. ii. 9.) *The Lord's Christ*, that is, "The Lord's Anointed." (See Ps. ii. 2.) There is a beautiful and striking antithesis between the words *see death* and *see the Lord's Christ*.

27. And he came by the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law,—† Matt. iv. 1.

Probably he had in view the prophecy of Malachi iii. 1. This prophecy was just going to be fulfilled, and the Holy Spirit, by a secret but powerful impulse, directed this righteous man to go and see its accomplishment. *Brought in the child Jesus*, that is, into the court of the women, just at this very juncture: *to do for him*, &c., that is, to present Him to the Lord, according to the reference in verse 24, and according to the Divine commandment. (Num. xviii. 15, 16.) Those who come, under the influence of God's Spirit, to places of public worship, will undoubtedly meet with Him who is the *comfort* and *salvation* of Israel.

28. Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God and said,

The aged saint first beheld his Saviour, then transported with the fulfillment of all his hopes, took Him up in his arms and blessed Him, for his faith was so strong that he was able to believe that the infant of the poor woman he saw was the Lord of All. He embraced Him with the greatest affection imaginable. When we receive the record which the Gospel gives us of Christ with a lively faith, and the offer it makes us of Christ, with love and resignation, then *we take Christ in our arms*.

29. Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word.
† Gen. xli. 30; Phil. i. 23.

This is the beginning of the sweet canticle, or swan-like song of Simeon, a little before his dissolution, which has been celebrated for its beauty in all ages of the Church. This sacred song, which was probably spoken aloud, in the hearing of all the people then present, embodies the full doctrine of the personal glory of Christ, the spiritual purpose of His mission, and its universal extent.

It had been Simeon's earnest desire to see his Lord with his bodily eyes before he died, and now, this desire having been accomplished, he avows his joy in being thus made ready, if not his desire also, to depart in peace. The phrase, *Lettest thou thy servant depart*, signifies a *release* or *loosing* from life—from a sorrowful and dark prison, such as this wretched life certainly is. In the use of the word *depart*, as found in the Scriptures, and the philosophers, there is a manifest profession of hope in a future state, since the body is supposed to enchain the soul, and detain it from its native home. *In peace*, refers to that happy and tranquil state of mind, which results from the full assurance of God's favor. An entrance into perfect peace and felicity, is implied, else death would not be a desired and welcome release. *According to thy word*, a retrospect of the previous revelation. (Verse 26.) Note here, 1. That a good man having served his generation, and God in his generation, faithfully, is weary of the world, and willing to be dismissed from it. 2. That the death of a good man is nothing else but a quiet and peaceable departure; it is a departure *in peace* to the God of peace. 3. That it is only a spiritual sight of Christ by faith that can welcome the approach of death, and render it an object desirable to the Christian's choice.

30. For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,
Isa. lii. 10; chap. iii. 6.

This was the ground of Simeon's assurance, that he was now to depart from life. As *salvation* had its origin in the wisdom, power and love of God, Simeon ascribed it to Him, putting the effect for the cause, and calling it *God's salvation*. The Lord Jesus Himself is here called "the salvation of God," because the whole salvation of a sinner centers in His person, as "God manifest in the flesh," all the purposes and promises of salvation had reference to Him. (Isa. ix. 2, xlii. 5-7, xlix. 5-6, lx. 1-3; John i. 4-9, iii. 19-21, viii. 12, xii. 34-36.) True believers may make the language of Job's assurance and triumph their own. (Job xix. 25-7.)

31. Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;

Here it appears that Simeon knew that this salvation, which God had *made ready in the presence of all people*, was not confined

to the Jews, but was designed for all mankind, and he rejoiced in knowing that. This shows the love to *other* men that dwelt in his heart. He longed that *all* should know his Saviour.

32. ^aA light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.
Isa. ix. 2, xlii. 6, xlix. 6, lx. 1, 2, 3; Matt. iv. 16; Acts xiii. 47, xxviii. 28.

By Moses and the prophets, a light of revelation was given to the Jews, in the blessedness of which the *Gentiles* did not partake. By Christ, as a moral light, or teacher, the Gentiles were to receive the knowledge of God, of true religion, and of Divine things in general, especially of a future state, and the true and only method of salvation through His own atoning blood. *And the glory of thy people Israel*. It was an honor to the Jewish nation that the Messiah sprang from one of their tribes, and was born, lived, and died among them. And of those who were *Israelites indeed*, of the spiritual Israel, He was indeed the glory, and will be so throughout eternity. (Isa. lx. 19.) For in Him *shall the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory*. (Isa. xlv. 25.)

33. And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.

They did not yet *thoroughly* understand the things which were spoken, or they marvelled how Simeon, a stranger, came to the knowledge of the child. Although they had been prepared, by the previous wonderful manifestations, for the remarkable destiny of the child, they did not as yet *fully* know the counsels of God relative to the salvation He was to procure, and hence they were struck and charmed by the new aspect under which this salvation was presented. Simeon sees fit to moderate their transports, by alluding to the approaching sufferings which must precede the glory.

34. And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold this *child* is set for the ^afall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against;

Isa. viii. 14; Hos. xiv. 9; Matt. xxi. 44; Rom. ix. 32, 33; 1 Cor. i. 23, 24; 2 Cor. ii. 16; 1 Peter ii. 7, 8. Acts xxviii. 22.

And Simeon blessed them, namely, Joseph and Mary. He pronounced them blessed who had the honor to be related to this child, and were intrusted with the bringing Him up. *Said unto Mary*, he blessed both, but addressed Mary, thus recogniz-

ing that she and not the husband is the parent.

This child is set, &c. *Is set*, that is, destined, appointed for. This Divine setting or appointing is always to be considered as *caused* by their own fault, in those who fall, by wilfully continuing in unbelief and impenitence. *Of many in Israel.* We are not to limit this rise and fall to persons of the Jewish nation, but to those of every nation where the Gospel should be preached in subsequent times. There seems to be a reference in this verse to Isa. viii. 14, 15. Paul says, in 1 Cor. i. 23, that Christ was to the Jews *a stumbling-block*, or something over which *they fell*. How was it they fell over Him? Through pride. (Rom. x. 3, 4.) And it is for the same reason that any still refuse Christ—they feel satisfied with their own righteousness, and imagine that God is also. People in this state of mind fall over Christ as over a stumbling-stone: they cannot receive Him, because they do not desire His salvation.

Rising again. Many in Israel, who fell over Christ, afterward believed, and rose from sin and death by Him, as myriads of penitent sinners have done since. Many of the priests who joined in crucifying the Saviour, were *afterward* obedient to the faith. (Acts vi. 7.) But as the word *again* is not expressed in the Greek, we need not suppose that the *same persons* would fall and rise again. The meaning is, that many would be ruined by Christ's coming, and many *others* would be made happy, or be saved. God's first design in sending His Son into the world was, *that through Him the world might be saved*. (John iii. 16.) But to those who have no relish for spiritual things, no appreciation of Christ's character and mission, by reason of their pride and perversity, He becomes a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient. (1 Peter ii. 8; see 2 Cor. ii. 16.)

And for a sign which shall be spoken against. The word *sign* seems here to be used for a *mark* or *butt* to shoot or dart at, which finely illustrates the deliberate malice and hellish artifice with which the character and person of Christ were assaulted, while He endured the contradiction of

sinners against Himself. (Heb. xii. 3.) The fulfilment of this prophecy culminated in the crucifixion. True religion is still spoken against. People must often give up the favor of the world, if they would be faithful to Christ.

25. (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.—Ps. xliii. 10; John xix. 25.

Mary may be supposed to have thus far congratulated herself on being the mother of the Messiah, and to have had no idea that the honor was to be mingled with much suffering. She is now disabused of this erroneous impression. *A sword, or javelin, or dart, shall pierce through thy own soul also*; "the darts that are shot at thy Son shall pierce thee to the heart; the calumnies, persecutions, and sufferings which He shall be exposed to, especially in His death, shall prove matter of the greatest affliction to thee, and shall sting thee with the bitterest griefs." It is clear that Simeon's intimation of the great grief in store for the mother, who stood before him, was founded on Isa. liii. *That the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.* These words are to be taken with verse 34. The word translated *thoughts* is a word of *middle* signification, and denotes *imaginings*, or the prevalent and dominant cause of thought, whether good or bad. "Thus will it be evinced what is the real disposition of every one to the Messiah. Christ shall *bring out* the secret characters, the moral feelings, and thoughts of men—all things in reference to Him were ordered by Providence to produce this effect. Lasting neutrality with respect to the Lord is impossible; he that is not for Him is against Him. (Luke xi. 23.) His appearing brings to light the latent good and evil, as the same sun which dissipates the clouds that obscure the sky, also draws up the mists and vapor of earth. (See Matt. xi. 6.)

36. And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanneel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; 37. And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.—Acts xxvi. 7; 1 Tim. v. 5.

The other pious soul, to whom the destiny of the infant Jesus was revealed, was the aged Anna, who heard Simeon's words, shared in his anticipations, and

joined in the song of thanksgiving. Her name is the same with the Old Testament Hannah. It will be observed, that although in this interesting transaction, Simeon is the foremost figure, and his words alone are recorded, yet more is stated personally of Anna than of him. *A prophetess.* Such an appellation must have been caused by some earlier and frequent utterances, dictated by the Spirit of prophecy, by reason of which she ranks among the list of holy women, who, both in earlier and later times, were chosen instruments of the Holy Ghost. *The daughter of Phanuel.* The particularity with which her parentage and lineage is given shows that she was a person whose family as well as personal history was well known to the public.

Of the tribe of Aser, or Asher. Her native province stretched its whole eastern side along the margin of the Mediterranean, and included those among the most ancient cities of the earth, Tyre and Sidon. *She was of a great age.* We do not know her exact age, but if she had been a widow eighty-four years, and if she had been married for seven years, on the supposition that she was twenty years of age when she married, her age at this time must have been one hundred and eleven years. *And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years.* Some maintain that eighty-four years was the sum of her whole life; others that it was that portion of it which had elapsed since the death of her husband. The probability, we think, is in favor of the latter supposition. The years in which she had remained a widow are doubtless mentioned as a matter of commendation, for although widows were quite at liberty to marry again, it was considered praiseworthy in them to abstain from second marriages, and a woman who became a widow when still young, and remained the rest of her days in widowhood, was regarded with great respect and admiration among the Jews. The Romans had a similar feeling in this matter.

Which departed not from the temple. This means, that she was constant in her attendance on every act of worship and sacred service, making her extreme age no

excuse for neglect, but rather rejoicing in it as a privilege—of which thousands younger and stronger than she would not avail themselves. *But served God with fastings and prayers night and day.* She accompanied her devotion with frequent fastings, probably not oftener than *twice* in the week, for this was the custom of the most rigid Pharisees. (Chap. xviii. 12.) When she fasted and prayed she *served God*; she did not do these things in a self-righteous spirit, as some of the Jews did, whom God reproves in Isa. lviii., because they fasted and prayed, and yet were living in their sins. *Night and day.* A considerable part of the night as well as of the day. No doubt Anna was also occupied in many good works, yet she lived in a constant habit of prayer. (See 1 Tim. v. 6, 10.)

^{38.} And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

^{39.} Mark xv. 43; verse 25; chap. xxiv. 21. *Or, *Israel.*

That instant, or, at that very time, when Simeon held the blessed Redeemer in his arms, and gave utterance to the foregoing words, the Providence of God so ordering it, that another important testimony might be borne to the child Jesus. *Gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him, &c.* Anna praised God, as Simeon had done (verse 28), for sending the long-expected Messiah. *And spake of him, &c.* She spake afterward of the child, of the nature and design of His mission, to the pious persons dwelling in the capital, who lived in and upon the hope of salvation through the Messiah, and among whom the report of His birth was soon spread.

How great an honor did the Almighty confer upon Simeon and Anna, that, of all the dwellers in Jerusalem, of all the worshippers in the temple, they and they alone should be selected for the first interview with the Lord of the temple! The Holy Spirit often passes by learned and scientific men, and delights in bringing to the temple the man whose heart, like Simeon's, overflows with love to God, and whose mind and thoughts are filled with desire after His name. The woman, who, like Anna, departs not from the service of God night or day—persons like these, who in the sight of men have little, per-

haps nothing to recommend them, but who possess that which, in the sight of God, is above all price; who, in the quiet, unobtrusive duties of a lowly Christian walk and conversation, are daily waiting upon God, and, amidst the toils and business of life, are looking anxiously forward to the day when the Lord Jesus shall appear unto their complete salvation, seeking more of that light which cometh down from above, and of that peace which passeth all understanding.

39. And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.

The all things according to the law of the Lord, refer to the circumcision of Jesus, and the purification and presentation in the temple. *They returned into Galilee.* Luke passes over the coming of the wise men, and the flight of the holy family into Egypt, for it would appear that this return to Nazareth did not occur till some time afterward. Probably they returned to Bethlehem, supposing that Jesus was there to be educated. After some time the wise men arrived, and then, by Divine monition, they fled into Egypt, and on their return went to reside at Nazareth. *To their own city Nazareth,* the place of their usual residence, and where the blessed infant passed the days of his childhood and youth.

40. ¹And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him.—Verse 53; chap. i. 80.

The child grew in bodily strength and stature. *And waxed strong in spirit*—the powers of His human mind daily expanded and improved. *Filled with wisdom,* not by any advantages of instruction and education, but by the operation of the Holy Spirit, everything He said and did was wisely said and wisely done, above His years; in every stage of His human development He was perfect. *And the grace of God was upon him.* The original word not only means *grace* in the common acceptance of the word (some blessing granted by God's mercy to those who are sinners, or have no merit), but it means also *favor* or *approbation*, and this sense appears to be most proper for it here, when applied to the human nature of our blessed Lord. The same word is thus

rendered verse 52. The peculiar favor of God rested upon Christ, even as man. It is evident from this verse that Jesus had a human soul capable of increasing in wisdom and knowledge. As to the manner in which the indwelling Deity gradually communicated knowledge, wisdom and holiness to the human nature of Christ, we must confess that we know nothing. That as man His wisdom and knowledge could not be infinite, or incapable of increase, we know; but how the union was formed, or the communications were imparted, we cannot, in the smallest degree, comprehend or explain. (1 Tim. iii. 16.)

41. ¹ Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover.

² Ex. xxiii. 15, 17, xxxiv. 23; Deut. xvi. 1, 16.

His parents went—every year. This was their constant custom, because positively enjoined by the law. (Ex. xxiii. 17.) Males only were required to make their appearance at Jerusalem *thrice* in the year, in attendance at the three great festivals (Ex. xxxiv. 23), yet females were not forbidden to be present, and it is quite probable that pious females often, on such occasions, accompanied their husbands. (See 1 Sam. i. 7, 22, 24.) Such as will go no farther than they are dragged in religious exercises, are strangers to Mary's piety and devotion. These parents every year attended the great national feast of the passover, when the slain lamb foretold the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, and the symbols of emancipation from Egypt shadowed forth the far higher redemption. (Lev. xxiii. 5.) No difficulties, no discouragements could hinder their attendance. Though it is no certain evidence of the truth of grace to frequent assemblies for worship, yet it is an infallible sign of the want of grace customarily to neglect them. All worldly business must give place to Divine appointments.

42. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.

Every Jewish child of twelve years old was permitted, as "a son of the law," to take part in the celebration of the sacred festival. There existed, also, no longer any reason that Jesus should absent Himself from Judea, as Archelaus, whom Joseph had reason to fear, was already

banished by Augustus, after a reign of ten years.

43. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it.

Religious duties are not to be attended to to the prejudice and neglect of our particular callings. God calls us, as well from His house as to His house. When Joseph and Mary *had fulfilled the days*—the seven days of the feast of unleavened bread, which immediately followed the passover, and was usually counted as part of it—making eight days in all—they returned toward their home in Nazareth: *the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem, and Joseph and his mother knew not of it*. In their annual visits to Jerusalem the parents of Jesus must have formed acquaintances and made friends in different parts of the city. The parents of Jesus may then have started for home at a time unknown to Him, supposing that He was with some of their traveling friends or relatives, or they may have joined their elder fellow-travelers in the persuasion that Jesus knowing the time and place of departure, was among the younger ones. Or, again, it may be that Joseph and Mary had committed Him temporarily to the charge of some friends of the family, whose station was in some other part of the caravan, and, on the other hand, these friends with whom He was supposed to be, might justly infer that He was with His parents by some after arrangement. Certainly if Jesus had been in the immediate company of His parents, His absence would have been noticed during the day.

44. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance.

As the pilgrims to the passover required to be all at Jerusalem by the same time, those who dwelt in the same neighborhood necessarily left their homes together, and, by previous arrangement as to the time of starting, made up a large traveling company. The Nazarenes doubtless timed their departure from home so as to fall in with parties arriving so far on their way from places more to the north on the same line of road, and in the southward journey were joined by parties from places lying nearer to Jerusalem on the same route. Quitting that city as soon as the festival

was ended, the persons going the same journey would in like manner leave together, but would throw off parties right and left as they proceeded on their way. Thus the stream of travelers increased as it approached, and diminished as it receded from Jerusalem—being in both cases largest when nearest the city. Thus the northward company must have been very large indeed during the first day's journey from Jerusalem, and the conclusion of the parents of Jesus, that their Son, although not at hand, might be with some acquaintance in the company, was perfectly natural.

Went a day's journey. "The usual rate of traveling in the East," says *Prof. Hackett*, "is three miles an hour, and as the number of hours devoted to traveling rarely exceeds six or eight hours, the distance of an ordinary day's journey may be considered as twenty or twenty-five miles. The first day, however, on starting on an expedition, forms an exception to this rule. On that day it is not customary to go more than six or eight miles, and the tents are pitched for the first night's encampment almost within sight of the place from which the journey commences. If the first day's journey of the caravan in which Joseph and Mary were occupied two or three hours only, they had reason to suppose that Jesus was with some of the relatives or friends who were traveling with them. They could act naturally enough under the impression for so short a time, and would have no occasion for anxiety until His continued absence, when they came to halt, aroused their fears." Perhaps, too, they might have become uneasy on His account earlier in the day, but the multitude of the caravans at a time when, as *Josephus* tells us, Galilee contained more than four million inhabitants, would render an instantaneous search impracticable. It must not, besides, be forgotten, that in the East even an ordinary child of twelve would be equal to one of fourteen or fifteen among us, and that they could not, therefore, be extremely uneasy, especially about such a child as He was. *And they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance.* Here they would most naturally expect to find Him, for the

members of families, connected by relationship or friendship, doubtless often mingled together on the march, to beguile its tedious monotony by social converse.

45. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him.

When they found Him not, at the end of the day's journey, they went about seeking Him among the Nazarenes of their acquaintance, but could hear no tidings of Him. The company was to proceed in the morning, and it became necessary to decide either to go on with it or to return to Jerusalem. They probably waited to see the caravan pass out in the morning in order to make sure that He was not in it, and then feeling confident that He must have remained behind at Jerusalem, they hastened back with anxious hearts to seek their lost Son. Those that would find Christ must *seek till they find*; for He will at length be found of those that seek Him, and will prove their Bountiful Rewarder.

46. And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.

Three days, one day spent in their departure, another in their return, and the third in their search, which resulted in the finding. *In the temple, sitting, &c.* The doctors, struck with the power of His questions, and the depth of knowledge they displayed, probably asked Him to take a seat. The Sanhedrim, which, when full, comprised no less than seventy persons, sat in a semi-circle upon a bench, and the students, arranged according to their proficiency, sat on three benches or forms, one behind another; in front of this arc, and behind these benches, stood the common or occasional auditors. If Jesus was in this part of the temple, Joseph and Mary could the more easily have approached Him to converse with Him in an undertone, which they did. There is no reason to suppose that Christ *disputed* with the doctors, as many imagine, from being unacquainted with the extent to which the system of interrogation, between the teachers and the taught, operated among the Jews in the time of Christ. *Asking them questions*, not as a scholar, to be informed, but as a teacher, taking occasion thus to give instruction.

47. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.

¹Matt. vii. 28; Mark i. 22; chap. iv. 22, 32; John vii. 15, 46.

Christ's *understanding* appeared as much in His *answers* as in His *questions*. It may be that He had just heard some passages from the Prophets read, had asked for explanations, put some questions, and then, from the fullness of His own knowledge, had given answers. It can scarcely be doubted that all that was said had special reference to the Messiah, and to the real nature of His Kingdom and His work. At all events, such was His display of wisdom and knowledge, that *all that heard Him*, even the most learned doctors, *were astonished at his understanding and answers*. There seems to have been nothing beyond mere *astonishment*.

48. And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.

Joseph and Mary were greatly astonished at what they beheld—to find that Jesus had so much respect shown Him, and was exciting so much astonishment. This scene doubtless brought up in remembrance the incidents of His birth and infancy. No longer, however, could Mary restrain the feeling of pain and anguish which His temporary loss had inflicted upon a mother's heart. When, therefore, Jesus, as we may suppose, perceiving His parents, arose dutifully out of His place, and came to them, Mary privately talked with Him about their case—Joseph, knowing he had only the name of father, said nothing. *Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us?* Why hast thou caused us so much fear and anxiety? Accustomed, no doubt, to the most affectionate behavior from Him, she was surprised at any conduct that *appeared unkind*. *Thy father and I*. This was not merely the only possible manner in which Mary could publicly speak to her son of Joseph, but is also an indisputable proof of the wisdom with which she brought up the child, a wisdom which taught her to say nothing yet to Him of the mystery of His birth. *Have sought thee sorrowing*, not only distressed that we lost thee, but reproaching ourselves bitterly that we did not take more care of thee to bring thee along with us.

49. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?—John ii. 16.

Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? Or, in the things or affairs of my Father, in that which belongs to His honor and glory. Here already is the germ of that sacred must which Christ so often uttered in the subsequent way of His obedience. How full of the dignity, which belonged to Christ as the Son of God, was this reply! In His obedience to His mother, on other occasions, He set an example to all children, but in His conduct on this occasion He acted as became the King of kings and Lord of lords. The business which the Father had given the Saviour to do, was, as we learn from other parts of the Scriptures, the salvation of sinful man. God has appointed us a work to perform.

50. And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.—Chap. ix. 45, xviii. 34.

They understood Him not well, or only caught glimpses of His meaning. They knew not fully even yet the wonderful relation in which the boy of twelve years old stood to the awful Being who inhabiteth eternity—that His Father, to whose business He was now called, was the Father of the universe, the Father of time, yea, the Father of eternity, and of heaven itself, and that He, that wonderful and blessed child, could truly say, "Before Abraham was, I am." (John viii. 58.)

51. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.—Dan. vii. 28; verse 19.

This glimpse of Christ's glory in the temple was to be short; it was now over, and He did not urge His parents either to come and settle at Jerusalem, or to settle Him there, but very willingly returned with them to Nazareth. (See on verse 39.) *And was subject unto them.* This is put in strong antithesis with the Divine parentage which He claimed in verse 49, and it is inserted to prevent any inference, that Jesus did not afterward render filial obedience and service to His earthly parents. He behaved toward them with all dutiful submission; He obeyed their commands, and, as is believed, followed Joseph's employment, working at the trade of a carpenter. (Matt. xiii. 55; Mark vi. 3.) No child among the Jews

was ever brought up in idleness. *But his mother kept all these sayings in her heart—rather events, including both actions and words; she treasured them up in her memory, and pondered upon their mysterious import for eighteen years.*

Doubtless the faithful memory of her who kept and pondered all things in her heart, could have supplied to Luke, not only that one precious anecdote of the boyhood, but also numberless other anecdotes of the youth and early manhood, of the deepest interest. How we long for them! What would we not give to know more of that home at Nazareth, where thirty long years of that sinless life were spent? But no! it is buried in silence. And why? The silence of Holy Scripture is often as instructive as its revelations. Let us humbly, therefore, learn the lesson of this mysterious silence.

There were inmates of that Galilean home to whom was vouchsafed—what is denied to us—the privilege of watching the growth of Jesus all through those silent years. And to them it once occurred, as now to us, to wonder that Jesus did not seek to make Himself more widely known. "Show Thyself to the world," they said. And what was Christ's reply?

"My time is not yet come; your time is always ready."

And what is the Evangelist's own comment? "For neither did His brethren believe on Him."

Here, then, we have a lesson and a warning.

The lesson: That God's ways are not as man's ways—that whatever is most divine is most secret in its growth; as with the seed that groweth secretly, we know not how; as with the hidden life of grace within each one of us, so with the Messiah in His silent home at Nazareth. "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing." Such is the lesson.

And the warning: That the kind of knowledge we most crave after is not always the kind of knowledge that is best for us. To those "brethren of the Lord," was their knowledge of Christ's daily life all through those years a blessing to them? No; "for neither did His brethren believe on Him." Let Bible students, in their

curious antiquarian researches, ever remember this. To know all about Christ is one thing; to *know Christ* is quite another thing. Nay, the first kind of knowledge may, as in the case of those brethren, actually hinder the second. Let us beware, lest, by dwelling too minutely and exclusively on the earthly surroundings of our Lord, we dim to ourselves the glory of His divine Person. It was not flesh and blood which revealed to Peter, that in Jesus of Nazareth he beheld the Son of the living God.

52. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man.
 †1 Sam. ii. 26; verse 40. *Or *Age*.

Increased in wisdom and stature. (See on verse 40.) It is not improbable that the extraordinary improvement made by Jesus in His childhood, was promoted by that Divine nature with which His human nature was united, though promoted in a manner which did not interfere with the plan, according to which His physical and intellectual abilities were, like those of other men, gradually to increase. Christ grew and improved, His body in stature, His soul in wisdom, and He became every

day a more eminent and illustrious person in the eyes of all, being highly in favor both with *God and man*. His entire being was in the favor of God, yet as that being increased in amount, the amount of *favor* increased proportionately. There is no ground for the inference which Socinians draw from this verse, that Christ could not be God, because God cannot increase in wisdom, as Christ is here said to do, inasmuch as God's perfections, being infinite, will admit of no increase, for it is plain that the increase here attributed to Christ respects His humanity. The wisdom and endowments of His human mind were capable of increase, though His Divine perfections were absolutely perfect. Nothing but what is recorded in this verse is bequeathed to us of the life of Jesus, from His twelfth to His twentieth year! God's ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts. Doubtless He has permitted all the incidents of Christ's history to be handed down to us which the necessities of the Church required, and we must await another day and another place for more.

1. What occurred in "those days?" 2. Where did Joseph go to be taxed? 3. What great event occurred during their visit to Bethlehem? 4. What is said about the shepherds? 5. Explain verse 14. 6. Where did the shepherds find Mary and Joseph and the babe? 7. What took place when eight days were accomplished? 8. What is said of Simeon? 9. What did Simeon say unto Mary? 10. What is said of Anna? 11. Explain verse 40. 12. What particulars are given of Joseph and Mary's visit to Jerusalem? 13. Where did Jesus go with His parents from Jerusalem? 14. How did He increase in wisdom?

CHAPTER III.

3 *The preaching and baptism of John: 15 his testimony of Christ. 20 Herod imprisoneth John. 21 Christ baptized, receiveth testimony from heaven. 23 The age and genealogy of Christ from Joseph upwards.*

NOW in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene,

Luke, as will be observed, gives us with great exactness and faithfulness the names and dates, which connect the sacred history with the history of the time. The particularity with which he refers to the

time when our Lord began His public ministry, evinces the accurate and well-informed historian. Christianity is a religion of *facts*. It stands in its place in history. It is neither theory, nor legend, nor myth. It is just as true that John the Baptist and Jesus Christ lived and preached, as that Tiberius Cæsar lived and reigned over the Roman Empire; and the Evangelist appeals to the history of that time in his record of these Gospel facts. There is thus every evidence that the

Gospels were not written by impostors, and that the narratives which they give are true. *Josephus*, a writer of that very age, who was a Jew, and an enemy of Christianity, most remarkably confirms these statements of the Evangelists.

Now in the fifteenth year, &c. Tiberius Cesar was the cruel, sensual, infamous successor of Augustus in the empire of Rome, to which Judea at this time sustained the relation of a province. Having been joint emperor two years with his predecessor Augustus (from the beginning of which time the Evangelist reckons), he had, after that, up to the time here assigned as the commencement of John's public ministry, exercised sole dominion for thirteen years, making in all, *fifteen years*. *Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea*. Pilate came to Judea as Procurator, and continued to fill that office to the year 38.

And Herod being tetrarch of Galilee. This was Herod Antipas, the second son of Herod the Great, and bearing the abbreviated name of his grandfather, Antipater. The title of *tetrarch* originally signified the ruler of a fourth part, or one of four associated rulers, as in ancient Galatia, but was afterward applied in a general sense to any ruler, and especially to tributary kings, immediately dependent on the Roman emperor. *And his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and of the region of Trachonitis*. This Philip was the half-brother of Herod the tetrarch, being the son of Herod the Great, by his wife Cleopatra. *Iturea*. This territory seems to have extended to the north-east of Palestine, forming a central district between the lake of Tiberias and the territory of Damascus. *Trachonitis* was the most eastern portion of Philip's territory, lying to the east and south-east of Iturea, and to the south of Damascus, being thus a frontier district toward the Arabian Desert. *And Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene*. This person is not historically known. He was probably the son or grandson of another Lysanias, whom Mark Antony put to death about sixty years before the point of time here designated by Luke, and gave part of his territory to Cleopatra of Egypt. The enemies of the Gospel have tried in vain to make him the same person, and thus convict

Luke of a chronological mistake. Traces of the Lysanias to whom Luke refers are found outside of history. A coin has been found belonging to a period later than Herod's death, bearing the inscription, "Lysanias, tetrarch and high priest". A Doric temple in Abila bears the inscription, "Lysanias, tetrarch of Abilene." This must have been Luke's Lysanias, for the first Lysanias was not a tetrarch, that title having been first adopted after Herod's death. *Abilene*. This territory took its name from the town of Abila or Abela. Its precise situation is not clearly known, but it appears to have been somewhere to the north or north-east of Palestine; bordering on Anti-Libanus, and adjoining Philip's territory.

2. *Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.—John ii. 49, 51, xviii. 13; Acts iv. 6.

The high priest (Lev. xi. 10) was at the head of the Jewish sacerdotal system, the sacred representative of the nation. Until the time of Herod, the dignity of the high priest's office descended with due regularity in the Aaronic line, but the Herodians and Roman rulers made changes at will, and appointed a new high priest so frequently that the office became almost annual, and a number of ex-high priests were living. The high priest is supposed to have had an assistant to occupy his place in case of incompetency from sickness, defilement, or otherwise. (2 Kings xxv. 18; Jer. lli. 24.) *Josephus* on one occasion mentions two high priests, Jonathan and Annas. The name of the high priest, also, continued to be given to any one who had been in that office, and especially when he still possessed some civil office after he had left the high priesthood. These facts help to show, inasmuch as there could properly be only one high priest at the same time, and as *Caiaphas* held this office during the public ministry of Christ (Matt. xxvi. 3, 57; John xi. 49), why *Annas*, his father-in-law, who had been high priest, but afterward deposed by Valerius Grattus, is here mentioned. He was, in all probability, the coadjutor of Caiaphas, the actual high priest at this time, or was regarded by the Jews as still the legitimate high priest, and his age, rank and consequence, as a man of the first consideration and influence in

the state, easily explains his being named before Calaphas by the Evangelist.

The word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. It was about at the age of thirty that John received his formal commission from Heaven as a prophet. The probability is that, before he reached that time of life, both his parents were dead, and it is supposable that the demise of the survivor of them, by divesting him of earthly ties (for he had no brothers or sisters), and by breaking up his home, supplied the occasion for his withdrawal into the desert. The region to which he retired was doubtless that wild, mountainous region lying east toward the Dead Sea. There—in the deep solitudes, where he had, no doubt, for several years brooded over the iniquities of the times, over the prospect of the Messiah's kingdom, and over the precise nature of that mission to which he knew that he had been nominated, though not yet called to its actual duties, *the word of God came unto John*, doubtless as the Divine word or message was communicated to the prophets of the Old Testament by the Holy Ghost (Jer. i. 2, 4, 11; Ezra i. 3, 6), and made clear unto him all that he needed to know. It not only taught him what to do, and that the time was come for him to do it, but it inspired him with all the energies and powers needed for the fit discharge of the high and solemn office to which he was called.

³ And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins:—Matt. iii. 1; Mark i. 4. ⁴ Chap. i. 77.

Came is, in Greek, the graphic present, *comes*, arrives, or retaining the precise sense of the compound verb, *becomes near*, at hand, or present. *Into all the country about Jordan.* At God's command he left the wilderness, and came to more inhabited places. This region was contiguous to the desert, to which John had retired "until the day of his showing unto Israel." (Chap. i. 80.) Those that are best pleased with retirement must cheerfully exchange it when God calls them into places of concourse. *Preaching*: a verb so rendered more than fifty times in our version, but four times *publish* (Mark v. 20, vii. 36, xi. 10; Luke viii. 39), and twice *proclaim*. (Luke xii. 3; Rev. v.

2.) It properly denotes the act of a public crier, or a herald, announcing or proclaiming something by authority. This primary and strict sense of the term must not be superseded by the technical and modern usage of the word *preaching*, as applied to formal and official religious teaching. In this sense, it is probable that neither John nor the Apostles preached while Christ was with them.

The baptism of repentance. Not the baptism of faith in a Redeemer already crucified and atoning, but a baptism of repentance and reformation preparatory to His coming. *Repentance* properly denotes afterthought, reflection, and then change of mind, including both the judgment and the feelings, upon moral subjects, with particular reference to one's own character and conduct, with an implication of improvement or reform in both. Evangelical repentance is not mere amendment or mere sorrow for sin, but comprehends them both. *For the remission of sins.* This phrase depends upon *repentance*. It is not *baptism for the remission of sins*, but *repentance*, in faith on an approaching Messiah, for such *remission*. The remission of sin was the object or purpose of the baptismal rite. John's preaching and baptism did not of itself procure the remission of sin, which could be effected only by the death of Christ. It, however, prepared the way for this result. Those who repented and reformed their lives under his ministry, received the pardon of their sins, although the great atoning sacrifice had not actually been offered. (See on Matt. iii. 1.)

⁴ As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."

⁵ Isa. xl. 3; Matt. iii. 3; Mark i. 3; John i. 23.

Luke here proves, by a quotation from Isa. xl. 3, that there was nothing unforeseen and suddenly contrived in the coming of Jesus Christ. It was predicted in Gen. iii. 15, and this promise was brightened and expanded in all subsequent prophecy. The purpose in this quotation is to connect the ministry of Christ, through that of His forerunner, with the ancient Scriptures and the Church of the Old Testament, thus uniting the two canons in the closest manner, notwithstanding the

long interval of four hundred years between them.

Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. This is a plain allusion to the custom that prevailed in Eastern countries, of sending messengers and pioneers to make the ways level and straight before kings and princes and other great men, when they passed through the country with great pomp and magnificence. John was, in a spiritual sense, to go before the Lord—before the Saviour of the world, calling upon the people, to *prepare His way, to make His paths straight*—to remove out of their minds everything that opposed itself to the admission of Divine truth, all prejudice, blindness, pride, obstinacy, self-conceit, vanity, and vain philosophy, but, above all, to subdue and regulate those depraved affections, appetites, passions, and inveterate habits of wickedness, which are the grand obstacles to conversion and the reception of the Word of God.

John was a *voice* which conveys the mind of the speaker, and then vanishes: he declared the mind of God concerning His Son, and then was seen no more, for his ministry was of short continuance. His life, also, was vocal, no less than his lips, the whole man being as it were a sermon. *Crying* denotes the zeal and fervency of John's preaching. The whole phrase, *the voice of one crying*, might be more exactly rendered, *a voice crying*. It is a kind of exclamation, as if it had been said, "Hark! one cries" (or is crying), perhaps with the additional idea of long-continued previous silence. (Exod. iv. 15.) By *wilderness*, in Scripture, we are not always to understand what is commonly denominated so with us, an uninhabited region. Often, no more was denoted by it, than a country fitter for pasture rather than agriculture, mountainous, woody, thinly inhabited. No doubt John's singular habits of dress and diet (Mark i. 6), and his holy life, secured him a congregation in the wilderness. Men went there to see him, and these bringing back a wonderful report of him, at length crowds were collected to hear his sermons. (See on Matt. iii. 3.)

6. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth;

Every valley, &c. (See on verse 4.) By the import of the language that the prophet uses, it is plainly to be seen that the main work is God's, though men are called to concur with Him in it, which is everywhere the scheme of Scripture, as it certainly is of sound reason. (Phil. ii. 12, 13.) If ever we design to receive Christ into our hearts, we must first prepare and make ready our hearts for receiving Him. For though the *preparation of the heart be from the Lord*, yet He requires the exercise of our faculties, and the use of our efforts; He prepares our hearts, by enabling us to prepare our own hearts, by getting a sight of the evil of sin, and a sense of our misery without Christ, a hungering desire after Him, and a lively faith in Him.

6. And all flesh shall see the salvation of God. †Ps. cxviii. 2; Isa. lii. 10; chap. ii. 10.

These words are cited from Isaiah lii. 10, in which chapter the ancient Jews admit that the prophet is speaking of the Messiah. Now is the time, when all persons, Jews and Gentiles, may see the Author of salvation, whom God has promised to the world, and by faith be interested in Him. This salvation shall be more fully discovered than ever, and the discovery of it shall spread further. All mankind shall see it, and some of all tribes and kindreds and nations enjoy it. The great end of Christ's coming into the world was to procure salvation for all flesh willing to be saved by him.

7. Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? †Matt. iii. 7.

This mode of address might seem strange to us, did we not know from Matt. iii. 7, that this *multitude* did not consist of persons who were anxious inquirers after salvation, but rather Pharisees and Sadducees, or at least such as were infected by their pernicious leaven. (See on Matt. iii. 7, xii. 34.) *To be baptized of him.* Passages like John i. 25, and Matt. xxi. 24-27, seem to indicate that John originated baptism proper by Divine appointment, but in accordance with a Jewish expectation that something of the sort would be established, suggested by passages like Isa. xii. 13; Ezek. xxxvi. 25; Zech. xiii. 1. This baptism was an appropriation and

concentration into a single rite of all the lustrations and washings of the Old Testament dispensation. Thereby it became the emblem of the out-poured Spirit of regeneration, and so of induction from the world into the kingdom of God. And thence being the rite of initiation into the Christian Church, it becomes the successor of circumcision.

O generation of vipers. Generation is in Greek a plural. The plural may have reference either to variety of species or to multitude of individuals. By the terms *generation of vipers*, or broods of vipers, the diabolical nature of hypocrisy is pointed out. John evidently knew their radical insincerity, notwithstanding their coming for baptism. Before we accuse John of harshness, we should do well to remember, first, that love itself can be severe, and that the meek Saviour himself was inexorably so, toward hypocrites; and, secondly, that the judgment here announced was not inevitable, but only impending over obstinate impenitence, while John earnestly desires that they may yet escape it, and points out the way of safety. Neither commentator nor preacher should effeminately shrink at the "mention of hell to ears polite." *Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?* rather, *who did warn you, or who warned you, i. e.,* just now, or before you came out thither? The word rendered *warned*, denotes a slight as well as secret intimation or suggestion, as distinguished from a full and open disclosure. "Who has given you a hint of the impending danger?" "Who has shown you that you must flee?" *The wrath, i. e.,* the manifestation of God's anger against sin, and His determination to punish it. *To come*, in Greek, an active participle, *coming*, or about to be, the verb denoting mere futurity, and having no equivalent in English.

8. Bring forth therefore fruits *worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

*Or, meet for.

The condition of proud Phari-sees, pretending and false-hearted hypocrites, though very dangerous, yet was not hopeless, and therefore John, whilst reproving them for their sins, yet out of love to their souls, encourages their repentance. He

repelled their application to be baptized, until they should *produce* or *bear fruits worthy of repentance, i. e.,* such effects as genuine repentance, may justly be expected to produce, answerable to amendment of life. (See on iii. 3.) Let it be observed that John addressed himself, in the first instance, not to the *understanding*, but to the *heart*. He did not attempt to convince his hearers, but to reform them. Thus it is that men everywhere, and at all times, must be prepared for the reception of Divine truth. They must first be *reformed*, and then *convinced*. It is not in general the want of evidence, but the want of virtue that makes men infidels; let them cease to be wicked, and they will soon cease to be unbelievers. "With the heart," says Paul (not with the head), "man believeth unto righteousness."

And begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father. John, knowing what the Pharisees would answer in their hearts to the severe, but doubtless deserved epithet he applied to them, proceeded to rebuke them for their reliance upon their Abrahamic descent, as the one essential qualification for salvation. He did not deny the fact of their descent from Abraham, which was notoriously true, but he condemned their reliance upon that fact, as securing the Divine favor, irrespective of their character and conduct. He gave them to understand that God was able from the very *stones* lying at their feet, *to raise up children unto Abraham.* By this he clearly meant to tell them, that if the Jews disgraced their high descent, God would remove His kingdom from them, and give it unto strangers.

9. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

♯Matt. vii. 19.

And now also, at this very time: the axe is laid unto the roots of the trees. The *axe*, an instrument for felling trees, is here a figure for Divine judgments, possibly suggested by the reference to *fruit* in the preceding verse. The *trees* of this verse, corresponding to the *fruits* of that before it, must, of course, denote those from whom fruit was expected and required, namely, those to whom John was now speaking. The representation made in the

verse, thus far, is just what Christ did when He came into the flesh. By Him *the axe was laid unto the root of the trees*. By the very covenant of peace which He has introduced, He has at the same time brought judgment near to the sinner. He has made, for the last time, an effort, and that the greatest of all, to convince the sinner that He has a controversy with him which must now be settled, either by his unconditional and complete surrender, or by his speedy and terrible punishment. His dealing with the sinner will proceed upon the simple fact, "fruit," or "no fruit," "according to that done in the body, whether it be good or bad." The Gospel message is indeed one of grace, and it is by grace alone through faith that the sinner can be saved; but here, upon the very front of Christ's mission, is written clearly and indelibly that the *judgment shall strictly proceed on works*. Where these exist, where they are seen and manifest, they will prove that the sinner has believed and is saved; where they are not, they will equally prove that he has rejected the counsel of God against himself, and his condemnation will be just.

• *Every tree*. Each fruitless tree, each impenitent individual, *therefore*, because the axe is laid there for this very purpose, *bringeth not forth good fruit*, that is, right or acceptable to God, and salutary, useful to the doer and to others. Let it be observed that the sin here specified is a sin of *omission*. The tree is described, not as bringing forth *evil* fruit, but as *not* bringing forth *good* fruit. *Is hewn down*, means strictly, *cut out*, and is so translated in Rom. ii. 24. It is here used to denote, not the mere felling, but the complete excision of the tree, *i. e.*, the being cut up by the root. In Scripture language, that which is very sure and very near is spoken of as if it was *already done*. Thus Christ speaks of Himself, as if He was already in possession of His glory, while He was here on earth (John xvii. 14); sinners, too, are represented as *condemned already* (John iii. 18), and Christians are spoken of as *already glorified*. (Eph. ii. 6, and Heb. xii. 22, 23.) *And cast into the fire—into fire*, (not the fire): an indefinite descrip-

tion of the element made use of to consume the tree, and representing, as a figure, the wrath of God, already mentioned in verse 7, or its ruinous effect upon the unforgiven sinner. (Compare Heb. xii. 29.) If the tree serve not for fruit, to the honor of God's grace, it must serve for fuel, to the honor of His justice.

10. And the people asked him, saying, ¹What shall we do then?—²Acts ii. 37.

Though it is not said that the Pharisees and Sadducees took warning from John's preaching, yet there were some persons who did. *The people* (that is the common people, as they are called), said, *What shall we do then?* This question indicated a strong desire to be instructed as to duty. Some think it was not the question of the penitent jailor, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" else John would have answered it as did Paul and his friend Silas that which was proposed to them, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." There is, however, nothing so purely legal in John's reply as to produce embarrassment in regard to it. There is law in all Gospel, and there is Gospel in the law. Though the atonement had not been made in the Old Testament times, yet sin was forgiven through the forbearance of God, in view of the atonement. Thus the faith in the Messiah to come as the remitter of sin was mingled with the repentance of John's dispensation, and it had power to save, when genuine, in its time and kind. The genuineness was to be tested by the bringing forth appropriate fruits. Hence, in the verse which follows, the general principles of benevolence are inculcated, not as in themselves rendering the person who practices them worthy of salvation, but yet of necessary performance, in order to obtain the Divine forgiveness for sin.

11. He answereth and saith unto them, ¹He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.

²Chap. ii. 41; ³2 Cor. viii. 14; ⁴Jas. ii. 15, 16.

By this answer John shows us that covetousness was the *chief* sin of the people, and also explains why he specified benevolence, which is its opposite. It was the sin of the *poor* as well as the rich.

Coat, or, tunic worn next to the skin. *Meat*. Clothing and food are here representative of all the physical necessities of

men. It may not be proper to interpret such general rules as that in this verse, *strictly* and *literally*, but, however explained, unless they be supposed to mean nothing, they certainly require a far greater degree of liberality in the rich, and even in the poor, according to their present ability, toward their still more indigent neighbors, than is almost anywhere practiced among Christians. The Word of God tells us that we should be ready to give—that we should even *labor* that we *may* have something to give. (Eph. iv. 28; Acts xx. 34, 35.) Those who have *more* than enough for themselves, ought to give to those who have *less* than enough. An extensive liberality and a diffusive charity in distributing such things as we can well spare toward the relief of the necessities of others, is an excellent fruit of repentance, and a good evidence of its sincerity and genuineness.

12. Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto Him, Master, what shall we do? 13. And he said unto them, [†]Exact no more than that which is appointed you.

^{*}Matt. xxi. 32; chap. vii. 29. [†]Chap. xix. 8.

The Roman government had conquered Judea, and obliged the Jews to pay taxes and tribute to support its tyranny. The *publicans* were the officers who collected the Roman taxes. They were often characterized by rapacity and extortion. *Master*, means teacher, and as neither of the other classes here referred to used this term of respect, may be regarded as indicative of the humility and distress for sin with which these publicans approached John. *What shall we do?* (See on verse 10.) As extortion was their besetting sin, John therefore enjoins upon them integrity and justice—*exact no more than that which is appointed you*, that is, than the legal tax. Here note, 1. That acts of justice and righteousness, as well as of charity and mercy, are real fruits of sincere repentance. 2. John does not condemn the *office*, but *cautions the officer*. If magistrates may impose taxes, they may doubtless appoint officers to collect those taxes. Christian charity should teach us to distinguish between the *calling* and the *crime*. The maladministration of those who fill an office is not a sufficient reason for condemning it.

14. And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, [‡]Do violence to no man, [§]neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.

^{*}Or, *put no man in fear.* [†]Exod. xxiii. 1; Lev. xix 11. [‡]Or, *allowance.*

Soldiers, or, as the original denotes, *men actually under arms*. They are supposed to have been a part of Herod's army *then* on their way from Galilee to Arabia Petraea, with Aretas, the king of which Herod, though his son-in-law, was at that time at war. *What shall we do?* (See on verse 10.) *Do violence to no man*. The original word properly signifies "to take a man by the collar and shake him," and seems to have been used proverbially for that violent manner in which persons of this station of life are often ready to bully those about them, whom they imagine their inferiors in strength and spirit. *Neither accuse any falsely*—not to the government, thereby to make themselves formidable, and obtain bribes; neither to superior officers, in order to be revenged on those they had a pique against, or to undermine those above them, and get into their places. *And be content with your wages*. The Greek word signifies not only the *money* which was allotted to a Roman soldier, which was *two oboli* (about three cents) per day, but also the necessary supply of *wheat, barley, &c.*, in other words, their *pay* and *rations*. "While you have what you agreed for, do not murmur that it is no more, especially do not make a mutinous demand for its increase, or seek to add pillage thereto."

It will be observed that the office and employment of a soldier is not condemned by John, but regulated. He did not bid them cast away their arms, abandon war, appear no more as military men in the field, but manage their employment inoffensively. The injunction to be content with their wages, implied their continuance in the military service for which the *wages* were received. War is, indeed, a terrible calamity, and earnestly should the prayer be offered that the soldier and his stern profession may become obsolete together. But, then, in the *present* state of society, war is often an unavoidable necessity, and the only means of defending the rights, the honor, and the very existence of a nation, and may thus prevent

still greater evil. Aggressive wars it is true, are always wrong; but defensive wars against foreign invasions and domestic rebellion are justifiable, yet they should be conducted without cruelty and oppression.

15. And as the people were in expectation, and all men minded in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not;

*Or, *in suspense*. †Or, *reasoned or debated*.

So extraordinary was John's person, so earnest his preaching, so acceptable his doctrine, and so exemplary his conversation, that many people began to think that he, perhaps, was the Saviour so long expected—that is, the Christ, or the anointed One. But he did not wish them to think this, hence—

16. John answered, saying unto them all, "I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:

†Matt. iii. 11. †Joel ii. 28, 29; John vii. 38; 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13.

See on Matt. iii. 11.

John's popularity (iii. 7; Matt. iii. 5) did not fill him with conceit and vanity. So far from this, the most prominent feature of his character was an unexampled modesty and humility. Far from desiring or attempting to fix the admiration of the multitude on his own person, he gave notice, from his first appearance, of another immediately to follow him, for whom he was unworthy to perform the most servile offices. (John i. 28–31.) Conduct like this will always be the characteristic of the true "man of God." He will, like the ancient priest, be hidden by the cloud of incense ascending from the altar at which he ministers. (See 2 Cor. iv. 5.)

And here is a criterion by which we may judge whether preaching is profitable to us. Does it exalt Christ in our esteem? Does it more and more endear Him to us as He is revealed in the Gospel? If this be its effect upon us, then, and only then, we may be sure that it is beneficial to our souls. John refers to Christ as *mightier than himself, the mightier than I*—more powerful, implying not only a diversity of rank, but also of efficiency and actual performance.

The latchet of whose shoes, &c. The comparison was founded on the office generally assigned to the lowest menial, of taking charge of his master's shoes. To understand the full import of the Baptist's simi-

litude, it is necessary to remark, that the shoes of the ancient Jews, as well as of the Greeks and Romans, and some modern people of the East, were not entire coverings for the feet, like those worn by us, but merely sandals of leather or wood, serving as a defense for the sole, and fastened by strings, twined in various ways round the ankle. On entering a temple to worship, or on paying a visit to a person of rank, these sandals were taken off, a servant being stationed at the door for the purpose of untying and taking charge of them till the owner's return; and this department was, from the earliest times, assigned to the youngest or the newest servant in a household, as the meanest and most disreputable part of the service. But, besides standing at the door to perform this office, it was usual for the menial to wait upon his master, as he went abroad, and to carry his shoes whenever he chose to walk without them, as, in those hot countries, is frequently the case. "A respectable man," says *Roberts*, "never goes out without an attendant to do anything he may require." Thus, when the ground is smooth, or where there is soft grass to walk on, the sandals are taken off, and the servant carries them in his hand. When the Baptist, therefore, declared that he was not worthy to untie the latchet, or to bear the shoes of the glorious Person of whom he was the forerunner, he meant, by that strong metaphor, to intimate that he was not worthy to render the meanest offices, to so exalted, so divine a Master.

I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. John depreciates not so much his baptism as himself. *He shall baptize, abundantly impart.* (Titus iii. 6; Acts ii. 3, 4, 17, and x. 44); and shall, therefore, show Himself *the mightier*. The Spirit and fire have the utmost power. The Holy Spirit, with which Christ baptizes, converts, purifies, and refines the heart; its fiery power, in the severer purgation, burning sin away by sharper agonies, and imparting a severer spiritual purity and energy, was manifested in the fiery tongues at Pentecost. (See Isa. iv. 4, lxiv. 2; Jer. v. 14; Mal. iii. 2 Acts ii. 3.) We must be care-

ful not to underrate the value of John's baptism. We have no proof that any of the Apostles received any other. The distinction between John's baptism and the baptism of Christ was not essential, but accidental, that is, not in its essence, but in its accidents or circumstances. The contrast drawn in this verse, therefore, is not between Christ's baptism, as attended by a spiritual influence, and that of John as unattended by this influence. The meaning is, "I baptize you with water, not without Divine authority or spiritual effect, an effect dependent, however, on a higher power, but He whose way I am preparing is so far superior, both in power and office, that, in the exercise of an inherent power, that of His own Spirit, He will in the same way baptize you with an effusion of the Holy Ghost." John exalted the Saviour. To *Him* we must go direct. Nothing will answer but union with Christ by faith. He is the appointed fountain of mercy, grace, life and peace. Man, when ordained, can, indeed, administer the outward ordinances of Christianity, with a prayerful hope that God may bless the means which He has Himself appointed, but here his power ends. Christ, the great Head of the Church, can alone make these ordinances savingly efficacious, and this He does by His Spirit.

17. Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.

Jer. xv 7; Mal. iii. 3; Matt. iii. 12, on which see notes.

The Saviour would communicate to His disciples the Divine Sanctifier, as purifying water, to wash away internal pollutions, and as refining fire, to consume their dross, kindle a holy flame of love and zeal, illuminate with heavenly wisdom, and purify and sanctify them. At the same time, to use another emblem, He would come to His visible Church, then containing a few believers and many hypocrites, as the husbandman to his heap of threshed wheat, with his fan in his hand. *Whose fan*. A well-known agricultural implement, which was used by the Jews, as it is by husbandmen of the present day, to separate the chaff from the wheat when the wind is not sufficient. (Is) *in his hand*, in readiness for use. *Purge*, cleanse from the chaff. *His floor*, the area of flattened

and hardened *ground* in the field where the winnowing was done. *Gather, collect*, or bring together, first from its dispersion at the harvest, and then from its mixture with the chaff and other refuse at the winnowing or threshing.

The wheat, those who believe in Him, in Matt. iii. 12, "his wheat," or His own wheat, that belonging to Him, which implies its value, while the chaff belongs to no one, because worthless. *His garner*, granary or grain depository, representing heaven. The garner or granaries of the East are often excavations in the earth, in which the grain is buried, frequently for the sake of concealment, either from an enemy or an oppressive government. *But the chaff* (or whatever is not nutritive and therefore valueless), the disobedient and rebellious, who would not come to Christ that they might have life, *he will burn with fire unquenchable*. This may, in part, refer to the calamities to come on the Jewish nation for rejecting Christ, yet it seems to intend the final destruction of all sinners in hell, which alone is properly opposed to *the gathering the wheat into the garner*, a phrase representing the destination of the saved.

The words *unquenchable fire*, are absolutely inconsistent with all the views of the restoration of the wicked, and however the phrase of being *consumed like chaff* might seem to favor the doctrine of their *annihilation*, the epithet of *unquenchable* given to this *fire*, or more exactly *unquenched*, *i. e.*, never quenched or put out, is so far from proving this doctrine that it cannot, by any easy and just interpretation, be reconciled with it. Compare Mark ix. 43, 45, where the same Greek word is paraphrased, *that never shall be quenched*, and where Jesus repeats the expression with great solemnity, as if to show that the highest possible meaning was to be attributed to His word. Restorationism teaches that the wicked will be delivered from hell, but this supposes the word *unquenchable* to be an empty terror devoid of meaning. For to what amounts it that the fire is unquenchable if the sinner may be snatched from it at any moment? Destructionism is the doctrine that the sinner ceases, by the penalty, to exist.

But if this doctrine be true, then God still keeps an *empty hell* eternally burning!

18. And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people.

From this statement we learn the following characteristics of John as a preacher: 1. He was *affectionate*, exhorting and beseeching. 2. He was *practical*, urging to duty, directing in it, and not amusing with matters of nice speculation. 3. He was *popular*, addressing himself to the people, and accommodating himself to their capacity. 4. He was *evangelical*, he preached the gospel, for so the word here often signifies. (Matt. xi. 5; chap. iv. 18, and Acts viii. 4, &c.) 5. He was a *copious* preacher. He preached a great deal, shunning not to declare the whole counsel of God, and he varied in his preaching, that those who were not influenced by one truth might be by another.

19. But Herod, the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, 20. Added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison.

⁹Matt. xiv. 3; Mark vi. 17.

Herod, the son of that Herod who slew the babes of Bethlehem, conceiving a violent passion for Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, first won her affections from her husband, then dismissed his own wife, and married Herodias, during the lifetime of his brother. It was impossible that such portentous wickedness as this could escape the observation or the reproof of the holy Baptist. He raised his voice against the incestuous match, and this, too, although he could not be ignorant of the danger he incurred by such a measure. It is probable that the sentiments which John expressed were those which were generally entertained; and as he had great influence with the people, Herod was probably not less actuated by alarm than by resentment in determining to silence the faithful prophet.

He added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison. Josephus says that the Baptist was imprisoned in the strong fortress of Machærus, in Perea, east of the Jordan. One sin leads to another, and generally to a greater. Shutting up John in prison was a greater sin on Herod's part than his marrying his brother's wife. It was an insult directly against God, for God considers His children as Himself.

Whoever injures one of *them*, injures Him, for they are as dear to Him as the apple of His eye. Besides, the incarceration of John hindered the preaching of the Gospel, and thus men's souls were murdered. It is a dreadful sin to prevent the spread of Divine truth. How difficult it is to imitate John's fidelity! A minister knows that he shall give offense to sinners, if he speaks to them plainly of their sins. As long as he speaks in *general* terms, he does not offend them, but as soon as he points out the peculiar sins of each class of persons, then he makes them enemies. But how wicked it is to be angry with a faithful minister for pointing out our sins! How much more is he to be admired, than one who says, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace!" (See on Matt. xiv. 3, 4.)

21. Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened,—Matt. iii. 13; John i. 32.

We are not to suppose that all the people had been baptized before our Lord's baptism. We must attach to the word *all* the restricted sense, *great numbers*. The meaning is, that at the period when the greatest number of baptisms was taking place, the baptism of Jesus of Nazareth took place among others. Not one Evangelist communicates a complete account of what happened at our Lord's baptism, and it is only by collating their several contributions that we obtain a complete view of the occurrence. (Matt. iii. 13-17; Mark i. 9-11; John i. 32.)

Jesus also being baptized. The reason assigned by Christ (Matt. iii. 15) for His being baptized, was this: "Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." It was God's will that *all men* should be baptized, and therefore it was necessary that Jesus, when He was a man, should be baptized, for He came to do *all* God's commands, that by His obedience many might be made righteous. Christ was now about to enter upon His great work, and it was proper that He should be set apart by His forerunner, and that He should manifest His connection with him, and give His sanction to what he had done. Besides, it was requisite that some public act should mark the commencement of His ministry, and afford occasion for God to declare by some manifest sign His approbation of

Him, and His solemn appointment to the office of the Messiah.

And praying. All the three voices from heaven, by which the Father bare witness to Christ, were pronounced while He was praying, or very soon after it. (Chap. ix. 28, 35; John xii. 27, 28.) It is our duty to sanctify every ordinance and every action with prayer. The inward and spiritual grace, of which sacraments are the outward and visible signs, must be obtained by prayer, and therefore prayer must always accompany them.

The heaven was opened, i. e., cloven or rent. This cannot possibly denote a flash of lightning, or the shining of the stars, or a sudden clearing of the sky, or anything whatever, but an apparent separation or division of the visible expanse, as if to afford passage to the form and voice which are mentioned in the next verse. He that by His power parted the waters, to make a way through them to Canaan, now by His power parted the air, to open a correspondence with the heavenly Canaan. Thus was it shown that heaven, which was closed and shut against us for our sins, is now opened to us by Christ's undertaking for us. Compare the similar expressions of Isaiah lxiv. 1; Ezek. i. 1; John i. 52; Acts vii. 56. In all these cases the essential idea suggested by the version, is that of renewed communication and extraordinary gifts from heaven to earth.

22. And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased."

*Chap. ix. 34, 35; Ps. ii. 7; Isa. xlii. 1; Matt. xii. 18, xvii. 5, xxvii. 43; Col. i. 13; 1 Peter ii. 4; 2 Peter i. 17, 18.

In every humiliation of Christ, provision is made to render what is due to His Divine glory. At His birth it was done by the heralding of an angel; in His circumcision by His name *Jesus*; in the presentation in the temple, by the testimony of Simeon; in His baptism, by the demurring of John (Matt. iii. 14), and the incidents here recorded; and in His passion, by various supernatural manifestations.

And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him. This was the first manifestation of the threefold miracle attending Christ's inauguration as Mediator. The Evangelist is explicit and tells us that the Spirit descended, was "in

a bodily shape," not merely alighting as a dove would alight, but in a visible form or shape, "like a dove." The most usual symbol of the Divine presence was fire, or light, or glory. We are entitled, then, to conclude, that after the baptism of Jesus, when it is said the Holy Spirit descended upon Him, a flame of fire, or a bright shining light, "in a bodily shape like a dove," rested upon Him. (Isa. lxi. 1.) The form of a *dove* would indicate the spirit of Christ's ministry, and, as the dove with an olive-branch flew to the ark, showing the waters of the flood to have abated, so this was the symbolical testimony of the Father, and the Spirit, at His baptism, which agreed with the angels' song at His birth, *Peace on earth*, &c. We must not doubt that the Holy Ghost dwelt in Jesus "without measure," from the very time of His incarnation. It was designed, on this occasion, that His receiving of the Spirit might be notified to others.

It is clear that the *Holy Ghost* cannot be an attribute or influence which could not be embodied or subjected to the senses, but denotes a Divine Person. We have here a striking illustration of the incarnation. As the Holy Spirit, the third Person in the Trinity, assumes the bodily form of a dove, by way of self-manifestation to the eyes of men, what difficulty is there in supposing that the second Person of the Trinity should become God manifest in the flesh in a human form? The descent of the Holy Spirit on Christ indicates Him as the medium or channel through whom this great blessing is to be obtained.

And a voice came from heaven. This was the second feature of the threefold miracle on the occasion. *From heaven*, or more exactly, *out of heaven*. *Which said, Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased.* This was the third part of the miracle at the baptism. We have here, 1. *The nearness of Christ's relation. Thou art my Son.* Christ is the Father's Son, first, in respect of His eternal generation. He is His Son, secondly, in respect of His miraculous conception, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost. He is His Son, again, by particular designation, to hold the office of Mediator, and to be the heir and Lord of all things, whom the Father hath

sanctified and sealed, and to whom He said, "I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth." And He is His Son, or proved to be so, in respect of His resurrection, being "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." 2. *The evidencedness of Christ's person, Thou art my beloved Son.* The article recurs twice in the Greek, literally, *the Son of Me, the beloved.* This repetition of the article is exceedingly emphatic. Jesus is elsewhere called "God's dear Son." The Divine love here affirmed is not to be deemed as the ground or cause, but the effect or co-eternal adjunct of the Sonship here ascribed to Christ. The Father loves the Son on account of that independent absolute perfection, of which both are equally possessed; and He loves Him on the ground of that most intimate relation which subsists between them, as in some way distinct, though in essence one, and of which the relation of Sonship is the fittest analogy to be found among men. The Father loves the Son on account of the manner in which He unfolds the Divine character, in the creation and the government of the world. But this love is drawn forth by the still more illustrious manifestation of these excellences, on the part of the Son, in the accomplishment of the great and beneficent work assigned to Him as the Saviour of the lost, a work expressly committed to Him by the Father—a work performed by Him, in the exercise of adequate powers, in a manner absolutely perfect—and, therefore, the proper object of the entire approbation, the most complacental regard, of Him who appointed Him. (John x. 17, 18.)

In thee I am well pleased. The verb meaning *to be well pleased*, and the noun meaning *good pleasure*, are employed when one is pleased by what he or another has or does. The Father here proclaims that He accepts Christ as the Mediator between God and man. He publishes to the world that He is satisfied with Him, as the propitiation, the substitute, the ransom—payer, for the lost family of Adam, and the Head of a redeemed people. (John iii. 35.) There is a rich mine of comfort in these words,

for all Christ's believing people. In themselves, and in their own doings, they see nothing to please God. They are daily sensible of weakness, shortcoming and imperfection in their ways. But let them recollect that the Father regards them as members of His beloved Son Jesus Christ. They are clothed in Christ's righteousness, and invested with His merit.

The baptism of our Lord affords a demonstration of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. *Three distinct persons* are here represented: God the Holy Ghost made manifest "in a bodily shape like a dove;" God the Son ascending from the waters of Jordan in that body which had been prepared for Him; and God the Father, "whom no man hath seen or can see," manifesting Himself by the voice from heaven—the three Persons but one God of the Christian Trinity, co-essential co-equal, co-eternal. Until we receive this doctrine, Christianity has not even effected an entrance into our mind. It only has its perfect work within us, when we are enabled to have near access to God the Father, through the mediation of God the Son, and by the Grace of God the Holy Ghost.

^{23.} And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli.

^{24.} See Num. iv. 3, 35, 39, 43, 47. *Matt. xiii. 55: John vi. 42.

Jesus himself, or this same Jesus, the pronoun serving to distinguish Him from others. Began to be about thirty years of age. A better rendering of the original would be—and *Jesus was about thirty years of age*, when thus (see verses 21, 22, in which the Evangelist has been describing the dedication of Christ to His work as Messiah), *beginning* (or entering upon) His public ministry. Thirty years, however, was the legal age for entering on the priesthood. It was also the age at which the scribes entered upon professional duty as teachers. *Being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, i. e., being the reputed son of Joseph. Which was the son of Heli.* Matthew, who also gives a genealogy of the Messiah, says, chap. i. 2, that Joseph was the son of Jacob; here he is called the son of Heli. This apparent discrepancy is by most commentators explained by the fact, that two distinct pedigrees are given,

Matthew giving the genealogy of Joseph, Luke giving that of Mary. This explanation requires the word *son*, in the link between Joseph and Heli, to be taken in the sense of *son-in-law*, a meaning which it has in 1 Sam. xxiv. 16, xxvi. 21, 25. (Compare also Ruth i. 11, 12, 13.) If it be asked why Luke did not openly express this idea, by putting the name of Mary in place of Joseph, and writing, *which was the daughter of Heli*, the answer is, that as the Hebrews never permitted *women* to enter into their genealogical tables, whenever a family happened to end with a *daughter*, instead of naming *her* in the genealogy, they inserted her *husband* as the *son* of him who was in reality but his *father-in-law*. It is remarkable that the Jews in their Talmud call Mary *the daughter of Heli*, showing that either that is their own tradition, or that so they originally understood the genealogy as recorded. And on that passage in the Talmud, *Raschi* thus comments: "Jesus was connected with the blood royal by birth."

24. Which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi, which was the son of Melchi, which was the son of Jaana, which was the son of Joseph. 25. Which was the son of Mattathias, which was the son of Amos, which was the son of Naum, which was the son of Esli, which was the son of Nagge. 26. Which was the son of Maath, which was the son of Mattathias, which was the son of Semei, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Judah. 27. Which was the son of Joanna, which was the son of Rhesa, which was the son of Zorobabel, which was the son of Salathiel, which was the son of Nerl. 28. Which was the son of Melchi, which was the son of Adll, which was the son of Cosam, which was the son of Elmodam, which was the son of Er. 29. Which was the son of Jose, which was the son of Eliezer, which was the son of Jorim, which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi. 30. Which was the son of Simeon, which was the son of Judah, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Jonan, which was the son of Eliakim. 31. Which was the son of Melea, which was the son of Menan, which was the son of Matathas, which was the son of Nathan, which was the son of Davidl. 32. Which was the son of Jesse, which was the son of Obad, which was the son of Booz, which was the son of Salmon, which was the son of Naasson. 33. Which was the son of Aminadab, which was the son of Aram, which was the son of Esrom, which was the son of Phares, which was the son of Judah. 34. Which was the son of Jacob, which was the son of Isaac, which was the son of Abraham, which was the son of Thara, which was the son of Nachor. 35. Which was the son of Sarch, which was the son of Regau, which was the son of Phaler, which was the son of Heber, which was the son of Sala. 36. Which was the son of Cainan, which was the son of Arphaxad, which was the son of Sem, which was the son of Noah, which was the son of Lamech.

In regard to the catalogue of names, it is most likely that Luke took his account from family records. This will account for the introduction of Cainan the son of Arphaxad, which is omitted in Gen. ii. 12, 13, probably for a similar reason that the names of three kings are omitted in Matthew's genealogy.

37. Which was the son of Mathusala, which was the son of Enoch, which was the son of Jared, which was the son of Maleleel, which was the son of Cahnan. 38. Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.

Which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God. "Who, being descended of no human parents, but formed by the immediate power of a Divine Creating Hand, might, with peculiar propriety, be called (*the son*) of God, in His original state, the heir of immortality and glory." The fact that Adam is here called the son of God, signifies that Christ, born of a virgin, was the second Adam, and that His production by the Holy Spirit was no less the peculiar work of the Divine Power, than was the creation of Adam. *Son of God*, therefore, in this passage, is one who, other than God, has no natural father. (Gen. v. 1, 2; comp. chap. i. 27.) Luke carried up the pedigree to Adam, the human, and to God, the Divine Father of ALL, that He might intimate the right of the Gentiles in the Messiah. Matthew, writing more particularly for the Jews, in pursuance of his purpose to demonstrate the Messiahship of Jesus, by showing the exact correspondence of His life to the prophecies and types of the Old Testament, traced His descent not only from David the first and greatest of the theocratic kings, but from Abraham, the Father of the Faithful, and the founder of the ancient church or chosen people.

"The genealogy of Matthew," says *Dr. Smith*, Classical Examiner in the University of London, "is Joseph's genealogy as legal successor to the throne of David; *i. e.*, it exhibits the successive heirs of the kingdom ending with Christ, as Joseph's reputed son. Luke's is Joseph's private genealogy, exhibiting his real birth, as David's son, and thus showing why He was heir to Solomon's crown. The simple principle that one Evangelist exhibits that genealogy which contained the successive heirs to David's and Solomon's throne, while the other exhibits the paternal stem of Him who was the heir, explains all the anomalies of the two pedigrees, their agreement as well as their discrepancies, and the circumstance of their being two at all."

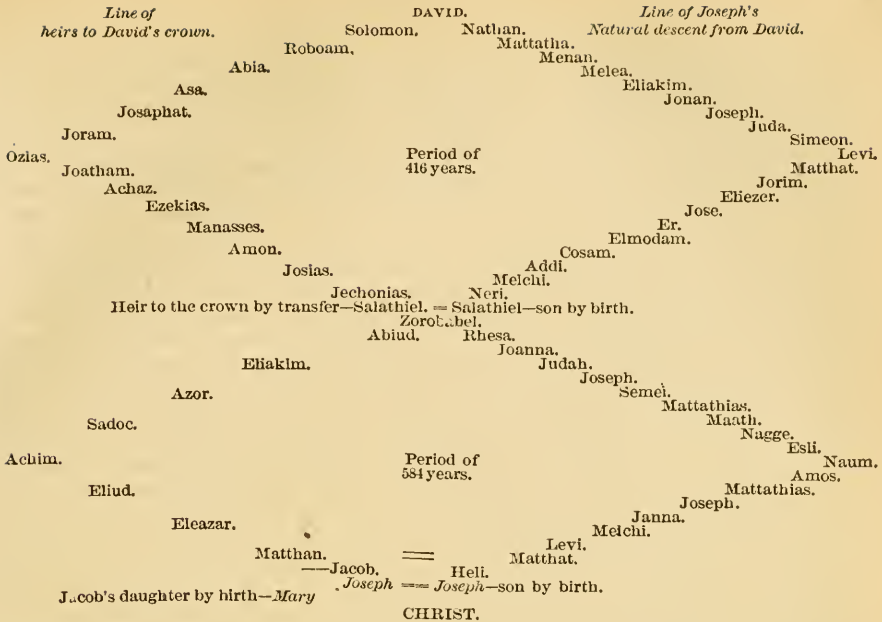
"We agree with those," says *Dr. Lange*, "who consider that, while Matthew gives

the genealogy of Joseph, Luke gives that of Mary. . . . Considered in itself, it was far more likely that Luke would give the genealogy of Mary than that of her husband. She is the principal figure throughout his early chapters, while Joseph occupies a far more subordinate position than in Matthew. He is very explicit in narrating that Mary became the mother of the Holy Child, through the miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit; why then, should he, who was not writing for Jews, give the descent of his foster-father, when he is intent upon asserting that the Lord was not related to Joseph according to the flesh? He is expressly contrasting His true descent from Eli, the father of Mary, with His supposed descent from Joseph, and Mary is simply passed over, because it was not customary among the Jews to insert the names of females in their genealogies. We find it then here stated, that Jesus was the descendant of Eli, viz.: through Mary His daughter." *Dr. Lange* also says: "On comparing the genealogies in Matthew and Luke, we are immediately struck with the difference between them. The former is written in the descending, the latter in the ascending line—the former extends to Abraham, the common ancestor of the Jewish nation, the latter to Adam, the common parent of mankind; the former is divided into three parts, each of fourteen generations, and thus exhibits a more artificial arrangement, while it wants the completeness which we discover in the latter. Both tables give fourteen names from Abraham to David, while from David to the Babylonian captivity, Matthew gives fourteen, and Luke twenty-one names. Symmetrical arrangement causes Matthew to omit certain names, while a desire for historical completeness is more strongly manifested in Luke, who, during his stay with Paul at Jerusalem (Acts xxi. 17), might easily have found opportunities

of obtaining important particulars concerning Mary and her genealogy. The universal character of his genealogy is explained by the fact that his Gospel was not written, as that of Matthew, for the Christians of Palestine."

Notwithstanding a few difficulties which some have perceived in relation to the genealogical tables of Matthew and Luke, it is certain that no difficulty was ever found, or alleged in regard to them, by any of the early enemies of Christianity. There is no evidence that they ever adduced them as containing a contradiction. Many of those enemies were acute, learned and able, and they show by their writings that they were not *indisposed* to detect all the errors that could possibly be found in the sacred narrative. It is to be remembered, also, that the *Jews* were fully competent to show that these tables were incorrect, if they were really so, and it is clear that they were fully disposed, if possible, to do it. The fact, therefore, that it is not done, is clear evidence that *they* thought them to be correct. The same may be said of the acute pagans who wrote against Christianity. None of them have called in question the correctness of these tables. This is full proof that, in a time when it was easy to understand these tables, they were believed to be correct.

"*The theory* of Lord Arthur Hervey," says *Dr. Whedon*, "lately published in England, founded in a great degree on the theory of Grotius, seems likely to be ultimately universally adopted. This theory, in its details, solves so many of the facts as not only to remove difficulties, but to furnish a sort of proof of the genuineness of the record. By this theory *Matthew* gives the genealogy of Joseph (including, in fact, that of Mary) in the line of *royal inheritance*; *Luke* gives that of *natural descent*. This is made clear by the following table:



“From David, Matthew traces the *royal line* through Solomon to Jechonias; Luke gives the private line through Nathan to Salathiel. But Jechonias was *childless* (Jer. xxii. 30), so that with him the Solomonic line ended. Consequently, Salathiel, of the Nathanic line, came into the royal heirship. By this transfer Salathiel stands in both, namely, the *line of natural descent* from David through Nathan, and the *line of political succession* to the crown. From Zorobabel’s son, Abiud, Matthew furnishes a series of heirs; from his other son, Rhesa, Luke gives the natural line of Joseph down to Matthat. But this Mat-

that is the same as Matthew’s Matthan. Of this Matthat Jacob and Heli are two sons; the former, being the elder, is crown-heir; the second stands in the private line. Heli’s son is JOSEPH; Jacob, the crown-heir, has only a daughter, *Mary*. The royal line thus failing of a direct male heir, Joseph marries Mary, and is thus transferred to the royal line both by kin and by marriage. Both these views secure the true Davidic descent of Mary, which is indeed absolutely necessary to the fulfilment of a most explicit Divine promise (2 Sam. vii. 12), to which Peter refers. (Acts ii. 30)”

1. At what time did the word of God come unto John ?
2. Where did John preach ?
3. What did he preach ?
4. What did he say to the multitude that came to be baptized ?
5. Who also came to John to be baptized ?
6. What did he say of Jesus ?
7. What did Herod do to John ?
8. Why did he shut him up in prison ?
9. What is said of the baptism of Jesus ?
10. How was the heaven opened ?
11. How did the Holy Ghost descend ?
12. What did the voice say ?
13. Why did Luke carry up our Lord’s pedigree to Adam ?
14. What is said about the genealogies of Matthew and Luke ?

CHAPTER IV.

¹ *The temptation and fasting of Christ.* ¹³ *He overcometh the devil:* ¹⁴ *beginneth to preach.* ¹⁶ *The people of Nazareth admire his gracious works.* ³³ *He cureth one possessed of a devil,* ³⁵ *Peter's mother-in-law.* ⁴⁰ *and divers other sick persons.* ⁴¹ *The devils acknowledge Christ, and are reproved for it.* ⁴³ *He preacheth through the cities.*

AND ^aJesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and ^bwas led by the Spirit into the wilderness.

^aMatt. iv. 1: Mark i. 12, on which see notes. ^bChap. ii. 27: verse 14.

The remarkable transaction in our Lord's life we are now to consider, is one of the most, if not the most, difficult to interpret of all in the sacred history.

Some have undertaken to regard it is as a *parabolic description of an actual event*, others, as a *train of thought*, others as a *vision or prophetic trance*, others still as a *myth*. But to all these views there are the following objections: 1. It is an established rule of interpretation, that in explaining the sacred writings we ought never, without the most apparent and indispensable necessity, allow ourselves the liberty of departing from the plain, obvious and literal meaning of the words. And, evidently, no such necessity can be alleged in the present instance. It is true there are in this narrative many difficulties, and many extraordinary, surprising and miraculous incidents; but the whole history of our Saviour is wonderful and miraculous from beginning to end, and if, whenever we meet with a difficulty or a miracle, we should have recourse to figure, metaphor, or vision, we should soon reduce a great part of the sacred writings to nothing else. 2. There is not, in any part of this narrative of the temptation, the slightest or most distant intimation that it is nothing more than a parable or a vision. And it is certain that if any one had meant to describe a real transaction, he could not have selected any expressions better adapted to that purpose than those actually made use of by the three Evangelists in the record they have made of the temptation. 3. The view that the temporal and earthly thoughts which constituted the temptations to which Christ was exposed, were *the result of His own reflections*, revolts us as an outrage against the Person of our Lord. Had Jesus cherished such thoughts in the faintest degree, He had been Christ no

longer. We dare not suppose in Him a choice which, presupposing within Him a tendency for evil, would involve the necessity of His comparing the evil with the good, and deciding between them. 4. It was in itself extremely probable that there should be a real and personal conflict between Christ and Satan. This chief of the fallen angels has ever been an irreconcilable enemy of the human race. From the very creation of man he has exercised toward him the most malignant art and subtilty, and, with what success, in leading to acts of folly, stupidity and weakness, we all too well know and feel. At the time of our Saviour's appearance, the tyranny of this diabolical spirit seems to have arrived at its utmost height, and to have extended to the bodies as well as the souls of men, of both of which he took absolute possession. It was, therefore, highly probable that our blessed Lord would think it a measure eminently proper, to begin His ministry with showing a decided superiority over the great adversary of man, whose empire He was going to abolish, with manifesting to mankind that the great Captain of their salvation was able to accomplish the important work He had undertaken, and with setting an example of virtuous firmness to His followers, which might encourage them to resist the most powerful temptations that the Prince of Darkness could throw in their way.

And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost. This is peculiar to Luke, and is to be referred to the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Him after His baptism. (Luke iii. 22.) Christ had now greater measures of the gifts, graces and comforts of the Holy Ghost than ever before. He was occupied, endowed and governed by Him, not merely as man, but as the God-man or Mediator. Immediately afterward, He was exposed to terrible sufferings and temptations. It is often God's method to prepare His people for great sufferings, by granting them great consolations beforehand. Such as are baptized with Christ, must expect to be assaulted by Satan. *Returned from Jordan*, probably a short distance toward Jerusalem.

And was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, &c. We must not understand an act of compulsion. There was some urgency, but this referred to the necessity of this for Christ's work, and not to any compulsion contrary to His will. Christ was led by a strong impulse distinct from His own will, though not opposed to it. (See on Matt. iv. 1.)

² Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing; and when they were ended, he afterward hungered.
^cExod. xxxiv. 28; 1 Kings xix. 8; see on Matt. iv. 2.

The forty days spent by our Saviour in the wilderness bear a striking resemblance to the forty days' retirement of Moses on Mount Sinai, and the forty days spent by Elijah at Horeb; and this likeness between the Mediator of the New Covenant and the Mediator and Reformer of the Old becomes the more significant from the subsequent appearance of Moses and Elijah with Jesus, on the Mount of Transfiguration. And yet Christ's fast of forty days is not determined by theirs, but rather theirs and His are alike determined by the significance which this number, forty, in the Scriptures everywhere obtains. It is the signature of the punishment of sin. (Gen. vii. 4, 12; Num. xiv. 33; xxxii. 13, 14; Ps. xc. 10; Dent. xxv. 3; 2 Cor. xi. 24; Ezek. xxix. 11.) *Tempted.* (See on Matt. iv. 1.) In reference to the nature of Christ's temptation, the learned commentator, *Joseph Addison Alexander*, says: "Our Lord's susceptibility of temptation was no more inconsistent with his sinlessness than that of Adam, and is insisted on in Scripture as essential to His office, and especially as necessary to a real sympathy between Him and His tempted people." (Heb. ii. 18.)

And in those days he did eat nothing. We are to understand this fasting in the strictest sense, forty days' and forty nights' entire privation. Jesus not only abstained from some kinds of food, or for a certain portion of each day, but He ate nothing all those days. This fasting was doubtless miraculous or superhuman. It is beyond the power of nature to endure such privations. There is no authenticated instance of any healthy person having remained for nearly so long a time without food. Our Lord here intended our admiration

rather than our imitation, or, if our imitation, of the action only, not of the time. In seasons of danger or general affliction, it was customary among the Jews to abstain from food as a religious duty (Josh. vii. 6; Judg. xx. 26); and the same practice prevailed among individuals when the occasion was personal. (Exod. xxiv. 18; 2 Sam. xii. 16; 1 Kings xix. 8.) Fasts are evidently of Divine authority, and fasting at the present day may be regarded as one of the outward means which may be profitably employed to humble and chasten the soul, and train it anew to the love and pursuit of holy and spiritual joys. There can be no doubt of its being sanctioned under the Gospel dispensation. (Matt. vi. 18; ix. 15; Acts xiii. 3; 1 Cor. vii. 5.) How far or how long a person should abstain from food depends on circumstances. The great end to be kept in view is, humiliation *for sin* and abstinence *from sin*. "If," says *Marshall*, "abstinence divert our minds, by reason of a gnawing appetite, then you had better eat sparingly, as Daniel in his greatest fast." (Dan. x. 2, 3.)

He afterward hungered. (See on Matt. iv. 2.) Immediately after such a fast, hunger must necessarily have made itself felt with unexampled power, and the more so, probably, from the combat with the Prince of Darkness. Satan, who doubtless had been heedfully watching an opportunity to assail Jesus at disadvantage, thought he perceived an opening for his insidious approaches, and sought to make the want of food the occasion of His sinning by the unlawful creation of food.

The three temptations which follow are by some compared to the threefold bait presented to Eve (Gen. iii. 6), in which the fruit being good for food, so appealed to the appetite, and being pleasant to the eye, so pleased the sense of beauty, and being represented as being able to make her as the gods, so awakened her ambition. Others see in them the threefold description of unholy lusts by the Apostle (1 John i. 16), "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." There is clearly one element common to all these temptations: they are attempts

to call up a willful and wayward spirit in contrast to a patient, self-denying one.

3. And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.

See on Matt. iv. 3.

Said unto him. The devil now probably had a visible form, not terrifying, but as a friend, and perhaps as an "angel of light." (2 Cor. ii. 14.) At any rate it was such a form as would render him most likely to fascinate by his blandishments, or subdue by menace and terror. *If thou be the Son of God.* The voice of the evil one evidently links itself with the remembrance of the heavenly voice at the Jordan. (Luke iii. 22.)

The phrase, "*If thou be,*" &c., may be either understood as expressing a doubt (if thou art really the Son of God), or as admitting that the fact was so (since Thou art the Son of God.) *Command*, that is, order, *that this stone*, probably pointing to a loaf-like stone on the ground, before them, *be made*, changed into, *bread*. How artful the suggestion! There is no severer physical want than hunger (unless thirst be greater)—none that occasions severer pangs—none that more tempts to extreme resources for its gratification.

Under these circumstances, how perfectly natural might it seem, at the first view, to one conscious of possessing miraculous power, that He should exercise those powers for the satisfaction of His wants! But Jesus understood the nature of this insidious suggestion, and refused to yield to it, knowing that to satisfy the appetite by working a miracle would imply distrust in God, and a disposition to leave the path of duty, as well as to use improper means of relief.

4. And Jesus answered him, saying, ^dIt is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.—^dDeut. viii. 3; Isa. viii. 20; Eph. vi. 17.

See on Matt. iv. 4.

The text which our Lord quoted is from Deut. viii. 3, and was addressed by Moses to the Israelites, when reminding them that though God had suffered them to hunger, He had fed them miraculously with manna, to show that he had other methods of sustaining man than by bread alone. The application of the passage intended by the Saviour to His own case was this: "He that brought me into this wilderness, and subjected me to these trials,

can support me under the pressure of hunger by a variety of means, besides the common one of bread, just as He fed the Israelites in the wilderness with manna, with food from heaven." *But by every word of God.* This does not mean that men must dispense with bread, and feed only on the study of the Divine word, but that our meat and drink, our food and raiment, are all the work of the creating hand of God, and that a sense of *dependence on God* is the duty of man. His word is to be the basis of our hope. Through it we are to have communion with Him, and on it, on *every word of God*, whether it be His instructive, consoling, or preceptive word, we are to rely and rest, giving Him our entire confidence.

Satan often tempts Christians, first to distrust God's Providential regard for them and then to supply improperly their own necessities. If they are in difficulty, so that it appears to the eye of sense as if their Heavenly Father, instead of bread, was giving them a stone, and if there seems a way of helping themselves by doing something not quite upright, not quite open or honest, not quite according to the commands of God, Satan recommends them to take that way, to turn the stones into bread, assuring them that if they are too conscientious, they will never get out of their difficulties. At such times they should remember that bread alone, without God's blessing, cannot nourish them, while with God's blessing, the want even of bread itself cannot starve them. "God will provide." (Gen. xxii. 8.) So, likewise, in things spiritual, Satan tempts Christians. When their mind is enfeebled by anxiety, or their body weakened by disease, their spiritual enemy urges the most distressing doubts of the love of their heavenly Father to them, or of their relationship to Him. In hours like these, the Christian should take refuge in the written Word, and lie down in peace on the many blessed promises which God has given.

5. And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

See on Matt. iv. 8.

Taking him up. *Taking him along with him*, is the exact English of the original Greek. But whether he did, or did not, *transport Him through the air*, cannot, we

think, be determined from this passage. This part of the transaction is supposed to have occurred in vision, even by some who understand what goes before as literally true. But such a difference is highly arbitrary and unnatural, nor is there any more necessity for such a supposition here than in the other cases. *Into an high mountain, showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.* If we take the world to mean only the land of Judea, and some of the surrounding nations, as it appears sometimes to signify (Luke ii. 1), then Mount Quarantania, which is fifteen hundred or two thousand feet high, the highest mountain in Judea, and which is generally supposed to have been the scene of this transaction, could have afforded the prospect in question. Of it, *Maundrell* says: "It is, as Matthew calls it, 'an exceeding high mountain,' and in its ascent difficult and dangerous." The *Abbe Mariti*, also, in his travels through Cyprus, &c., speaking of this mountain, says: "Here we enjoyed the most beautiful prospect imaginable. This part of the mountain overlooks the mountains of Arabia, the country of Gilead, the country of the Ammonites, the plains of Moab, the plain of Jericho, the river Jordan, and the whole extent of the Dead Sea." These various domains the tempter might show to our Lord distinctly, and might also at the same time *point out* (for so the original word rendered *showed* sometimes signifies) and direct our Lord's eye toward several other regions that lay beyond them, which might comprehend all the principal kingdoms of the Eastern world.

6. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. 7. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. *John xii. 31; xiv. 30; Rev. xiii. 2, 7. *Or, *fall down before me.*

See on Matt. iv. 9.

Before time began, the world was made over in an everlasting covenant never to be forgotten, to the incarnate Son. "Thou shalt have the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." (Ps. ii. 8.) And, it is distinctly declared not only "That the Most High alone ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will" (Dan. iv. 17), but also that Christ "is

the Governor among the nations" (Ps. xxii. 28), and that "all power is given unto Him in heaven and on earth." It was therefore false for him whom Jesus denominated "the father of lies" (John viii. 44), to affirm that all the kingdoms of the world were committed to him, and were at his disposal. *If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.* "Thou art come to be great—to be a king on the earth, but I am strong, and will resist Thee. Thy followers shall be imprisoned and slain, some of them shall fall away through fear, others shall forsake Thy cause, loving this present world. Cast in Thy lot with me, let Thy kingdom be an earthly kingdom, only the greatest of all—a kingdom such as the Jews seek to be established on the throne of David. Worship me by living as the children of this world live, and so honoring me in Thy life; then shall all be Thine." Such was the base proposition of Satan to Jesus. What words can describe the reckless audacity of that fallen and foul spirit?

8. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for fit is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shall thou serve. †Deut. vi. 13, and x. 20.

See on Matt. iv. 10.

Get thee hence, begone, avaunt, out of my sight! a strong expression of indignation and abhorrence. We are not to parley or to reason with temptations, to hesitate and deliberate whether we shall yield to them or not, but must at once repel them with firmness and vigor. Jesus did not dispute with the tempter, or tell him that the world was not his to bestow, or that it was a perishing portion, but He simply appealed to the *command* of God. The passage He referred to is found in Deut. vi. 13, and is here given in the words of the Septuagint version. We must oppose to the dictates of our passions the plain and positive precepts of God in His holy word. *Him only*—this was the key of all. There could not be two masters—no divided empire. The kingdom must either be wholly spiritual—that is, of God—or wholly temporal—that is, of the devil. And there could be no question *which* it should be—"Him only shalt thou serve." This verse, compared with other similar passages of Scripture, proves the Divinity

of Christ. The worship and service due to God cannot be given to a creature without the guilt of idolatry. Since then, God requires "that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father" (John v. 23), and "when He bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him" (Heb. i. 6), and since Christians "serve the Lord Christ" (Col. iii. 24), He cannot be a creature, but must be truly God.

9. And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence:

εMatt. iv. 5, on which see notes.

He brought Him, doubtless, by His own permission. They went together, but at Satan's instance, which is no more inconsistent with our Lord's Divine or human dignity, than His submitting to be scourged and crucified by Satan's agents. In either case it was a part of His voluntary humiliation as a Saviour and a substitute. *Set him on a pinnacle of the temple.* (See on Matt. iv. 5.) *Set Him*, literally, *made him stand*, but here again without implying force or authority. *If thou be the Son of God, &c.* How much artfulness was displayed in this proposition! "You were willing to trust God for your food, now show that you can equally trust Him for your safety; throw yourself boldly from this elevation, and proclaim by this act at once the strength of your faith, the completeness of your dependence, and the reality of your Sonship, and you shall be hailed with wonder and delight by the assembled worshippers!" thus tempting our Lord, as it were, by the very excess of that Christian grace, which He had before so beautifully exhibited. To a vain-glorious mind, nothing could have been more gratifying, more flattering, than such a proposal.

10. For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee: 11. And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

1 Ps. xci. 11; 2 Cor. xi. 14; Heb. i. 14.

See on Matt. iv. 6.

It is written. The devil can quote Scripture for his purpose. Nothing makes wicked men so self-satisfied as to be able to bless their crime with a holy text. They can ridicule the Bible, and trample

upon it at any other time, but they are profoundly Biblical, and deep reverers of God's holy and inspired Word, if a text can be wrested to their purpose. The Bible, like every other good, can be misused for our own destruction. It is a part of our probation, that God has not given a revelation so unequivocal that perverse minds may not pervert it to the service of error and sin. Satan now combats our Lord with his own weapons. The passage (Ps. xci. 11, 12) is not Messianic, but speaks of the saints in general, and the devil leaves Christ to draw a conclusion *from the less to the greater*, from the safety of the saints to that of the Messiah. The cause of truth, and sometimes of common sense, has suffered a great deal by the quoting of Scripture merely by scraps. The devil did this on this occasion. In his quotation he left out, because they did not suit his purpose, the words to keep thee "in all thy ways," thus making the passage a general promise of safety in *all* ways, whether ways of duty, or ways of folly and of sin. God will command His angels to guard the Christian from harm *in all his ways*, that is, in all the ways in which he ought to walk. God has promised the protection of angels to encourage us to trust Him, not to tempt Him. *In their hands they shall bear thee up.* This denotes a tender care like that of nurses. (See Num. xi. 12; Deut. i. 31; Acts xiii. 18; 1 Thes. ii. 7.) *Lest at any time, or, lest haply or by chance, thou dash*, or strike thy foot in walking so as to stumble, *against a stone, i. e.*, the one which happens to be lying in the way. We are not, for the sake of appearing more abundantly to trust God, to incur danger where no duty calls, but in the assured path of Christian duty, we cannot trust Him too simply, or too exclusively, or too largely.

12. And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

1 Deut. vi. 16; see on Matt. iv. 7.

Our Lord answers a third time in the language of Scripture, from Deut. vi. 16. The word of the Law which He quotes contains no contradiction of the devil's quotation from the Psalm, but a rectification of the misuse which the evil one had made of it. *Tempt*—to demand further evidence of what is already made suf-

ficiently plain. That this is the purport of the phrase, *tempting God*, is easy to be seen from comparing Ex. xvii. 2, 7; Num. xiv. 22; Ps. lxxviii. 18, and cvi. 14. If our Lord had cast Himself from the pinnacle of the temple, He would have demanded a needless miracle, publicly to prove Himself "the Son of God," and would have put Himself in expectation of an interposition for which He had no warrant, and thus would have "tempted the Lord."

13. And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him ^{for a season.}

¹John xiv. 30; Heb. iv. 15; James iv. 7.

Ended all the temptation, the trial of forty days. Jesus gave the tempter opportunity to say and do all he could against Him. He let Him try all his force, and yet defeated him. God expects His people to pass through all their trials, to go through the *hour of temptation* assigned them. *He departed from him*—the idea here expressed is not that of mere locomotion or departure, but of cessation from disturbance and annoyance. *For a season*, literally, *until an opportune season, or a convenient time*. Such an occasion was furnished in the hour of darkness (chap. xxii. 53), when our Lord's "soul was sorrowful, even unto death." (See Matt. xxvi. 38; John xiv. 30.) In Matt. iv. 11, and Mark i. 13 (on which see notes), it is said, *angels came and ministered unto him*. As soon as the angel of darkness departed, the angels of light appeared upon the scene. It is a change from deep night to glorious morning. Probably the angels assumed a visible appearance, as the devil had done in the temptation. During the assault, they stood at a distance, that it might appear that Christ vanquished Satan in His own strength; but when the conflict was over, they came to congratulate Him on His success, and to give the glory due to His name. *Ministered unto him*—waited on Him, served Him, with particular reference to food. In our *war with devils*, we may have abundant comfort from our *communion with angels*. God will more than make up to us, even in *this life*, all we suffer or give up for His sake.

14. ¹And Jesus returned ^{in the power of the Spirit} into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about.

¹Matt. iv. 12; John iv. 43. ²Verse 1. ³Acts x. 37.

Prepared by His baptism and temptation for His ministerial work, our Lord now enters on His public activity in Galilee. *The power of the Spirit*. Having conquered the grand adversary, He went forth, with the Spirit which had descended after His baptism not only not suppressed by the temptation in the wilderness, but, on the contrary, exhibiting Himself for the first time in full power in Him after the triumph there achieved. The phrase may refer either to the miracles He wrought in confirmation of His doctrine, or to the energy which attended His word to the hearts and consciences of the hearers. *Galilee* was the most northerly of the three general divisions of Palestine. A considerable interval elapsed between the time of the temptation and this visit to Galilee. *And there went out a fame, &c.* The mode of the Saviour's teaching, the spirituality of His doctrines, John's testimony of Him, His work at the temple in Jerusalem, all these things had a wonderful effect upon the people, and served to draw their attention to this new spiritual teacher who had come among them.

15. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.

This helped to excite the attention of men concerning Him. We do not find that the persecuting Jews ever hindered Christ or His disciples from preaching in their synagogues. *Being glorified of all*, that is, with universal applause. The word *synagogue*, which means a "congregation," is used in the New Testament to signify a recognized place of worship.

16. And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read.

¹Matt. ii. 23, xiii. 54; Mark vi. 1. ²Acts xiii. 14, xvii. 2.

The account of this incident, verses 16-31, is found only in Luke, although it is doubtless alluded to in Matt. iv. 13-16. *Nazareth*—beautifully situated among the hills which constitute the south ridges of Lebanon. *Where he had been brought up*. The Holy Ghost has seen fit to communicate but little concerning the Saviour's life, until He entered upon His public ministry. Importance and usefulness are not confined to publicity; we must be willing to be hid as well as displayed; a great work requires much preparation—

before we teach we must learn. It was probably Christ's long residence at this place that caused Him to be called *Jesus of Nazareth*, though some regard this name as one of reproach. *As his custom was, i. e.*, according to His habit of attending the synagogue worship on the Sabbath. The synagogue was the place where His Father's day and word were publicly recognized, and, as such, He thought it good to do it honor. The example of Christ has the force of a law to His followers. *He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day.* Bad a place as Nazareth was, it was not so bad but that it had a synagogue. Here Jesus preached the opening sermon of His whole activity in Galilee. *And stood up for to read.* It was the custom in the synagogue for persons when reading to stand, and when they finished reading, and undertook to expound or to teach, to sit down and commence their address to the congregation. The reading of the Scriptures should always be attended to whenever an assembly convenes for the worship of God. It is a great advantage to the ignorant who cannot read for themselves. It honors the written word as the Supreme authority in our religion. It solemnizes the mind, and prepares the heart for devotion and instruction.

17. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,

The shape of the ancient *book* was that of a roll or scroll. It was a cumbrous roll of linen, papyrus or parchment, with letters laboriously written, with a *calamus* or reed pen, or a *stilus* or iron pen. When rolled up, it was bound round with thongs, called in Latin *lora*. The scroll was read by unrolling the one end, and rolling up the other end, so as to glide the eye down the open page. *And there was delivered unto him the book.* There was a "minister" (verse 20), or servant of the synagogue, called the *chazan*, who attended to what may be called the keeping of the synagogue. One of his functions was to take charge of the sacred books, to produce them from the chest or ark near the pulpit or desk in which they were kept, deliver them to the reader, and to receive them back again. *Of the prophet Esaias.* Why this book in particular? The book of the

Old Testament, to be read, was selected by the ruler of the synagogue, but the particular portion was left to the choice of the reader. *And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written.* Whether Christ chose the particular passage quoted for the occasion, or whether it was the first passage that presented itself to His eye when He unfolded the roll, is uncertain. The latter would seem probable, yet, were this to be conceded, we must remember that He did nothing casually; accidental circumstances subserved His pleasure, and were parts of His plan.

18. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor: he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,
Isa. lxi. 1, 2.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, &c. This passage is found in Isa. lxi. 1, 2, and is almost in the exact words of the original. In this prophecy Christ asserts His designation to the office of the Messiah, and His qualification for it. The reference is to His baptism, at which the Spirit was given to Him without measure. *Because he hath anointed me.* Not that He was literally anointed, as were the kings and priests who were the types of His office, but that He had the unction of the Holy Ghost to perform the very works here predicted. *To preach the Gospel.* Preaching is the great ordinance Christ Himself made use of, and enjoined upon His Apostles and ministers, for accomplishing His purpose of salvation. *Gospel*—the glad tidings of salvation. *To the poor*—the poor in spirit, and such also as are poor in outward condition, if meekened and humbled by the sight and sense of their sins. (Matt. xi. 5.) Though the Jewish doctors disdained the poor, such as are destitute of worldly riches, yet to them the Gospel is emphatically glad tidings.

He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted—to comfort those who are bowed down by a crushing sense of sin, or by heavy afflictions. (Ps. li. 17.) *To preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind.* There is no bondage like that of corruption, no vassalage like that of the soul under the dominion of sin, and when taken captive by the devil at his will.

There is here an allusion to the wretched state of those prisoners, who, according to the inhuman custom in some Eastern countries, had *their eyes put out*; and with regard to such as these, this great Deliverer is represented as *restoring them*—a work far beyond all human power. *To set at liberty them that are bruised*. These words seem to have been quoted from Isa. lviii. 6, to strengthen the idea in the preceding clauses. Our Lord may have turned to that passage as He read, or quoted it, in the hearing of His auditors, from memory. Some suppose there is here, also, a reference to the Jews, whom, as bruised in their consciences by the galling fetters of a religion of external ordinances, our Lord released by the promulgation of His perfect law of liberty.

19. To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

There is here a manifest reference to the *Year of Jubilee*. It was celebrated every fiftieth year. For the manner of its celebration, see Lev. xxv. 8-18. It commenced on the great day of atonement, and was ushered in with the universal sound of trumpets throughout the land. It restored individuals, families and communities, as far as possible, to the same situation they occupied at the beginning of the fifty years. All servants of Hebrew origin were set free; there was a general release of debts and obligations, all pledges were given up, and the inheritances which had been alienated, no matter how often, nor for what cause, came back to the hands of the original proprietors. So the trumpet of the Gospel was to proclaim a restoration of all things to their primeval order and harmony. Our Saviour, by applying this text to Himself, plainly declares the typical design of the institution referred to. *The acceptable year of the Lord*, that is, the definite time in which the Lord is gracious. A present and full salvation is now proclaimed by the Gospel. This is the *time* in which God saves to the uttermost all who come unto Him in the name of His Son Jesus Christ. The whole continuance of this dispensation is represented as a *year*, and each of us has only a *day* of it. "Behold, now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation."

20. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

Closed the book, &c. (See notes on verses 16, 17.) *And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him*, that is, were *attentively fixed on Him*. There was something in His manner or tone of voice which riveted the attention of the people. That He should undertake to teach, excited surprise, as He was known there, not as one learned in the law, but rather as a carpenter's son, who had, perhaps, Himself worked at His father's trade. And yet strange and wonderful rumors had come home lately in regard to Him, as setting up high claims, and pretending abroad to do great works.

21. And he began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.

He began by explicitly declaring, that the words read to them were, at that very time, and on that very occasion, *fulfilled in their hearing*, thus declaring, in no ambiguous language, to His fellow-townsmen, that He was the promised Messiah of whom the prophet spake, and doubtless He explained the words at some length, as referring to the spiritual redemption which He came to effect in behalf of enslaved sinners, and earnestly exhorted His hearers to seek these important blessings. Had this explanation been necessary for our salvation, it would have been recorded. The custom of preaching from a text of Scripture, which prevails throughout all Christian churches, seems to have had its origin in the authority of this example.

22. And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?
*Ps. xlv. 2; Matt. xiii. 54; Mark vi. 2; chap. ii. 47.
*John vi. 42.

Bare him witness, gave a favorable testimony; and *wondered at the gracious words*, or, *the words of grace*. This phrase may refer to the agreeable manner of Christ's discourse, as well as to the matter of it. They *admired*, especially when they remembered His humble origin, which gave no warrant for such speaking. It cannot be doubted that our Lord's elocution was peculiarly becoming, majestic, solemn, impressive and persuasive. In every sense "He spake as never man spake." *Proceeded out of his mouth*—an Oriental expression for the utterance of a grave and earnest dis-

course. *And they said, is not this Joseph's son?* This question was asked in the strange conversational freedom, in which the Jews indulged at their religious meetings. One moment they were astonished, the next their pride rose. The impression made by Christ's sermon was only on the surface, for the audience were unconscious of their spiritual bondage, and felt no longings for deliverance. They wondered, but did not believe. Of how many, alas! is this true, in respect to the preaching of the Gospel!

23. And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country.

Seeing the captiousness of prejudice rising against Him in the hearts of His hearers, as indicated by their contemptuous allusion to His low birth, Jesus now addressed them in the language of reproof. In doing so, He also gives them an intimation in respect to the blessed purpose of His appearance as Israel's physician. *Physician, heal thyself, &c.* From the latter part of the verse, this proverb would appear to be a demand upon Jesus to display His miraculous powers in the sight of His fellow-townsmen. *Whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, &c.* "Do for your own Nazareth what you have done for Capernaum (in which He had healed the nobleman's son (John iv. 46-54), and doubtless performed other cures not mentioned), and thus satisfy our craving for the marvelous, or, satisfy us of your claims to the Messiahship, before you seek to convince the nation of the truth of your pretensions."

24. And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country.

He said, in answer to some response with which they interrupted Him. *Accepted, i. e.,* approved, acceptable. Ministers generally are least acceptable among those who are familiarly acquainted with their extraction, the follies of their childhood and youth, and their education. That which comes from afar, and has not been much known, gains the greatest reputation among a people. Ministers should avoid too much familiarity with their congregations, and by gravity of deportment keep up esteem and a certain measure of awe, always tem-

pering their gravity with courtesy and a condescending affability. (See on Matt. xiii. 57.)

25. But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; 26. But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. 27. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.

*1 Kings xvii. 9 and xviii. 1; James v. 17. *2 Kings v. 14.

Our Lord now illustrates His proverb, as well as His line of conduct, by the examples of two of the greatest of Hebrew prophets. The first example was in the days of *Elias* (the Greek form of the Old Testament name *Elijah*), when, though there were many widows in Israel, His own nation, yet none of them were qualified to receive His miracles, but a stranger, a widow of *Sarepta*, a heathen city (known as *Sarafend* at the present time, and a large inland village half way between Tyre and Sidon), whom in time of great famine He had sustained with oil and meal. (1 Kings xvii. 8-24.) *The heaven was shut up three years and six months.* In James v. 17, the duration of the drought is stated to be of the same length as it is here, while from 1 Kings xviii., it appears to result that *Elijah* in the third year returned to Ahab, and very soon after his return the rain commenced. In explanation of the seeming difficulty, we may suppose that the third year (1 Kings xviii. 1) must be reckoned from the arrival of *Elijah* at *Sarepta* (1 Kings xvii. 9), which, however, had been already preceded by a year of drought, during which the prophet had abode at the brook *Cherith*. (Verse 7.)

The second example was in the days of *Eliseus* (Greek form for *Elisha*), when, though there were many lepers in and about the neighborhood, yet they, being His countrymen, despised Him, and none were qualified for a cure, but *Naaman*, the Syrian, a man of another and heathen country. (2 Kings v. 10.) *Lepers.* Leprosy, in its worst form, was one of the most terrible of diseases. It began with red spots upon the body, grouped in circles, and covered with a shiny scale or scab. It became, generally, incurable, and so corrupted the system that it became hereditary for generations. The body crumbled, the limbs fell apart, and the man literally

went to pieces. The argument of Christ here is: "The Israelites had as good ground to reproach these eminent prophets for passing them by, as you Nazarites have to reproach me in the manner you have done."

^{28.} And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath,

Truth embitters those whom it does not enlighten and convert. The Gospel, when preached with soft words, wins the acquiescence of the godless, but, when it is applied to the conscience, it kindles indignation. The Nazarites could not bear the doctrine of the Divine sovereignty—that God has a right to do what He will with His own. They saw, at least the great majority of them, that the faithless widows and lepers were but types of themselves, and, instead of any longer wondering at the *gracious words*, they were exasperated to madness. Suddenly the church became a mob.

^{29.} And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the ^b brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.

^aOr, edge.

Perhaps their first intention was only to expel Him from the town. But one act of violence usually leads to another. Their rage waxed more and more fierce, as they dragged Him along, until they determined to take His life. The treatment He received remarkably resembles that with which afterward Stephen met. (Acts vii. 51.) *Rose up*, in tumultuous excitement, *thrust him out*, implying that He would have stayed. *The brow of the hill*. As Nazareth is a region of some fifteen hills, abounding in precipices, there are several which might have been suitable. *Dr. Robinson* says, that in the south-west part of the town is a hill, which breaks off in a perpendicular precipice, forty or fifty feet in height, and he suggests this, or some one of the several precipices in that vicinity, as the cliff down which they were intending to throw Jesus. *Precipitation* was a punishment rarely used, though we meet with it in the history of the kings, and in subsequent times. (2 Kings ix. 30, 33; 2 Chron. xxv. 12.)

^{30.} But he passing through the midst of them went his way,—John viii. 59 and x. 39.

It has been maintained that Christ escaped by a miracle, either in rendering

Himself entirely invisible, or putting on some *other form*, or affecting their eyes or minds in such a manner that they should not *know Him*. But Christ and His Apostles seem never to have wrought miracles in the way of self-preservation. The probability is that Jesus beheld His enemies with a look of His hitherto unrestrained majesty, reserved for this last need, and they, receiving yet another sign of His spiritual might, as a parting token, were compelled on the right and left to make place reverently for His going forth.

Had Jesus been less faithful in proclaiming the truth, He might have avoided persecution, but He sought not to please *men*, but *God*. Persecution may be escaped by us by acting insincerely and unfaithfully. But what if we should, by so doing, lose our peace of mind, and the approbation of God! The first sermon of Jesus at Nazareth imparts pregnant suggestions to the minister of the Gospel at the beginning of his work. It shows, 1. The origin, matter and object of preaching (verses 18, 19). 2. That preaching is to be grounded on Scripture, adapted to the necessity of the hearers, and presented in an attractive manner. 3. That blossoms are as yet no certain signs of fruit, and that unhappy causes may blast fair promises and prospects of success. 4. That a new work is to be begun, with thankful recollections of the past (verse 16), with holy spiritual might for the present (verse 18), and with joyful hope of the future (verse 21).

^{31.} And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the Sabbath days.

^bMatt. iv. 13; Mark i. 21.

Capernaum is compounded of the words *Kefr*, village, and *Nahum*, refreshment, so called from the springs near which it stood. Christ's residence and preaching there were the subjects of prophecy. (Matt. iv. 13-15.) The place is not named in the Old Testament, which, probably, though not necessarily, implies a later origin. *Josephus* mentions the town once by the name of *Cepharnome*, but applies the form *Capernaum* (or *Capharnaum*) only to a fountain. It was situated upon the shore of the lake of Gennesaret. *Came down*. The way to Capernaum from Nazareth was descending. Capernaum was six

hundred feet lower than the Mediterranean sea, and much lower, therefore, than Nazareth. *And taught them on the Sabbath days.* What He preached there is given in Mark i. 15. Nothing moved by the treatment He had received at Nazareth (verses 28, 29), Jesus patiently worked on in another place. Christians should not give up any work they are called to do, for want of success. The day comes when every man shall be rewarded according to *his own labor*. The discouragements we meet with in trying to do good, enable us to show the world that there are such things as faith and patience, and that, at all events, we are persuaded that we have truth on our side.

32. And they were astonished at his doctrine; for his word was with power.—Matt. vii. 23, 29; Tit. ii. 15.

Astonished—they were struck, literally, *struck out*, driven from their normal or customary state of mind by something new and strange. *At his doctrine*, both the matter of His discourse, and the manner of His teaching. *For his word was with power*, with authority. He spoke as one not relying on rabbis, or elders, or prophets, or even upon Moses, but as one greater than they all, having authority, original and unappealable, in His own Divine person. Indeed it was *Emmanuel, God-man*, who thus addressed them, although they then knew it not. It is one thing to admire the preacher, but another and quite a different thing to believe the truth he proclaims. (See on Matt. vii. 28, 29.)

33. ⁴And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice.—Mark i. 23.

In the synagogue. See on verse 15. Synagogues were intimately connected with our Lord's life and ministry. In them He worshiped in His youth, and in His manhood. They were the scenes, too, of no small portion of His work. In them were wrought some of His mightiest works of healing. (Luke xiii. 11; Mark i. 23; Matt. xii. 9.) In them were spoken some of the most glorious of His recorded works, (chap. iv. 16; John vi. 59); and many more, beyond all reckoning, which are not recorded. (Matt. iv. 23; xiii. 54; John xviii. 20, &c.)

There was a man which had a spirit of an unclean devil. When God became incarnate,

Satan became incarnate also. It is undeniable that in the time of Christ there was such a thing as the possession of men's bodies by evil spirits, or devils, as they are usually called in the Scripture. Every expression that our Lord makes use of with respect to these demoniacs plainly supposes them to be really possessed. He treated them as such. Everywhere a plain distinction is made between common diseases and demoniacal possessions, which shows that they were totally different things. (Matt. iv. 24; Mark i. 32; Luke vi. 17, 18, vii. 21, viii. 2, xiii. 32.)

The evil spirit had permitted the man to go to the *synagogue*. The Jews were careful that a man thus afflicted should suffer as little as possible on account of his misfortune. He was allowed to go where he pleased, and no restraint was laid upon him, so long as his conduct was not dangerously violent. *Spirit of an unclean devil—spirit* probably referring to the influence, and *devil* to the personality of the possessing demon. *Unclean* not only indicates that wicked spirits are impure and filthy, and continually endeavor to pollute mankind, but it is probably intended to teach the awful truth, that works of uncleanness, in breach of the seventh commandment, are works which Satan especially labors to promote by lascivious thoughts, images and desires. It may also teach us that those who were given over to Satanic possession were often people who had been specially addicted to sins of uncleanness and impurity. *And cried out.* The term refers to a specific act, and not to one of common occurrence. The cry was under a *certain fearful looking for of judgment*. The unclean spirit felt at once that One was nigh who was stronger than all the kingdom to which he belonged; hitherto his goods had been at peace, but now there was come One who should divide the spoil.

34. Saying, *Let us alone: what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; †the Holy One of God.

*Or away. †Verse 41. †Ps. xvi. 10; Dan. ix. 24; chap. i. 35.

Let us alone, disturb not our actual condition, a most miserable desire to have nothing to do with Jesus. (Comp. Rev.

vi. 15.) What *have we to do with thee?* what is there common to us or connecting us, *thou Jesus of Nazareth?* From the plural "we," "us," it is possible that the demon spoke in the name of the whole demon-world, or also in the name of the entire throng assembled in the synagogue, in the definite purpose of arousing a bitterness against Jesus and bringing His life into danger. *Art thou come to destroy us?* Here is a testimony of the decided opposition between the demon empire and Christ, and of His supremacy. From this it may be inferred that the demons live in fearful anticipation of the day when they shall be *destroyed* by being subjected to greater torment than they now suffer. They shall be cast into the bottomless pit. (Rev. xx. 10.) They are now reserved in chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day. *I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.* He does not say, *we know*, he speaks of himself, not the rest. The demons in the possessed seem to have perceived before the rest who Jesus was. Here, then, the powers of hell avouch Christ's character and mission ("to destroy the works of the devil"), to which Heaven had already borne its testimony. But earth gave no responsive recognition. Heaven had spoken—Hell had spoken—but Earth still was mute. In Matt. viii. 29, the two demons also recognize Christ in His Divine and adjudging character. So in Acts xvi. 16-18, the girl possessed with the spirit of Python or Apollo, proclaimed the Apostles to be the servants of the Most High. Let us beware of an unsanctified knowledge of Christianity. It is a dangerous possession, but a fearfully common one. We may know the Bible intellectually and familiarly, and yet it may have no influence over our hearts, will, consciences, lives—thus augmenting our guilt.

35. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, *Hold thy peace, and come out of him.* And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not.

Rebuked him, not as Michael the archangel (Jude 9), but in His own name and in His own power. Christ passes over for a moment the sufferer Himself in order to direct at once His word of might against

the evil spirit controlling him. *Hold thy peace*, literally, *be muzzled*.

And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, that is, had thrown him into convulsions in the midst of the assembly. This was the decisive paroxysm with which the healing was declared; at the same time, a phenomenon exhibiting the knavish, spiteful and degraded nature of the demons. (Mark ix. 26; Luke ix. 42.) *And hurt him not.* Mark says (i. 26), *when the unclean spirit had torn him*, but there is no contradiction between *that* account and *this*; the meaning is, he did not inflict on him any serious or permanent injury. Every open sinner who scornfully rejects the Gospel for his rule of life, and the Lord Jesus for his Redeemer, even while he knows that he cannot disprove the one, or disbelieve the other, stands before God in almost as awful a state of danger, as the unclean spirit in the synagogue at Capernaum. But whilst, for that unclean spirit, not all the blood of Calvary could avail to purchase him a release from everlasting wo, yet to the sinner, however obstinate, hardened and impenitent, "Judah's cleansing fountain" still is open, and no sooner does he fall before the throne of God, a willing, earnest suppliant, than he may enter within the door of grace and mercy.

36. And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, *What a word is this!* for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out.

The miracle of casting out the demon—the first miracle of the kind—struck the people with amazement. No one doubted of the truth of the miracle; it was evident beyond contradiction. *What a word, &c.* What kind of teaching is this? The ground of their inquiry is contained in the clause, *for with authority and power, &c., i. e.*, as one having power, self-derived and independent. From the appearance of a new power of delivering, they inferred the appearance of a new revelation and deliverance; miracle and prophecy always, to the Israelites, were reciprocal in their influence.

37. And the fame of him went out into every place of the country round about.

The fame, literally, *the sound*. This is a very elegant metaphor. The people are

represented as *struck* with *astonishment*, and the *sound* goes out through all the coasts, in allusion to the propagation of sound, by a strong stroke upon any substance, by which the air is suddenly agitated, and conveys the *report* made by the stroke to distant places. So this miracle, just performed, was told to others by those who saw it, till it was heard through all the coasts of Galilee. (Mark i. 28.)

38. And he arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon's house. And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought him for her.—Matt. viii. 14; Mark i. 29.

See on Matt. viii. 14.

How indefatigable was the good Physician—one hour removing spiritual ailments, and the next, bodily diseases, thus evincing far more clearly than words can speak, that there is nothing above His power or His willingness to heal. *And he arose out of the synagogue*, a concise expression for *he arose and went out. Simon's house* (in Mark i. 29), is *the house of Simon and Andrew*. These brothers were partners in the fishing business, and appear to have lived together in the same house. (Matt. iv. 18.) Peter is mentioned alone by Luke for his strong personal character. *And Simon's wife's mother*—whether his mother-in-law lived with him, or whether he received her into his house that she might be affectionately attended to during her sickness, is not known, but either shows the kindness of his heart. We should show piety at home. “Despise not thy mother when she is old.” (Prov. xxiii. 22.) The Romish doctrine of the celibacy of the clergy, certainly finds no countenance in the fact that the chief of the Apostles, who is claimed by that Church as the first pope, was a married man. We find Paul speaking of him as such, many years after this. (1 Cor. ix. 5.) When writing to Timothy, also, he says: “A bishop must be the husband of one wife.” (1 Tim. iii. 2.) Marriage is one of the first of Divine institutions, and a positive command of God, who declared the state of celibacy *not good*. (Gen. ii. 18.) “Marriage is honorable in all.” (Heb. xiii. 4.) Neither the Prophets of the Old Testament, nor the Apostles of the New, judged themselves too pure for an institution of their Maker. Several of the earliest

ecclesiastical writers mention others of the Apostles, besides Peter, who were married men, and one of them asserts that they all were, “excepting John and Paul.”

Was taken with a great fever. Strength of grace, and special regard even from Christ Himself, cannot prevail against diseases. Though Peter was a good man, and his mother-in-law probably a pious woman, this did not exclude sickness from his family. That her fever was of a serious nature, appears not only from the terms in which Luke, who was a physician, describes it, but also from the fact that it hindered her even from entertaining, in a manner somewhat befitting Him, the so greatly desired guest. Of Tabiga, the grand manufacturing suburb of Capernaum, Dr. Thomson says: “As there is considerable marshy land about this Tabiga, may not this account for the prevalence of fevers at Capernaum? for here it was, of course, that Peter's wife's mother lay sick of a fever. Fevers of a very malignant type are still prevalent, particularly in summer and autumn, owing, no doubt, to the extreme heat acting upon these marshy plains, such as the Butaiha, at the influx of the Jordan.” *And they besought him for her*. Most probably she was too ill to ask His help herself. Doubtless Jesus loved Peter, and therefore could not be indifferent to the sufferings of his mother, yet He waited until He was *besought*. So truly does our Lord delight to hear the voice of His praying people, that He delays many a blessing until He has heard the voice of faithful, fervent supplication.

39. And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her: and immediately she arose and ministered unto them.

See on Matt. viii. 15.

Stood over her. Matthew says (viii. 15) *he touched her hand*; Mark (i. 31), *he took her by the hand*. The accounts taken together harmonize and complete the narrative. The Evangelists who add something more, do not contradict the other who says less. *And rebuked the fever*, as, just before, the demon, and, as at other times, He “rebuked” the winds and the waves. (Matt. viii. 26; Mark iv. 39; Luke viii. 24.) This is generally regarded as a mere personification; but may it not be regarded as a recognition of Satan, and

the powers of evil as the authors of the disharmony in the outward world, a tracing of all these disorders up to their source in a person? We speak of rebuking a child or a servant, but not a clod or a tree. *And it left her.* Not in that state of extreme weakness and exhaustion which fever usually leaves behind when in the ordinary course of things it has abated. There was not a gradual convalescence, but an instantaneous cure was effected. The suddenness of the cure showed the reality of the miracle. *And immediately she arose and ministered unto them.* The completeness of her recovery was shown by the fact that she at once girded herself for serving. She was restored to her original position, and resumed her ordinary household duties. *She ministered unto them,* or waited on them, served them, with specific reference to food.

Serving Christ in His ordinances and in His members, is the best proof we can give to others that we are restored to spiritual health. How few render to the Lord according to the benefits they have received! Let those who have been restored to bodily health, perhaps rescued from the sight of an opening grave, not forget the Divine goodness, but be found ministering to the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to the wants of His people. "I will pay thee my vows, which my lips have uttered and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble." (Ps. lxxvi. 13, 14.)

40. ^bNow when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them.—Matt. viii. 16; Mark i. 32.

See on Matt viii. 16.

The report of Christ's two astonishing miracles caused the light of a new hope for the sick in the town and vicinity to rise. *When the sun was setting.* As the Jewish Sabbath ended at the setting of the sun, the people felt no scruple in carrying the afflicted, and laying them at the feet of Jesus at this time. Then, again, it must be remembered, that the cool of the day was the best time for the sick to appear on the street, and that some time was necessary to spread the news of the great Physician, and bring the sick together. *All they that had any sick with divers diseases, &c., that is, ill, or being in*

an evil condition—disease in general is denoted. The sick, the lame, the blind, the paralytic, the possessed (Matt. viii. 16; Mark i. 32), walking, led, supported by crutches, or carried in their beds, attended by numerous friends, gathered at the door of the house in which Jesus was. The Saviour could not behold unmoved the diseased creatures that were brought to Him. His heart was full of compassion. Some persons turn away from the view of misery, because it gives them uneasiness, but such conduct is selfish. Jesus felt far more at the sight of suffering than we can feel, yet He was willing to bear the pangs of sympathy. "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." (Isa. lvi. 3.) *And he laid his hands on them,* following His usual custom of connecting the exercise of His power with some external act. Most probably He uttered some kind word of encouragement, as individual cases required. *And healed them.* What rejoicing was heard that night through all the place! No sinner need despair who comes to Christ, conscious of his spiritual malady, to be healed by His merciful hand. Jesus, as it was predicted (Isa. liii. 4-6), *Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.* (Matt. viii. 17.) His sympathy with the distressed was a part of His suffering, and His removal of diseases was the fruit of His bearing our sins, and the punishment of them.

41. ^aAnd devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he rebuking them suffered them not to ^bspeak: for they knew that he was Christ.

^aMark i. 25, 34, iii. 11. ^bOr, to say that they knew Him to be Christ.

Came out of many, at His command. *Suffered them not to speak, i. e.,* declare His Messiahship. (See on verse 35.) Our Lord refused testimony from devils, for the very reason why they were eager to give it, because He and they would thus seem to have one interest. (Matt. xii. 24.) He wished to show His abhorrence of their malignant nature. He would not accept them as preachers. They so mingled falsehood with their truth, that he who listens to them for their truth's sake will be led away by their lies. Are we not here taught at this day not to found our faith on pretended spiritualistic manifestations from unknown supernatural sources or sorceries?

This is an appropriate place for noticing several peculiarities of our Lord's miracles. 1. They were public. Many of them, it is true, were wrought in private, thus indicating that there was no ostentation in the manner of performing them; yet as a *general* thing they were wrought in public—in the presence of His disciples, in the sight of multitudes in all parts of the country, in a great number of populous towns, in broad day, and, in fact, under the eye of a whole nation, for nearly four years. 2. They were of a beneficent character. They were not, like the wonders of the heathen magicians, either hurtful or trifling, or like those of Mohammed, frivolous, or like those recorded in the legends of the church of Rome, most of which are so grotesque that they make a rational man smile and a Christian man weep, nor were they a wild, arbitrary display of power; but they all looked to some benignant result, such as comforting the distressed, relieving the diseased, feeding the hungry, consoling the fearful, and demolishing the bulwarks of unbelief. 3. Christ's miracles were of such a character, that if they were not miracles, then miracles can have no existence, and it would be impossible for a Divine mission to be authenticated to mankind by this species of evidence. They are not of a nature to be referred to the possible effects of imagination, nor to occult laws of nature never till then developed, nor to fortunate coincidences. The universal experience of man up to that time, and since that time, proves that they were not only above nature, but in many instances contrary to all its fixed and uniform laws. They were, moreover, generally of such a character as to preclude all preconcerted action with a view to collusion and deception, being performed, not in circumstances previously arranged, or at places specially suggested, but just when and where exigencies arose, and necessities required.

⁴² And when it was day, he departed and went into a desert place; and the people sought him, and came unto him, and stayed him, that he should not depart from them.—Mark i. 35.

According to Mark i. 35, Jesus "prayed" during this retirement. There was an alternation of prayer and labor in His life, such as in truth might be called a *praying*

without ceasing. (Chap. iii. 21, vi. 12, ix. 29; Mark xiv. 23, xiv. 34.) We must make time for private meditation, and being alone with God. Constant excitement and engagement entail great peril on the soul. The morning is the best time for devotion. *Boerhave*, the celebrated physician, rose early in the morning, and, through life, his practice was to retire an hour for private prayer and meditation. This, he often told his friends, gave him firmness and vigor for the business of the day. Chief Justice Hale, too, rose early, and retired for prayer, and to read a portion of God's word, without which, he said, nothing prospered with him all the day. "Ministers," says an old divine, "should be much in prayer. They use to reckon how many hours they spend in reading and study. It were far better both for ourselves and the Church of God, if more time were spent in prayer."

A desert place, not a large desert, as when the desert of Judea or of Sinai is spoken of, but only a solitude near Capernaum. *And the people sought him*, inquired whither He went, and continued to ask until they ascertained, then *came unto him*, even in the solitary place to which He had retired. *And stayed him*, that he should not depart from them. There was growing up a dangerous popularity. The miracles Christ had performed were in danger of producing too secular and general excitement. He indicated a disposition to go away, but the people earnestly solicited and pressed Him to remain at Capernaum. (See on Mark i. 35-37.)

⁴³ And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also; for therefore am I sent.

I must preach—to other cities also. Not in the sense of an absolute necessity, but of a moral obligation which sprang from His very relation as the Messiah of Israel, and not of Capernaum alone. As it was Christ's great design to plant and propagate the Gospel, He must not confine His ministry to one particular place. *For therefore am I sent*, equivalent to "For that I have come out." In Mark i. 38, "for therefore came I forth." (Isa. lxi. 1; John xvi. 28, xvii. 4; John x. 36.) Preaching was Christ's *great* work. Hence those who regard preaching as a thing of less importance than some other religious observances, are in error. (See on Mark i. 38-9.)

41. "And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee."
 *Mark i. 39.

From this it appears that their synagogues were scattered through the villages of Galilee, as churches are among us. *He preached*, the proper meaning of the word is, *He continued preaching*; He never slackened His pace—He continued proclaiming the glad tidings of salvation to all—there was no time to be lost—immortal souls were perishing for lack of knowledge, and

the grand adversary was prowling about, seeking whom he might devour. In the earlier part of our Lord's ministry, He preached mostly in the synagogues. Afterward, when the people followed Him from place to place by thousands, He was obliged to address them in the open air, from a ship anchored near the shore, or from some eminence, where He could be seen and heard by all. (See on Mark i. 39.)

1. Where did Jesus go after returning from Jordan? 2. What is meant by "led by the Spirit?" 3. How long was Christ tempted? 4. State the three temptations, with the particulars of each. 5. How did Jesus return into Galilee? 6. Where did He teach? 7. What did He do in Nazareth? 8. What portion of Scripture did He read? 9. What effect was produced by His teaching? 10. Why was the Saviour thrust out of the city? 11. Where did He meet the man with the spirit of an unclean devil? 12. State the particulars of his restoration. 13. What miracle is next recorded? 14. Where did Jesus go "when it was day?" 15. What did He say to those who sought Him?

CHAPTER V.

1. *Christ teacheth the people out of Peter's ship: 4 in a miraculous taking of fishes, sheweth how he will make him and his partners fishers of men: 12 cleanseth the leper: 16 prayeth in the wilderness: 18 healeth one sick of the palsy: 27. calleth Matthew the publican; 29 eateth with sinners, as being the physician of souls: 34 foretelleth the fastings and afflictions of the apostles after his ascension: 36 and becometh faithhearted and weak disciples to old bottles and worn garments.*

AND sit came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret.

*Matt. iv. 18; Mark i. 16, on which see notes.

Pressed upon him. A crowd rapidly gathered around One of whom so many strange things had been reported, and about whom local curiosity had been so intensely excited. Their wish was such as Jesus never repelled—to hear the word of God. It seems the sermons which He had preached in His last tour through the country, had made a great impression on the minds of the people who heard Him. There was a glorious prospect of a plentiful harvest, but how few of these blades came to full corn in the ear! To hear with diligence and affection is well, but a preacher of the Gospel may expect that, out of crowds of hearers, only a few, comparatively, will fully receive the truth, and hold out to the end. *He stood.* It is probable, from Matt. iv. 18; Mark i. 16,

that Jesus was in the habit of walking upon the broad beach of the lake. He now stopped in His course as He arrived at the boats of the future Apostles. *By the lake of Gennesaret.* This inland sea or lake is called by various names. 1. *The Sea of Galilee* (Matt. iv. 18); through it the Jordan flows, along the east side of the province so called. 2. *The Sea (or Lake) of Tiberias*, from a city built by Herod on the south-west shore, and named in honor of the Emperor Tiberius. (See John vi. 1, xxi. 1. 3. *The Lake of Gennesaret*, in Hebrew, *Cinnereth* (Deut. iii. 17), or *Cinneroth* (1 Kings xv. 20), from a city and a district on the western shore. (Josh. xix. 35; Num. xxxiv. 11.) This lake is of an oval shape, about thirteen geographical miles long and six broad. The river Jordan enters it at its northern end, and passes out at its southern end.

2. And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets.

Ships—two small vessels. They were a sort of large fishing-boats, of which *Josephus* says there were about 230 on the lake, and four or five men to each. *Standing by the lake.* Stationed, at anchor, near the

shore of the lake. *But the fishermen were gone out of them.* They were not only fishing on this occasion, but followed this business as their stated occupation and the means of their subsistence. This *lake* still abounds in a great variety of excellent fish. The *fishermen* mentioned in this verse were James and John (see verse 7, 10), who are not mentioned by name, and are therefore considered as strangers to the reader. *Were gone out of them.* Out of their boats, but were probably in sight. *Were washing their nets,* from the filth of the sea, before laying them out to dry, ere they went home to get such rest and refreshment as might fit them for the toils of another night. In Matt. iv 21, it is said "*mending their nets.*" Some of the company might be employed in "*mending their nets,*" after washing, and others in "*washing their nets,*" by casting them from the shore into the lake. The "*mending their nets*" is a trivial circumstance which it would never have occurred to the inventor of a fictitious tale to mention, and is one of those minute, latent, indirect proofs of the authenticity of the Gospel, which it is most agreeable to trace when opportunity offers, although not, perhaps, of great importance. "*Fishers of men,*" after they have cast in *their* nets for a draught, should seek carefully to purify and cleanse themselves from aught which, in that very act, they may have gathered of sin, impurities of vanity, of self-elation, or of any other kind, and this they must do if they would use their nets effectually for a future draught."

3. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people out of the ship.

Entered into, went on board, *one of the ships, which was Simon's.* The ship of James and John was at some distance, perhaps around at the farther point of the cove. Simon having descried Jesus approaching, followed by the multitude, forthwith returned to his boat. *And prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land*—requested him, for the sake of convenience, to *put out* a short distance upon the sea, just far enough for Him to be heard distinctly by those on shore. *And he sat down,* the usual position

of a teacher, *and taught the people out of the ship,* the knowledge of the Lord. The shore was the church, the ship the pulpit, the Saviour the preacher. Here, with the deep blue sky above, the high rocks or gently sloping hills around, and the placid waters beneath, with brow yet unfurrowed with the lineaments of predicted sadness, He proceeded to unfold the great revelation for which, during four thousand years, the world had waited in anxious expectancy. It was a momentous day in the history of the Church. It is holy work that makes holy ground. It is right that there should be places set apart for holy lessons and holy services, but we must never think for one moment that there is any spot of ground so holy, that there we must think right thoughts, and speak right words, and do good deeds, but that the moment we are outside, the rest of the ground is so profane that we may live just as we like.

4. Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, ^bLaunch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.—^bJohn xxi. 6.

When Christ had done preaching, and had probably dismissed the people to their homes, He directed Peter to resume his business. Time spent on week days in the public exercises of religion, may be but little hindrance to us *in time,* and a great advantage to us in *temper of mind,* in our worldly calling. *Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught:* as opposed to the shallow water near the shore, and where would be a larger shoal of fishes. The *nets,* including also those of the fishermen employed by Peter, were probably seines, although some suppose they were *bag-nets* or *basket-nets,* such as were used in deep water. This command to Peter, following the slight test to which his obedience had been already put, had its force also with reference to the rest of the crew of the boat, who must have been active therein. Christ commands *the use of means.*

5. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.

Master. Peter familiarly addresses Jesus, not as a new acquaintance, but as an old disciple. He received the first blessed word from Him on the banks of the Jordan. *We have toiled all the night, and have*

taken nothing, a circumstance which one would have thought should have excused them from hearing the sermon, but such love had they to the word of God, that it was more reviving and refreshing to them than the softest slumbers. "Fishers of men," says an old divine, "may labor all night, and all day, too, and catch nothing. This is sometimes the fisherman's fault, but oftener the fishes, who are crafty and cunning, and will not come near the net, or are too slippery to be holden. It is the fisher's fault that nothing is taken if he doth only play upon the sand, and not launch out into the deep, deliver some superficial and less necessary truths, without opening to the people the great mysteries of godliness, and if he fish with a broken net, either deliver unsound doctrine or lead an exemplary life; also, if he doth not fish at Christ's command, but run a fishing unsent." Certain it is that all the labor of the ministry must be unsuccessful where the blessing of God is not. It is the presence and influence of Christ in a congregation that causes souls to be gathered unto Himself; without these, whatever the preacher's eloquence or abilities may be, all will be *night and fruitless effort*.

Nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. We are not to regard these as the words of one half despairing of the issue, yet merely complying with the request of One whom, out of regard to their former transient relation, he recognized as his "Master," and felt bound to obey. On the contrary, they were spoken more in the spirit of the Psalmist, when he exclaimed, "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." (Ps. cxxvii. 1.) They were words of faith. "Though my own reason is against Thine, though my conclusions are the opposite of Thine, though I am a fisherman, and have the greater experience in my trade, and the knowledge of the best seasons for prosecuting it, and of all the likelihoods or unlikelihoods of success that may attend it—*nevertheless*, my reason shall be laid prostrate at Thy feet, my conclusions shall be dismissed, and because Thou biddest me, I will do it." What a

precedent for us! Let us not despond upon any unsuccessful trial in our Master's business, nor be dejected by any disappointment in the way of our ordinary calling, when we contemplate this eminent example of such a blessing upon a mind ready to labor at His word, and so large amends made at once for so many fruitless experiments before.

6. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. 7. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.

Break, literally, *began to break* or, *was breaking*. Such an immense weight of fish was inclosed in the net, as it was impossible for the united strength of the two brothers to draw, or for the boat to manage. Perceiving this, the brothers *beckoned*, or made signal, to their partners in the other boat, who were probably not within call, to come to their aid. What a pity there should be such an envious separation among the different denominations that profess to believe in Christ Jesus! Did they *help each other* in the spirit of Christian fellowship, more souls would be brought to the knowledge of the truth. *And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink*. Perhaps miraculous power gathered in more than the nets. Probably the one-sided dip came near to swamping the boats, the *beginning* to be merged was arrested by the righting.

8. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me: for I am a sinful man, O Lord."—2 Sam. vi. 9; 1 Kings xvii. 18.

He fell down at Jesus' knees—a profound reverence, as to a Divine being. He had a full Divine impression that this was no prophet, or angel, but God incarnate, the Son of God, who had just shown His lordship over nature, animate and inanimate, and His knowledge of the secrets of the deep. *Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord*. He was not weary of Christ's presence, but acknowledged himself unworthy of it. He felt he was in the presence of Deity, a sense of his sins and unworthiness suddenly rushed on his mind, while, with mingled feelings of humility, gratitude and awe, he entreated Jesus to depart from one who was so guilty and undeserving.

Observe, 1. Peter's acknowledgment was very just, and one which it becomes us all to make; for even the best of men are sinful men, and should be ready upon all occasions to own it, and especially to own it to Jesus Christ; for to whom else but to Him, who came into the world to save sinners, should sinful men apply themselves? 2. His inference from it was not just: if we be sinful men, as indeed we are, we should rather say, "Lord, for that very reason, while we own ourselves most unworthy of Thy presence, we most importunately entreat it. Come unto me, O Lord, for *I am a sinful man*, and if Thou stand at a distance from me, I perish!" Prayer should not be too much controlled by emotion. When the *wicked* say to God, "Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways," He often takes them at their word, yet He does not deal thus with the trembling penitent, but receives him in His arms, and bids him live with Him forever.

9. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken:

The word *astonished* is far too weak for expressing the effect which we find this miracle produced upon Peter. The original literally means *amazement wrapt him round*. Terror was mingled with his astonishment. All that were in his boat were similarly affected. We learn, from Matthew iv. 18, that Andrew, Simon's brother, was with him.

10. And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not, ⁴from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

²Matt. iv. 19; Mark i. 17, on which see notes.

James and John were affected with like astonishment. *The sons of Zebedee*. In respect to their relation to the Saviour, it is more than probable that Salome, the wife of Zebedee, was an own sister of Mary, the mother of the Lord, so that her children were own cousins of Jesus. The children and wife of Zebedee are often noticed in the New Testament, but it is in this transaction alone that we catch a glimpse of Zebedee himself. (Matt. iv. 21.) It is supposed that he died shortly after. *And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.* Though Peter was immediately addressed, the rest, Andrew, James and John, were included.

"Be not afraid, these discoveries tend to *life*, not *death*, and ye shall become the instruments of *life* and *salvation* to a lost world." This was properly the inauguration of the great work whereunto they were about to be sent.

Jesus intending to call Peter, James and John into His service, 1. *Taught* in their presence, that they might *know His doctrine*; 2. He performed a *miracle* before their eyes, that they might see and be convinced of His *power*; 3. He *called* them to go forth with *this doctrine*, and through *this power*, that they might *teach* the ignorant, and be *successful* in their work. *Thou shalt catch men*. Not only in His parables, but in His other discourses, Jesus draws His doctrines and instructions from the scenes of nature, from the objects that surround Him. The fishermen were to *catch* men, as David, the shepherd, was to *feed*. (Ps. lxxviii. 71, 72.) Julian the Apostate endeavored to turn the simile of fishing against Christianity, inasmuch as fish were caught from their living element for death; but the expression used singularly excludes such a turn, for it signifies to take alive, or for life, being compounded of the words *alive* and *capture*. The parallel word "fishers," used by the other Evangelists, is the oldest name by which the ministerial office is described in the New Testament.

"Here," says a commentator of the last century, "is the work of ministers set out, to gain souls to God. They are not to fish merely for a livelihood, much less for honor and applause to themselves, but to win souls to God, and are to bait their hooks and order their nets to this end, which they will never serve, if either by general discourses they make the meshes so wide that all will dart through them, or if by their wit and learning they make their discourses so fine and curious that few or none of their hearers can understand them. Nor will all our art make us fishers of men. *I will make you to become*, says Christ. Here we see His authority. Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, God must give the increase. But yet we must order our nets rationally and probably, in order to our end, and without that cannot expect God's blessing. Nor were

the Apostles presently to enter upon the work of the ministry, but first to *come after Christ*. And indeed such should all Gospel ministers be. In the choice of Matthias, Peter limited the people in their election to those that had accompanied with them all the time the Lord Jesus went in and out amongst them. (Acts i. 21.) Other fishers commonly prove fishers for something else, not for the souls of men.

11. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.
 *Matt. iv. 20, xix. 27; Mark i. 18; chap. xviii. 28.

They—Simon or Peter, Andrew, James and John (see notes on chap. vi. 14), brought their ships to land, had drawn them up again on the shore for a final abandonment. *They forsook all and followed Him*. They renounced their boats, and nets, and fish, the habits of life to which they had been used, and the occupation in which alone they were skilled, and which furnished their subsistence. And this, not to attach themselves to one who was rich or great, or who could or did hold out to them any worldly advantages, but to One who was as poor as themselves, One with whom they were often to suffer peril, hunger and thirst, and who could not assure them of a place where to lay their heads. Whatever they left, it was their *all*, and was as valuable to them as may be the house or land, the library, the office, the shop, of any one who reads this.

*Forsaking consists not in the more or less that is forsaken, but in the spirit in which it is left. A man may be holden by love to a miserable hovel with as fast bands as to a sumptuous palace, for it is the worldly affection which holds him, and not the world. The sincere Christian, in every age, though he does not cast aside his worldly calling, is enabled to do, what is in every respect the same—follow his occupation with a single eye to God's glory, holding all his possessions in charge for God. The minister of the Gospel is to give himself up wholly to his great work, and not encumber himself, more than can be avoided, with secular affairs and worldly business. Churches should adequately provide for their ministers, so as to prevent necessity for their resorting to worldly business.

12. ¶ And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

*Matt. viii. 1-4; Mark i. 40-45, on which see notes.

A certain city. We cannot ascertain certainly where this miracle was wrought. The confines of the city are intended, for lepers were not suffered to live in towns. *A man full of leprosy*. His disease was deep-seated, virulent, and covered all his body.

Of all diseases to which the human frame is liable, the leprosy, perhaps, was the most astonishing and appalling. It was a poisoning of the springs of life, and was deemed one of the Lord's most fearful visitations of wrath. (Num. xii. 6, 10; 2 Chron. xxvi. 19.) It affected not merely the body of the sufferer, which it covered with deep bright spots, eating through the skin into the very flesh, and spreading like one great cancer over the whole frame, but in some supernatural manner it broke forth upon the garments, in green and reddish spots, fretting them away. It even contaminated the walls of the dwelling-houses, marking them with hollow strokes, greenish or reddish, which, in sight, were lower than the wall (Lev. xiv. 37), *i. e.*, corroding not merely the plaster, but eating even into the stones of which the houses were built.

Fell on his face. In Mark (i. 17), *knelling down*; in Matthew (iv. 19), *worshiped*. There is no essential difference in the accounts. Either of the postures might have been assumed, according to the custom of the country, in token of civil respect, or as an act of religious homage.

And besought him. The leper expressed the profoundest reverence and most earnest importunity. *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean*. The leper's faith had doubtless been aroused and strengthened by the report that had gone out concerning Jesus. (See Luke iv. 37.) There was here no questioning of Christ's power; nothing of his unbelief, who said, "If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us." (Mark ix. 22.) *Will* and *canst* are not mere auxiliaries, but distinct and independent verbs. *If thou art willing thou art able to cleanse or purify me, i. e.*, to free me from the leprosy, considered not as a mere disease, but as a symbolical and actual

defilement. If the leper had known the compassion of the Saviour's heart, he would not have said, "If thou wilt." Christ's *mercy* is as great as His *power*. It is true that by His *power* He stretched out the heavens, and laid the foundation of the earth. But it is also true, that "high as the heaven is above the earth, so great is His *mercy* toward them that fear Him." How agonizing must have been the leper's suspense after the utterance of his cry! But it was not protracted. A voice replied that went at once to his heart and filled it with rapture.

13. And he put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him.

See on Matt. viii. 1-4; Mark i. 40-45.

By the law of God (Lev. v. 3), he that touched a leper was unclean. By what Christ did, as He was God, He could not contract any ritual uncleanness. The sun casts his beams upon all that is polluted on the earth, but retains unscathed his own purity and splendor. The deed of stretching out the hand and touching the leper had no magical, intrinsic power, being frequently dispensed with, but it visibly connected the author with the subject of the miracle, and at the same time symbolized or typified the healing virtue which it did not of itself impart. *Saying, I will: be thou clean.* Christ ratified and approved his utterance of faith, by making the concession of his request in the very words wherein the request itself had been embodied. *I will.* This is the saying of God, and God only—the saying of Him whose Almighty will is the cause of all things. When His servants wrought miracles, far different were the phrases they used. *Their* cures were in the name of *another*, but Christ's were in *His own* name, and by *His own will*. Joseph says (Gen. xli. 16), "It is not in me, God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." (2 Kings v. 7; Acts iii. 6.) *And immediately the leprosy departed from him.* The effect, as usual, was instantaneous—the man was cleansed or purified, as he had asked, and Christ had promised, both in a physical and moral sense.

14. And he charged him to tell no man: but go, and show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

^aMatt. viii. 4; Mark i. 40, on which see notes. ^bLev. xiv. 4, 10, 21, 22.

Charged him to tell no man. Our Lord's purpose in the injunction to the man that he should not divulge the cure, as well as on similar occasions, was probably this, that His stiller ministry might not be hindered or disturbed, by the inopportune flowing to Him of multitudes, who should be drawn to Him merely by the hope of sharing the same worldly benefits, as we see was the case on this very occasion (Mark i. 45), nor yet by the premature violence of His enemies, roused to a more active and keener hate by the great things which were published of Him. (Luke ii. 46, 47.) The words, *tell no man*, are to be taken with this limitation, "till thou hast shown thyself to the priests, lest if a rumor of these things go before thee, the priests at Jerusalem, out of envy, out of a desire to depreciate my work, may deny either that thou wast a leper, or else that thou art now truly cleansed." This limitation is suggested by the order of the sentence, "see thou tell no man . . . but go," &c. The man was ready to remain. Adversity transfers our affections from natural objects to Christ.

And show thyself to the priest, i. e., subject thyself to the inspection of a priest, and obtain an official recognition of the cure that has been wrought upon thee. The Saviour condescends to permit His miracle to be judged by the priest as to its genuineness and completeness. *And offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded.* The sacrifice here referred to is found prescribed in Lev. xiv. 10, 21, xli. 1-32. By this requisition Christ not only provided for the full authentication of the miracle, but, as it were, defined His own relation to the ceremonial law. He knew that the ceremonies of the Mosaic law, which were only shadows and figures of good things to come, and had in themselves no inherent power, were now drawing to a close, and were soon to be laid aside forever. But so long as they were not abrogated, He would have them respected. As they were ordained by God Himself, they were not to be lightly esteemed. There is a time to be silent about the work of Christ, as well as a time to speak. There are times when our Lord would have us work for Him quietly

and silently, rather than attract attention by a noisy zeal. There is a zeal which is "not according to knowledge," as well as a zeal which is righteous and praiseworthy. Often we can be more useful by quietness and patience, than in any other way. We are not to "give that which is holy to dogs," nor "cast pearls before swine." By forgetfulness of this, we may even do more harm than good, and retard the very cause we want to assist.

For a testimony unto them, *i. e.*, as a proof that I reverence the law and comply with its requirements, or it may refer to the fact of the man's being cleansed, which could be fully ascertained by nothing but official scrutiny and attestation. "That they may know that a mighty cleanser is here." It was a most suitable case to present to the priesthood, because it came by law under their notice (Lev. xiv. 2, 10, 21), because of its peculiar symbolic significance, and because of its demonstrative character.

Leprosy is an emblem of sin. What are we all but lepers, spiritually, in the sight of God? Sin is the deadly sickness by which we are all affected. It is inherited from our parents. (Ps. li. 5.) It has eaten into our constitution. It has affected all our faculties—heart, conscience, mind and will, are all diseased by it. (Isa. i. 6.) It excludes from communion with God, and from heaven, and, at length, it will bring the body down to the grave (Rom. vi. 23), and if sin is unpardoned, it will ruin the soul forever. Who shall deliver us from this body of death? Let us thank God that Jesus Christ can. With Him nothing is impossible. Let us never despair of any one's salvation so long as he lives. No cases of spiritual leprosy could be worse than those of Manasseh, Saul and Zaccheus, yet they were all cured; Jesus Christ made them whole. "*I will.*" These two little words are a deep mine, rich in comfort and encouragement to all laboring and heavy-laden souls. They show us the mind of Christ toward sinners. They exhibit His infinite willingness to do good to the souls of men, and His readiness to show compassion, and impart salvation to all who, like this leper, approach Him, sensible of their misery,

feeling that they have no claim other than their misery gives them, realizing their guilt, and exercising faith in His power and mercy.

^{15.} But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities.

¹Matt. iv. 23; Mark iii. 7, i. 45; John vi. 2.

The greater Christ's precaution against having His cure of the leper blazoned abroad, the more rapidly and extensively the news spread. We learn from Mark i. 45, that the delivered one forgot the injunction. (1 Sam. xv. 22.) Thankful joy made silence impossible. It is noticeable that in the Gospels we never find the behavior of those who transgressed such a command very severely censured. Yet certainly this man, by his disobedience, did the cause of Christ no service. The rumor he started raised a crowd and excitement, wholly unlike the gentle and spiritual movement it was the purpose of Jesus to create, and He was followed by such numbers, that had He entered into any city, He would have been in danger of attracting the suspicious notice of the authorities.

^{16.} And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.—³Matt. xiv. 23; Mark vi. 46.

He withdrew, literally, *He was withdrawing*, or separating Himself, implying a habit, and *prayed*. Christ frequently, doubtless, daily went aside from the multitude, into retired places, for those exercises of devotion in which His soul delighted. (Luke vi. 12; Prov. xviii. 1; Matt. xiv. 23; Mark vi. 46.) Often, when the labors of the day were so arduous and continuous as to give Him no time for this, He drew upon the hours of night, in order that the duty and privilege of prayer might not suffer interruption. It was not enough for Him to have the feeling of devotion in His soul; He uttered audible prayer to God, and retired and withdrew Himself from other engagements, and from His most intimate friends, for this purpose. Here we have an example for our imitation. If Jesus gave Himself to prayer, shall we venture to neglect doing so? The more various and important public labors are, the more evidently do we need to draw down succor by ardent prayer, that we may be strengthened and prospered in them. We should so order our affairs

that our public work and our secret devotions may not encroach upon, or interfere with each other. Ministers, especially, are here taught that they are to receive fresh supplies of light and power from God by prayer, that they may be the more successful in their work, and that they ought to seek frequent opportunities of being in private with God and their books.

17. ¶ And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them.

Active and indefatigable as our Lord was in preaching in their synagogue publicly on the Sabbath, He considered this as no sufficient reason for not instructing the people in the same blessed truths on every day, in private, and in the house in which He resided. Where the heart is full of the love of God, no time will appear inappropriate, no place unseemly, to speak of all His wondrous works of providence and grace.

There were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by. It being ascertained where Jesus might be found, persons of consideration repaired to Capernaum (Mark ii. 1), not only from other parts of Galilee, but even from Judea and Jerusalem, some, doubtless, in search of benefit to their souls, some from curiosity to see and hear One whose name was in every mouth, and others to watch whether any dangerous principles lurked in a doctrine so actively promulgated. Among these, and all, probably, belonging to the latter class, were Pharisees, and *doctors of the law*, who were the same as the scribes (verse 21), so often mentioned in connection with the Pharisees.

In the phrase, *and the power of the Lord was present to heal them all*, if we refer the pronoun *them* to the persons, implied in the words *he was teaching, i. e.*, to such persons in His audience as stood in need of His healing power, the passage may be interpreted, *the power of Jesus was* (operative) *to heal all who were diseased*; in other words, there was on this occasion an eminent display of His miraculous healing power, accompanying His presentation of the truth, and attesting to His Divine character and mission.

18. ¹And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him.

²Matt. ix. 2; Mark ii. 3.

Out of the other miracles of healing which were performed at this time, this one is recorded in detail, on account of the remarkable circumstances which attended it. Behold, merely indicates something new and unexpected. *Men brought in a bed.* Mark says (ii. 3), he was brought by four men. According to Oriental usage, the *bed* was probably no solid framework like our bedsteads, but a simple pallet, rug or blanket. Even the most costly Oriental beds consist of cushions and light coverings, spread upon the floor or divan. *A man which was taken with a palsy.* Palsy seems to be a contraction of the word paralysis. It is the cessation of nervous activity and muscular motion—a disease that is found everywhere in various forms. It was not uncommon in the East, and was often caused by sleeping at night in the open air. Sometimes it attacks the whole body, sometimes only parts of it. Some think this man's disease had been of long standing. Others suppose it was the *universal palsy*, which is quickly fatal, and which may account for the earnestness and haste of the bearers in getting their friend to Christ. At all events his case was a very aggravated one. He was totally disabled. *And they sought means to bring him in, and lay him before Him.* When they reached the house, they implored, but in vain, that an opening might be made in the crowd, that they might present their sick friend to Jesus. The door-way was thronged, some were seeking a cure themselves, others were anxious to hear the Saviour preach, many were influenced by curiosity to see Him, and the envious scribes were not disposed to give way that He might again prove His almighty power.

19. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus.

To understand the scene here described, we must banish from our minds every form of American or European houses. In those Eastern countries houses were built very low, with flat roofs (Sam. ii. 2; Josh. ii. 6; Jer. xlviii. 38; Zeph. i. 5), and with a small square, or court-yard, in the midst of the building. Access was obtained to

the roof by a staircase outside, so that a person might ascend to the roof without entering the house. In the present case our Lord appears to have been preaching in the court-yard of the house. Those who carried the paralytic not being able to reach Him because of the crowd, ascended to the roof, removed so much of it as was necessary, and let down their patient through the aperture. This could be done by holding the corners of the couch, which was but a thickly-padded quilt, without any apparatus of ropes or cords.

What pains men will take about an object when they are in earnest! The friends of the paralytic were ingenious in finding out a way. If we are as anxious to obtain spiritual blessings as they were to benefit the sick man, we shall be ingenious too. We shall find time in almost any circumstances for prayer and for reading the Scriptures. Many have shown great ingenuity in contriving means to bring sinners to Jesus. The last day will reveal how abundantly their pious plans have been blessed.

²⁰ And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.

On verses 20-26 see on Matt. ix. 2-8; Mark ii. 1-12.

The Saviour was not annoyed by the interruption, so ready was He always to help the afflicted. Not a word appears to have been spoken by any one of the party. The sick man's friends who remained on the roof, and were, no doubt, looking down with deep anxiety, conceived, and conceived truly, that the silent misery of the sufferer would plead his cause far more effectually than their best eloquence, while the sick man himself, unable to speak from his malady, was content to lie at the feet of Jesus, and there to trust to His Divine compassion. *When he saw their faith*—that of the bearers of the paralytic, as well as of the paralytic himself, manifested by their making these extraordinary efforts to bring him to Jesus. *He said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.* Saving faith and healing were alike the gift of God, and often, if not commonly, bestowed together. Instead of healing the paralytic immediately, our Lord, who knew well the state

of his heart, and, as if regarding him with special tenderness, as one who mourned more for his sins than his sufferings, pronounced his sins forgiven. This absolution was not a declaration of what was, or a wish for what might be, but a judicial sentence of what took effect the moment the words were uttered. The poor paralytic's sins were now actually pardoned, and he must have experienced the blessedness of the "man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." The worth of the pardon which Jesus bestows is valued only by those who groan beneath the burden of sin.

Our Lord's procedure on this occasion, in pardoning the paralytic's sins before healing his bodily disease, though it does not show, as some maintain it does, that He regarded special suffering as punishment for special sins, nevertheless was calculated to remind him, and all who were present, and all who read the account of the transaction, that sin is the cause and root of all pains and diseases. Greatly may he rejoice, whose experience enables him to bless the Lord who hath first forgiven him all his iniquities, and then healed all his diseases.

²¹ And the scribes and Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?

²² Matt. ix. 3; Mark ii. 6, 7. ²³ Ps. xxxii. 5; Isa. xliii. 25.

The scribes and Pharisees who surrounded Jesus now began to show their malice toward Him. They *began to reason*, to discuss or interchange views, secretly, (Matt. ix. 3.) Blasphemy is committed when, 1. unworthy things are attributed to God; 2. when worthy things are denied to God; 3. when that which is exclusively Divine is attributed to others than God. The charge of *speaking blasphemies*, brought by Christ's subtle and bitter foes against Him, was based upon an arrogation of the Divine prerogative. "What are this man's pretensions, that on his own authority he should pronounce forgiveness of sin, the sole prerogative of God? He is guilty of the rankest blasphemy." Had our Lord been a mere man, or the highest of created beings, their reasoning would have been correct, for no one but God has power to forgive sin.

But His language is becoming and appropriate, when regarded as spoken by a Being who was God incarnate. As it seems to have been then agreed on all hands, that forgiving of sins was the prerogative of God alone, and that for man to arrogate to himself such a power as belonged to God alone, was no less than blasphemy; how can man, without guilt, undertake to pronounce absolution?

22. But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, Why reason ye in your hearts?

Mark says (ii. 8), *they reasoned within themselves*. Our Lord, seeing their thoughts, addresses them with a question corresponding in form with theirs: *What reason ye in your hearts?* In Matt. (ix. 4), the question is, "Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?" "Why do ye secretly reckon and meditate evil?" The words refer to this process as going forward not merely in their minds, but in their inner parts, or secretly. In both cases the interrogation implies censure. To know the hearts of men was, with the Jews, a test of the true Messiah's claims. In telling them what the thoughts of their hearts were (for they had expressed nothing publicly), our Lord gave them the fullest proof of His power to forgive sins, because God only can forgive sins, and God only can search and know the heart.

23. Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk?

Whether is easier. This was a point which could be determined without trouble. Miracles had other prophets also performed, but really to bestow forgiveness, that belonged to the Searcher of hearts alone. Christ's enemies, however, as He knew, thought that to *say*, or *claim* that sin is forgiven, was undoubtedly the easier, particularly so long as inquiry was not made respecting the credentials of the speaker's authority. In order, therefore, that they might doubt no longer of His credentials (which seem to have been the great end of the miracle), the Saviour accomplished the miracle of healing, whereby the blessing of the forgiveness of sins was at once manifested and sealed.

24. But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go unto thine house.

The phrase *Son of man* appears to have

been taken from Dan. vii. 13, which the Jews understood as referring to the Messiah. (Luke xxii. 69, 70; John xii. 34.) *That ye may know*, &c. "By doing that which is submitted to the eyes of men, I will attest my right and power to do that which, in its very nature, lies out of the region of ocular demonstration. From what you shall see, you may conclude that it is no 'robbery' (Phil. ii. 6), upon my part to claim also the power of forgiving men their sins." *Power upon earth*, the counterpart of *power in heaven*. It could be no superior scientific skill, it could be no mere earthly magnetic power, it could be no accidental coincidence of events. Earth is exclusively the place where sins are committed and remitted. The phrase implies a condition of heavenly glory, in which no one will call in question Christ's right to remit sins. *I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go unto thine house*. This was added to show the paralytic's perfect cure from a state of absolute helplessness. Our Lord here places the miracle as *proof*, in close succession after His claim of forgiving power as *the thing to be proved*. No geometrician could ever bring proposition and demonstration into closer contact.

25. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God.

Christ's command was accompanied with Divine power, the helpless man instantly sprang to his feet, lifted upon his head the mattress upon which he had lain, and strode with vigorous limbs out of the court, through the crowd which now instinctively made way for him, hastening, under a command so pleasant to obey, first of all to his own home and family, to be a help where he had formerly been a burden, *glorifying God* for the wonderful cure which He had performed on his body, and for the still more wonderful grace He had bestowed on his soul.

26. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to-day.

They were all amazed, or, literally, "amazement took them all." The word used for amazement is the same that is translated in three places as "a trance." (Acts x. 10, xi. 5, and xxii. 17.) The effect

was thrilling. *Filled with fear.* A natural awe and reverence pervaded the people, which led them to say, *We have seen strange things to-day*, literary, events beyond belief, marvelous, paradoxical, things contrary to opinion, expectation, or ordinary experience. *They glorified God*—an admirable antithesis, the enthusiasm of the people, over against the murmuring of the scribes. Matthew says, ix. 8, “The multitude glorified God, who had given such power unto men.” From this it would seem that their ideas of Christ were, as yet, very imperfect, and that they looked on Him in no higher light than that of a man acting with delegated authority, whereas they ought to have concluded that He was the Divine Messiah. Nevertheless *they glorified God*, saying, “We never saw it in this fashion.” “We never saw anything like this.”

In addition to the practical lessons already derived from the narrative explained, the following are worthy of serious consideration: 1. Affliction may prove a great blessing to a man's soul. Many a one would never think of Jesus, but for the sickness with which he is visited. 2. Whilst it is pleasant to see crowds flocking to the house of God, there is too much reason for the painful fear, that many go there, not as humble worshipers, but as censors and spies. 3. All who are themselves in health and strength and comfort, ought to be ready to perform the various offices of humanity to those who are in sickness, or in any trouble. Especially ought Christians who have friends and acquaintances under the disease of sin, to endeavor to bring them to the Saviour, in a spiritual sense. 4. It is a solemn truth that Jesus can perceive the thoughts of men. This should be a daily and habitual reflection with us. All our purposes or desires even, for good or evil, are known to Him. (Heb. iv. 13; see Ps. cxxxix. 5.) It is delightful to think that the Son of Man has still power to forgive sin. “Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.” (Acts v. 31.)

27. *And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me. 28. And he left all, and followed him.—Matt. ix. 9; Mark ii. 13, 14.

On verses 27–38 see on Matt. ix. 17; Mark ii. 14–22.

After these things, i. e., after He had healed the leper and restored the paralytic. *He went forth*, left the house. *And saw a publican named Levi*, that is, *looked upon, attentively regarded.* A publican was a gatherer of taxes imposed by the Romans on the subject provinces of the empire. These taxes being regarded with disgust and impatient abhorrence, as badges of the national dishonor, the Jews who accepted this office, and thus made themselves the instruments of this disgrace to their country, were regarded with great abhorrence.

Named Levi, or Matthew. The two were one and the same person. It was a common thing among the Jews for a person to have two names. Matthew, who was the first Evangelist, was originally called Levi, but later, as Simon was named by the Lord, Peter, received from Him the new name of Matthew, which signifies, *God's gift.* *Sitting at the receipt of custom, i. e.*, the place of such receipt. The publicans had tenements or booths erected for them at the foot of bridges, at the mouth of rivers, and by the sea-shore, where they took the toll of passengers. (See preface to Matthew.)

Sitting. Dr. Thomson says, “The people of this country *sit* at all kinds of work. The carpenter saws, planes and hews with his hand-adze, sitting upon the ground or upon the plank that he is planing. The washerwoman *sits* by the tub; and, in a word, no one stands where it is possible to sit. Shop-keepers always sit, and Levi *sitting* at the receipt of custom, is the exact way to state the case. *And he said unto him, Follow me.* Doubtless this was not Levi's first knowledge of the Saviour. The analogy of the class described (Matt. iv. 18–22), makes it not improbable that this man, like his predecessors, already belonged, for a shorter or longer time, to the most attentive hearers of the Saviour. But now he is called to accompany Him continually as an Apostle, and to leave all for His sake. *And he left all, rose up and followed Him.* We are not to understand that he departed without settling up and arranging his affairs, so that his employers might receive detriment from his change of pursuit, and yet it is plain that unhesi-

tatingly, without the reply of a word, or the least unnecessary delay, he left all in which he had just before been immersed, and obeyed the summons which was to change the whole tenor of his life.

1. Such is the freeness of Divine grace that it calls and converts when, where and whomsoever it will. 2. Conversion is as much a supernatural work now, as it was eighteen hundred years ago. (Ps. xxvii. 8.) 3. We must never despair of any one's salvation so long as he lives, after reading of Levi's case. 4. Conversion now is as equally decisive a work as it ever was. Where the inward call of the Holy Spirit accompanies the outward call of the Word, the soul promptly yields obedience to the call of Christ, Satan cannot hold us down, the world shall not keep us back. It is admitted that Matthew's resigning his worldly calling, and worldly gains, was peculiar, but this only as regards the act, and not as regards the state of mind which produced the act, and which is required of all. 5. Instant obedience to what Christ says is duty. God says, "Believe—do." We are not to discuss the metaphysics of the question, but just believe as God says, and do as God prescribes, and in the effort we will find the strength that is adequate to the occasion.

29. And Levi made him a great feast in his own house; and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them. 1. Matt. ix. 10; Mark ii. 15. 2. Luke xv. 1.

Levi regarded the change in himself as occasion of rejoicing and gratitude. There are many who, if they hear of a relation being converted, consider it rather a misfortune. What an error! Nothing can happen to a man which ought to be such an occasion of joy as his being made a subject of Divine grace. *Made him a great feast.* When Christ was invited to any table, He never refused to go, even if a publican or Pharisee invited Him, He went mainly for an opportunity of conversing and doing good. *A great feast.* The words refer more properly to the number of the guests, and the manner in which they were received, than to the quantity or quality of the fare. The *great company of publicans* consisted, in all probability, of Levi's old friends and companions, whom he desired to be convinced of the change

he had experienced, and to have the opportunity of seeing and hearing his heavenly Teacher. Having been graciously delivered from the bondage of sin, he wished others also to be set free. This feeling of Levi will always be the feeling of a true Christian.

30. But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?

Their scribes and Pharisees, i. e., those belonging to Capernaum, where this entertainment was given. They were outraged, not only by our Lord's going to a publican's house to eat with him and his guests, but also by His choosing such a man for one of His most honored servants and closest companions. We are not to suppose that the scribes and Pharisees were among the company at table, for they would then, undoubtedly, according to their own opinion, have defiled themselves. We are rather to believe that the feast was so far of a public character, that access to the house was forbidden to no one, and that the desire of Christ's enemies to observe the Saviour was stronger than their disinclination to enter into the house of a publican. *Why do ye eat and drink, &c.* This fault-finding question was not directly addressed to the Saviour Himself. The defeat suffered by them shortly before at the healing of the paralytic, had probably deterred them from coming too frequently in contact with Christ. But though the cavil was addressed to *His disciples*, as it was aimed at our Lord, *He* answered, not merely to shame the scribes and Pharisees and to maintain His own cause, but also and especially in order to come to the help of His perplexed disciples, who were not yet in a condition suitable to defend themselves and Him.

31. And Jesus answering said unto them, they that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick.

As if our Lord had said, "Why should a physician be censured for conversing with sick patients? I came into the world to perform the office of a kind physician unto men; surely then I should take all opportunities of conversing with them, that I may help and heal them, for *they that are sick need the physician*, but as for you, scribes and Pharisees, who are strong and sound in your own opinion and

conceit, I have no hope of doing you good, for such as *think themselves whole* desire not the physician's aid." Very striking is this image of sickness to mark the prostrate condition of man in his sin. The drooping, the disgust with the very sights and sounds which gladdened him before, the feverish restlessness, the parched tongue, the weary limbs, the acute pain, the dull, deep gnawing of mortal disease, the disarrangement of all the functions of the body, the sleeplessness, the delirium, the helplessness and the hopelessness of the poor stricken one, and his death, if his sickness is not removed—surely all this supplies a wonderful picture of sin in the soul of man, the spiritual disease under which he is suffering, and his melancholy doom, if that disease is not healed by the Great Physician.

32. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.—Matt. ix. 13; 1 Tim. i. 15.

Here, as elsewhere, we see that our Lord's call to sinners is not a bare call to become His disciples, but a call to *repentance*. Repentance, or godly sorrow for sin, is for the just-named sick, the restoration of the health of the soul. We are not to understand that Christ found some who were "whole," and "righteous;" for an Apostle has declared that "all have sinned." Jesus called those scribes and Pharisees "righteous" and "whole," not because they were really so, but only because they, with a holy mockery, esteemed themselves so. The language in relation to them is entirely ironical. (See on Matt. ix. 13.)

33. And they said unto him, "Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink?"

*Matt. ix. 14; Mark ii. 18.

The objection here made, that the disciples of our Saviour did not fast so often and so much, and "make prayers" so frequently as the disciples of John the Baptist, seems, according to the fuller account of Matthew and Mark, to have come from the disciples of John themselves, in union with the Pharisees, the Pharisees having, perhaps, incited these disciples to make common cause with them, which they could the more easily do, as now Jesus was at a feast and John in prison. The *prayers* do not refer to the common and usual prayers of devout men,

but to those which accompanied a life of austere devotion, such as John and his disciples practiced, of whom many may have been from among the Essenes, whose previous asceticisms would lead them to regard with surprise the departure of Jesus and His disciples from the stern habits of self-denial practiced by their Master.

34. And he said unto them, Can ye make the children of the bride-chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them?

Can ye make, by your ordinances, precepts and practices, *the children of the bridegroom*, &c.—an evident allusion to the last testimony of John the Baptist (John iii. 29), given with a look at his murmuring disciples. It will be noticed that there is an antithesis between this and the following verse. In the one case fasting would be performed, if at all, by compulsion; in the other case, it would be spontaneous and genuine. Now that the Bridegroom was with the children of the bride-chamber, and it was a day of joy and rejoicing with the disciples, mourning and fasting would be very inappropriate for them. Christ would not discourage His disciples by over-rigorous institutions, and it is unfit that His religion should be burthened with them. He suits the duties of His people to their circumstances, and kindly proportions their work to their strength, with a tender regard to their weakness, till by degrees they may be fitted for the more difficult and humbling services. (See on Matt. ix. 15.)

35. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.

"*The days will come*, in which a much greater sorrow will befall my disciples than even that which has now smitten the sorrowing disciples of John—I am not only to be separated from them, but to be *taken away*—an evident allusion to the violent death He should die, *and then shall they fast in those days.*" The words, *those days*, are not to be regarded as an unnecessary pleonasm of the *days will come*, but as an emphatic repetition. Though the expression—*then shall they fast*—does not seem to warrant the inference drawn by many from it, that when the Saviour left the world, literal fasting from meats and drinks, at

certain seasons, was to be the duty of all Christians, yet it may not be doubted that fasting and abstinence were occasionally practiced by believers after our Lord's ascension. (See on iv. 2.) The words in this verse appear to have a deeper meaning than any mere abstinence from food. They describe the state of mind in which all true Christians should live until their Lord returns. It is time for daily and hourly self-denial and mortification. The time of fullness and satisfaction cannot be until we see the Bridegroom amongst us again.

36. And he spake also a parable unto them; No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old.—Matt. ix. 16, 17; Mark ii. 21, 22.

Our Lord now introduces a *parable*, which here means a proverbial expression, or simile, illustrative of some truth, to explain and enforce the principle of congruity and fitness which would be violated, should His disciples adopt the ascetic habits of John's disciples, or those of the Pharisees. The special fitness of a parable taken from wine and clothing while He sat at a feast, strikes the eye of itself. *If otherwise*; if he does, he both rends the new garment and the patch from the new garment, and the patch from the new garment will not agree with the old. This is meant to show how the attempt to patch up the old with the new, spoils both systems. The new loses its completeness, and the old its consistency. The Saviour gave the murmuring scribes and Pharisees to understand that that which He was bringing in, was not a mere addition to, or complement of that which had gone by. The whole Jewish dispensation was passing away. The dispensation of the Gospel was at hand. But the latter was not to be thrust into the midst of the former, in order to make it last longer, or wear better. The old dispensation was not the more important of the two, and so the new ought not to be used to renovate and help on the old. The garment of law righteousness was old. The garment of Christ's righteousness was new. The first was waxing feeble,

and ready to perish altogether. The latter was not to be pieced into it, in order that it might be preserved. The "agreement" spoken of in the parable as not existing between the new and the old, simply has reference to any effort to bring them together, to unite them, to save the one from perishing by the help of the other. The old and new Covenants are both originally from God, and both, as such, are *good*, but they must not be blended together, or mixed up with each other, as if to make but *one*.

37. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. 38. But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved.

This parable has nearly the same meaning with the one preceding it. There is, however, this distinction, that in the former, the new (the cloth) is represented as something added with the intent of mending the old, while, on the other hand, in the second, the new (the wine) is now the principal thing, and comes into prominence in its peculiar force and working. The first parable tells us that the improvement must not be begun externally, leaving the state of the inner man untouched; the other shows inversely, that the internal renovation must reach to what is outward, and give to this a suitable direction.

39. No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better.

It seems very likely that in this concluding verse, which is peculiar to Luke, our Lord refers especially to the disciples of John the Baptist. They had drunk of the "old wine" of John's teaching, and could hardly be expected to become attached to the "new wine" of our Lord's kingdom. Or, it may be that the reference is to the Pharisees. The gracious Redeemer apologizes for those hearts which had grown accustomed to the nature of the old, regarding it as not unnatural that they should feel it difficult to depart from the regular and wonted course, and venture into a new and fermenting element of life. The old, though in itself less pleasant, is yet, through custom, more acceptable. "Use forms the taste."

1. From what place did Christ teach the people? 2. What did He say to Simon? 3. What did Simon reply? 4. What was the result of his obedience? 5. What did Simon Peter say at Jesus' knees? 6. Explain Christ's reply to him. 7. State the particulars of the cure of the leper. 8. Where did Jesus withdraw Himself? 9. For what purpose? 10. Explain the narrative of the healing of the paralytic. 11. What did Jesus say to Levi? 12. At what did the scribes and Pharisees murmur? 13. How did Jesus vindicate His course? 14. Explain the parables in verses 36 and 37.

CHAPTER VI.

1 Christ reproveth the Pharisees' blindness about the observation of the Sabbath, by scripture, reason, and miracle: 13 chooseth twelve apostles: 17 heareth the diseased: 20 preacheth to his disciples before the people of blessings and curses: 27 how we must love our enemies: 46 and join the obedience of good works to the hearing of the word: test in the evil day of temptation we fall like an house built upon the face of the earth, without any foundation.

In this chapter we have Christ's exposition of the Moral Law, which He came not to destroy, but to fulfill, and to fill up by His Gospel.

AND it came to pass on the second Sabbath after the first, that he went through the corn-fields; and his disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands.—Matt. xii. 1; Mark ii. 23.

Second Sabbath after the first. From Passover to Pentecost was seven weeks. The customary reckoning of these seven weeks was from the *second day* after the Passover, and the *first Sabbath* after this *second day* was called the *second-first Sabbath*. The Passover was in April, a time not too early for the ripening of the barley-fields in the better parts of Palestine. *He went through the corn-fields*, attended by His disciples and some of the Pharisees, whose curiosity, it is probable, prompted them to follow on this occasion, in expectation of seeing more miracles. The fields were sown with corn, in the proper English sense of grain or breadstuffs, with particular reference to wheat and barley. Rabinnic authority shows that there were paths leading through the fields of corn. *And his disciples*, who had eaten nothing during the day, *plucked the ears of corn*, wheat or barley, and as it was ripe, *rubbed them in their hands*, so as to separate the kernels from the chaff, *and did eat*. This is a customary way of appeasing hunger in Palestine at this day.

2. And certain of the Pharisees said unto them, Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the sabbath-days?—Ex. xx. 10.

Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the sabbath-days? This could not refer to

walking in the fields, for, according to Jewish tradition, one might travel beyond the limits of a town, "a Sabbath-day's journey," which was about seven-eighths of a mile. (Ex. xvi. 20; Acts i. 12.) The plucking of ears of corn by passengers in a corn-field through which a path lay, was allowed by the law. (Deut. xxiii. 25.) *Dr. Robinson* says it is the custom still. Indeed, the Pharisees only say that it was *unlawful on the sabbath-days*. This was more than the law of the Sabbath said or implied. The law forbade servile work on that day, but the act of the disciples was no servile work. Hypocrites expend their zeal about the lesser things of the law, whilst they neglect the greater. (Matt. xxiii. 24.) They place all holiness in the observance of outward ceremonies, whilst they neglect moral duties. An intolerant and censorious spirit in religion is greatly to be deprecated.

3. And Jesus answering them said, Have ye not read so much as this, what David did, when himself was an hungered, and they which were with him? 4. How he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the shew-bread, and gave also to them that were with him; which it is not lawful to eat but for the priests alone?—1 Sam. xxi. 6. 2 Lev. xxiv. 9.

In the answer of our Lord there was a reference to 1 Sam. 21. *The house of God*, in which He dwelt among His people, an expression no less applicable to the tabernacle than the temple. As the ancient sanctuary, under both its forms, was meant to symbolize the doctrine of Divine inhabitation and peculiar presence with the chosen people, it was movable as long as they were wandering and unsettled, but as soon as they had taken full possession of the promised land, which was not till the reign of David, the portable tent was exchanged for a permanent, substantial dwelling. At the time here mentioned, the tabernacle was at Nob. (1 Sam. xxi. 1.) *The shew-bread*, in Hebrew, "bread of

the presence," or faces, because this bread was to be set continually "before the face of Jehovah." (See Ex. xxv. 23 and 30.) Twelve loaves were every Sabbath placed on a table in the Holy Place, first in the tabernacle, and afterward in the temple of Solomon, and when they were removed, they were eaten only by the priests: The argument of Jesus was this: "If David, when he was fleeing from Saul, and was overtaken with hunger, took and ate that holy bread, and did this, not because he was called of God to a peculiar work and office in which he might lawfully do things forbidden to others, for *he gave also to them that were with him*, why might not my disciples pluck barley on a holy day, when they were hungry? If God permitted the rules of His own house to be infringed in cases of necessity, would He not allow work to be done on His own Sabbath days, when it was work for which there was really a need?" Our Lord did not argue for a proper breaking of the law, but for its true construction. The example adduced by Him not only indicated His purpose to remain in all things spiritual faithful to the standard of His illustrious ancestor, but was also admirably fitted to show that under such a pressure a ceremonial precept must give place to a moral duty.

5. And he said unto them, That the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

The Sabbath is an ordinance for man's rest, both actually and typically, as setting forth the rest that remains for God's people. (Heb. iv. 9.) But He who is now speaking has taken on Himself manhood—the whole nature of man—and is rightful Lord over creation, as granted to man, and of all that is made for man, and therefore of the Sabbath. The whole dispensation of time is created for man—for Christ, as He is man—and is in His absolute power. Hence the Sabbath having been ordained for man, not for any individual, but for the whole race, it must needs be subject to the Son of man, who is its Head and Representative, its Sovereign and Redeemer. This implies that though the Sabbath, in its essence, is perpetual, the right of modifying and controlling it belongs to Christ, and can be exercised only under His authority.

The Sabbath is of Divine institution. It was established on the day of the holy rest of God, at the end of the creative week. It formed a part of the Patriarchal religion. It was woven into the moral code given to Moses. It was not given as a part of the *ceremonial* law, but of the *moral*. The injunction in the fourth commandment, to "*remember*" it, implies that it was an institution with which the Israelites were already acquainted. We meet with directions concerning it in the Prophets, and then passing on we find it hallowed by Christ's holy example. (iv. 16.)

After the resurrection of Christ, the Jewish Sabbath, which was laid upon the primitive Sabbath, was abolished, and "*the Lord's day*" (Rev. i. 10), or Christian Sabbath, was superimposed upon another day—the *first day of the week*—thus making the day of universal and perpetual obligation. On this day, when His disciples were assembled, Jesus appeared to them. The appearance was repeated by Him on the same day a week afterward. On this day, in all probability, the Holy Ghost was given, for the day of Pentecost signifies the fiftieth day from the first day of the feast of the Passover, and always happened on the first day of the week. On the first day of the week the disciples assembled for worship. (Acts xx. 7.) On it contributions were made for charitable purposes. (1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2.) John refers to it as "*the Lord's day*" (Rev. i. 10), meaning that it was that day which was consecrated to the worship and service especially of the Lord Jesus Christ. *Ignatius*, Bishop of Antioch, A. D. 101, says: "Let us (Christians) no more sabbatize," that is, keep the seventh day, as the Jews did, "but let us keep the Lord's day." *Theophilus*, Bishop of Antioch, about A. D. 162, says: "Both custom and reason challenge from us that we should honor *the Lord's day*, seeing on that day it was that our Lord Jesus completed His resurrection from the dead." *Irenæus*, Bishop of Lyons, A. D. 167, who had been a disciple of Polycarp, the companion of the Apostles, says: "On the Lord's day every one of us Christians keeps the Sabbath, meditating on the law, and rejoicing in the works of God." *Clement*, of Alex-

andria, A. D. 192, says: "A Christian, according to the command of the Gospel, observes the *Lord's day*, thereby glorifying the resurrection of the Lord." The words of *Tertullian*, about the same time, are: "The Lord's day is the holy day of the Christian Church." *Constantine*, in the fourth century, issued an edict, obliging all the Roman empire to "observe the *Lord's day*, in memory of those things which were done by the common Saviour of men;" and *Chrysostom* says: "The first day of the week is to be observed by Christians as the *Lord's day*."

The Sabbath is absolutely essential, not only to the animal creation in the service of man, but to man's welfare, physically, intellectually, socially, morally. Hence nearly all nations have observed a day of rest periodically, and generally the seventh day. The infidel actors in the French Revolution abolished the Christian Sabbath. They voted "No God," instead of the God of Abraham, and they voted "No Sabbath," but substituted what they called the Decades, or every tenth day. But what was the result? After the desperate experiment had been made, Robespierre was constrained to say, "The world will go to pieces if we cannot find a God;" and, in the course of a few years, as if the Sabbath was made for man, the world fell back into the olden ruts, and seized the Sabbath again as too precious to be let go.

We live in days when anything like strict observance of the Sabbath is loudly denounced by some as a remnant of Jewish superstition. Vague talk like this has no confirmation in the word of God. Let us settle it in our mind that the fourth commandment has never been repealed by Christ, and that we have no more right to break the Sabbath, under the Gospel, than we have to murder and to steal. The architect who repairs a building, and restores it to its proper use, is not the destroyer of it, but the preserver. The Saviour who redeemed the Sabbath from Jewish traditions, and so frequently explained its true meaning, ought never to be regarded as the enemy of the fourth commandment. On the contrary, He has "magnified it, and made it honorable."

¶ And it came to pass also on another sabbath, that

he entered into the synagogue and taught: and there was a man whose right hand was withered.
⁶Matt. xii. 9; Mark iii. 1; see chap. xiii. 14 and xiv. 3; John ix. 6.

Another Sabbath, probably the next after the incident in the corn-field. *The synagogue*, of those with whom He had thus disputed (Matt. xii. 9), taught, according to His usual custom. *And there was a man whose right hand was withered*. An atrophy (of the limb), and an inability to move the nerves and muscles, which would cause the limb to be *rigid*, was what the Jews understood by a "withered limb." It was occasioned by a deficient absorption of nutriment in the limb. It was attended with great danger, and often proved fatal. When once thoroughly established, it was incurable by any art of man. *Right hand*. The mention of the right hand is important, not only as it is a definiteness of expression which attests the independence of Luke's narrative, but also as showing the great mercy of restoring to a man the use of the hand (or arm) with which he labored.

7 And the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against him.

Christ's enemies were present, for they observed the *forms* of religion, though they knew not its *power*. They *watched him*, and, as the original verb denotes, with evil intent. It is thus that some minds place themselves when they come to view religion. They see it, not to know the true will of God, and their duty in His sight, but to see if some ground of perversion cannot be found.

8 But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth.

But he knew their thoughts. This assertion of Christ's omniscience is not the less valuable and convincing a proof of His Divinity, because introduced with so little apparent design on the part of the Evangelist. *And said to the man with the withered hand*. Notwithstanding the men were present who had just charged His disciples with breaking the Sabbath, Jesus here proceeded with His work. The unjust censures and malicious cavils of wicked men must not discourage us from doing our duty either toward God or our neighbor. *Rise up, and stand forth in the midst*, literally, "up! into the midst." It may

have been the design of this command, to stand forth and show himself to the congregation, that the sight of his distress might move them to pity him, and that they might be the more sensibly struck with the miracle when they observed the wasted hand restored to perfect soundness in an instant.

9. Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing: Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?

To expose the malice and superstition of His foes, our Lord appealed to the dictates of their own minds, whether it was not more lawful to *do good on the Sabbath days than to do evil, to save life than to kill*. He meant, more lawful for Him to save men's lives than for them to plot His death without the least provocation. In Scripture, the mere negation of anything is often expressed by the affirmation of the contrary. Thus (chap. xiv. 26), *not to love*, or even *to love less*, is called *to hate* (Matt. xi. 25); *not to reveal* is *to hide*, and here, *not to do good*, when we can, is *to do evil*, *not to save* is *to kill*. From this, and many other passages of the New Testament, it may be justly deduced, as a standing principle of Christian ethics, that not to do the good which we have the opportunity and power to do, is, in a certain degree, the same as to do the contrary evil, and not to prevent mischief when we can, the same as to commit it.

10. And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored whole as the other.

See on Matt. xii. 13; Mark iii. 5.

The *manner* in which Christ performed this miracle is very remarkable. First, He made a full pause, gazing upon His adversaries as they stood with the obdurate silence of hatred in a circle before Him. He *could* have healed the poor man by a word, but He desired him to *stretch forth his hand*. Was not this a strange command? The man might have replied, "I have often endeavored to stretch forth my hand, and have not been able. Why should I try again?" But he made no such unbelieving answer; he confided in the power of Jesus, and his attempt was successful—*his hand was restored whole as the other*. In this simple history we have the best answer to those doubts, hesitations and questionings by which anxious inquirers

often perplex themselves in relation to repenting and returning to Christ. Let them do as *he* did who had the withered hand. Let them not stand still, reasoning, but act. Depraved man is withered in every limb of his soul, impotent by fallen nature. Yet just as this man was commanded to put forth his strengthless hand, so is the strengthless soul commanded to commit itself to the Redeemer, and in the effort to do so it will find that power accompanies the precept.

11. And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.

They felt they could not stand before His arguments, sustained as they were by such signs and wonders. Their credit was in danger; they saw that if Jesus was allowed to go on, their influence and gains would be lost. What then would be done? It was an affair of so much importance that they called a council. (Mark iii. 6.) The enemies of Christ and His cause, when arguments fail, fall to violence. It is a certain sign of a weak cause, that it must be supported by passion, which is all tongue and no ear. (See Mark i. 21; Mark i. 29; John v. 9; John ix. 14; Luke xiii. 14, xiv. 1.)

12. And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.—Matt. xiv. 23.

It would appear, from a comparison with Matthew (x. 2-4) and Mark (iii. 13-19), that what is here related took place soon after Jesus returned from the sea of Tiberias (Mark iii. 7), to avoid the murderous designs of the Pharisees and Herodians. (Mark iii. 6.) *Went out*. Out of synagogue and city, from the crowded haunts of men. Solemn was the exchange from town to mountain. Hattin was the mountain-summit to which our Lord ascended. *To pray*. What a sublime and striking picture is here presented—the incarnate Son withdrawn from the noise and tumult of the world, to hold converse with the ineffable Jehovah! The Christian should be much alone with God. Shut out from life's distracting cares and business, he should hold communion with his "Father who seeth in secret," and place his soul under the beams, and breezes, and blessed visions of heaven.

If the sinless Saviour found retirement necessary for His spiritual strength, how much more do we need it who are polluted with sin!

And continued all night. What ardor of love must have filled His bosom to have driven sleep from His eyelids, and sustained Him in prayer during the watches of the night! This perseverance furnishes a high and holy lesson for imitation. It is not by the short and transient applications to a throne of grace, which we are too apt to dignify with the name of prayer, that we can hope to be qualified for seasons of peculiar trial, temptation or labor. This can alone be done by dwelling near the mercy-seat; by sitting, as it were, upon the footstool of the throne (1 Chron. xxviii. 2); by daily, hourly, constantly sending forth our petitions to Him whose grace alone can be sufficient for us. *In prayer to God*, literally, *in prayer of God*. This expression is a Hebraism, meaning "fervent and earnest prayer," just as "mountains of God," and "cedars of God," in the Old Testament, mean "lofty" mountains, and "high" cedars. (Ps. xxxvi. 6; lxxx. 10.) We must not only *ask*, but *seek*, and *knock*. It is not difficult to determine what was the subject of our Saviour's prayer that night, when we observe that the next morning He chose twelve from among His disciples to be Apostles. Was He not praying in the night for them, and for their followers through all time?

Here, then, we learn the great importance of prayer and intercession in behalf of ministers, and particularly at the time of their ordination, that they may enter upon the great work before them with a becoming caution and fear—with a proper sense of responsibility, not with aspiring, but humble thoughts, *for who is sufficient for these things?* Those to whom the responsible office of ordaining is committed, should pray that they may "lay hands suddenly on no man." Those who offer themselves for ordination should pray that they may not undertake work for which they are unfit, and not run without being sent. The lay-members of the Church, not least, should pray that none may be ordained, but men who are in-

wardly moved by the Holy Ghost. Happy are those ordinations, in which all concerned have the mind that was in Christ, and come together in a prayerful spirit.

13. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples; and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles;—Matt. x. 1.

When it was day, probably early in the morning, *he called unto him his disciples*. The persons commissioned were disciples before they were Apostles, to teach us that Christ will have such as preach the Gospel to be His disciples before they are ministers—trained up in the faith and doctrine of the Gospel, before they undertake a public charge. The successive stages of apostolic induction are, *First*, the admitting to a more intimate association of one and another as *disciples*. (John i. 35–52.) *Second*, a choice of one or several at a time to be strictly His intimate *followers* in order to be His future *preachers*. (Luke v. 1–11.) *Third*, the formation of the whole into an organism of *twelve*, under the title of *Apostles*, as specified here, in verse 13. *Fourth*, a sending of them forth on a trial mission. (Matt. x. 1–42.) *Fifth*, the apostolic keys. (Matt. xvi. 13–20.) *Sixth*, their qualifications for the exercise of their inspired and miraculous apostolic authority by the Pentecostal effusion of the Spirit. (Acts ii. 4.) It will be remembered, also, that Christ called them at first servants (Matt. x. 24), afterward friends and children (John xiii. 33; xv. 15), finally, even brethren. (John xx. 17.)

And out of them he chose twelve. The Saviour caused a great number of His disciples to come to Him, and now out of this number *chose* the twelve Apostles. He chose them, not they Him, yet He chose with discerning power, knowing their character and state of heart. Though the call of all proceeded alike from their Master's grace, we cannot fail to notice those personal qualifications which He Himself condescended to own and use in His service—the firm faith of Peter (*the rock*); the energy of the sons of Zebedee, whom He surnamed Boanerges (*sons of thunder*), united in John with that spirit of love, which made him the *beloved disciple*; the fraternal and friendly affection of Andrew and Philip; the devotion and guileless sincerity of Nathanael; the self-

sacrifice of Matthew ; the practical godliness of James, and the firm resolve of his brother Judas, to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," and, at the opposite extremity of the moral scale, that love of the world which made Judas Iscariot an awful example, that even one of those chosen by Christ to live with Him and hear His word, could yet betray his Master, and prove to have been all along "a son of perdition," for "He knew from the beginning who should betray Him."

Why Christ chose *twelve* it is difficult to say. Perhaps, if He had taken fewer, it would have been too limited a testimony. By taking twelve he took a competent number who could be witnesses of the facts they saw, and of the truths they heard, and thus go forth as eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses, to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ. Or, perhaps, He selected twelve, because that was the number of the tribes of Israel. (See Matt. xix. 28.) That there was a Divine *idea* in the selec-

tion of *twelve* Apostles, is evident from the symbolical usages in the Apocalypse. In Rev. xii. 1, the woman that symbolizes the Church has upon her head a crown of twelve stars. And the tree of life, emblem of Gospel grace, has twelve manner of fruits, that is, a monthly harvest, thus combining therein a Mosaical and Apostolic allusion. *Whom also he named Apostles. Apostle means one sent forth.* By this name, thenceforth, were those to be known, whom Jesus now commissioned to be His more intimate friends and followers, and to be the founders, under Him as their Great Head, of the Church which He was about to establish. Judas by his betrayal of Christ forfeited his apostleship. The place thus left vacant was filled by Matthias, although some, who look upon his appointment as not being in accordance with the mind of the Spirit, number Paul with the twelve, in the place of Judas.

The following are the names of the Apostles, and the order in which they are given :

(ON THE HISTORY OF THE APOSTLES SEE APPENDIX A.)

<i>Matthew</i> x. 2, 3, 4.	<i>Mark</i> iii. 16, 19.	<i>Luke.</i>	<i>Acts</i> i. 13.
1. Simon Peter, and	1. Simon Peter.	1. Simon Peter, and	1. Peter, and
2. Andrew, his brother.	2. James, and	2. Andrew, his brother.	2. James, and
3. James and	3. John, surnamed Boanerges.	3. James, and	3. John, and
4. John, Sons of Zebedee.	4. Andrew.	4. John.	4. Andrew.
5. Philip, and	5. Philip.	5. Philip, and	5. Philip, and
6. Bartholomew.	6. Bartholomew.	6. Bartholomew.	6. Thomas.
7. Thomas, and	7. Matthew.	7. Matthew, and	7. Bartholomew and
8. Matthew, the publican.	8. Thomas.	8. Thomas.	8. Matthew.
9. James, the son of Alphaeus.	9. James, the son of Alphaeus.	9. James, the son of Alphaeus.	9. James, the son of Alphaeus, and
10. Lebbeus, surnamed Thaddeus.	10. Thaddeus.	10. Simon Zelotes.	10. Simon Zelotes, and
11. Simon, the Canaanite.	11. Simon, the Canaanite.	11. Judas, the brother of James.	11. Judas, the brother of James.
12. Judas Iscariot, "Who also betrayed Him."	12. Judas Iscariot, "Who also betrayed Him."	12. Judas Iscariot, "Which was also the traitor."	

It will be observed that in Luke's catalogue their names are given by couples, doubtless to indicate how they were assorted in sending them forth two by two. It will be noticed also that although the arrangement of the names is so unlike in these four lists, the variation is confined to certain limits, as the twelve may be divided into three quaternions, which are never interchanged, and the leading names of which are the same in all. Thus Peter is invariably the first, Philip the fifth,

James the ninth, and Iscariot the last, except in Acts, where his name is omitted on account of his apostasy and death.

14. Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew,—John i. 42.

Simon, (whom he also named Peter.) Simon was the son of Jonas, or Jona. This was his original name, and signifies *hearing*. He was born at Bethsaida, a town situated on the western shore of the lake of Genesareth, but in what particular year we

are not informed. (John i. 42, 43.) He was a married man, and had his house, his mother-in-law, and his wife, at Capernaum, on the lake of Gennesareth. (Matt. viii. 14; Mark i. 29, Luke iv. 38.) He was by occupation a fisherman, and seems to have been associated with his brother Andrew in this business.

And Andrew his brother. Andrew was a native of Bethsaida, and brother of Peter. Whether he was Peter's elder or younger brother is uncertain. He, too, was called from his fishing-net to be a fisher of men. The name Andrew was Greek, and is found in Herodotus. He probably had a Hebrew name besides, which had been gradually superseded by the Greek one.

James and John. These two Apostles in most passages of the Gospels are named together, and from the prevailing order it is inferred that John was the younger. Their father was Zebedee, their mother Salome, whom some recent critics identify with the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus, in John xix. 25. Zebedee, whose occupation the two sons followed, was a fisherman of Bethsaida, on the lake of Tiberias, who, as he had a vessel of his own and hired servants (Mark i. 20), appears to have been in good circumstances for his station in life. We know nothing of him beyond his interposing no refusal when his sons were called to leave him (Matt. iv. 21), and his disappearance from the Gospel narrative leads to the inference that his death set Salome free to join her children in ministering to the Lord. (Luke viii. 3.)

Philip. The name is an old Greek one, and is found everywhere in ancient history. Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter (John i. 44), and apparently was among the Galilean peasants of that district who flocked to hear the preaching of the Baptist. He was a firm believer in the Messiahship of Christ. (John i. 25.) The statement that Jesus found him (John i. 43), implies a previous seeking. To him, in the whole circle of the disciples, were spoken the words so full of meaning, "Follow me."

Bartholomew is a patronymic, *the son of Tholmai*. His own name nowhere appears in the three first Gospels. He is supposed

to be the same person who is elsewhere called Nathanael.

15. *Matthew and Thomas, the son of Alpheus, and Simon called Zelotes.*

Matthew is the same as *Levi*. (Luke v. 27, 29.) He was the son of a certain *Alpheus*. (Mark ii. 14.) The only certain information which we possess concerning *Matthew* is contained in the Gospels, as his name occurs but once in the Acts of the Apostles, and never in the Epistles. Although a Jew, he was in the employment of the Romans as a publican, or tax-gatherer, and persons thus employed were odious to their countrymen, even to a proverb. The office was, however, one of some trust, and the means of worldly comfort which it offered were in proportion to its responsibilities, and this the more enhances the devoted self-denial of *Matthew*, in so readily leaving all to follow *ONE* who had "nowhere to lay his head." (See Preface to Gospel of *Matthew*.)

Thomas was also called *Didymus*, the two names being Aramaic and Greek synonymes, both meaning a *twain*. He was probably a Galilean, as well as the other Apostles, but the place of his birth and the circumstances of his calling are unknown. Besides the lists of the Apostles, he is named eight times in the Gospel of John: xi. 16, xiv. 5, xx. 24-29, xxi. 2.

James the son of Alpheus. The words *the son*, are not in the original, but the ellipsis is no doubt to be supplied with them. He is called by Mark, *James the Less* (xv. 40), and appears to be that *James* whom Paul calls "the Lord's brother." (Gal. i. 19.) *Alpheus* seems to be a Greek modification of an Aramaic name, of which *Clopas* (John xix. 25), is supposed to be another form. Now as *Clopas* was the husband of the Virgin *Mary's* sister (John xix. 25), his son would be the cousin of our Lord, and might, according to a common Hebrew idiom, be called brother. (See Gen. xiii. 8; 2 Sam. i. 26; Acts vii. 25, 26, ix. 17.)

Simon called Zelotes, in Matt. x. 4, *the Canaanite*. The two epithets attached to his name have the same signification, the former being the Geck translation of the latter, which is Chaldee. Both seem to

point him out as belonging to the Jewish faction called *Zealots*, which was animated by a most bitter and uncompromising zeal against the Roman rule, as a thing accursed, unlawful, and by every means to be put down, and which played so conspicuous a part in the last defense of Jerusalem. Simon is not mentioned in the New Testament out of the catalogue of the Apostles.

16. And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which was also the traitor.—Jude 1.

Judas the brother of James. The place here occupied by the name of *Jude* is filled by that of *Lebbæus* in Matthew x. 3, and that of *Thaddeus* in Mark iii. 18. It is generally accepted that these were three names for one and the same person, who is therefore said by Jerome to have been *trionymus*. He is the "Judas, not Iscariot," mentioned by John, xiv. 22.

Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor, i. e., who became, or turned out to be the traitor. Judas is uniformly mentioned last on the lists, with a brand of infamy. Many conjectures have been made as to the meaning of the appellative *Iscariot*. Some suppose it to signify, "The zealot;" others, that it is derived from a word signifying *suspension*, and refers to the manner of his death (Matt. xxvii. 5); others still, that it means "the man of Carioth," or Kerioth, a city of Judah. (Josh. xv. 25.) The last explanation is now generally accepted; and if it be right, Judas is the only one of the Apostles whom we have any reason to regard as not a Galilean. *Also, i. e.,* besides being an Apostle, or although he was one, which was a fearful aggravation of his guilt, he became a *betrayed*. Judas came to an awful end. (Matt. xxvi. 34; John xvii. 2; Acts i. 25.)

17. ¶ And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judæa and Jerusalem, and from the sea-coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases:
¶Matt. iv. 25; Mark iii. 7.

After choosing His twelve Apostles, our Lord descended with them, and stood in the plain. As the place where the following discourse was delivered, is said, by Matthew (v. 1), to have been a mountain or eminence, we must interpret the words here of an elevated plain or table-land at the foot of the mountain. *Robinson* and

Stanley both describe the Tell Hattin, lying a little west of the sea of Galilee, and so called from the village at its base, which the Latin, though not the Greek tradition, connects with the delivery of the sermon on the Mount, and which is now called the "Mount of Beatitudes," as consisting of a ridge, from which rise two horns or peaks, known as the Horns of Hattin. If the tradition is correct, as *Stanley* is disposed to regard it (and even *Robinson* finds nothing contradictory to it in the situation of the hill), our Lord ascending the ridge into one of the peaks, would have gone up into the mountain (Matt. v. 1), and coming down afterward, for greater convenience, upon the ridge, would have been upon a *level place*, without having left the mountain.

The company of his disciples—no longer including in their class the Twelve who had just been chosen as His immediate attendants. *And a great multitude of people, &c.* Some had come to hear the new Teacher, whose fame had spread abroad in every direction; others, and perhaps the large majority, *to be healed of their diseases.*

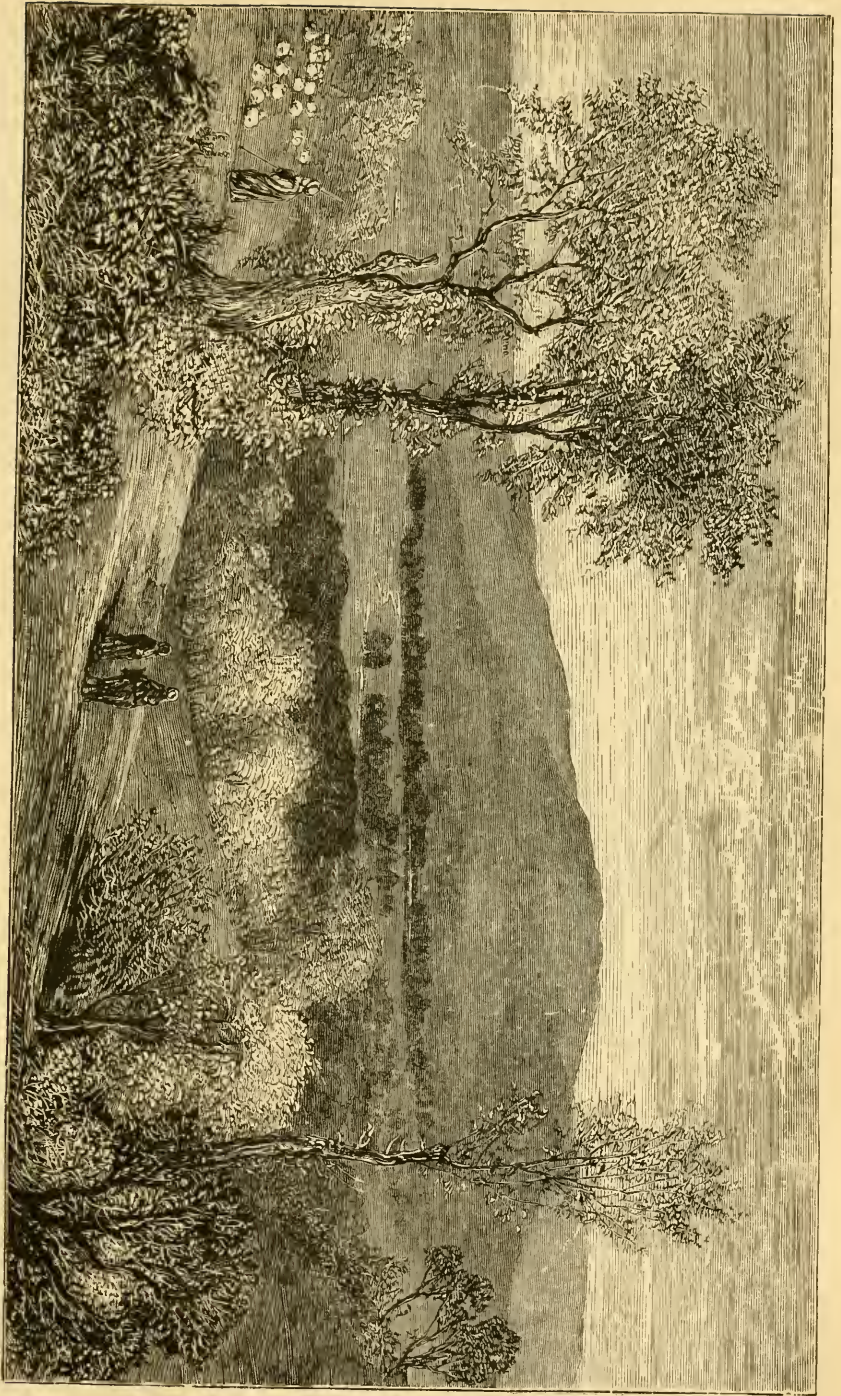
18. And they that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed.

Persons demoniacally possessed were among the gathered crowd. *Were healed.* Those who were possessed with demons were afflicted to a greater or less extent with physical maladies.

19. And the whole multitude, sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all.
¶Matt. iii. 14, 35. ¶Mark v. 30; Luke viii. 46.

There was such eagerness to be healed, that they pressed forward in a body to touch Jesus. *Virtue* means power. The word is the same as that used by our Lord (Mark v. 30), when "He perceived that virtue had gone out of Him." Christ's inherent, underived power *went forth* from Him, so that all who had approached Him, desiring a cure, were healed. Happy are they who, treading in the steps of Jesus, delight in relieving the miserable! What a scene of *suffering* must have been witnessed on this occasion! Then what a scene of *joy*! Yet these changes were but faint emblems of the glorious works which are now wrought where the Gospel is preached in power; for virtue, a Divine

MOUNT HATTIN.



power, still goes out of Jesus, so that tongues that were dumb in His praise are loosed, feet that could not walk in His ways are strengthened, and parents behold their wandering children returning to their forsaken God.

20. ¶ And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, "Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God."—Matt. v. 3 and xi. 5; James ii. 5.

See on Matt. v. 1.

Without entering into any thorough discussion of the question, about which some difference of opinion exists, whether the sermon here given and that recorded in the 5th, 6th and 7th chapters of Matthew are two relations of the same discourse, or distinct discourses, delivered at different times, we shall assume, as most harmonists and interpreters maintain, that they are identical. The very variations in them tend to establish an essential sameness. Both begin with the same blessings and end with the same striking parable concerning the difference between hearing and doing, and it is inherently improbable that Christ, at different periods in His life, should have made use of the same commencement and the same conclusion of His discourse. Between this common beginning and ending, it is true, there is much in Matthew which Luke does not give, and some passages in Luke which do not appear in Matthew, yet it is also true that the passages common to the two Evangelists are perfectly identical in substance, follow in the same order, and contain those truths which are of universal concern to the disciples of Christ in every age. Should it be asked why Luke omitted such extended and important parts of the discourse, this question might be answered, first, by replying that he repeats the like sentiments in other passages of his Gospel, and, secondly, by asking why Mark omitted the whole discourse, or why Matthew passed over all that is contained in chapters 1 and 2 of Luke? It is well that the Evangelists did not follow servilely each in the steps of his predecessor, else what need would there have existed for four Gospels? In what respect would the second, third and fourth have added to the amount of information given in the first?

In order to harmonize the arrangement of Luke's report of the sermon with that of Matthew, we must read the verses in the following order: 20-26, 29-30, 27, 28, 32-42. Verses 34 and 35 in Luke are additional matter.

And he lifted up his eyes, a form of expression representing the solemnity and importance of the discourse about to be pronounced; *on his disciples*, to whom, until verse 27, His discourse is addressed, but in the hearing of the people. *Blessed be ye poor*. This is explained by the terms in Matthew, "poor in spirit." The reference is not to external situation, but to disposition and character. A bare outward poverty, or an avowed voluntary poverty, will entitle none to the blessing. Many poor persons are proud, ungodly, dishonest and profligate, while some of the rich are humble, pious and holy. Poverty, indeed, has advantages in respect of religion, but none are here pronounced *blessed*, except such as have "poverty of spirit," that is, are of a true, humble, lowly spirit. *For yours is the kingdom of God*. Such persons are blessed, because their humility rendering them teachable, submissive, contented and obedient, and leading them to rest their hope entirely on something out of themselves, prepares them to be members of the kingdom of grace, and heirs of the kingdom of glory, particularly as this humility is connected with the other dispositions represented in this sermon; for all of them, though no doubt with a great variety of degree, are to be found in every man, who, being born again, has entered into the kingdom of God.

21. *Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. †Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh.

*Isa. lv. 1, lxx. 13; Matt. v. 6. †Isa. lxi. 3; Matt. v. 4.

Hunger is used in all languages to express vehement desire. *Filled* is a figure taken from cattle in good pasture, fed till they are satisfied, and graze no longer. Probably, many persons present were kept at a great distance from their necessary food by attention to our Lord's instructions, and thus would be the better prepared to appreciate the declaration that hungering after righteousness they should be satisfied in due time with Divine consolations and a holy felicity. In the knowledge and

faith of the truth respecting the Saviour, they would obtain the gratification of their desires, and, in the fullness of their grateful and happy hearts, would be able to exclaim, "Surely, in the Lord have we righteousness," we "are complete in Him," "who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." (Isa. xiv. 24; Col. ii. 10; 1 Cor. i. 30.) *Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh.* It is as if Christ had said, "Ye disciples that are now in a sad, mournful, afflicted state are blessed, for there will come a time when ye shall be comforted, a time when God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes." Happy are they who now sorrow after a godly sort for their sins, "When they behold transgressors are grieved" (Ps. cix. 158), and mourn under that wholesome discipline of affliction by which God reduces His wandering children, and trains them up to higher holiness, for all their sorrow shall pass away like a dream, and they shall ere long rejoice in a complete deliverance from it.

22. *Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake.
 *Matt. v. 11; 1 Peter ii. 19 and iii. 14, iv. 14. *John xvi. 2.

When men shall hate you. Hatred of Christ's disciples is the bitter root from which persecution grows. The wicked hate the holy image of God, and those who bear it; His holy truth, and those who profess and preach it; His holy law, and those who obey and stand up for its obligation and authority; His holy ordinances, and those that attend on them. *And when they shall separate you from their company.* These words designate all kinds of expulsion from society, in consequence of the odium attached to faith in Christ, and an open profession of His name. *And shall reproach you*—shall cover you with opprobrious epithets, as they eject you forth from society. *And cast out your name as evil.* It will be noticed that there is a climax in the verse: 1. hatred; 2. severance from general and special intercourse; 3. reproach, and 4. formal excommunication from the synagogue, or church fellowship. (John ix. 34; xvi. 2.) Christ's disciples were abhorred for their name. As such, they were sometimes called

Nazarenes, and sometimes *Christians*, and both these names were matters of reproach in the mouths of their enemies. *For the Son of man's sake*, because (or on account) of me; i. e., as being my disciples, or believers in my claims to the Messiahship, and therefore avowed subjects of my kingdom. Such is the treatment which He warns them to expect, as His professed followers, and such the consolation which He gives them. They must have tribulation in His service, but for that very reason He pronounces them *blessed*. "All who live godly must suffer persecution." The particular form of the opposition which wicked and worldly men make to the cause of Christ, will depend on circumstances; but in all countries and in all ages it exists, and the followers of Christ should count on being exposed to derision, reproach, slander, and it may be evils of a more formidable kind, from ungodly men.

23. *Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.
 *Matt. v. 12; Acts v. 41; Col. i. 24; James i. 2. *Acts vii. 51.

The defamed and persecuted are not only pronounced "blessed," but are called on to *rejoice*. It seems a strange exhortation for such, not merely to be patient and resigned, but joyful and glad. But when the whole of the case is taken into view, the command appears in the highest degree reasonable, and the duty not only practicable, but easy. "This is the victory which overcometh the world"—all difficulties, "even our faith." (1 John v. 45.) Let a man but believe what Jesus reveals to him, and he will not feel it difficult to do what Jesus commands, or endure what Jesus appoints. The man who believes that his reward shall be great in heaven, will have no difficulty in rejoicing and leaping for joy amid those afflictions, which, however heavy, he will in this case feel light, and which, however long continued, he will regard as but for a moment, and which he knows are "working out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." (2 Cor. iv. 17.) For the persecutions which *the prophets* referred to endured, (see 1 Kings xiii. 4; 2 Chron. xxiv. 21, xxxvi. 16; Neh. ix. 26; Heb. xi. 32-38.)

24. ^aBut wo unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation.

^bAmos vi. 1; James v. 1. ^cLuke xii. 21. ^dMatt. vi. 2, 6, 16; Luke xvi. 25.

Wo unto you. This is the expression of one lamenting (or bewailing the unhappy condition of another), not of one inflamed with anger. We are not to understand our Lord here as denouncing riches as necessarily evil, or rich men as necessarily wicked. He would not thus have spoken of the rich Chuza with his wife (Luke viii. 2, 3), or the family of Bethany. (Luke x. 38-42.) His intention obviously was to show His disciples the danger of riches, worldly indulgences, and all those ruinous advantages which men so eagerly pursue, and of that pride and self-sufficiency which are commonly increased by outward prosperity. *For ye have received your consolation, i. e.,* ye who love the good things of this world supremely, and trust in them, having chosen them for your happiness, shall not receive Divine comfort, or the heavenly reward.

25. ^aWo unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. ^bWo unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep.—^cIsa. lxxv. 13. ^dProv. xiv. 13.

Full. Ye that abound in worldly goods, and take up with these things as your portion, *ye shall hunger*—ye shall fall into a state of great indigence and misery, aggravated by all the plenty which ye enjoyed and abused. The retribution which, in the verse preceding, is described only as a coming short of the expected consolation, is here represented as a direct feeling of hunger, pain and sadness. Miserable are *you that laugh now*, that spend your lives in mirth and gaiety, or are of a light, trifling spirit, for *ye shall mourn and weep*. You have reason to expect a portion in those doleful regions where, without intermission and without end, ye shall be abandoned to weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Our Lord's declaration is to be understood of that turbulent, carnal mirth, that levity and vanity of spirit, which arises, not from any solid foundation, but from sensual pleasure, or those vain amusements of life by which the giddy and the gay contrive to fill up their time—that sort of mirth which dissipates thought, leaves no time for consideration, and gives them an utter aversion to all serious reflections.

26. ^aWo unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.

^bJohn xv. 19; ^c1 John iv. 5.

The phrase *all men* (like the term *world*) is used to distinguish the great ungodly mass, as opposed to the righteous few. The sentiment is not that it is a positive mark of evil to be spoken well of by a bad man; for Timothy “had a good report from those that were without.” To be universally praised, however, is a most unsatisfactory symptom, and one of which a minister of Christ should always be afraid. Plutarch tells us that when Phocion in his orations had particularly pleased the multitudes, he used to ask his friends whether anything wrong had been uttered in his address. So, the minister who is universally applauded, may well doubt whether he is faithfully doing his duty, and honestly declaring all the counsel of God; for, according to the old adage, “a compliant temper makes friends, truth excites odium.” *For so did their fathers to the false prophets.* The false prophets and teachers, whom the Jews commended, accommodated their sentiments and doctrines to the wishes and passions of their auditors. They spake to them smooth things, and prophesied lies, because *the people loved to have it so*; they prophesied of peace, when war was at hand; they strengthened the hands of evil-doers (Jer. xxiii. 14), and daubed the ruinous wall with untempered mortar. (Ezek. xiii. 10, 11.)

27. ^aBut I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, ^bExod. xxiii. 4; Prov. xxv. 21; Matt. v. 44; verse 35; Rom. xii. 20.

But I say unto you which hear. The words were not addressed by the Saviour, as in verse 26, exclusively to His disciples, but to all within His hearing, and, of course, to all who in future ages should hear His Gospel.

This is the most sublime piece of morality ever given to man. The thought of requiting acts of enmity with acts of kindness could only arise in the heart of Him who has Himself prayed for the evil-doers. Such sayings of the Saviour, particularly, may well have elicited from even a godly man, on reading the sermon on the Mount, the exclamation, “Either this is not true, or we are no Christians.” The

precept is equivalent to a prohibition of malignant feeling toward any human being, a command to cherish kind wishes toward all mankind. Instead of warranting us to confine our benevolent regards to those whom we may consider our neighbors—our kindred or countrymen—our benefactors or friends—men of our own sect, or even religion—our Lawgiver commands us to embrace, in the widespread arms of our benevolence, all mankind—strangers, foreigners, heathens, even enemies. Every human being is to be regarded with good will, and, as we have opportunity, to be treated with kindness. It is quite obvious that we are not required to regard with precisely the same kind of feeling a Christian brother and an openly profane and profligate person—a generous benefactor and a malignant, inveterate enemy. It is not possible, and, if it were, it would not be proper, to cherish the same tender regard for strangers as for “our own, those of our own household,” the same gratitude to enemies as to benefactors, the same esteem for the bad as for the good. But we are to regard all men, even our enemies, with love; that is, we are sincerely to wish them well, we are to desire their good, we are, as we have opportunity, to promote their happiness.

²⁸. Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.

²⁹Luke xxiii. 31; Acts vii. 60.

The word *bless* does not mean, according to a common use of it in Scripture, to implore blessings from God upon them who are imprecating evils upon us, for then it would be synonymous with *pray* for them. It is quite parallel to the Apostle's injunction, not to “render railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing.” Be civil and kind to those who are rude to you, and be ready, when you can do so with truth, to speak to the advantage of those who have, by malignant and untrue statements, endeavored to injure your reputation. *And pray for them which despitefully use you, who are making continual war upon you, and constantly harassing and calumniating you.* “Knowing that you can do but little to make them happy, call in the aid of Omnipotence. Instead of imprecating vengeance, pray for forgiveness and for all

heavenly and spiritual blessings to them, and do this for your most inveterate foes.”

²⁹. And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also. ³⁰. Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.

³¹Matt. v. 39. ³²1 Cor. vi. 7. ³³Deut. xv. 7, 8, 10; Prov. xxi. 36; Matt. v. 42.

That smiteth thee, &c. Christianity obliges us to bear many injuries patiently rather than revenge one privately: we must leave the matter to God and the magistrate. The *coat* here mentioned was a tunic, generally made of linen, worn next to the skin, with armholes or sleeves, reaching down, like a shirt, to the knees, and bound round the waist by a girdle. The *cloak*, called in modern times the “aba,” was a large square piece, several feet in length and breadth, and worn very much as an American Indian wears his blanket. *Taketh away.* In the parallel passage (Matt. v. 40), the words are, *sue thee at the law, and take away, &c.* Manifestly the precepts in these two verses are not to be taken strictly, but restrainedly. They must not be so expounded as to contradict other portions of God's word. A literal interpretation of them would break up all the foundations of society, and destroy all control of personal property. The command of our Lord (verse 29), does not forbid the repression of crime, or declare the office of the magistrate and policeman unlawful. Nor does it declare all war unlawful, or prohibit the punishment of evil-doers, and disturbers of the peace and order of society. (See Luke xxii. 36; Rom. xiii. 4.) Neither does our Lord's command forbid us to defend ourselves when we are in danger, for this is one of the strongest instincts of our nature, the law of God written on our heart; or to avail ourselves of the protection which the law gives to property, for justice to our creditors, to the public, to our families, may require us to defend our estate. At the same time, this command condemns anything like a pugnacious, revengeful, litigious, or selfish spirit. If a man give a disciple of Christ a contemptuous or painful blow on the cheek, it is his duty and wisdom to imitate his Master, and take it patiently, nay, to turn the other, and expose himself to a repetition of the insult or injury, rather than to begin a contest, by returning the blow,

sending a challenge, or commencing a process at law—even though he should be ridiculed for his want of manly spirit, in consequence of his obedience to the laws of his Lord. If a man be sued at law, and be unjustly deprived of his “coat,” which, though not of great value, he might be ill able to spare, he had better suffer himself to be defrauded of his “cloak,” than be involved in the temptations and evils of seeking legal redress. He ought, also, to have resort to the tribunals of justice only when the cause is important and the call urgent—to prosecute his claims with humanity, moderation, and a spirit of peace, to be content with reasonable satisfaction, and to embrace every opportunity of terminating the contest.*

31. ^bAnd as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.—^bMatt. vii. 12.

We are not to do to others as they do to us, but *as we would that they should do to us*. In interpreting this rule we are to have regard to the following limitations: 1. We are not to overlook the difference which exists between ourselves and others in regard to the circumstances in which we are severally placed. For example, all that a father may expect from a child, or a master from his servant, or a magistrate from his subjects, is not, for this reason, to be done by such superiors in rank or relation to their inferiors. 2. What we would that others should do to us, is not to determine our duty to them, unless the thing we would they should do to us is right in itself. If a judge and a criminal should exchange situations, it does not follow that because the judge in the character of a culprit would desire not to be condemned, therefore he must not condemn the criminal before him in the judicial capacity in which he is now called to act, for then would offenders go unpunished, and society be unlinged and ruined. 3. We are not obliged to do all that to others, which we might probably be glad they would do to us; that is, the rule does not apply to everything that is lawful, but to what is reasonable. A poor man may desire that one who is wealthy should give him enough to make him rich, and it is likely that if the rich man were poor, he also might desire the same kindness; but he is

not, for this reason, even though he might lawfully do it, required to make the poor man rich. *As ye would*, the rule embraces all things, small and great, seen and unseen whether done when absent or present, and whether involving much sacrifice or little. This rule has the following, among other points of excellence: 1. It is plain and concise. 2. It is admirably adapted to sudden emergencies, when there is not time for long deliberation as to what duty demands. 3. It is susceptible of universal application—to all persons, places and things. 4. It meets those cases in which self-interest and private feelings are likely to dim our perceptions of right and wrong. 5. Being founded in the reason of things, it is such a precept as approves itself to the mind of a reasonable creature, as soon as he hears and understands it, so as not to need any labored proof. It should be noticed that this rule holds negatively as well as positively. Though it wears only the positive form, we are as much bound not to do to others what we would not have others do to us, as to do to them what we would have them do to us. To neglect to do what we would expect from others, is equally wrong in nature, though it may not be equally wrong in degree, as to do to them what we would not wish them to do to us.

32. ⁱFor if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. 33. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. 34. ^kAnd if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.
ⁱMatt. v. 46. ^kMatt. v. 42.

In these verses our Lord beautifully shows that it is the duty of the Christian to be better than anybody else. “A Christian,” says *Cecil*, “if he be a shoemaker, should be the best shoemaker in the town.” The disciples of Christ are to exercise charity in giving, charity in forgiving, charity in lending. It is sometimes their duty (if they have ability) to lend such poor persons as they cannot expect will ever be in a capacity either to pay or requite them. Love for love is justice, love for no love is favor and kindness, but love and charity to all persons, even the undeserving and the ill-deserving, is a Christ-like temper. A man ought to tremble with fear, if, beside the external part of

his religion, he finds nothing in his life but what may be found in a Turk or a heathen.

35. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.
Verse 27. =Ps. xxxvii. 23; verse 30. =Matt. v. 45.

Love ye your enemies. This precept of our Lord cannot be understood, in its full force, without a reference to the low and narrow doctrines which were about this time inculcated by the Jewish teachers, and acted upon by the people. A limit was fixed, beyond which it was lawful to *hate* an offending brother, though he might be at first forgiven. Apostatizing or heretical Israelites it was lawful and meritorious to slay, openly, if opportunity served, and legally if expedient, but at all events to slay them, even if by subtilty and craft. As to the Gentiles, even those with whom they had no war or contention, there was no instruction to *plot* their death, but it was *not lawful* to deliver them from death. In the face of such facts, how noble does Christ's precept appear! (See notes on verse 27.) *Do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again, and your reward shall be great.* Confer acts of kindness, lend cheerfully, without fearing the loss of what shall be thus bestowed. It often happens that, even contrary to appearances, the loan is thankfully returned by the borrower, but should it not be, remember (and let this silence all your doubts) that God chargeth Himself with what you give from love to Him, and love to your neighbor. He is the poor man's surety. *And ye shall be the children of the Highest, rather, dear and acceptable to God, or, you will be like unto God, for He is kind unto the unthankful, and to the evil,* bestows the gifts of common Providence on the worst of men, who are every day provoking Him, rebelling against Him, and using those very gifts to His dishonor.

36. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.—Matt. v. 48.

Be not satisfied with the low standard of publicans and other ordinary men, but make God your model. Follow not the example of unregenerated persons, but aim at an imitation of your Father. *Be, literally, become merciful.* In Matthew (v. 48), this is denoted by *perfect*. There is

no difference in sense. Whoever has the grace of compassion and mercy, flowing from pure love to God and man, will be in possession of all the kindred graces, though destined to a higher development, which constitute the perfection of moral character. Let us not presume to call God our Father, if we do not labor to resemble Him, nor dare to claim the peculiar honor and privileges of Christ's disciples, if we do not distinguish ourselves from others, by the charity of our tempers, and the usefulness of our lives, as well as by the articles of our faith, and the forms of our worship.

37. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned; forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:—Matt. vii. 1.

The judging here forbidden is not self-judging, which is a great and necessary duty, or judging by civil magistrates in their spheres, or judging by ecclesiastical officers of applicants for admission to the communion, or that judgment which cannot but be formed of the state and character of men from their avowed principles and visible conduct, for Christ directs His disciples to judge by this rule. The judging referred to obviously respects personal actions and characters. We are not to be officious in our judgments—intermeddling with what we have no concern with; or rash, not deciding, even when called to judge, till we have carefully examined the subject; or presumptuous, pronouncing on things beyond our reach—such as the views and motives of another, and acting as if our conjectures were infallible truths; or severe, but putting the best construction on doubtful actions; or partial, condemning in one what we approve, or at least pass by, in another, condemning in our neighbor what we overlook in ourselves; or hasty in pronouncing our judgment, because it is very difficult to obtain possession of all the materials that in any case are necessary to form a correct judgment, and to pronounce judgment without this, is to run the hazard, at least, of doing cruel injustice.

And ye shall not be judged. It is not probable that these words refer to what a man may expect in the ordinary intercourse of life. Their *main* reference, at least, is to the judgment of God, and of eternity. Nor

is their meaning, "if you are lenient, or severe, in your judgments of your fellow-men, God will be lenient, or severe, in His judgment concerning you;" but, "beware of wrong judgments, for all your judgments are to be reviewed, and by these judgments ye are to be yourselves then judged." *Condemn not, &c.*, expands and enforces the preceding command. It denotes a censorious, fault-finding spirit. *Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven*, not that a bare forgiving of others is all that God requires in order to our forgiveness, but it is one part of that obedience which we owe to God, without which it is in vain to expect forgiveness from Him.

33. "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again."

^aProv. xix. 17. ^bPs. lxxix. 12. ^cMatt. vii. 2; Mark iv. 21; James ii. 13.

Give liberally to those that need your assistance, not out of mere human generosity, nor out of vanity, but for the sake of God, and it shall be given unto you, for your kindness and liberality will naturally gain you love and respect, and God also, by His grace, will influence men's hearts in your favor. (Prov. xix. 17.) *Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over.* The figure is taken from a full measure of dry commodities, such as corn, fruits, &c. The whole appears to have been a proverbial expression among the Jews, to denote, metaphorically, abundant and exuberant liberality. There were, among the Jews, measures of various sorts, *overflowing, abraded, heaped up, pressed, shaken, covered, &c.* The representation here of a measure secured by *pressing down* such articles as lie light and loose in the vessel, *shaking it up*, and filling it to *overflowing*, brings into relief in a vivid manner, the riches of the Divine liberality. *Shall men give.* As the verb has no expressed nominative in the original, the Saviour does not say *whom* He uses for the impartation of such a recompense to His disciples, and hence it is not necessary to restrict the matter to the future life, and to understand it, as some do, of the angels, as almoners of God's bounty and love toward such as exercise the spirit here spoken of. *Into your bosom.* Almost all the ancient nations, and particularly those

of the East, wore long, wide and loose garments, and when about to carry anything away that their hands could not contain, they used a fold in the bosom of their robe, nearly in the same way that women in this country use their aprons. The word "bosom" or "lap" frequently occurs in this sense in the best and purest Greek writers. *For with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again.* Amazing goodness! We ourselves are, as it were, permitted to tell God *how much* benignity He shall show us! Charities done in faith, in obedience to God, and with an eye to His glory, will produce a certain and plentiful increase. Liberality is the way to riches, giving is the best and surest way of thriving. A little charity from us, if we have but little, is looked upon by God as a great deal, but to do little when we have the ability to do much, is the greatest imprudence as well as impiety, for *he that soweth bountifully, shall reap bountifully.*

39. And he spake a parable unto them, "Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch?"

^dMatt. xv. 14.

This *parable*, or figurative saying, was spoken by our Lord to His disciples. It was introduced by Him as showing how they who are leaders, especially, should be examples of all that is good. It teaches us that "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps," that each individual of the human race has his foolish heart so darkened by sin as to be unable by any means to find his own way out of the labyrinth into which he has unhappily wandered. It is not a difficult thing, generally, to convince men that they need guidance regarding the things of God and eternity; yet, when thus convinced, they readily, alas, fall an easy prey to the first plausible guide that presents himself. *Both fall into the ditch.* Ignorant and unskillful instructors destroy themselves and others. "The candle of the wicked shall be put out." It is our duty to "beware of false prophets" (Matt. vii. 15), to "prove all things" (1 Thes. v. 21), to "try the spirits whether they are of God." (1 John iv. 1.) With the Bible in our hands, and the promise of the Holy Ghost to all who seek, we shall be without excuse if our souls are led astray.

40. "The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master."
 *Matt. x. 24; John xiii. 16, xv. 20. *Or, shall be perfected as his master.

It cannot be expected that the scholar will excel his teacher, but the complete disciple will be as his teacher. If, therefore, men follow blind guides in their religious inquiries, they must continue in ignorance, or be deluded into error, so that it is of the greatest importance for us to take care on what teachers we attend, lest our greatest diligence and highest attainment should leave us short of the saving knowledge of God and of ourselves. It must not be overlooked that an indirect intimation is here given to the Twelve to fashion themselves in all things after the character of their new Master.

41. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye? 42. Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.
 *See Prov. xviii. 17; Matt. vii. 3-5.

Mote means a small bit of straw, or grass, or dry wood. *Beam* means a large piece of timber, such as is used for the rafter of a roof. A contrast is intended between the little faults and great ones. The epithet *hypocrite*, so frequently applied by our Lord to the scribes and Pharisees, does not always mean that they were always deceiving those about them by a profession which they *knew* to be hollow. The offer of the man to *pull out the mote* from his *brother's eye*, supposed him to have considered himself perfectly clear-sighted. The censorious are here condemned, and those, also, who, though never perhaps designated censorious, yet are lynx-eyed for all the blemishes and faults which disfigure their neighbors, and set themselves to the removal of what is wrong in others, without due consideration as to their own fitness for such duty. We are here taught the lesson of the true *relative* magnitude which our own faults, and those of our brother, ought to hold in our estimation. What is a "mote" to one looking on another, is to that other himself "a beam," just the reverse of the ordinary estimate. We are not to close our eyes to the defects of others, but, first, to be jealously anxious to obtain clear visions

ourselves. *Cast out first, &c.* The reason of this requirement is obvious. Only the man who has learned to deal with his own heart unreservedly in the way of tracing out and bringing into the light of day all that would hide itself there, who has experimentally learned how deceitful as well as wicked that heart is, is prepared to deal wisely with others. Then only will he *see clearly to pull out the mote which is in his brother's eye*. Besides, the very process through which he has himself passed, will give a gentleness and tenderness to all that he may be called to do with others, which he never otherwise could have possessed.

43. *For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.
 *Matt. vii. 16, 17.

The word *for* indicates that this parabolic saying is connected with what immediately precedes. Here, as frequently elsewhere, the Saviour compares persons to trees. The law that like produces like, so immutable in the natural world, is applied to the law of moral likeness which exists between the state of the heart and the external acts of men. "Every teacher, who really knows and believes the truth himself, cannot but, in his teaching, declare that truth, and, in his character and conduct, exemplify its influence. On the other hand, a false teacher cannot but, in his teachings and conduct, exhibit what, to a careful observer, will be found a sufficient proof of his true character."

44. For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes.—Matt. xii. 33. *Gr., a grape.

As men can always determine the nature of the tree, not by its appearance, leaves or blossoms, but by its fruits, so the claims which religious teachers have to our attention, faith and obedience can and are to be decided, not by their profession, but by their doctrine and their conduct. What is true of public teachers is equally so of private individuals. The habitual conduct of a truly pious man *must* be good, and the tendency of his example, conversation and instructions, must be beneficial. But the habitual tenor of an unconverted man's actions must be evil, and the effect of his example

and doctrine pernicious, however it may be disguised. The only satisfactory test of any man's religious character is his conduct and conversation.

45. ^bA good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil; for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.—^cMatt. xii. 35. ^cMatt. xii. 34.

A *good man*. The Saviour regards no man as naturally good, in the Pelagian sense of the word, but speaks of the sinner who has become good through grace. Both the *good* and the *evil* man He sets forth as they commonly reveal themselves outwardly, without, however, denying that even the good has his weak and the evil man his better side. The heart of the one and of the other, is the magazine or storehouse, out of which perpetually proceeds what therein was in no small measure hidden. *For of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.* Out of the abundance of the thoughts and desires of the good man's heart he will bring forth whatever can conduce to the glory of God and the good of mankind; but wicked men have within them a treasury of pride, malice, impiety and selfishness, from which they naturally educe evil things. A man's conversation is one indication of the state of his heart. It is not true, as some allege, that no one can know anything of the state of another's heart, and that, although men are living wickedly, they have *good hearts*. If a man's conversation is carnal, worldly, irreligious or profane, his heart is of a corresponding character.

46. ^aAnd why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?
^bMal. i. 6; Matt. vii. 21 and xxv. 11; Luke xiii. 25.

In Matthew (vii. 21) it is: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord." To call a person lord, is equivalent to acknowledging him as master. If there be any emphasis in the repetition of the word *Lord*, it is intended to express, not merely profession, but a decided, open, habitual profession. A profession of discipleship, an acknowledgment of our submission in mind and heart to Christ Jesus, is a solemn duty. But such profession, however necessary in connection with faith and obedience, is not enough for the purpose of salvation. *And do not the things which I say?* The meaning of

Christ is: "Why are ye so inconsistent in your profession and practice, as to call me Lord, and yet persist in disobedience to my commands?" A few pious and devotional forms of speech are not enough for salvation, if our practice conform not to the Divine will. God judges of the heart, not by *words*, but by *works*. A good servant never disputes, speaks little, and always follows his work. Such a servant a real Christian is; such is a faithful minister, always intent either on the work of his own salvation, or that of his neighbor. The inquiry in this verse constitutes the transition to the parable which follows.

47. ^aWhosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like: 48. He is like a man which built a house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock.—Matt. vii. 24.

The great purpose of this parable is to show that we must "not be forgetful hearers, but *doers* of the word," or, the folly of Christian profession, unaccompanied by Christian practice, and the certain ruin to which such profession must lead if persisted in. The reason why Christ thus concluded His sermon, lies in the corruption of the human heart, which finds it easy to hear, but difficult to do. *Whosoever cometh to me*—as a scholar. These words are omitted in Matthew, but without impairing the sense. *And heareth my sayings.* By these we are to understand everything contained in this sermon; yet this is equally true of all Christ's words, whether spoken by Himself personally, or made known through the medium of His inspired servants. To *hear* our Lord's sayings, is just to have them addressed to us, to have an opportunity of becoming acquainted with them. *And doeth them.* The man of whom this is true is the man who not only listens to Christ's sayings, and understands their meaning, but who, believing them (Rom. iii. 27), learns to think, feel and act according to them, and who, through these sayings, understood and believed, repents, changes his mind, is "converted," is radically changed, is "born again," becomes "a new creature," being "transformed by this renewing of his mind."

He is like a man which built an house. (In

Matt. vii. 24, called "a wise man.") This man has wisely thought over the plan beforehand—seen the amount of expenditure it would require, and now he is *doing* his work. He is *building an house*—the image of desired felicity—that he may dwell in it quietly, comfortably and securely, in the midst of tempestuous weather. By the building, we are to understand, 1. The character which He cultivates—the whole frame of his sentiments, affections and active habits. He is moulded according to "the form of doctrine into which he has been delivered." (Rom. vi. 17.) 2. The hope he cherishes. He has a "hope of eternal life," a "good hope through grace," but that hope rests entirely on what Christ has said to him. *And digged deep.* He was not satisfied to begin his building "on the earth," just as he found it, or with lifting a spadeful here and there, but toiled and labored, and descended deeper and deeper through the soil. The lesson here taught is, that the study of piety should not be superficial, but a principle well founded and deeply rooted in the heart. *And laid the foundation on a rock.* This indicates the solidity of the work, and under it hearing and doing are to be understood. It is of essential importance to have a firm foundation. The man built, not on his own conjectures or reasonings, nor the conjectures or reasonings of other men, but on "the true and faithful sayings of God," in which Christ is represented as "the Lord, our strength and righteousness." It will be noticed that what our Lord contrasts is not believing and doing, but hearing and doing; yet in the doing of Christ's sayings, believing them is of course necessarily implied. In this representation of the only foundation on which a character and conduct pleasing to God can be reared, we have a refutation of the opinion which some entertain, "that it matters but very little what doctrines we believe, if we have a good life."

And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it. In Judea, as in other Oriental countries, the rains are periodical. When they descend, they often descend in torrents, and continue to do so, with unabated

violence, for a number of days. In consequence of this, the most trifling mountain brook becomes a mighty river—a deluge rushes down with dreadful impetuosity from the high grounds to the plains, converting them into one wide waste of waters. The huts of the inhabitants, generally formed of clay hardened in the sun, are exposed to great danger, and, when not founded on the solid rock, are often undermined and swept away by the resistless torrent. The Christian's edifice of faith and hope may be subjected to many trials, from Divine judgments expressed in various tribulations, persecutions from men, accusations of conscience, terrors of death and retribution and false teachers (Eph. iv. 14), who seek to draw him away from Christ, and overwhelm him in sadness and despair, but they cannot succeed. (Rom. viii. 33-39; John vi. 68, 69.) Neither will the building be overthrown by the final trial at the general judgment, which, we suppose, is here mainly intended by *the flood*.

For it was founded upon a rock. In "the day of the Lord Jesus," the floods shall be let loose, "the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed," the tempest of Divine wrath against sin shall sweep resistlessly along, the streams of all-searching judgment shall beat vehemently on all that must be tested; but they shall not even *shake* a single stone in the building of the true believer, because it is founded on the Rock of Ages which can never be moved. There will then be found much wanting and much wrong, and that will be freely forgiven for Christ's sake, but the frame of character, of thought, feeling and action, formed by the faith of the truth, will meet with the unqualified approbation of God, and the hope founded on these sayings will prove to be a "hope that maketh not ashamed."

49. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built a house upon the earth: against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell: and the ruin of that house was great.

Notice the points of similarity between these men. Each was a builder, and set to work. The object of both was the same—shelter, pleasure, comfort. Both had time given them to build. Both had the choice of situation. Both took possession

of their buildings. Both were tried. *Hear-eth, and doeth not.* The man heard what might have secured real, lasting work at his hands, if he had attended to it, but he did not. Many who hear Christ's words make light of them; others listen to them with some degree of attention, and profess to inquire, but refuse to believe and obey them; others, still, profess to believe Christ's words, and declare their determination to obey them, but fail to do so. To this last class there is here a special reference.

Without a foundation built a house upon the earth, in Matt. vii. 26, "upon the sand." Here is an image of deficient steadfastness. The man began on the surface, and perhaps prided himself on the skill with which he nicely adjusted his building to the ground just as it was. The building which he erected was not based upon Christ—the true and faithful sayings of the Saviour—though he heard them, he did not conform his mind to them—he did not believe them. His foundation consisted of false principles, and the edifice he built was just that character, that mode of thinking, feeling and acting which such false principles naturally produce. *Against*

which the stream beat vehemently, &c. This "foolish" man's building was tested as well as that of the "wise" man, and though specious in appearance it proved baseless, and unable to endure the trial. "The fishermen of Bengal," says *Mr. Ward*, in his *View of the Hindoos*, "build their huts in the dry season on the bed of sand from which the river has retired. When the rains set in, which they often do very suddenly, accompanied with violent north-west winds, the water pours down in torrents from the mountains. In one night multitudes of these huts are frequently swept away, and the place where they stood is the next morning undiscoverable."

And immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great. The self-delusion vanishes, the man feels it is too late to correct his error, his past life is forever fled, his misery is boundless, the more so as he flatters himself with vain hopes. Character and hopes must be subjected to the test of the Divine judgment. Then "that which was highly esteemed among men" will be found to be "abomination in the sight of God" (Luke xvi. 15), and no character will stand but that which is formed in accordance with the sayings of Christ.

1. What is meant by the "second Sabbath after the first?" 2. How did Jesus answer the objection to the plucking of the ears of corn by His disciples on the Sabbath? 3. Who was cured by Him in the synagogue? 4. What lessons does this miracle teach? 5. How many Apostles did Christ choose? 6. What are their names? 7. What did the "great multitude of people" come to Jesus for? 8. Explain verse 20. 9. Why are Christians to rejoice when persecuted for the Son of man's sake? 10. Is it desirable that all men shall speak well of us? 11. How are we to treat our enemies? 12. Explain verses 23-30. 13. Also verse 31. 14. What is said about a "good" and a "corrupt" "tree?" 15. Explain the parable of the two builders.

CHAPTER VII.

1 *Christ findeth a greater faith in the centurion, a Gentile, than in any of the Jews;* 10 *healeth his servant being absent;* 11 *raiseth from death the widow's son at Nain;* 19 *answerseth John's messengers with the declaration of his miracles;* 24 *testifieth to the people what opinion he hold of John;* 30 *inveigleth against the Jews, who with neither the manners of John nor of Jesus could be won;* 35 *and sheweth by occasion of Mary Magdalene, how he is a friend to sinners, but to forgive them their sins, upon their faith and repentance.*

Jesus proceeded continually from instruction to action, and from action to instruction. Words speak only to the understanding, works speak to the heart.

This chapter opens with a memorable instance of His Divine power and compassion.

NOW when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum. *Matt. viii. 5.

All his sayings. His sermon in the hearing of the people of Capernaum, the center of His operations, to which He frequently returned after His itinerant missions. Christ's doctrines assert their own intuitive truth, but it is the miracles

of the preacher that attest that it is with a true Divine mission that He utters them.

2. And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die.

^{b2} Kings v. 1, &c.; Job xxxi. 15; Acts x. 7; Col. iv. 1.

A centurion, or captain in the army of Herod, who was at that time king of Galilee, but under subjection to the Romans. He was stationed with a hundred men under his command in the barracks at Capernaum. Herod, to support himself in his authority and to enforce the payment of tribute, which he had to render to the emperor of Rome, had stationed large bodies of soldiers in various parts of the land. Like many other heathens of that age, this centurion, unsatisfied with the old and worn-out popular religion in which he had been brought up, and his situation having brought him into such approximation to Judaism as enabled him to observe the great superiority of its moral and religious spirit, and the refreshing contrast which the simple purity of belief in one God offered, to the perplexing crowd of divinities which idolatry presented, he was led to believe in Jehovah, and to render to Him his worship. He was one of the proselytes, whom the providence of God had so wonderfully prepared in all the great cities of the Greek and Roman world as a link of communication between Gentile and Jew, in contact with both—holding to the first by their race, and to the last by their religion, and who must have greatly helped to the ultimate fusion of both into one Christian church. *Servant*; the original word means, literally, *boy*, but still a *servant* is denoted, otherwise the statements that he was very dear to the centurion, and was sick in his house, would have been superfluous. *Who was dear unto him*—literally, *whom he held in honor or esteem*, or highly valued. The centurion's feeling such a deep interest in the well-being of his servant, is a beautiful trait in his character, and highly creditable to him, especially when the temptations of military life are remembered. *Was sick, and ready to die*, of a paralysis. (Matt. viii. 6.) This is not contradicted by the fact that he is said to have been "grievously tormented," for paralysis or palsy, with the contraction of the joints, is accompanied with severe

pain. United with tetanus, as it sometimes is in Eastern countries, extreme suffering and rapid dissolution are often the result.

3. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant.—John iv. 47.

The report of Christ's miraculous powers was now in the mouth of men, and had reached the ear of this Roman centurion. *Elders of the Jews*, doubtless elders of the synagogue which the centurion had built for the Jews. (Verse 5.) As he was a Gentile, and Christ a prophet, he thought Christ would not care to converse with him, hence he sent persons in authority, that by the dignity of the messengers he might honor Him to whom they were sent. *Beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant*. *Beseeching*, here, is a participle, agreeing with the centurion, so that even according to Luke's language, the words were those of the centurion. The request was earnestly urged, and this furnishes another evidence of the master's regard for the servant.

4. And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this: 5. For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.

^{d1} Kings v. 1; Gal. v. 6; 1 John iii. 14.

Instantly, that is, with much earnestness. Saying, that he was worthy, &c. We see here the force of real goodness to conquer the most inveterate prejudices, the elders of the Jews at Capernaum petitioners for a Gentile, for a Roman centurion. So may we disarm the violence of a party spirit, and conciliate the friendship of those who otherwise might have their eyes upon us for evil. The erection of a house of worship for the Jews by the centurion had won the regard of these messengers. *For he loveth our nation, &c.* Here was an instance of marked generosity. Many a man is indifferent to the wants of others. He is in the midst of those who have no great claim upon him. He is too glad of the excuse or apology for steering clear of what would touch his means, invade his time, or burden him with new cares and responsibilities. Not so the centurion. Those acquainted with the Roman history know well with what cruelty, rapacity and oppression, the governors and commanding officers in the conquered provinces too commonly behaved toward the people

whom they were sent to keep in awe. So far were they from building them temples or synagogues, that they frequently invaded those sacred retreats, and laid their sacrilegious hands on everything that was valuable in them. In the midst of this brutality and insolence of power, this gallant soldier stood up to patronize and assist a distressed and an injured people, and it is a glorious testimony to his memory, that, after consecrating his own soul as a living temple of faith, love and grateful obedience, he prepared a sanctuary, wherein his poorer fellow-citizens might serve the God of their fathers. There cannot be a stronger indication, both of love to mankind, and love toward God, than erecting places of worship where they are wanted.

6. Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself; for I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof; 7. Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee; but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. 8. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto *one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.

*Prov. xxix. 23. †Ps. cvii. 20. *Or, *this man.*

Far from being puffed up with a conceit of his own merit, in having built a synagogue, the centurion thought himself unworthy to come to the Saviour, or to receive Him beneath his roof; he even counted it a presumption to have asked, through the intervention of others, the presence in his house of so exalted and holy a personage. Humility, in the Gospel sense of the word, is a virtue with which the ancients, and more particularly the Romans, were totally unacquainted. They had not even a word in their language to describe it by, their only word that seemed to express it signifying baseness, servility, and meanness of spirit. When, therefore, we see this centurion differing so widely from his countrymen in this respect, we may certainly conclude that his notions of morality were of a much higher standard than theirs. The best men have always the lowest thoughts of themselves; when we esteem ourselves unworthy of any favors, Christ accounts us worthy of all. While God "resisteth the proud," He "giveth grace to the humble." "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." "Learn of me," says Jesus, "for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

But say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. He had faith in Christ's Divine power, he believed that He was able, at a distance, and by a single word, to command this disease from his servant; that it required neither machinery, nor effort, but the briefest, slightest forth-putting of His will. He thought that Christ's power was equal to that of God, who said, "Let there be light, and there was light."

For I also am a man set under authority, &c. His profession as a soldier served him with arguments as a Christian. He argued from the less to the greater. "I am a subaltern, an under-officer, have such power that I can say to this soldier, 'Take up that position,' and to that soldier, 'Be sentinel there,' and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he doeth it—much more, surely, Thou, who art the Commander of all the armies of the skies, and the Ruler of all the inhabitants of the earth, hast but to speak the word, and my servant then will be instantly healed." One's profession may often be made serviceable to one's Christianity, and lessons may be gathered from domestic, private and professional life, which will cast new lustre on the truths, and inspire with new force the precepts of the Gospel. Humility is the concomitant grace of faith. As a tree sends its branches upward in proportion as it strikes its roots downward, so in proportion as a man is deep in humility, he is "strong in faith, giving glory to God."

9. When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

What can be more wonderful than to see Christ wonder? The expression, *he marvelled*, is one of those which show the reality of our Lord's human nature. He was made like unto us in all things, sin only excepted. As man, He grew in wisdom and stature, hungered, thirsted, was weary, ate, drank, slept, wept, sorrowed, rejoiced, groaned, agonized, bled, suffered, died, and so also as man He wondered. Yet all this time He was very and eternal God, one with the Father, and the Saviour of the world. This is a great mystery, and one which we cannot fathom. The union of two natures in one person is

a thing passing our weak comprehension. We must believe, admire and adore, without attempting to define or explain.

I say unto you I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. It is worthy of remark, that our Lord unites with the elders in praising the centurion, but for qualities wholly unnoticed by them, viz.: his faith and humility. The faith of the centurion was great, because he had to ascend from paganism to attain it; great, because not purely physical, but spiritual, realizing his own unworthiness and the superiority of Jesus as the Holy One; great, because it realized the Divine mission of Christ from Jehovah, and expressed a sense of profound submission to His absolute *word*. It was a faith enabling him to accept all that Jesus should teach, and prompting him to aim at obedience to all that He should command. The unbelief of the entire chosen people of God was rebuked by the faith of this *stranger to the commonwealth of Israel*.

10. And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.

Whole, restored to perfect health and vigor. There was not merely a remission of the strength of the disease, but it had altogether left him. This cure was the effect of the faith, prayer and humility of the centurion, through which the almighty energy of Christ was conveyed to the sick man. But these very graces in the centurion were the products of grace. It is God Himself who, by the gift of His mercy, disposes the soul to receive its cure, and nothing can contribute to the reception of His grace but what is the fruit of grace itself.

On this history, note, 1. Our Lord's miracles had the fullest credit given to them, by men of rank and character, who were perfectly competent to ascertain the truth of any facts presented to their observation, and not likely to be imposed upon by false pretenses. 2. The profession of a soldier is not an unlawful one. It is never condemned in the Scriptures. On the contrary, it is placed by the sacred writers in a favorable and honorable light. (Matt. xxvii. 54; Acts x. 2, xxvii. 43.) 3. There is no situation in life that exempts

us from the obligation to be Christians. Those who are not Christians because of their circumstances, will find the difficulty in their hearts, rather than in their circumstances. 4. We are to admire more the least measure of grace in a good man, than all the grandeur and glory of a great man. 5. Christ is most pleased with us when we put the most confidence in Him. We are not guilty of presumption on the one, hand, or of rash and daring intrusion on the other, when we lay much upon the shoulder of Jesus to bear and endure for us. The more we trust Him, the more He feels He is honored by that trust.

11. † And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain: and many of his disciples went with him, and much people.

The day after—the day succeeding the healing of the centurion's servant. *Nain*, which is now only a little hamlet, inhabited by a few families, was then a small town in the tribe of Issachar, hard by the source of the brook Kishon, not far from Endor. The name signifies the "Lovely," perhaps on account of the pleasant situation in the plain of Esdraelon. It does not appear that our Lord ever went to Nain, except on this occasion. *Many of his disciples*. Among these, doubtless, were the Twelve appointed to be Apostles, for it cannot be supposed that He would suffer the chosen witnesses of His miracles to be absent, when so great a miracle was to be performed as the raising of a person from the dead, and to be performed so publicly, in the presence of all who were attending the funeral. Luke is the only Evangelist who records this miracle. *Much people*, consisting, doubtless, in part, at least, of hearers of the sermon on the Mount.

12. Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her.

Gate of the city. Most towns and villages were walled for the sake of protection. *Behold, there was a dead man carried out*. The place of burial was outside the city, according to the universal custom of the East, both in ancient and modern times. Yet, though for this reason our Lord's meeting the funeral at the gate was a natural circumstance, and apparently accidental, still it is to be regarded as one of

the wonder-works of God's grace, one of those marvelous coincidences which, though seemingly casual, are yet deep laid in the councils of His wisdom and of His love. *The only son of his mother.* The object of her fondest affections, and perhaps the support of her declining years. There is no one loss referred to in Scripture which is spoken of as so deep, severe and painful, as the loss of an only son. "Make thee mourning as for an only son, most bitter lamentations." (Jer. vi. 26.) "They shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son." (Zech. xii. 10.) That the gracious Redeemer appreciated the bitterness of such grief is evident from the fact that of the three memorable instances in which He exerted His power over death and the grave, and released their captives, one was the case of an only brother, another an only daughter, and this an only son.

And she was a widow. This adds a still darker shade to the desolation of the scene. She had no one to help her, to bear her loss. She had already followed her husband to the grave. Perhaps she had often thought that her son would supply the loss of his father, and at length he had arrived at an age to be her prop and comfort, but now he was dead, and with him had died her fondest wishes and dearest hopes—the name of the family would now perish out of Israel. Well might this mother say, in the bitterness of her soul, "Is there any sorrow like unto my sorrow?" *And much people of the city was with her.* Doubtless the large attendance was an expression of the respect and sympathy felt for the bereaved and deeply distressed mother. We should show sympathy with those around us in their losses and calamities.

13. And when the Lord saw her, ^{he} had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.
^aHeb. ii. 17 and iv. 15.

Jesus, whose tenderness made Him susceptible of the strongest impressions from occurrences of this kind, was greatly moved with pity at the sorrowful scene. *Weep not.* As with Jairus, his fear, so with this widow, her grief is first allayed, before the Lord displayed His miraculous power. What tenderness He showed in His manner of performing the miracle!

He undertook the work of our redemption and salvation *in his love and in his pity.* (Isa. lxiii. 9.) We should but mock the afflicted, if we were to say, "Weep not." We can only weep *with* those that weep. But Jesus could remove the cause of grief, hence the words "weep not," which would have been inappropriate in others, were perfectly becoming in Him. Though Himself a man of sorrows, He tasted the pure joy of comforting mourners. Though others may despise our grief, He does not. We are not to understand that Jesus intended here to condemn proper sensibility in our trials and sorrows. He shed tears Himself. We are not to forbid weeping on the part of those who are afflicted, but to "weep with them that weep," showing them that we have a fellow-feeling. Yet there is no reason for inordinate and excessive grief for those *that sleep in Jesus.* As they will rise again, rise in glory, we must not *sorrow as those that have no hope.* (1 Thess. iv. 13.)

14. And he came and touched the bier;* and they that bare ^{him} stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, ^bArise.
^aOr, *coffin.* ^bChap. viii. 54; John xi. 43; Acts ix. 40; Rom. iv. 17.

The people of the East bury their adult dead without coffins, but they carry them to the grave on a bier that is shaped like one. On this the corpse is laid, wrapped in folds of linen, and the bier is borne on the shoulders of four, sometimes six persons. Jesus *touchèd the bier*, as if to arrest it, and the bearers, obedient to that intimation, though they knew not why, *stood still.* Then came the majestic command—*Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.* Strange, mysterious address to the body lying cold, stiff and silent, in the rigors of death! *I say unto thee—I*, that am the Resurrection and the Life, quickening the dead, and calling those things which be not, as though they were.

15. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak: and he delivered him to his mother.

No sooner had Christ uttered the command, than it was obeyed. The utterance to the body was heard by the departed soul, and it returned to its tenement of clay. *Sat up.* The young man, without any human help, rose upon the bier, *and began to speak*, thus showing that he was

really alive. What were his first words? We are not informed. Did he inquire who had restored him to life? He soon must have known; for He who had snatched him from the grasp of death, *delivered him to his mother*. This sweet office Jesus would perform Himself. O, what a solace it must have been to His loving heart to behold the joyful meeting of the parent and the child! He did not oblige this youth, to whom He had given a new life, to follow Him, as His disciple to minister to Him, much less, as a trophy of His dominion over death, to get honor by him, but presented him to his mother, to attend her, as a dutiful son, thus indicating that it was mainly in compassion of her affliction He had wrought the life-giving miracle.

^{16.} ¹And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, ²That a great prophet is risen up among us: and, ³That God hath visited his people. ^{17.} And this rumor of him went forth throughout all Judea, and throughout all the region round about.

¹Luke i. 65. ²Luke xxiv. 19; John iv. 19 and vi. 14 and ix. 17. ³Luke i. 68.

The effect of the miracle upon the multitude was marked. *There came a fear on all*. A religious awe and reverence pervaded them; *and they glorified God*, praised Him for His mercy in remembering and visiting His people Israel. *Saying, that a great prophet is risen up among us*. They concluded that no ordinary prophet was among them, but a "great" one, since none but the very greatest prophets of the olden times, an Elijah or an Elisha, had brought the dead to life. In their other exclamation, *God hath visited his people*, lay no less an allusion to the long periods during which they had been without a prophet, so that it might have seemed, and many might have almost feared, that the last of these had arrived.

And this rumor of him went forth. Wherever this miracle was reported, which was not only in Judea, but in all the neighboring regions, it produced the same opinion in those who heard of it, namely, that God had visited His people in an extraordinary way, and had raised up among them a very eminent prophet, which greatly heightened and increased the mighty expectations from Him, which long before they had begun to entertain.

From this narrative we may learn the following lessons: I. The young may die

Their bloom and beauty do not shield them from the destroyer. 2. The tender compassion of the Saviour. He sympathizes with us in our sorrows. To Him we should go for succor and comfort in every time of trouble. 3. There comes a day, of which this was a foreshadow, when, for His people, "God shall wipe all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." (Rev. xxi. 4.) 4. The miracles of Christ were so peculiar as to attest His Divinity. How many times He may have raised the dead, we know not; we have record of but three cases; and these three cases form a striking contrast. The daughter of Jairus was raised from her *bed*, the son of this widow from his *bier*, and Lazarus from his *tomb*. Nor was this a *contrived* climax, but appears spontaneously, from a comparison of three Evangelists, and, thus appearing, it is deeply significant. 5. The soul separated from the body plainly lives independent of that body. 6. The fact that this young man began to speak, and yet nothing is said as to what the conversation was—this fact, as well as the sequel of the resurrection of Lazarus, and that of Jairus' daughter, are indirect evidences of the inspiration of the Gospel. If these incidents were mere figments of the fancy, their authors would have given whole pages of the conversation of these persons on their return to this world; and this would have been done with greater boldness, because they knew that no wing could follow them to see the districts they described, or confront them with refutation. 7. This miracle is a pledge of the resurrection. It is as easy to raise a million of the dead as it is to raise one. 8. Jesus will deliver to us again our loved and lost ones who have died sprinkled with His atoning blood, and we shall recognize them, and dwell with them forever, where no grave is opened, and no tear is shed. 9. Christ has power to quicken dead souls. (Eph. ii. 1.) Let us never despair of any soul. Let us pray for our children, and faint not. Our young men and our young women may long seem traveling on the way to ruin. But let us pray on. Who can tell but that He, who met the funeral at the gate of Nain, may

yet meet our unconverted children, and say, with almighty power, "Young man, arise!" With Jesus, nothing is impossible.

18. ¹And the disciples of John showed him of all these things.—¹Matt. xi. 2.

John was now in prison (Matt. xi. 2), where he had been confined for rebuking the adulterous intercourse of Herod with Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. The prison, as we learn from *Josephus*, was the fortress of Machærus, on the border of Perea and the desert. It is very likely that John's disciples attended the ministry of our Lord at particular times. Though bigotry existed in its most formidable shape between the *Jews* and *Samaritans*, yet we do not find that it had any place between Jews and Jews, though they were of different sects, and attached to different teachers. At this time, *the disciples of John*, who seem to have had free access to him, *showed him of all these things, i. e., of Christ's teaching*; His election of the twelve Apostles to preach the Gospel, and His miracles, particularly His raising from the dead Jairus' daughter, and the widow of Nain's son.

19. ¹ And John, calling unto him two of his disciples, sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou ¹he that should come? or look we for another? 20. When the men were come unto him, they said, John the Baptist has sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?

¹Gen. xlix. 10; Num. xxiv. 17; Dan. ix. 24; Zech. ix. 9.

He that should come, more literally, *the coming one*—the promised Messiah, *or look we for another*—under that character? They did well to come to their teacher to express their doubts. It is always well to confide such thoughts to those who are able to help us, for by hiding them in our own bosoms, we may often occasion ourselves much uneasiness, and expose ourselves to great danger. Considering what clear evidence John had received by a miraculous sign from Heaven that Jesus was the Messiah (John i. 33), and what express and repeated testimonies he himself had borne to this truth, it cannot reasonably be supposed that he now doubted of it. The utmost that we can suppose concerning him is, that whilst not doubting the Saviour's person, he could not fully understand His mode of action. He was somewhat impatient. Matters moved too slowly for him,

especially as he himself, as a prisoner, was now condemned to involuntary inactivity. He was anxious for some speedy and public declaration of the Lord in respect to His Messianic dignity—a declaration corresponding with the expectation which doubtless he had formed to himself of the Lord of the threshing-floor with His fan in His hands. (Matt. iii. 11, 12.) But John's disciples were unwilling to acknowledge Christ to be the Messiah, who about that time was generally expected, because they had such a zeal for the honor of John, their master, that they were not willing to own any one greater than him. Probably, also, they were prejudiced against the Lord on account of His manner of life, which was very unlike that of John, for Jesus freely mixed with sinners, and was entertained by them, while John had always led a solitary life, and had lived upon the coarsest fare. John, therefore, to whom a delegation had been sent to know from him whether He was the Christ, now sends two of his disciples to Jesus, that they might obtain further satisfaction as to His Messiahship, and have their faith confirmed in Him from whom they had otherwise fled, out of a preposterous emulation.

21. And in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities, and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight.

What a view is here given of the number and variety of our Lord's miracles! By *plagues*, we are not to understand, as some do, palsies and leprosies, but more violent and active diseases. It will be noticed that Luke, the physician, distinguishes the demoniacs from naturally sick persons. *He gave sight* might be rendered, "he made a present of seeing," or "he graciously gave sight." The words denote how highly gratifying the gift of sight was to those who had been blind, as well as the kind manner in which our Lord bestowed it. In all Christ's miracles, not only the *cure*, but the *manner* in which He performed it, endeared Him to those who were objects of His compassionate regard.

22. ¹Then Jesus answering, said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; ²how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, &c. to the poor the gospel is preached.

¹Matt. xi. 4. ²Isa. xxxv. 5 and xlii. 7. ³Luke iv. 18.

Go your way, and tell John. The answer

is addressed to John, from whom the question came, and therefore can determine nothing as to its true motive. *What things ye have seen and heard*, of which a specification is made in the remainder of the verse—not exhaustive, but illustrative, by means of a few signal instances. Christ would have men judge of Him and of others only by their works. This is the only safe way of judging. A man is not to be credited because he professes to know such and such things, but because he demonstrates by his conduct that his pretensions are not vain. *How that the blind see*. Our Lord here refers to Isaiah (xxix. 18), and other passages where these works are made the proofs of the Messiah. *The lame walk*, literally, *walk about*, showing their cure to be real. *The lepers are cleansed*—delivered from their disease and defilement. *The deaf hear*—their ears are unstopped. *The dead are raised*. Perhaps the raising of the dead may have been among the miracles the messengers actually witnessed, or the reference may be to the resuscitation of the widow's son at Nain. *To the poor the gospel is preached*. This was a sign of Messiah's time. (Isa. xxix. 19.) Contempt for the poor seems to have been very common in the times of the Gospel. (John vii. 49; ix. 34 and James ii. 24.) Concern and tender interest about the poor was a distinguishing feature of our Lord's ministry and that of His Apostles. *Then*, as ever since, the poor of the world have been more disposed than other men to hear and embrace the Gospel. It will be noticed that the miracles here enumerated were not only the most convincing proofs of the supreme power of Christ, but were also emblematic of the work of salvation which He effects in the souls of men. Sinners are *blind*, their understanding is so darkened by sin that they *see not* the way of truth and salvation. They are *lame*, not able to walk in the path of righteousness. They are *leprous*, their souls are defiled with sin, the most loathsome and inveterate disease, *deepening* in themselves and infecting others. They are *deaf*, to the voice of God, His word and their own conscience. They are *dead*, in trespasses and sins, God, who is the life of the soul, being separated from it by

iniquity. As Christ would be known by His works and doctrines, so must true Churches of Christ and true ministers of Christ. When the dead in sin are not quickened, and the blind are not restored to sight, and the poor have no glad tidings proclaimed to them, we may generally suspect that Christ's presence is wanting.

23. And blessed is *he* whosoever shall not be offended in me.

Blessed, truly fortunate or happy, with particular reference to the Divine favor. *Whosoever*, a contingent expression, not necessarily implying that any one had actually been, but simply that some one might thereafter be *offended*, or be *stumbled*, made to fall, *i. e.*, betrayed into sin and error. The warning thus given is just as needful now as when it was delivered. Many are offended at Christ: some at the asserted divinity of His person, and the meritoriousness of His satisfaction; some at the mysteriousness of His doctrine; others at the sanctity and strictness of His laws; some at the free dispensation of His grace; others that the terms of Christianity are too hard, humbling to the proud and earthly hearts, and laying too great a restraint upon human nature; others, that the world does not believe in Him, that there are so many hypocrites and inconsistent professors of religion, and that his real followers are generally poor and unlearned. But those who believe in Him, notwithstanding all these hindrances, shall be in a happy condition here, and, at the judgment-day and beyond, learn the deep meaning of our Lord's words in this verse.

24. † And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John, *What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind?*—*Mat. xi. 7.*

Unto the people. Not before John's disciples, but before the multitude, Christ commended John, for as John's disciples had too high, so the multitude had too low an opinion of him, possibly because of his imprisonment and sufferings. Reminding the people of their visit to the wilderness of Judea, bordering on the Jordan, where John preached and baptized, He assured them they had gone there not to see a common sight, but an extraordinary one. This He did by a form of

expression not uncommon in the Bible, by which a question is equivalent to a strong and positive affirmation. John, whom they had gone out to hear preach, was not a *reed shaken with the wind*, not as easily shaken as they, by every gust of rumor or prejudice, or every change of outward circumstances. He was not a man of an unstable and unsettled judgment, but fixed and steadfast. Convinced of the truth, he continued to believe and assert it. *Steadiness* is essentially necessary to every preacher and to every private Christian.

25. But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts.

It was unreasonable to expect to see in the desert a man clothed delicately and faring sumptuously, for such persons were rather found in kings' palaces, whereas John was a plain man, clothed in a camel's-hair garment, with a leathern girdle, and living on plain, coarse fare, and there was nothing to please the eye in his appearance. Here John is commended for his gravity and sobriety—his mortification to the glory, honor, ease and pleasures of the world. The spiritual nature of the Messiah's kingdom is thus intimated. As Christ's forerunner did not resemble any of the officers who attend the courts of earthly princes, consequently Christ Himself was in no respect to be like an earthly prince. A minister of the Gospel should have nothing about him which savors of effeminacy and worldly pomp.

26. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet,

Our Lord, with a fine climax in His questions, from a *reed* to a *man* (intending by this that John was no weakling), and then to a *prophet*, gave the people to understand that John, instead of having lost in any respect his claim to the name of a *prophet*, was even exalted above ordinary prophets. He was *much more than a prophet*, because he pointed out Christ more clearly and fully than any of the prophets before him. The ancient prophets beheld Christ afar off, but John saw Him face to face. They prophesied of Him, he pointed at Him, prepared His way, foretold that His kingdom was at hand, and had the honor of

baptizing Him. He excelled in everything peculiar to a prophet.

27. This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.—Mal. iii. 1.

This is he. The clearer any ministry is in discovering Christ, the more excellent it is. *Of whom it is written.* In the verse referred to (Mal. iii. 1), *Jehovah*, speaking of the coming of Christ, says, "my face," and "before me;" but it is here quoted as the language of the Father to the Son, and He therefore says, "before thy face," and "thy way before thee," so that, to prepare the way of Christ was "to prepare the way of the Lord Jehovah," for "He and the Father are one."

28. For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

Among those that are born of women, that is, among the whole race of mankind in all former ages, *there is not a greater prophet*, &c. John was greater than any of the ancient prophets, on account of his wonderful conception and birth, his intimate knowledge of Gospel mysteries (see especially John iii. 27, &c.), his express testimony to the Messiah, and his remarkable success in making way for Him. John was also himself the subject of ancient prophecies, and long expected by the Church. The world thinks that kings, generals and statesmen are the greatest of men. But God measures differently. The Divine head of Christ is the loftiest of all men's heads, and His nearest servant's is next. It was when John was in prison, that Jesus thus commended him. How precious is the thought, to faithful ministers, that though the world may slight and despise them, Jesus will maintain their honor, support their cause, and prove to them an unchanging Friend! How comforting is it also to all true Christians who are suspected, slandered and falsely accused, to know that Jesus will never desert any of His people! *But he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.* Jesus here speaks of His disciples, not only so far as they appear as Apostles or Evangelists, but without any distinction. The humblest Gospel minister who preaches Christ *as come*, is to be preferred before all the old prophets who prophesied of Christ

as to come. That minister who sets forth the life and death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, is greater in the kingdom of God—that is, has a higher office in the Church, and a more excellent ministry—than all the prophets, yea, than John himself.

^{29.} And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John.—Matt. iii. 5; Luke iii. 12.

The people who flocked to hear the Gospel message, even the *publicans*, who generally were esteemed notoriously wicked, on account of their injustice and extortion, *justified God*, that is, owned and approved His wisdom and mercy, in having called them to repentance by John's ministry, and prepared them for Him that was to come, and they testified their approbation by receiving baptism at John's hands.

^{30.} But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.

^{*}Or, *frustrated*. †Acts xx. 27. †Or, *within themselves*.

They who *esteemed themselves* good, and were generally regarded as learned, honorable men, *rejected the counsel of God*, &c., that is, despised, frustrated and made of no avail the gracious offer of repentance and salvation which God sent to them by the Baptist. It is a fearful thought, that men have power to ruin themselves forever. God has "no pleasure in the death of him that dieth." (Ezek. xviii. 32.) Christ is willing to gather men to His bosom, if they will only be gathered. (Matt. xxii. 37.) But by continued impenitence and unbelief, by persevering in the love and practice of sin, by pride, self-will, laziness and determined love of the world, we may bring upon ourselves everlasting destruction.

^{31.} † And the Lord said, "Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? And to what are they like?"—Matt. xi. 16.

Our Lord now proceeds to describe and condemn the fickleness and perverseness of the Pharisees, whom nothing could induce to embrace the Gospel, neither His own ministry nor that of John. *This generation, i. e.*, of this age. The question is asked, as though it were difficult to find an object with which such men could be compared.

^{32.} They are like unto children sitting in the market-place, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept.

The market-place. In the earlier times of the Jewish history, the markets were held near the gates of towns, sometimes within, sometimes without, where the different kinds of goods were exposed for sale, either in the open air or in tents. But we learn from *Josephus*, that in the time of our Saviour, the markets, at least in cities, had become such as they now are in the East, where they are called "bazaars." These establishments are usually situated in the center of the towns, and do not by any means answer to our notions of "a market," which is usually for the sale of articles of food, for in these bazaars all the shops and warehouses of the town are collected, and all the trade of the city is carried on, of whatever description it may be. It was common for children in the market-place to play at rejoicing and at mourning. One party of children imitated the glad songs of the Jews at their marriages, and on other joyful occasions, while another party were expected to dance at the sound of their music. But sometimes sullen and wayward children would not join in the amusement. Then the other party would good-naturedly change the play, and imitate the mournful music of funerals, expecting their companions to use sorrowful gestures and to appear to weep, but the same froward children would object to this play also. In a matter of infinite importance the Pharisees had imitated this example. All the methods which Divine wisdom had tried for their conversion had proved vain.

^{33.} For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil.

^{*}Matt. iii. 4; Mark i. 6; Luke i. 15.

They had demanded cheerfulness of John, and as he led so solitary and so strict a life, being clad in skins, feeding on locusts and honey, and refusing to taste wine or strong drink, they accused him of being demoniacally possessed, saying, *He hath a devil*—he acts like a wild, distracted demoniac, whom an evil spirit drives from the society of men.

^{34.} The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!

The severity of John's ministry proving unsuccessful, with respect to the conver-

sion of the scribes and Pharisees, God sent His own Son to address and conduct Himself toward them in a more free and familiar manner; but because Christ manifested a mild and joyous spirit, in no way despising the comforts of life, but temperately enjoying them, these same Pharisees, because they did not find in Him the austere, unbending sternness which they had not been able to endure in John, applied to Him the epithets, *glutton, wine-bibber, and friend of publicans and sinners*, in doing which, however, they did not consider that these latter words indicated His highest titles of honor. (Luke xv. 2.) What a contradiction was this! Yet thus do men always and everywhere act, when left to themselves. The first and natural movement of the sinner's heart, when God speaks to him, is to question something regarding the mode, or even to doubt the reality of the communication altogether. No matter how clear and convincing the evidence may be—no matter how varied its attendant circumstances, as, for example, in the outward difference of life in the case of the Baptist and Jesus—no matter how lavish God has been in furnishing tokens of Himself, and of the reality of what He demands, still the wicked heart craves for something more. "This is not the evidence exactly that convinces me," are practically its words. "If this single point had been different, or if some clearer statement had been made, or if I were to see with my own eye the miracles recorded in Scripture, I might believe." So, too, those who hate the Gospel, excuse themselves for not attending to it, by accusing those who preach it of faults in their manner, or of errors in their life.

35. *But wisdom is justified of all her children.
 †Matt. xi. 19.

Rather, *by all her children*. *Wisdom* can here be no other than the Divine wisdom which had been revealed by John and Jesus, and in Jesus was personally manifested. *Her children* are those who are born of her, and possess a wise heart. The *justification* of wisdom takes place where she is acquitted of accusations of this kind, and acknowledged in her true character. Wise and good men, not only some, but

all, admire the beautiful variety in the conduct of Providence, and in the methods of revealing Divine grace, approve their religion in their judgment, honor it in their conversation, and adorn it in their lives.

36. † *And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.
 *Matt. xxvi. 6; Mark xiv. 3; John xi. 2.

The time and place of the occurrence of the things here related are not particularly indicated. In some respects the incident here recorded is similar to the anointing of Jesus' feet by Mary, as narrated (Matt. xxvi. 7; Mark xiv. 3; John xii. 3); but must not be confounded with that event. We know nothing of this Pharisee, except his name, *Simon*. (Verse 40.) There is no proof that he was the same as "Simon, the leper," mentioned in Mark xiv. 3. He certainly was not Simon Peter, or Simon Zelotes. There is as little reason for ascribing his invitation to hostile intentions, as for believing that it sprang from esteem and affection. Perhaps pride itself impelled him to receive a rabbi at his table, whose name was already upon so many tongues, and in respect to whom one did not know how high He might yet rise, and Christ readily accepted the invitation, never refusing any opportunity for doing good.

37. And behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, †Rom. v. 8; 1 Tim. ii. 9.

The *woman* mentioned in this narrative is one whose name is, for wise and kind reasons, not stated. This is the view maintained by the great majority of all Protestant commentators. She is never again mentioned, that we are aware of, in the Gospel history. *Which was a sinner*. That she was an unchaste woman can scarcely be doubted, from the emphasis the word "sinner" receives from its connection, and from the reference made to her by the Pharisee. (verse 39.) She *was a sinner*, but at the time here spoken of gave evidence that she had already learned to hate and forsake her sins, and to love dearly and tenderly the Saviour for whom she had forsaken them. *When she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house*. This is additional proof that this woman was not, as some have

strangely supposed, Mary, the sister of Lazarus, for Mary was well known to Christ, and had not come accidentally, but had been invited. (John xii. 2.) It also shows that the woman's heart had been touched by some previous attendance upon our Lord's ministry, inasmuch as she made preparations for what she was about to do, after she had learned that He was in the Pharisee's house. *Sat at meat*—reclined, which was the usual position at the table, and, as it appears from the sequel, without having His feet washed or being anointed. *Brought an alabastron box of ointment.* The alabastron box containing the ointment, or rather oil, is in the original called simply an *alabastron*, a name derived from the Alabastron in Egypt, where there was a manufactory of small pots and vessels for holding perfumes, made from stone found in the neighboring mountains, and which was thought to conserve better than any other substance the qualities of the precious unguents. The Greeks gave to these vessels the name of the town which produced them, and then to the species of stone of which they were made, and eventually to all perfume vessels of whatever form or substance. Ointments and oils were used in Eastern countries to an extent we can hardly understand. The excessive heat of the climate made it almost necessary, to preserve the skin from cracking. (See Ps. civ. 15.)

38. And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

¹Isa. lxi. 3; ²Matt. v. 4; ²Cor. vii. 10, 11; James iv. 9.

It would appear that the meals at which Jesus took part had a somewhat public character. The entrance stood open to all, not because they were invited by Him, but because the concourse could not be hindered. *Stood at his feet behind him.* The guests at meal-time so reclined on couches that their feet were behind them, toward the open space or passage, between the couch and the wall, where the servants stood in attendance. Into this open place, to which access, without obtrusiveness, was easy, this woman came. Christ could not perhaps have seen her without turning His head. Hence, the force of the expression, "behind him." *Weeping* tears of penitence and love. *And began to wash*

his feet with tears. From a deep conviction of her many sins, and of the obligations she was under to the Saviour for bringing her to a sense of them, she shed tears in such abundance that they trickled down on His feet, which were then bare. Neither the Jews nor the Romans wore stockings, and as for their shoes or sandals, they always took them off when they went to their meals. At feasts it was the custom of the entertainer to provide water, and direct his servants to wash the feet of his guests. *And did wipe them with the hairs of her head.* Observing that the tears shed so freely wetted the Saviour's feet, she wiped them with her hair, which she now wore flowing loose about her shoulders, as mourners commonly did. *And kissed his feet with affectionate tenderness,* or kissed them *again and again,* which is the true force of the original word. The *kiss* was used in ancient times as the emblem of *love, religious reverence, subjection* and *supplication.* It has the meaning of *supplication,* in the way of *adoration,* accompanied with *subjection,* in 1 Kings xix. 18; Job xxxi. 27, and in Ps. ii. 12. *And anointed them with the ointment.* That which she had before used in self-adornment, she now poured out upon the feet of her Lord, as a token of her love, and a pledge that, thereafter, her chiefest beauty and ornament were to be a meek, penitent and believing spirit.

39. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him, saw it, he spake with himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.—¹Isa. lxxv. 5. ²Luke xv. 2.

When Simon observed that Jesus permitted such a notorious sinner to approach, nay, and to touch Him, *he spake within himself,* he thought in his heart, *this man, if he were a prophet,* as he pretends to be, *would have known what manner of woman,* what a disreputable person, *this is that toucheth him,* thus familiarly; and, instead of allowing her to do so, would immediately have driven her away with just disdain, as the tradition of the elders directs, for it was a maxim with the Pharisees that the very touch of the wicked caused pollution. The discerning of spirits was, according to the Jews, one of the characteristics of the Messiah. (Isa. ix. 3, 4.)

40. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on.

Though Simon did not declare his sentiments, they were not hidden from Christ, who, to show him that He was a prophet, and that He knew not only the characters of men but the inward and invisible state of their minds, conversed with him on the subject of his thoughts. *Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee*, something demanding thy whole attention, applicable to thee, and important for thee. *Master, say on.* Though the Pharisee's heart had just pronounced his guest to be an impostor, the courtesy of the lip proclaimed Him "Master" still. If Jesus had directly attacked Simon in regard to his wicked and unreasonable pride, and unfeeling disdain of the poor, weeping penitent, he would probably have been only hardened and irritated by it. He therefore adopted a method adapted to convince, without offending him. He did not expose him before the company, by making what he said within himself public, but with great delicacy proceeded to utter a parable, to show that Simon erred in condemning a woman whom the Heavenly Judge had acquitted, and that it was well known to Him what both the woman and Simon were, not merely as to what is outward, but in the most secret recesses of the mind.

41. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.—See Matt. xviii. 28.

Creditor. A man who is accustomed to lend. *Five hundred pence*, about \$75; *fifty pence*, \$7.50. God is the creditor, men are the debtors, and sins the debts. The determinate numbers used can only be meant to indicate the great inequality of the debt of these two persons, and at the same time to teach, that whilst it is not true that any man's sins are *really* small, yet sinners, in the eye and according to the judgment of God, are not equal, but have different degrees of guilt; all are guilty, but not all alike.

42. And when they had nothing to pay, ^{he}he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most?

^dPs. xxxi. 1, 5, ciii. 3; Acts xiii. 38; Rom. iii. 24 and iv. 5, 8.

Nothing to pay—he frankly forgave them both. Here, on the part of the debtors, two things are evident: the certainty and

greatness of the debt, and their utter incapacity to make restitution, being entirely insolvent; while on the part of the creditor there appears correspondingly in the remission of the debts, 1. A very great goodness, and, 2. That goodness perfectly free, depending simply on his own will, quite undeserved by the debtors, and never to be demanded by them as a matter of right. Such also is the relation of the sinner to God, that all sins require an exercise of grace that is perfectly free, and this also it is possible for them to find. *Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most? Both would love*, for such a manifestation of love infallibly begets love in the heart of the receiver. It is also implied that the degree of the reciprocal love will be determined by the apprehension of the greatness of the received benefit. *Neither of the debtors would love at all the creditor before he had forgiven them.* An insolvent debtor, till he is forgiven, does not *love*, but shuns his creditor, apprehending severe treatment from him. It is entirely the same in the heart of the sinner. He learns from the Divine law, both his guilt and his liability to punishment, so that nothing but fear of God can take possession of him. But the sinner, in such a state, is met by God in the Gospel with the gracious method of pardon for his sins, and this, in the believing heart, which appropriates to itself the word of God, becomes the means of rooting out fear, and implanting a principle of love (Rom. xv. 1, 8, 15; 2 Tim. i. 7; 1 John iv. 18, 19.) The application of the parable, therefore, leads to the following conclusions: 1. Love to God cannot precede the pardon of sin. 2. And hence it cannot deserve this pardon of sin. 3. But infallibly marks an act of forgiveness, already past and experienced.

43. Simon answered and said, I suppose that *he*, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

Simon answered, and said, I suppose, &c. He surely who was forgiven most was under the greater obligations, and must reasonably be supposed to feel the greater affection for his merciful and generous creditor. By this acknowledgment he was, unknowingly to himself, prepared to receive our Lord's reproof. And he said,

Thou hast rightly judged, and the reflection is evidently suited to the case that we have before us.

44. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. 45. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. 46. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.—Ps. xxiii. 5.

Now follows the application of the parable.

He turned to the woman, who had been a notorious sinner, and was the greater, the five hundred pence debtor. The Pharisee, however, though the less, the fifty pence debtor, yet was a debtor too, which was more, perhaps, than he thought himself to be, judging rather that God was his debtor. (Chap. xviii. 10, 11.) Seest thou this woman, afflicted and distressed as she is? and canst thou avoid taking notice of the extraordinary tenderness and affectionate regard to me that she has now manifested? I entered into thine house, as a guest, on thine own express invitation; thou gavest me no water for my feet, though that be so customary and necessary a refreshment on these occasions; but she, nobly supplying the lack of service, hath washed my feet, not with mere water, withheld by thee, but by something far more precious, her tears, and wiped them, not with a common napkin, but with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss, as men do when they receive a guest, but this woman since the time I came in (some copies read, she came in), hath not ceased to kiss even my feet with the greatest humility and affection. My head with even common oil thou didst not anoint, though few entertainments fail of being attended with that circumstance (see Deut. xxviii. 40; Mi. vi. 15; Ps. xxiii. 5, civ. 15 and cxli. 5); but this woman hath anointed, not my head, but my feet, with precious ointment. This comparison, drawn so much to the advantage of the woman whom the Pharisee so thoroughly despised, must have put him to shame. Then comes the judgment pronounced by Christ—a judgment in which He furnishes His reply to the silent query of Simon, whether this professed prophet discerned spirits, by showing him that He did most truly discern both her spirit and his.

47. Wherefore, I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.—1 Tim. i. 14.

Wherefore must not be coupled with I say unto thee, but with what follows, so that I say unto thee should be placed in parenthesis. I say unto thee, I declare it openly, both for her vindication and for thy admonition, her sins, which are many, and exceedingly heinous, as I well know, are forgiven, freely and graciously, for, rather, therefore she loved much, as I have been the means of bringing her to repentance, and to enjoy pardon and peace, she has thus testified the great love and high regard she has for me, as being persuaded that she never can sufficiently express her sense of the obligation. From this woman's manifestations of love to me, thou mightest have drawn the conclusion that her many sins have been forgiven her. There are three things in this passage which show that the forgiveness of sin is not, as Romanists contend it is, obtained through works of love. 1. Christ said to the woman (verse 50), Thy faith hath saved thee; 2. In verse 47, forgiveness of sin goes before love; and, 3. If we, as debtors, could by any merit of our own, obtain forgiveness of sin, we should, then, in contradiction of the parable itself, have something wherewith to pay. But to whom little is forgiven, or who thinks his debt was but small, the same loveth little, is not much affected by the kindness of the creditor that forgives him, and feels but little gratitude and love to him on that account.

48. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. Matt. ix. 2; Mark ii. 5.

The woman's sins were not now forgiven for the first time. She was really forgiven before she came to Christ. Now she received a public and authoritative declaration of it before many witnesses, as a reward for her open expression of love and gratitude. Before, she had hope through grace. Now, she received the assurance of hope. Before, she was justified before God; now, Jesus has justified her before men, before this Pharisaic company, by declaring that her sins had been forgiven. While the Pharisees murmured, the poor penitent rejoiced.

49. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also?—Matt. ix. 3; Mark ii. 7.

Began to say. Just as in chap. v. 21. It would seem almost inconceivable that the same censure should have been already repeated, if we forget that a Pharisaic heart at all times remains the same; besides, these guests need not, of course, have been acquainted with that which had already taken place at the healing of the paralytic. *Sins also.* A better translation would be, *even sins*, the contrast being between the display of His power in curing physical infirmities (verse 21), and the greater exercise of it in the forgiveness of sin, which was solely God's prerogative.

50. And he said to the woman, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."
 1. Matt. ix. 22; Mark v. 34 and x. 52; Luke viii. 48 and xviii. 42.

Our Lord rebuked not the insolent murmurers, but the more they murmured the more persistently did He assure the penitent. He did not say, "Thy *love* hath saved thee." Here, as in every other part of the New Testament, *faith* is put forward as the key to salvation. This woman had embraced our Saviour's invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest;" and in her case it was proved true that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Faith is the *instrument* of receiving the *salvation* which is promised to those who repent. *Go in peace*, was a phrase which was a common valediction among the Jews, like our "Good-bye," or "God be with you."

The following lessons are taught by this narrative:

1. Men may show some outward respect to Christ, and yet remain unconverted. This Pharisee even desired that our Lord would eat with him, yet all this time he was profoundly ignorant of the nature of the Gospel. 2. For great sinners there is

a great Saviour. "This man receiveth sinners," which was the ironical taunt of proud and haughty Pharisees, is the Saviour's own motto, and the glorious peculiarity of His great salvation. 3. Love to the Saviour forms a necessary part of religion. It is not, as some maintain, enthusiasm, or the mere effect of a high-wrought imagination. It has its ground-work in the sober foundations of the word of God. That state of heart which the Saviour on this occasion prized so highly, He values still, for He is "the same yesterday, to-day and forever." Just in proportion to our love will be our obedience. 4. Toward a great sinner there ought to be great tenderness. However his sin may be rebuked, *he* should be deeply pitied. We should speak to him in terms of holy sympathy, and be ready to show the nature and issues of his transgression, and direct him to Jesus, who came into the world, "that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life." 5. Our salvation is of grace. It is utterly impossible for any person of himself to pay the debt he owes to God's violated law. They that owe least stand in need of mercy and forgiveness, as well as they that owe most. Let us rejoice to know that God, the great Creditor, forgives freely, fully and *frankly*, not grudgingly or indifferently, but graciously, cheerfully all who come to Him through Jesus Christ—who, though not the *cause* of God's love, is yet the expression of it, and the channel through which that love flows. 6. The knowledge of forgiveness, instead of leading to presumption or indifference to God's claims, will produce humility, and stimulate to obedience. That sinner loves Jesus most who is the most sensible of what Christ has done *for him*.

1. Whose servant was sick? 2. What did the centurion do? 3. What did our Lord say about his faith? 4. Why was his faith great? 5. What did Jesus meet at the gate of Nain? 6. How did He restore the dead man to life? 7. For what purpose did John send two of his disciples to Christ? 8. What was our Lord's message in reply? 9. What eulogy did Jesus pronounce on John? 10. Explain verses 31-35. 11. What occurred when Jesus sat at meat? 12. How are we to understand the parable of the creditor? 13. What did Jesus say to Simon?

CHAPTER VIII.

³ Women minister unto Christ of their substance, ⁴ Christ, after he had preached from place to place, attended with his apostles, propoundeth the parable of the sower, ¹⁶ and of the candle; ²¹ delecteth who are his mother, and brethren; ²² rebuketh the winds; ²⁸ casteth the legion of devils out of the man into the herd of swine; ³⁷ is rejected of the Gadarenes; ⁴³ healeth the woman of her bloody issue, ⁴⁹ and raiseth from death Jairus' daughter.

Much of what is contained in this chapter in relation to Christ's preaching and miracles is also recorded by Matthew and Mark. These portions of our Lord's history are here repeated, as well for their intrinsic importance, as that out of the mouth not only of two, but of three witnesses, every word may be established.

AND it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him,

Afterward—after the laying of the platform of the new dispensation, by preaching the sermon on the Mount, and confirming it by miracles indicating His power over body and soul, or, as the original expression may be understood to imply, in the order of His work, for He went through it regularly, and the end of one good work was with Him the beginning of another. *He went through every city, &c., that is, of Galilee. Preaching and showing, &c., proclaiming and evangelizing, or publishing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God—the good news of the kingdom He was now about to erect among mankind. And the twelve were with him, that they might be further instructed for their work, and that their having been thus publicly seen in His train, might promote their reception, when they afterward came to any of these places by themselves.*

² And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, ³ And Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.—^aMatt. xxvii. 55, 56. ^bMark xvi. 9.

The women here mentioned seem for the most part to have been of some social standing and means. They were probably attached to Jesus and His company, by having been the subjects of remarkable cures. *Evil spirits and infirmities.* It is thus evident that the forms of affliction here denoted were not the same. Devils and diseases may combine, but they are not identical. *Mary called Magdalene,* so called

from Magdala, now Medjil, a town on the west side of Lake Gennesaret, the patrial name being given her to distinguish her from the other Marys in attendance on our Lord's ministry. She is mentioned here in a manner that does not betray the faintest consciousness of her having been mentioned before, and thus it is clearly implied that she is not the same as the sinful woman mentioned in the last chapter. *Out of whom went seven devils.* This phrase must here, as in every other passage, be taken literally, not figuratively for sins. It denotes an intensity of demoniacal possession. *Seven* may be a symbolical and indefinite number to indicate the malignant character of the possession. Instances of the indefinite use of the word *seven* may be found in Matt. xii. 45, and in Ruth iv. 15; 1 Sam. ii. 5; Isa. iv. 1. Of Mary's life previous to her having thus become a miracle and monument of the Saviour's power and mercy, we know nothing. Very great injustice has been done by some to the memory of Mary Magdalene, in supposing her to have been, before her conversion, a prostitute. (See notes on chap. vii. 37.) The fact that she was possessed with *seven demons* is no evidence against her, for *Joanna* and *Susanna* (verse 3), might as well, on this ground, be censured, for they seem to have been dispossessed likewise by Jesus. Then, again, such possession, instead of necessarily implying any peculiar criminality, seems to have been an *affliction*, for we never find that Jesus rebuked the *persons* who were possessed. From the time she had experienced Christ's miraculous power, she became His devoted follower. She seems to have exceeded all the other women in duty and respect to our Lord's person. At this time she came forth from the retirement in which she had long kept herself, in gentle considerateness to minister to the indigence of her homeless Saviour, as she afterward attended Him to His cross, embalmed His corpse, watched by His shroud, and wept at His grave. It will be remembered that she had the honor of being one to whom Jesus made His appearance on the morning of His resurrec-

tion, and that her name was the first word His risen tongue uttered.

And *Joanna, the wife of Chuza*. Joanna is the feminine of John, and the same as Jane. *Herod's steward*, of whom she was the wife, was the manager of the property concerns and household affairs of Herod Antipas. The bad examples of Herod, and of Herodias, had not hindered her from embracing that Gospel which her superiors despised. She also continued faithful to Jesus at His death, and at His grave. (Luke xxiv. 10.) Her case teaches us that not all our Lord's followers were poor. It throws light on Herod's anxiety to see our Lord, when He was sent to him by Pilate. He had probably heard of Him through his steward's family. It also suggests the pleasant idea that John the Baptist's imprisonment by Herod led to the conversion of some of Herod's retainers. Even in the worst places God has some to stand up for His name, and bear witness for His truth: there was a Joseph in Pharaoh's court, an Obadiah in Ahab's court, a Daniel in Nebuchadnezzar's court, a church in Nero's house, and a Joanna in the family of the bloody Herod, who had put John the Baptist to death.

Susanna means Lily. This is the only place in which we find this woman mentioned, but doubtless she was one of the noble band which exhibited their devotion and constancy in the time of Christ's passion. Who the *many others* were, we do not know. Their names, we may hope, are in the Book of Life, and "the day will declare" them. *Which ministered unto him of their substance*, literally, *things on hand, possessions, property*. For the words "to him," many versions have "to them," *i. e.*, our Lord and the Twelve Apostles. No doubt the holy courage and liberality of these female followers of our Lord drew upon them jeers and scoffs from many, for following the carpenter's son, and a few fishermen; but this, instead of cooling, inflamed their zeal.

What was true during our Lord's ministry has been ever since: more women than men have been, and are, among the followers of Jesus. In many congregations, at most communions, at meetings for social worship, and in enterprises of Christian

beneficence, the number of females largely preponderates.

4. † And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable:—Matt. xiii. 2; Mark iv. 1.

(We include in our exposition the explanation of the parable given of it by the Saviour in verses 11–15.)

A *parable* is a form of speech in which something is presented to us in lieu of some other thing which it resembles, and which we wish to illustrate. It is derived from a Greek word signifying to *compare together*. This first of the parables which Jesus uttered is recorded also by Matt. xiii. 3–8, and Mark iv. 3. It is generally called the "Parable of the Sower," but among the Germans has the title of "The four kinds of ground." The delivery of this very heart-searching and conscience-rousing parable, when the crowd of hearers was greatest, shows that our Lord was far from flattering men, and speaking smooth things; and teaches that ministers should always denounce sin most plainly when their churches are most full, and their congregations largest.

5. A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell by the way-side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.

It cannot be doubted our Lord intended to set Himself forth as the Chief Sower, though nowhere, in the three interpretations of the parable, has He announced Himself as such. His entrance into the world was a going forth to sow. *Others* were only able to sow, because He had sown *first*. They did but carry on the work which He auspicated and began. By the *seed* is meant the Word of God in general, but, pre-eminently, His Gospel; His gracious message by Christ; His gift of grace and glory; His testimony and invitations concerning the kingdom of heaven. It should be noted, that whilst the seed is the Word, the Word is Christ. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." (John i. 1, 14.) Christ is the living seed, and the Bible is the husk that holds it.

"*His seed*." The fields must all be sown with Christ's own seed, with no mixed grain. Woe unto the minister who

sows his own seed, and not Christ's. It will be observed that Christ sows the seed upon all soils. He gives to all opportunity of knowing Him; if any perish, it is not because the Sower withheld the seed, or because the seed was not good, but because their own hearts were not ready and open to receive it.

And as he sowed, some fell by the way-side, that is, some fell on the hard foot-path which skirted the edge of the field, or, perhaps, ran by way of short cut through the middle of it, where the glebe was not broken, and so it could not sink down in the earth, but lay exposed on the surface to the feet of passers-by, till at length it became an easy prey to the birds, such as in the East are described as following in large flocks the husbandman, to gather up, if they can, the seed-corn which he has scattered. Those here represented are such as, by deep-rooted prejudices against Christianity, have minds which are impenetrable, and inaccessible to conviction; also, the thoughtless, the inattentive, the inconsiderate, the trifling, the gay, who think of nothing beyond the present scene, and who do not consider themselves as in the smallest degree interested in a higher invisible world. Those last described, though not formally rejecting the Gospel, yet do in fact never concern themselves about it. They *hear* the word (verse 12), but here the matter ends. The truth never goes beyond the surface, never penetrates into their hearts, but lies on the hard beaten highway. As an effect of the refusal of the hard heart to let the seed penetrate into it, or to "understand" it (Matt. xiii. 19), the good word of God, being exposed to the scorn and contempt of others, is *trod-den down*. Nor only this, it is also *devoured by the fowls of the air*. *The devil* (verse 12) *cometh, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved*. The kingdom of darkness fights against the kingdom of God, which is built up within us through the word of God, and there is still permitted to exist a secret power of Satan, which, through much cunning and all kinds of wicked artifice, draws from the heart the preached Word. (Eph. ii. 2; 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.) Satan comes through his

emissaries, symbolized by *the fowls*. Temptations have wings, and they come in flocks, and they have open beaks to snatch up the word of life and carry it off or *devour* it. And how easily the seed of the word does go! People on Monday have forgotten both the sermon and the text of the Sabbath. The birds have come and devoured them up.

6. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture.

Here, again, we include in our exposition, the explanation of the parable given by our Lord, in verses 11-15.

Upon a rock. This explains what is designated in Matthew, *stony places*, and in Mark *stony ground*—reference being had, not to a field abounding in small stones, for then would seeds germinate in the crevices between, but to one, underneath which were large flat rocks, covered with a thin surface of earth, which prevented the seed from having any depth of root. The rocky soil of many parts of Palestine makes the circumstances here mentioned far more likely than they appear to be in a country like ours. The *rock* is the earthly, sinful nature of man. *And as soon as it was sprung up, &c.* In such a soil as has been described, because the seed had not fallen into deep earth, the plant the sooner appeared above the surface, and while the rock below hindered it from striking deeply downward, it put forth its energies the more luxuriantly in the stalk. It sprung up without delay, but was not rooted in that deep moist soil, which would have enabled it to resist the scorching heat of the sun, and being smitten by that, withered and died.

The persons here represented *are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy, and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away*. (verse 13.) They *receive the word with joy, with delight*. It is not, however, a joy springing up from the greatness of the benefit, even after all the counterbalancing costs and hazards are taken into account, but a joy arising from an overlooking and leaving out of calculation those costs and hazards. The word to which they have listened with delight, makes an impression upon them, and this impression passes

into expression. They move out of the passive into the active state, making a profession, and entering on the practice of religion. They are also often marked by the outward evidences of precocious piety, and a forward, flaming zeal. But after all, there is in them no real, thorough change. Whilst there is no conscious, intentional deceit, there is no radical renovation. The sad mistake in all such cases is, that convictions are mistaken for conversion; admiration of the preacher's eloquence for attachment to the Saviour (Ezek. xxxiii. 30-32); an appreciation of the moral beauties of the Gospel, for an appreciation of its holiness, and the pleasures of emotion, or such gratification as taste enjoys in a beautiful discourse, for the pleasures of piety. *And these have no root.* How beautifully does this figure show, that, as from the roots which are out of sight, a tree derives its stability and firmness, so, upon the hidden life of the Christian, that life which is out of the sight of other men, his firmness and stability depend. The word has never gone down into the hearts of the persons referred to, their roots lie along in their profession of religion.

Which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. The striking characteristic here, is the rapid change from bloom to decay, from the reception of the word to the renunciation of it. Divine truth has produced no deep or permanent effect, for while the hearts are soft and susceptible, they are, at the same time, weak and inconstant. Just as the sun scorches the plants, which have not sufficient depth of earth or moisture, whilst it contributes to the growth of plants which are not destitute of these conditions, so the troubles, afflictions and persecutions which will strengthen a true faith, cause a faith which is *temporary* to fail.

7. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it.

The portion of the seed here referred to wants neither root nor depth of earth. It grows up, but the misfortune is that the thorns grow up with it. The fault of the soil is not that of bearing nothing, but of bearing too much; of bearing what it ought not; of exhausting its strength and

nutrition on vile and worthless productions—*thorns* (under which term may be included all rank weeds, varying with countries and climates, which infect the soil and hurt the harvest), the roots of which drank up the sap of the ground, while their branches veiled off the sunlight, so that the good seed, starved beneath and overshadowed above, although it made a fair promise in the spring, produced nothing in the autumn.

And that which fell among thorns, &c. (verse 14.) Many persons in their youth receive religious instruction. They imbibed right principles, and listen to good advice, but no sooner do they *go forth*—no sooner do they leave those persons and places from which they received them, than they take the road either of business or of pleasure, pursue their interests, their amusements or their guilty indulgences with unbounded eagerness, and have neither time nor inclination to cultivate the seeds of religion that have been sown in their hearts, and to eradicate the weeds that have been mingled with them. The consequence is, that the weeds prevail, and the seeds are choked and lost. All classes and ranks are on this side exposed to danger. As principal antagonists to the efficacious working of the Divine word, Christ mentions *cares*—care for our present livelihood—the pressure of an earthly existence—*riches, and pleasures of this life* which riches procure; the glittering side of this life, both with poor and rich, with those who are in quest of them, and those who already have them, because both look upon them as the highest good, and put their confidence in them. So that, be it woman's household cares, or the anxieties and annoyances of man's business; the harassments of poverty or the enticements of wealth, the pursuit of fame or power, whatever it be that engrosses our attention, and stealing our thoughts from God and our hearts from heaven, counteracts the holy influences of Bibles, churches, Sabbath, sermons and sacraments, it is *choking the word.* It should be remembered, however, that *only where the seed and the thorns grew together* was the mischief done. There is a place for cares and for riches, too—a place in which they help and do not

hinder the kingdom of God. Kept in its own sphere, the lawful business of life becomes a protecting fence round the tender plant of grace in the Christian's heart. We should not permit the thorns or noxious weeds to occupy the position which is due to the good seed. Not as rivals in the field, but as guards around it—earthly affairs are innocent and safe. "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

8. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit a hundred-fold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

The fourth class of hearers, here, as well as in Matt. xiii. and Mark iv., are represented by certain salient distinctive points of character, which are as touchstones, by which every man may and should try himself. They *hear* the word willingly and with attention, and *understand* it, receive it in faith, obey it, and thus experience its power, in which respects they are distinguished from the first class. They also *keep* it in a pure, good heart, often meditating on it, and laying it up in the deepest recesses of the mind, which constitutes their distinction from the second class. *They bring forth fruit*, in them are manifested the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. v. 22; 1 Cor. xiii. 4-7), *with patience*, persevering with unshaken steadfastness against opposition and difficulties, under the reproach of the world, in the storm of persecution, and this patience which they exercise distinguishes them from the third class. The expressions, "good ground" and "an honest and good heart," do not imply that any one's heart is naturally good, or even can become so without the grace of God. The *ground*, here, like the *tree* in another analogical lesson, is not good until it is *made* good. The fairest sense of these expressions is, "an unprejudiced heart, willing to be taught," such as was peculiarly lacking among the Jews in our Lord's time. The Bereans are an illustration of the expression *good ground*. (Acts xvii. 9.) The good heart is good by reception of the truth. It does not receive the truth because it is good. There is no regeneration of heart, except by the power of the Spirit of God, and generally through the instrumentality of the truth.

Bare fruit a hundred-fold. Luke only mentions summarily the hundred-fold increase, while Matthew and Mark speak of the "thirty" and "sixty-fold." The return of a hundred-fold for one is not unknown in the East, though always mentioned as something extraordinary. If there be no fruit, there can be no Christianity. Fruit is the test of the tree, character the symbol of principle. That some portions of the *good ground* produced a larger return than others, corresponds with the fact in the spiritual sphere. There are diversities in the Spirit's operation, diversities in natural gifts bestowed on men at first, and diversities in the amount of energy exerted by believers as fellow-workers with God in their own sanctification and diversities, accordingly, in the fruitfulness which results in the life of Christians. While all true believers are safe in Christ, each should covet the best gifts; and no true disciple will be contented with a thirty-fold increase of usefulness, if, through prayer and watching, if, by denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, if, by sternly crucifying the flesh, and trustfully walking with God, he may rise from thirty to sixty, and from sixty to an hundred-fold, in that holy obedience which grows on living faith.

And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. This expression is especially recorded by all the three Evangelists, and seems to point out the special importance of the parable. The verb rendered *cried*, implies an utterance in loud and distinct tones, so that all could hear. This method of announcement Christ often adopted when uttering some important and mighty truth.

9. ⁹ And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be?—Matt. xiii. 10; Mark iv. 10.

They wished to understand the meaning of the parable. We should earnestly desire to know the true *intent* and full *extent* of the word we hear, that we may be neither mistaken nor defective in our knowledge.

10. And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God; but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.—Isa. vi. 9; Mark iv. 12.

Unto you it is given, &c., as a reward of your diligence, and desire to be informed,

these things shall be explained to you, but the rest shall be left in darkness, and shall have their voluntary ignorance punished with judicial ignorance. *Mysteries of the kingdom of God*; things respecting the Messianic kingdom, things which cannot be known until they are revealed. *But to others, &c.*—"but to them that are without, all these things are done in parables." Here observe, 1. That the doctrines of the Gospel are great mysteries. 2. That it is an invaluable privilege rightly to understand them. 3. That in this privilege all are not sharers, but only those to whom *it is given*. 4. That whilst God does not arbitrarily aim to confirm any in judicial blindness, it is, nevertheless, a righteous thing with Him to leave to farther blindness and ignorance in spiritual things, those who, as the Pharisees in Christ's time did, willfully reject the truth, and shut their eyes against the evidence of it.

11. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.—Matt. xiii. 18; Mark iv. 14.

Our Lord, in this case, gave both the parable and its explanation. He became His own interpreter. The Master takes us, like little children, by the hand, and leads us through all the turnings of His first symbolic lesson, lest in our inexperience we should miss our way. The Son of God not only gave Himself as a sacrifice for sin, He also labored as a patient, painstaking teacher of the ignorant. He is the Apostle as well as the High Priest of our profession. His instructions have been recorded by the Spirit in the Scripture for our use. We may still sit at His feet and listen to His voice. (See notes on verse 5.)

12. Those by the way-side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.* 13. They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.† 14. And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth and are choked with cares and the riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.

*See notes on verse 5. †See notes on verse 6.

Bring forth no fruit to perfection. In Matthew and Mark, *becometh unfruitful*. (See notes on verse 7.)

15. But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.*

*See notes on verse 8.

Concerning this parable, let the follow-

ing things be observed: 1. It is addressed to *hearers* of the Gospel: those who *refuse to hear* are elsewhere in the Scriptures noticed and condemned. 2. The four classes of hearers described include the whole mass of hearers. It is impossible to find any hearer who does not come under one of these descriptions. 3. As there never yet has been in the history of the world an assemblage of mixed hearers which might not be resolved into these four divisions, we have here decisive proof of our Lord's power of foreseeing future events. 4. It is a solemn thought, that only in one, out of the four classes of hearers, the seed brought forth fruit. 5. It is not enough merely to *admire* this parable. If a traveler, who possesses an accurate map of his route, turn aside from it and perish in a pit, it will not avail him in his extremity to reflect that he carries the correct track in his hand. 6. The minister receives the seed which he sows from Christ, but it must also have become, through spiritual experience, his own possession; for it must be taught of faith. (Ps. cxvi. 10; 1 John i. 1-3.) 7. The minister's vocation is one involving much labor, and requiring patience. 8. The work of spreading Divine truth is not confined to those who are formally set apart to it. As every leaf of the forest and every ripple on the lake, which itself receives a sunbeam on its breast, may throw the sunbeam off again, and so spread light around, in like manner, every one, old or young, who receives Christ into his heart, may and will publish, with his life and lips, that blessed name. 9. It is not the fault of the seed, or of the sower, if men do not bring forth fruit unto eternal life. The difficulty is with the soil. Men will not receive with meekness the ingrafted word, as an Apostle exhorts. (James i. 21.) The Gospel is always fruitful seed in regard to its Divine virtue, but not in regard to its actual effects. 10. There is not a uniform proficiency in holiness among Christians. None are destitute of fruit; but it is not always the same, even in the same person, nor is it so in different persons—it varies according to their respective powers, the relations of life, the spheres of operation in which the Lord has placed them, and

especially according to their degrees of fidelity in the cultivation of their hearts.

16. † No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light.—^aMatt. v. 15; ^bMark iv. 21; ^cLuke xi. 33.

Lighted a candle, or lamp. Covereth it with a vessel, &c. From some ancient writers we learn, that only those who had bad designs hid a candle, that, in the dead of the night, when all were asleep, they might rise up, and have a light at hand to effect their bad purposes. *But setteth it on a candlestick, &c.* “As men do not light a candle that they may cover it, so I have not communicated my truth or my grace unto you, my Apostles and disciples, merely for your own use, but for that of others.” Ministers and disciples of Christ, shining by light derived from Him as the “Light of the world,” are, in a subordinate sense, the “light of the world,” also, and diffuse His truth and salvation where darkness and wickedness would otherwise reign. It is their duty, and should be their grand object, so to recommend the truth by pious, edifying conversation and conduct, that men may see their good works and be led to glorify God. Every Christian should strive to be a *burning* and *shining* light. Heavenly good things are lost by parsimony, and increase by liberality.

17. † For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither *any thing* hid, that shall not be known, and come abroad.—^aMatt. x. 26; ^bLuke xii. 2.

What is committed to you in *secret*, should be *made manifest*, or, rather, *become manifest*, by you. Your Master did not give you talents to be buried, but to be traded with. Ye shall teach publicly, and explain and illustrate what I now teach you in private.

18. Take heed therefore how ye hear: † for whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he **seemeth* to have.

^aSee Matt. xiii. 12 and xxv. 29; ^bLuke xix. 26. *Or, *thinketh that he hath.*

How ye hear. In Mark, *what ye hear.* The same general idea of care and caution, in regard to the reception of truth, lies at the basis of both directions. Take heed that you attend to my words, for they must be listened to studiously, with teachableness of disposition, and with diligence, since they are symbolical and sublime, and not spoken at random, or by chance. Every advantage bestowed on us by Providence, and religious instruction especially, is a

trust, of which we must hereafter give account. We should therefore hear the words of eternal life with attention, impartiality and seriousness of heart, mixed with faith, not a mere historical persuasion of the truth of the Gospel, though with this we are to begin, but a deep sense of the need of God's mercy promised in it, a thankful acceptance of the terms on which that mercy is offered, and an humble reliance on a crucified Saviour for pardon, grace and strength.

For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have. The words *which he seemeth to have*, throw light upon the phrase *what he hath*, in the parallel places. (Mark iv. 25; Matt. xiii. 12.) The gifts we have will either be continued to us, or taken from us, according as we do, or do not, employ them for working out our own salvation, for promoting the glory of God, and for the edification of our brethren. Men only *seem* to have what they do not *use*, and mere shows of religion will be lost and forfeited. It is not that which a man does really possess, of which he can be deprived, but of that which he *seemeth* to have, *i. e.*, of which he has got a temporary or imaginary possession, like the stony-ground hearers, who at first received the word with joy, but falling away, were stripped of every semblance of a belief in Christ. There is no surer way to thrive in grace and increase in gifts, than to exercise and improve them. It is of vast advantage to cultivate and cherish a willing and receptive disposition and purpose in relation to the Gospel.

19. † Then came to him *his* mother and his brethren, and could not come at him for the press.

^aMatt. xii. 46; ^bMark iii. 31.

The earnestness and assiduity of Christ in teaching the people notwithstanding the opposition of the Pharisees, gave quietude to His friends. They wished Him to desist from His labors, and they seem to have engaged Mary to concur in the design, which was doubtless reprehensible, as it implied sentiments of Him derogatory to His perfect wisdom and excellence. *His brethren*, or near relations. Some think the word means the children of Joseph by a former wife, or His cousins. For the wide signification of “brethren,” see Gen.

xxxi. 46; Matt. xiii. 55, xxvii. 56; Mark iii. 18; Gal. i. 19.

20. And it was told him *by certain* which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee.

As the crowd was so great as to render it impossible for any one on the outside to directly address Jesus, the report of His mother and brethren being present, and desiring to speak with Him, was passed along through the crowd, and thus communicated to Him.

21. And he answered and said unto them. My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.

Christ here reaffirms the sentiment uttered while sitting in the temple in the midst of the doctors, that He has higher affinities and relationships than those of an earthly nature. We must not suppose from this answer that He intended any disrespect to, or felt no regard for His mother, or any of His relations, for we know that He bore to His mother such affection, that, when hanging on the cross, He commended her with His expiring breath to the care of His beloved disciple. (John xix. 27.) *My mother and brethren are these.* The pronoun having a strong demonstrative force, as though He pointed with His finger to His disciples who were present. As the Saviour speaks alone of *mother and brethren*, it is probable that Joseph was now dead. The fact that our Lord, among the possible relations which human beings can sustain to Him, does not include that of father, may, however, also be well explained from His unwillingness to attribute to any human being the relation which God alone sustained to Him.

Observe, 1. That those united to Christ *in spirit*, are nearer to Him than those related to Him in the *flesh*. With what sacred dignity does this invest all true believers! Although we cannot *see* our Lord, yet we may love Him; and although His bodily presence cannot be enjoyed by us, His spiritual presence is not denied. Though not ours in affinity and consanguinity, yet He is or may be ours, in faith, in love, and in service. 2. All true Christians are obedient to God. As soon as any one is converted, He begins to desire to do the will of God. David said, "O that my ways

were directed to keep thy statutes!" (Ps. cxix. 5.) "I delight," said Paul, "in the law of God after the inward man." Yet the sin of his nature troubled him. He said, "I see a law in my members, warring against the law of my mind." All the children of God endure the same struggle that Paul and David endured.

22. ¶ Now it came to pass on a certain day, that he went into a ship with his disciples; and he said unto them, Let us go over unto the other side of the lake. And they launched forth.—¹Matt. viii. 23; Mark iv. 35.

This beautiful and instructive incident is also recorded by Matt. viii. 18-27, and Mark iv. 35-41. The time of it is here left indefinite, but Mark tells us that it was the same day in which He pronounced the parables of the sower, the tares, the grain of mustard seed, &c., by the lake of Galilee. Jesus wished to visit the region that lay east of the southern extremity of this lake, and embarked with His disciples in a *ship*, or large boat, for that purpose. *The lake.* (See notes on chap. v. 1.) *And they launched forth*, probably as the bright sun was setting, and with the prospect of a fair wind and prosperous voyage. Thus many launch forth into the world, with fair appearances and high-raised expectations.

23. But as they sailed he fell asleep; and there came down a storm of wind on the lake; and they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy.

He fell asleep. Fatigued with the labors of the day, Jesus had withdrawn Himself to the hinder part of the vessel, and composed Himself to sleep. We have here evidence of His humanity. Though Christ's Godhead is the Rock to which we must all fly for hope and help, and in the clefts of which we must seek to be secure, yet it is, as it were, through His human nature that we have to enter into those clefts. What comfort does it afford to see Him who is all our hope and confidence, so truly a partaker of our necessities and sinless infirmities, as to need the repose which we ourselves require! The humanity of Jesus is here shown to be pure and perfect. Jonah once slept in a storm, but his sleep was the result of the opiate of a dead and benumbed conscience. The sleep of Christ in the tempest, was because of a pure, innocent and holy conscience. Another truth taught by the sleep of Jesus in the storm is, that even when the case of His people may *seem* most desperate, He has

not forgotten them. He may shut His eye, but not His heart.

And there came down a storm of wind on the lake, and they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy. A sudden and violent squall, such as those small inland seas, surrounded with mountain gorges, are notoriously exposed to, descended on the bosom of the lake, and the ship which bore the Saviour of the world appeared to be in imminent peril, as, humanly speaking, no doubt it was, for the disciples, exercised to the sea, many of them from their youth, would not have been terrified at the mere shadow of danger. Thus they who in such favorable circumstances had set sail, were suddenly overtaken with a storm. "Judge not according to the appearance." "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." There is neither room nor reason to doubt that Jesus is with us, because in temporal or spiritual things trouble and sorrow assail us. We may encounter storms when sailing with the Son of God Himself. "In the world," says our Lord, "ye shall have tribulation." "We are they," say the saints in glory, "who have come out of great tribulation."

24. And they came to him, and awoke him, saying, Master, Master, we perish. Then he arose, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water: and they ceased, and there was a calm.

How much was there to sustain the disciples with a sense of security! Jesus was in the same vessel with them, and exposed to the same peril, and if He perished not, their safety was surely guaranteed. Yet, for the moment, fear overwhelmed them. We see their terror in the double *Master, Master*, and in the words of almost rebuke, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" with which, according to Mark, they addressed Jesus. *We perish.* According to Matthew, "Lord, save us, we perish!" One advantage of trials is, to make us know our weakness, so that we shall apply to God by faith in Christ. It is by *faith* alone that we may be said to approach Him, by *love* we are united to Him, and by *prayer* we awake Him. All good perishes in us without Christ; without His grace we are in momentary danger of utter ruin.

Then he arose and rebuked the wind and

the raging of the water: and they ceased, and there was a calm. The word *rebuked* is one which we apply to living and intelligent creatures only. We talk of rebuking a servant, or a child, but not a tree, or a stone. It is possible, therefore, that in this case there is not a mere historical personification, but a recognition of a malignant agency to which the word is spoken. There may have been demon-spirits giving strength to the hurricane—mustering, in diabolic rage, the destructive forces of nature, under some mad delusion that they might possibly effect the ruin of the voyagers, and thus prevent the discomfort they seem to have known too well was at hand. Jesus needed not, as Moses, to stretch a rod over the deep—He needed not an instrument foreign to Himself to do His mighty work. Calm and collected He went upon the deck, and addressed His reproof to the *wind* and the *water*—the wind as the cause, and the raging billows as the effect. Nature yields obedience to him of whom the Psalmist prophetically sang: "Thou rulest the raging of the sea; when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them." The sea, no longer, as after a storm, rises, and falls, and frets, but at once becomes smooth and tranquil.

This scene strongly resembles that which the commencement of the sacred volume supplies: "And He said, Light be; and light was." And the analogy of the two examples is nearer than might at first appear; for He who now rebuked the wind and the raging of the water is He "by whom also God made the worlds," He "without whom nothing was made that was made." We have in this scene an instance of the juxtaposition of lowliness and greatness which is so often observable in the history of our Lord.

25. And he said unto them, Where is your faith? And they being afraid wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him.

The disciples had faith, for they turned to Christ in their need; but it was not quick and lively; it was imperfect, as was evident in their excess of terror, in their counting it possible that the ship which bore their Lord could ever truly perish, for they doubtless meant to include Him

in their *we*. The haste, agitation and weak faith of the disciples, drew forth from Jesus the gentle, tender, yet faithful words: *Where is your faith?* There is no reproach for that rude *awaking* from slumber He so much needed. But, gazing with earnestness upon them, He asks (as in Matthew), "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" • What encouragement is here given to feeble Christians, from the fact that even the disciples themselves possessed but "little faith?" A true and living faith, although it cannot be too large for God's glory, and for our own comfort, cannot be too small for the purpose of salvation. *What manner of man is this?* &c. By the miracle the disciples were led into thoughts, even higher and more awful, of that Lord whom they followed, and were brought more and more to feel that in nearness to Him was all safety and deliverance from every danger. Their faith was disciplined, and they were prepared for sterner moral storms yet in reserve for them. God has a kind design in *all* the afflictions which befall his people. Happy are those for whom all the hurricanes of life's unquiet sea have the effect of making Jesus more precious.

This miracle may be regarded as symbolical of the Church—the Church *in* the world, and yet not *of* the world, subject to the storms of persecution. From all these storms she shall be delivered, as she ever has been, by Christ, who is in her, being roused by the cry of His servants. "God is in the midst of her: she shall not be moved: THE LORD shall help her, and that right early." This miracle was not a mere miraculous feat, but also a prophetic fact. It was not finished when it was done, but a foreshadow, as all Christ's miracles were, of a grand result yet to be. That clear dominion of man's spirit over the material universe which Christianity gives, the calm courage which it inspires, and the lordship over the winds and waves, and over all the blind uproar of nature which it secures, is the appointed sequence of the calming of the storm on the Galilean lake. It is also a part of the recuperative and restoring process which is going forward under Him "by whom and for whom are all things."

It is an advance toward the time of the promised "restitution of all things."

26. ¶ ¹ And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee.
 =Matt. viii. 28; Mark v. 1.

We have just seen Jesus show Himself the controller of the elements by which our world is assailed. We now come to contemplate Him in a light still more glorious, as the Lord of the inner storms—the moral hurricanes by which the human mind and heart are deranged. *The country of the Gadarenes.* The city of Gadara, which was one of the ten cities called Decapolis, was on the east of Jordan, in the vicinity of the lake of Gennesaret, beyond the brook Jarmuk, about eight miles above its junction with the Jordan. This city gave its name to the district or canton of which it was the chief town—*Gadarene*. *Gergesa* was another city in the same neighborhood, which gave to another district the name of the country of the *Gergesenes*, so that the region generally might be designated by either name.

27. And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in *any* house, but in the tombs.

In describing this fearful scene, each Evangelist that records it has some touches which are particularly his own. (Matt. viii. 28–34; Mark v. 1–20.) *A certain man, which had devils long time*, was long demoniacally possessed. (See notes on chap. iv. 33, &c.) He was no madman or maniac bereft of reason, the victim of a disordered fancy or bewildered imagination; a deeper and darker woe brooded over him. A careful observation of the narrative shows us, that in that tempest-tossed spirit there was a strange, mysterious blending of human consciousness and fiendish hate—an interweaving of truth and error—a confounding of his own personality with that of the devils. His own nature was crushed to the dust by some savage tormentor, lording it over him, yet the overmastered soul (the nobler being of the man), seems ever and anon to rise to the surface, and to utter longings for emancipation.

And ware no clothes. He was naked, for he tore off whatever was put upon his person. *Neither abode in any house, but in the tombs.* There are in the part of the country re-

ferred to, and especially near the ruins of the city of Gadara, still to be seen numerous old sepulchres hewn in the sides of the hills, some of which are occupied as residences of poor families. These places of tombs being outside the towns, and being avoided by the Jews, for fear of contracting pollution from contact with human bones, formed secluded retreats, acceptable to those who, from demoniacal possession, madness or crime, or other causes, shunned the society of men. Though men are not literally possessed of devils, all are by nature the slaves of sin, and led captive by the great adversary at his will. How frequently does sin cut off men from social happiness and God! Hemmed in by deeds of moral turpitude, sinners live on, shut out from Heaven's own joys. Their home is but a tomb—a dark, cold place, though songs and revelry and thoughtless mirth are often found within.

28. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not.

The man may have rushed down from his dismal dwelling-place, to encounter with hostile violence the intruders that had dared to set foot on his domain. Or it may have been that he was drawn to Christ by the secret instinctive feeling that He was his helper, and driven from Him by the sense of the awful gulf that divided him from the Holy One of God. At any rate, if it was with purposes of violence, ere the man had fully reached Jesus his mind was changed, "for he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man." (Verse 29.) *Jesus thou Son of God most high.* Perhaps the demoniac was a Jew not wholly unacquainted with the Messianic hope, but certainly it is in the spirit of the Evangelists if we believe that the knowledge of the Lord which the demons usually exhibited had been attained in a supernatural way. *What have I to do with thee?* These are the words of the devil, by whom the man was possessed, rather than the man himself, and they mean, "What have we in common? Why interest thou with us? Why wilt thou not let us alone?"

I beseech thee, torment me not. How torment him not? It has been alleged that

in this entreaty the possessed man identified himself with his demon, dreading the pains and convulsions of the casting out, but if that had been meant, the possessed man would have distinguished himself from his demon, and not identified himself with him, for in that identification he would have felt the nearness and supremacy of Jesus itself a torment, and still more banishment into the abyss. These words, as well as those in Matthew, "Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" are a striking incidental proof that there will be a judgment and a hell. The devils believe this, if men do not.

29. (For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him; and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.)

For he had commanded, &c. (See notes on verse 28.) *For oftentimes it had caught him,* therefore our compassionate Lord had made the more haste to cast it out. *And he was kept bound, &c.,* he was possessed of that extraordinary muscular strength which maniacs so often put forth (Acts xix. 16), and thus all efforts to bind him had proved ineffectual. *Into the wilderness,* where he found a congenial habitation, howling amid the barren and dreary solitudes.

30. And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him.

When Christ commanded the unclean spirit to come out, the demoniac consciousness in the man was shaken to its depths, but still he felt himself to be possessed of a legion of evil spirits, and hence our Lord proceeded to perfect the cure, by asking him his name. Jesus did not ask the name because of His own ignorance of the state of this demoniac, but in order to show to those around Him how malignant was this Satanic possession, and the mighty power demanded to effect the cure of the afflicted man; also to restore the man, before his last and most fearful paroxysm, to personal consciousness—to the remembrance of his earlier history and better times. Anticipating the reply to the question, *What is thy name?* as if it had been addressed to him, the indwelling demon said, *Legion*

Legion is a well known name, by which a division of the Roman army was designated, and which is supposed to have contained 5,000 or 6,000 men. The word is here evidently used indefinitely to express a great number, and it was used to intimidate Christ, as though it had been said, "Don't interfere with us; you will find that we are not one that you can easily crush, but a mighty multitude, that will rush upon you and destroy you also." What a horrible representation does this word *Legion* make of this demoniac!—his whole inner being invaded, wildly torn and dislocated, by a host of infernal fiends—the spirits of darkness running riot within him!

31. And they besought him that he would not command them to go out ^{into} the deep.—Rev. xx. 3.

They besought him, &c. In Mark the singular is employed; in the narrative before us one of the demons is (verse 28) speaking for himself and companions; *here, all*, uttering themselves through one, unite in *beseeching* Jesus not to send them *into the deep*. *The deep* here means, not the sea, but the abyss or pit of hell. It is the same Greek word which is five times translated "bottomless pit" in the book of Revelation: for instance, xx. 1, 3; xii. 11. Evil spirits have their wishes and understand their interest as well as man.

32. And there was there a herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them.

The demons, in this ever-intensifying conflict between themselves and the Messiah, becoming aware that they must in some way yield before Him, entreat at least to be handled in the mildest way. They had great objections to being in the abyss, and much preferred to wander about. But it was held that they could only do this within the vehicle of some body—human or animal, divested of which they returned to the abyss. To avert this the demons implored permission to enter a herd of swine that was feeding near, knowing that it would be in vain to ask leave to enter into any other man, or into any lawful beast of the country. It should be remembered that to keep swine was a breach of the Mosaic law, swine being unclean animals. If, therefore, the Gadarenes were Jews—and there seem strong reasons for supposing they were—they were com-

mitting an habitual sin. *And he suffered them*, permitted the fiends to enter the swine.

33. Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked.

A large herd of swine were feeding on the neighboring cliffs; into these the demons entered, and the herd rushed headlong in frantic rage over the crags or slopes overhanging the lake, and were engulfed in the waters below, thus showing the extraordinary malice, hatred and love of mischief, which are attributes of Satan, and which extend their operation beyond *men*—even to *brutes*. The destruction of the swine does not, as some have imagined it does, present any serious difficulty. A man is of more value than many swine; and if the Lord that made all things could do man good morally, physically, or otherwise, by sacrificing these swine, He only did then and in that act what is done every day when the innocent lamb, the unoffending bird, the patient ox, are slaughtered for man's nutriment. In relation to the loss incurred by the owners of the swine (at which some have cavilled), it is no more open to objection than every murrain that causes cattle to die, or inundation that destroys the fruits of the field, or other natural calamity with which God chastens His children, punishes, or seeks to make contrite the hearts of His enemies. For oftentimes the taking away by God is, in a higher sense, a giving. It is the taking away of the meaner thing, for the purpose of making receptive of the higher.

34. When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country.

35. Then they went out to see what was done: and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. 36. They also which saw it told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed.

They that fed the swine fled in consternation to the adjoining city. The inhabitants hurried out to verify with their own eyes the strange report that they had heard. And not only did they find the herd perishing in the waters, but, stranger than all, the scourge and terror of the region *sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind*—clothed, doubtless, by the intervention of the disciples. It is likely that the one-sided report of the swineherd, in justifying themselves to the owners of

the swine, had filled the latter with hostile intentions against Jesus for the loss they had sustained. But when they came to the spot, and saw the demoniac thus quiet as a child, and heard from the keepers of the swine, as actual spectators, by what means he was healed, *they were afraid* to molest Christ. The *sitting at the feet of Jesus* implies that the man, as a disciple, was ready and anxious to receive and obey His instructions. The mercy of Jesus is the only medicine of the soul. When Jesus forgives a man his sins, He enlightens his mind, and thus is he brought to take the lowest place, while his chief anxiety will be to put the crown upon the head of his redeeming Lord. Christ also clothes the pardoned soul with righteousness—a righteousness which His own hands have wrought, which outshines the heavens in their brightness, and which shall never decay.

37. † *Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear: and he went up into the ship, and returned back again.

*Matt. viii. 34. †Acts xvi. 39.

The whole multitude, gathered from the entire country round about to see the strange sight, having learned, by what they heard and saw, of the wondrous miracle, were seized with superstitious and half-heathen fear, and dreading further destruction of their property, they besought Jesus to depart out of their country, and He returned to the boat. What a contrast to the entreaty of the Samaritans! (John iv. 40.) How seldom are the first offers of a Saviour cordially heard, and immediately accepted, by those who have lived in ignorance of God! Many a repulsive feeling, many a rebellious thought rises up within them, and though few will emulate the open opposition of the Gadarenes, and say, "depart from us," how many there are who put the word of salvation willfully from them, rush into the world, give way to folly, yield to sin, and in their days of darkness seek any and every master, rather than commit themselves at once to the Shepherd of their souls, and give themselves up to be guided, governed, sanctified and saved by the God of their salvation! How awakening the reflection, that we, like the Gadarenes, may be permitted but

once to have the offers of a Saviour's presence and a Saviour's love!

38. Now the man out of whom the devils were departed besought him that he might be with him: but Jesus sent him away, saying, 39. Return to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him.—*Mark v. 18.

The prayer with which the recovered demoniac followed the departing Saviour, may serve as an unequivocal proof of the completeness of his healing, as well as the warmth of his thankfulness. The man had friends at home. Probably he was now in danger of despising his own people. Perhaps the fact that Jesus, who, in the case of those who were healed elsewhere, imposed silence, appointed this man to be a living memorial of His own saving manifestation for that entire district, is a proof that He had not the intention of returning into the land of the Gadarenes. At all events, Christ's refusal to let the recovered demoniac accompany Him, may teach that true rest and repose in a Saviour's presence is reserved for Heaven, that life has great duties and great responsibilities, that religion is not a thing to be thrust into a corner, the joys of which are to be selfishly appropriated, without one effort to impart them to others, but home, friends, country, human kind, are the successive spheres for the operation of our Christian influence. Shining first and brightest in our own dwelling, the light of truth must radiate to the earth's circumference.

There is no revelation of Christ as the King of the world of spirits which contains so much that is obscure, as that made in the miracle we have just considered. In relation to such miracles the Saviour's own words hold good. (Luke vii. 23.)

40. † And it came to pass, that, when Jesus was returned, the people *gladly* received him: for they were all waiting for him.

At landing, He met with a better reception than among the Gadarenes, for the multitude gathered round Him to hear Him preach, many having waited there in expectation of His return.

41. † *And, behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue, and he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought him that he would come into his house:—*Matt. ix. 18; Mark v. 22.

Behold! The expression seems intended to call our attention to the greatness of the miracle, and partly to the singular

goodness of God in raising up friends to the Gospel even in the synagogues. Jairus was a ruler of the *synagogue*, doubtless the synagogue of Capernaum, where Jesus now was. His duties were to direct the performance of Divine worship, and to govern the affairs of the synagogue. There were commonly several of these officers in every town, but one ranked higher than the rest, and was called the president, or "father of the synagogue." Such, it is thought, was Jairus. It is most probable that he was one of that deputation which came to the Lord to intercede in behalf of the centurion's servant. (Luke vii. 3.) He was there pleading for the restoration of another—one ready to die. He is here pleading, if it be possible to conceive that he realized the idea of a resurrection of his daughter from the dead, for the restoration of his own. And what does this contrast teach us? That sympathy with others in their trials is the earnest of success to us in ours. *Jairus fell down at Jesus' feet*—a revelation of the life of faith in the president of a synagogue certainly not too friendly to Jesus, of no mean significance. *And besought him that he would come into his own house*, although he did not, like the centurion of Capernaum; say that Jesus could cure his child at a distance, yet he held that He could by a touch of the hand.

42. For he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying. But as he went, the people thronged him.

Luke is the only one of the Evangelists who uses the pleonasm, *one only daughter*. The statement of the age is also confined to him—facts, both of which show that he drew his materials from an independent source. The expression "little daughter" (Mark v. 23), is, according to the Talmud, thus explained: A daughter, till she had completed twelve years, was called "little," or, "a little maid," but when she became of the full age of twelve years, and one day over, she was considered "a young woman." *And she lay a dying*. Matthew makes the ruler say, *even now dead*; Mark and Luke make him say, *is at the point of death, is a dying*. The different accounts admit of easy combination, if we only consider the excited state of the speaker, who certainly did not weigh his words in

a gold-balance. He left the child as one who was dying, and having no certain notices since of her actual condition, he was perplexed whether to speak of her as departed or not, and thus at one moment he used one expression, at the next another. The variant statements just referred to constitute one of those apparent discrepancies in the Gospels which prove that there was not, as has been alleged, a conspiracy among the Evangelists to write the same thing, and thus to palm a joint imposture on a credulous world—that they were the independent witnesses of facts, and the independent recorders of the performance of them—and that what *appear* to be discrepancies or discords in the Gospel narratives, are found, when really and thoroughly understood, to be only grander harmonies. *But as he went, the people thronged him*. The Saviour did not allow Himself to be kept back by the imperfect form of Jairus' faith, as shown in conceiving of the miracle under one form, and stipulating that the Saviour must Himself come and lay His hands on his little daughter, instead of entreating "Speak, in a word." And as He went the people crowded upon Him, as the original verb rendered *thronged* signifies even to suffocation, to witness what the issue would be.

43. ¶ And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, 44. Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanchèd.—Matt. ix. 20.

A woman having an issue of blood, &c. To realize the greatness of the miracle here recorded, we should read Lev. xv. 19. The woman's disease rendered her ceremonially unclean. This helps to explain her desire to avoid publicity and observation. Her case was very grievous, and of long standing *Which had spent all her living upon physicians, &c.* Her suffering was much aggravated by many fruitless efforts she had made to be relieved—efforts which were not only painful, but had also brought her to poverty. Yet it is right, when we are sick, to use the means which appear likely to restore our health, for if we say we trust in God, while we refuse those means which are suited to our case, we only tempt Him, while to depend on them alone is to dishonor Him.

Came behind him. In her hopeless state this woman heard that Jesus was near, and forming her resolution in faith, hastened to join the multitude as they passed along. The crowd heedlessly thrust her aside, but she struggled on until she was by the side of our Lord. *And touched the border of his garment.* Possibly she had heard of "the multitude" who, a short time before, "sought to touch him, for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all." (Luke vi. 19.) Reaching forth her trembling hand, she silently and secretly touched the border or fringe of His outer garment—the square mantle, or vesture thrown over His shoulders. As the subjects of an Eastern prince, when presenting their petitions, touched the end of his robe, as an act of submission, this woman in like manner expressed her reverence and faith, and in a moment *her issue of blood was stanch'd*, not only the blood ceased flowing, but she experienced the healthy feeling of a new life. Her faith had peculiar strength and energy. Many had believed that a command of Christ was sufficient to heal the worst maladies, but none, that we are aware of, ever had faith to believe, as this poor woman did, that a single touch of His garment, even of the hem of His garment, would be superior to all physicians upon earth.

In every Christian congregation there are some happy few, whose cases are remarkably analogous to this. They make no public displays of their deep conviction, of the plague which lies at their heart's core; they have in vain tried many methods for relief; they come at length to Jesus in the crowd, their malady unknown even to those who follow in the same throng, or worship in the same temple. Thus all unknown and all unseen to others, they draw near by faith to the Saviour, and not only touch His garment, but hide themselves, and their own corruptions, and their wo, beneath it, even the garment of a Saviour's righteousness, and find there, where alone it can be found, their healing and their cure. These are they whom David calls "the Lord's hidden ones." (Ps. lxxxiii. 3.) The multitude of people who fill the churches, and make the crowd at sermons, and yet cease

not to go in their usual course, in following the world and their own passions, throng and press Christ, but do not touch Him.

45. And Je-us said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?

Who touched me? more literally, "who is the person that touched me?" Not that Christ needed to be informed, for He knew who had received the benefit. Nor was He about to chide the trembling woman for her boldness. The sequel of the history in which the woman was obliged, by this repeated question of the Lord, to own that she had come to seek, and had found health from Him, abundantly proves that there was a purpose in the question. *Peter and they that were with him said.* The reply of Peter, which has in it a shade of censure, that his Master should ask who touched Him, when such numbers were pressing upon Him, is entirely in agreement with Peter's forward and precipitate character. *Master.* The word thus translated is only used by Luke in the New Testament, and is only applied to Christ. It signifies literally, "one who is set over any thing to take care of it." It is a title of respect, and an acknowledgment of authority.

46. And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me.
Mark v. 30; Luke vi. 19.

Virtue, i. e., the healing power. *Out of me,* literally, *away from*—external rather than internal separation being denoted by the Greek preposition. Of the going forth of this miraculous power, the Saviour had an intellectual knowledge; He knew it within Himself. And that this virtue proceeds from the Lord need occasion as little perplexity as that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father. (John xv. 26.)

47. And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately.

Ps. xxxviii. 9; Jer. xxxi. 18; Hosea v. 3. Isa. lxxvi. 2; 2 Cor. vii. 15; Phil. ii. 12; Heb. xii. 28.

Not hid. (See Mark v. 32.) *Came trembling, &c.* She desired to remain in concealment out of a shame which, however natural, was untimely here in this crisis of her spiritual life: and this her loving Saviour would not suffer her to do; by a gracious force he drew her from it,

yet even here He spared her as far as He could. For not before, but after she was healed, did He require the open confession from her lips. *She declared unto Him before all the people, &c.*, in contrast with the great pains she had previously taken to promote the concealment of her action. Silence, which, in the first instance, was a proof of her modesty, would, if persevered in, now have been culpable. Though Jesus healed her upon her *secret* application, He desired her to make a *public* acknowledgment of her cure. He desires every sinner to do the same. "With the *heart* man believeth unto righteousness, and with the *mouth* confession is made unto salvation." The feeblest believer must not be ashamed to stand forth and acknowledge his obligations to the Saviour. The Christian may not be required to do this at the very beginning of his course, but neither will Christ permit him to be long concealed. He must own his Redeemer, and for his Redeemer's glory. In this will he resemble the saints above, who are not ashamed to acknowledge the blood by which they were redeemed.

48. And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.

Her faith had made her whole, and Christ's virtue had made her whole; it is as when we say that faith justifies; our faith is not itself a blessing, but it is the organ by which the blessing is received, it is the right hand of the soul, which lays hold upon it. *Go in peace.* This is not merely, go with a blessing, but go into the element of peace as the future element in which thy life shall move. The words, *Daughter, be of good comfort; go in peace,* express the one great privilege of the Gospel. Take this from the believer, this spirit of adoption, this assurance of his sonship, and he is left poor indeed. For there is no middle state here on earth, as there shall be no middle state throughout eternity, between those who are the children of God through Christ Jesus, having been reconciled and brought near by the blood of the cross, united to Himself and carried into His family by the Spirit of adoption—and those who are outcasts and rebels, neither partakers of God's grace nor preparing for His inheritance.

It furnishes us with some little idea of the abundance of the miracles of our Lord, of which comparatively so few have been recorded, when we find one so remarkable as that just noticed conveyed thus, as it were, merely in a parenthesis, and so little dwelt upon, that had it not occurred during Christ's passage to the ruler's house, it seems probable it never would have been narrated.

49. ¶ *While he yet spake, there cometh one from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master.
*Mark v. 35, on which see notes.

While he yet spake, &c. From this it appears that Jairus had come forth with the knowledge and approbation of his family to call the Master. It would seem, also, from this messenger, who probably was sent by the distressed mother, that no further benefit was expected from the *Master* or Teacher (the Greek word here translated the *Master* not being the same as that used in the 45th verse, but signifying "the teacher"), that, however efficient Jesus might be as a physician, it could not be expected that He had power to call back the pulsation of blood into the still and silent heart of her that was *dead*.

50. But when Jesus heard it, he answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole.—John ii. 23-40; Rom. iv. 20.

It—the messenger's report. Fear not: believe only, &c. Jesus gave this prescription for hope and victory. The delay with the cure of the woman had been for Jairus a trial of fire, his just awakened faith had been most intensely shaken, but now, when about to succumb, he is strengthened by the Saviour. In his earlier ministry Christ allowed His miracles to *precede* the faith in order to create faith, but in His advancing ministry He had a right, from His past works, often to require faith *before* the miracle, and then the miracle justified and rewarded the faith.

51. And when he came into the house, he suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden.

†2 Kings iv. 33, 36; Isa. xlii. 2; Acts ix. 40.

He suffered no man, &c. It was the Saviour's intention to keep the miracle as much as possible concealed. That He admitted into the house with Himself the three Apostles, who had a clearer revelation of His Divinity, humanity, power

and compassion towards the sorrowful and sinful, and who were with Him on the Mount of Transfiguration and in the garden of Gethsemane, is a proof of the high significance which He Himself attributed to the raising of the dead.

^{52.} And all wept and bewailed her: but he said, Weep not, she is not dead, but sleepeth. ^{John. xi. 11, 13.}

Notice the quiet power and calm self-possession of Jesus. In the midst of great distress He was unmoved and composed, and that, too, though performing a deed which, in dignity and power, might rival the creation of a universe. Thus quietly, calmly, unobtrusively, Christ often still acts by His Divine Spirit, when the yet greater work of the spiritual resurrection of a soul, dead in trespasses and sins, is to be perfected. A single discourse, a sentence, yea, even a word, has been blessed to this great and wonderful end—no effort visible, no display of majesty and power, except to the happy soul thus raised to spiritual life. All truly great men are quiet men. Evidence of power is self-composure, self-possession. All the greatest forces in nature make the least noise. The light descending from the sun has infinitely greater power than the flashing lightning and rolling thunder.

Weep not, she is not dead, but sleepeth. By this our Lord meant, *not* that she was in a state of suspended animation, or in a swoon, or a trance, which He *would* have said, if He meant this, but, "To you this is indeed death without hope of resurrection, but with me, in power and in purpose, it is but a *sleep*, from which she is now to be awakened."

^{53.} And ^{they} laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead.—^{Job xii. 4; Ps. xxii. 7.}

Who shall complain that they are subjected to the ridicule of the world, when they behold their Lord, thus, at the very moment of exerting the highest attribute of Deity, "quickenning whom he will," calling the breathless corpse to life again, laughed to scorn by these poor fallen sons of earth?

^{54.} And he put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise. ^{Luke vii. 14; John xi. 43.}

The words, *he put them all out, and they laughed him to scorn*, should be read together. It seems a rule in Christ's dealings with

men not to force evidence upon them, but rather to withhold from scorners and scoffers those proofs of His own mission which He affords to others. And *now*, as *then*, the scoffing spirit is the spirit which is often left to itself.

^{55.} And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and he commanded to give her meat.

Her spirit came again. This shows that the soul is a thing distinct from the body in which it sojourns. *Commanded to give her meat.* This was intended to strengthen that life which was come back to her, and to prove that she was indeed no ghost, but had returned to the realities of a mortal existence. (Luke xxiv. 41; John xxi. 5; Acts x. 41.) This precaution was the more necessary, as the parents in that ecstatic moment might easily have forgotten it.

^{56.} And her parents were astonished: but he charged them that they should tell no man what was done. ^{Matt. viii. 4 and ix. 30; Mark v. 43.}

The astonished parents were not to make the miracle known beyond the circle of those who, of course, would know that the once dead maiden still lived, thus giving it an unsafe notoriety. The command of Jesus to this effect was occasioned by the intense expectation of the people at the time (among whom were scribes and Pharisees, who would not be convinced), who might easily have given themselves up to insurrectionary commotions. Besides as respects the little daughter awakened to new life, who does not feel how injuriously the continual questions and expressions of astonishment and curiosity would have worked upon the higher and inner life in her case? Then, again, it was the will of God that the Divine glory of Christ should not be manifested to the world all at once, and suddenly, but, little by little, during His state of humiliation; for His resurrection was the time appointed by God for the full manifestation of Christ's Godhead. (Rom. i. 4.)

Practical Lessons. 1. Affliction often is the means of awakening to an appreciation of Christ. But for sickness, sorrow and trouble, many had never sought or found the Saviour of the world. 2. All are exposed to bereavement. Death is a cruel enemy. He makes no distinction in his attacks. He comes to the rich man's hall, as well as to the poor man's cottage. He

does not spare the young, the strong, and the beautiful, any more than the old, the infirm, and the gray-haired. Our blessed Redeemer knows our trials when sorely bereaved, and sympathizes with us under them. Of the three memorable instances in which He brought the dead to life, one was the case of an only brother; another, an only son; and this an only daughter. 3. Prayer is of great comfort in the hour of sickness and death. Our prayers, like that of Jairus, should be marked by faith, fullness, earnestness, and importunity. Faith is of vast importance. 4. Let the convinced and anxious sinner only believe, as he gazes upon Jesus on the cross, and his heavy burden will fall at his feet, to oppress him no more forever; let the discouraged Christian do this, and perplexities and obstacles will disappear, or he will be strengthened to encounter them; let

the dying saint do this, who has, for a moment, amidst the clouds that overhang him, lost sight of the Star of Bethlehem, and the shades of darkness will disperse, the scales will fall from his eyes, the anguish be removed from his soul, and all will be peace. 5. Jesus is the great vanquisher of death. The death of Christians is like a quiet sleep. Soon the morning hour shall strike, the waking time of immortality arrive, and the voice of Jesus be heard saying, "I go that I may awake them out of sleep." Let us take comfort in the thought that there is a limit to death's power. Thanks be unto God, there is one stronger than death, who has said, "O death, I will be thy plagues: O grave, I will be thy destruction." (Hosea xiii. 14.) That One is the Friend of sinners, Christ Jesus the Lord.

1. Where did Christ go, preaching, &c. ? 2. What is said of "certain women?" 3. What parable was spoken "when much people were gathered together?" 4. Who was the Sower? 5. What is the seed? 6. What are the four classes of persons represented? 7. Explain verses 16 and 17. 8. What is said concerning Christ's "mother and brethren?" 9. On what lake did the storm occur? 10. What miracle was then wrought? 11. What took place in the country of the Gadarenes? 12. Repeat the narrative of Jairus' daughter. 13. Also that of the woman having an issue of blood.

CHAPTER IX.

1 *Christ sendeth his apostles to work miracles, and to preach.* 7 *Herod desired to see Christ.* 17 *Christ feedeth five thousand:* 18 *enquireth what opinion the world had of him:* foretelleth his passion: 25 *proposeth to all the pattern of his patience.* 28 *The transfiguration.* 37 *He healeth the lunatick:* 43 *again forewarneth his disciples of his passion:* 46 *commendeth humility:* 51 *biddeth them to shew mildness toward all, without desire of revenge.* 57 *Divers would follow him, but upon conditions.*

In chap. vi., verse 13, we saw the Saviour's choosing of His twelve Apostles to their work and office, and their several names. They were first chosen disciples to be with Christ, and learn of Him, and be witnesses of what He did. Now they are sent forth to execute their office. Our Lord deemed it fit that those who were thereafter to carry on His work on earth, should learn to act without His personal presence, and that through them the Gospel of the king-

dom should be more extensively proclaimed by their dispersed and separate condition than it could otherwise be.

THEN she called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases.—*Matt. x. 1; Mark iii. 13 and vi. 7.*

Jesus qualified His Apostles to authenticate their mission by miracles. What an evidence of His power! He could not only work miracles Himself, but could enable others to work them. He gave them power and authority over all devils, i. e., to be exercised over or upon all devils, of whatever malignity and potency. "Though ministers," says an old divine, "cannot be expected to cast out evil spirits, they may fairly be expected to resist the devil and all his works, drunkenness, blasphemy, uncleanness, fighting, revelling, and the

like, faithfully reproving them." *And to cure diseases.* In performing miracles, the Apostles no doubt acted vicariously, as in later times, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

2. ^aAnd he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick.
^bMatt. x. 7, 8; Mark vi. 12; Luke x. 1, 9.

Preaching the kingdom of God was the prime object of the mission of the Apostles, healing of diseases and ejection of demons were the credentials of their Divinely appointed ministry. None ought to take upon them the office of preaching, or any other ministerial function, until thereunto called by Christ Himself. His ministers are now called mediately, they receive their authority from Christ by the hands of the officers of His Church. If ministers do not take a special interest in all sick people, visit them, sympathize with them, and help them, if needful, as far as they can, they are not true to their office as pastors. Yet *preaching* is the great work to which they are called. This they are to make their main business. The pulpit is the place where the chief victories of the Gospel have always been won.

3. ^aAnd he said unto them, Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece.
^bMatt. x. 9; Mark vi. 8; Luke x. 4 and xxii. 35.

They were to go forth to the discharge of their office without any anxious care for the future. They were going forth on God's work, and they might rely upon it that God would provide for all their wants. They were to make no provision for their wants, to take no money in their purses or girdles, no food in their scrips or bags, and no new clothes to supply the place of the old when worn out. If they had a staff, they were to go forth with it (Mark vi. 8), as they had it at the time, but they were not to seek one carefully, or make it a condition of their traveling. The fundamental idea is this, that they were to go forth with the slightest provision, and in dependence upon being provided for by the way.

4. ^aAnd whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart.—^bMatt. x. 11; Mark vi. 10.

In every place to which they came, they were to accept the first hospitality that offered, and having thus attached themselves to one household, that would become

the center of operations, they might go out of it for the purposes of their mission, but not shift their quarters so as to subject themselves to the imputation of being difficult to be suited, or of preferring the hospitality of the more affluent to that of the poor. They were there to *abide*, until they departed from the place, like men who regarded all the world as an inn, heaven as their home, and were content with any lodging, and any kind of entertainment.

5. ^aAnd whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them.
^bMatt. x. 14. ^cActs xiii. 51.

And whosoever will not receive you. Our Lord prepared His Apostles to find some who would refuse to hear their message. The sin of rejecting the Gospel is far greater than any sin that the heathen can commit. Men may think the idolater who leaves his aged parents to starve, or who cruelly slaughters the innocent children of his enemies, is the most wicked of the human race. But the Bible declares that the man who refuses to accept the merciful offer of the Son of God is far worse than any of the heathen, and that he shall suffer the hottest wrath of his insulted Redeemer.

Shake off the very dust from your feet. This symbolical act would be perfectly intelligible to the Jews, as a declaration that they were excommunicated—"no better than heathen"—and that the Apostles would have no further intercourse with them. *For a testimony against them.* Wherever the word is preached, it is for a testimony, either for or against a people. And if the dust of a minister's feet whilst alive, and the ashes of his grave when dead, do bear witness against the despisers of the Gospel, their sermons will do much more.

6. ^aAnd they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing everywhere.
^bMark vi. 12.

Preaching the gospel is expressed in the original in one word. In Mark it is "preached that men should repent." The promises and blessings of the Gospel are theirs only who truly repent of their sins. Preaching the Gospel embraces the preaching of repentance; the part is included in the whole. *Everywhere*, in all the towns and villages to which they came. Minis-

ters of the Gospel stand in great need of help and comfort, of the assistance and encouragement of each other in the weighty duties of their calling, and, like laborers in the same vineyard, should extend to one another sympathy, the strong endeavoring to strengthen the hands of the weak. *And healing everywhere.* The healing activity for which power was bestowed upon the Apostles, is a striking symbol of that which evangelization and missionary labor must even now everywhere accomplish wherever it directs its steps. Missionaries who are also physicians, other things being equal, have the largest success in winning souls to Christ.

Notwithstanding the instructions Jesus gave to His Apostles (verses 3, 4, 5), applied peculiarly to the period in which they were given, yet they contain a lesson for all time, and their spirit is meant to be remembered by all ministers of the Gospel. Ministers are to free themselves as much as they possibly can from worldly incumbrances, which may hinder them in performing the duties of their office. (2 Tim. ii. 4.) They are to avoid worldliness and luxurious habits. They are to study simplicity in their mode of life, confidence in God, contentment with such things as they have, not being unwilling to accept gifts, in imitation of the humility of their Master, who received the donations of His pious followers.

7. ¶ ^hNow Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by him: and he was perplexed, because that it was said of some, that John was risen from the dead; 8. And of some, that Elias had appeared: and of others, that one of the old prophets was risen again. 9. And Herod said, John have I beheaded: but who is this, of whom I hear such things? ⁱAnd he desired to see him.—Matt. xiv. 1; Mark vi. 14. ^oChap. xxiii. 8.

Very little is related concerning the events that happened while the Apostles were absent from the Lord. This, however, we know, Jesus continued to preach and to perform miracles. His fame was so great that it reached the ears of Herod, the governor. (See notes, chap. iii. 1.) *And he was perplexed, &c.* It immediately occurred to him that he had himself, not long before, most cruelly and wantonly put to death an innocent, virtuous and holy man, whose reputation for wisdom, integrity and sanctity of manners, stood almost as high in the estimation of the world as that of Jesus, and who had even

declared himself the herald and forerunner of that extraordinary person. (See notes on chap. iii. 19, 20; also, Matt. xiv. 1-12 and Mark vi. 14-29.) This instantly suggested to him an idea, the most extravagant that could be imagined, that this very person who assumed the name of Jesus was (though some were of the opinion that Elias, and others that one of the old prophets, had appeared), in fact no other than John the Baptist himself, whom he had beheaded, and who was now risen from the dead, and was endowed with the power of working miracles. Doubtless Herod also imagined that John would exercise this power for the purpose of inflicting exemplary vengeance upon him for the atrocious murder he had committed, as well as for his adultery, incest, and all his other crimes, which now probably presented themselves in their most hideous forms to his terrified imagination, pursued him into his most secret retirements, and tortured his breast with unceasing agonies. *Who is this, of whom I hear such things?* "Having just gotten rid of John, has he returned? or who is this of whom I hear such mighty works? What am I to think of him, or fear from him? With these feelings *he desired to see Jesus*, that his doubts and fears might be removed. *Was risen.* It will be noticed that this expression is not employed of Elias, as of John and one of the old prophets, inasmuch as he did not suffer death, but was taken bodily up to heaven. (2 Kings ii. 11.)

There is here exhibited the power of a bad conscience. Amid all his splendor and power the wicked monarch could not forget his faithful reprover. He had silenced the *prophet* by decapitation, but he could not silence his own *conscience*, which upbraided him with the murder of the holy man. "The way of transgressors is hard." If, *before* sin was perpetrated, it could be known what would be the state of mind *afterward*, many would tremble to do the deed. A bad man is a terror to himself, and needs no further disquietude than what his own guilty conscience occasions him. "Which way I fly is hell, myself am hell." Conscience cannot save the soul. Herod's fear was not followed by repentance. When at last he did see

Jesus (chap. xxiii. 6-12), it was to insult Him, and to array Him, just before His crucifixion, with a gorgeous robe that ill became His wounded, bleeding form.

10. ¶ And the apostles, when they were returned, told him all that they had done. ¹And he took them, and went aside privately into a desert-place belonging to the city, called Bethsaida.

²Mark vi. 39; Matt. xiv. 13.

Ministers must report their labors to God, by whose authority they preach. The excitement among the people concerning Jesus was very high when the Apostles returned to Capernaum, and it was so much increased by their return, when they reported to Him how they had executed their office, that it was impossible to obtain in the city the rest and repose so much needed. With a view to the enjoyment of Himself and His disciples, Jesus withdrew with them privately into a secluded place from the multitude. Occasional retirement, self inquiry, meditation and secret communion with God, are absolutely essential to spiritual health. "If a man is always driving through the business of the day," says an old writer, "he will be so in harness as not to observe the road he is going."

11. And the people, when they knew it, followed him: and he received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing.

When the crowd were aware of Christ's withdrawal, they flocked after Him. Some have thought that the quiet spot to which Jesus repaired was on the other side of the lake; others, on the same side across a bay. He went by water, and the fact that the crowd was able in a short time, and without apparent instruction, to reach the same place by land, is in favor of the latter opinion, as the Upper Jordan (which in the other case must have been crossed by them) is, as well as the Lower, in flood, and unfordable at and about the time of the Passover, which was then at hand. *And spake unto them of the kingdom of God, &c.* Unmannerly and uninvited as this intrusion of the multitude on the privacy of our Lord and His Apostles seems to have been, it elicited no rebuff from Him. On the contrary, He whose meat it was by day, and sleep by night, to do good, embraced the opportunity for bestowing upon their souls instruction, reproof and counsel, and upon their bodies, health and

healing, thus teaching us by example that no occasion for a good work should be unacceptable to us, and that spiritual alms should be mixed with bodily relief. Mere spiritual counsel cannot be expected to produce much good effect in the case of those who are suffering physically from causes which we could, but are not willing to, remove, or at least abate.

12. ¹And 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 towns and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals: for we are here in a desert-place.

²Matt. xiv. 15; Mark vi. 35; John vi. 1-5.

The miracle, the record of which properly begins here, is one of the few which are recorded by all the Evangelists. They narrate it with that variety of manner, yet agreement in fact, that evinces independence of relation, with common truth at bottom.

"A great multitude" of people (John vi. 2) were present, and composed partly of Capernaïtes, and partly of passengers to the approaching Passover at Jerusalem. (John vi. 4.) *The twelve*, who were frequently distinguished thus from the other disciples, after their call to the Apostleship, suggested that Jesus should dismiss the crowds, and let them seek for the refreshment which they required, in the neighboring hamlets and villages. This proposal implied that the people had not brought provision with them, which, indeed, was true, except in the case of the lad, who had five barley-loaves and two small fishes. (John vi. 9.) But as Jesus knew that mere love of wonder-working was the low motive of the great number (John vi. 2), He determined to perform upon the whole mass a compassionate miracle, emblematic of His mission to the world, seeking on this bridge, as it were, to bring them up to higher views.

13. But he said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they said, We have no more but five loaves and two fishes; except we should go and buy meat for all these people. 14. For there were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, Make them sit down by fifties in a company. 15. And they did so, and made them all sit down.

¹2 Kings iv. 42, 44. ²Num. xi. 21, 23; Prov. xi. 24, 25. ³1 Cor. xiv. 40.

We have no more but five loaves and two fishes, &c. When Jesus commanded the multitude to be furnished with food, the Apostles, ignorant of their Master's will, alleged their inability to comply with His

order, in view of the scantiness of their supply of food, unless they should go and buy, thus showing a most pitiable perplexity, which had no other means at command. These *loaves*, which were of barley, were the kind of bread then and still eaten by the poor of Palestine. What a slender provision for *about five thousand men*, besides women and children (Matt. xiv. 21)—a whole number, probably of not far from ten thousand persons! With this small stock of homeliest fare the Lord undertakes to feed all the multitude, and bids His disciples to make them all recline on the “green grass”—at that season of the year a delightful resting-place, and which both by Mark and John is noted to have abounded in the place, for though this was a *desert-place*, in the sense that there was no possibility of making a purchase there, it was not a desert in the sense that nothing grew upon it. The people were to recline *by fifties in a company*, the separate companies looking, in their symmetrical arrangement, like so many garden-plots. In this subordinate circumstance we behold the wisdom of Him who is the Lord and lover of order. Thus all disorder, all noise and confusion were avoided. There was no danger that the weaker, the women and the children, should be passed over, while the stronger and ruder unduly put themselves forward; thus the Apostles were able to pass easily up and down among the multitude, and to minister in orderly succession to the necessities of every part. *Loaves and fishes*. Idle and indecent application of sentences, taken from the Scriptures, is a mode of merriment which a good man dreads for its profiteness, and a witty man disdains for its easiness and vulgarity. (Eph. v. 4, iv. 29.)

16. Then he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude.

What a scene was then presented! The ranks of guests rising in lines on the ascending slopes—their canopy the evening sky, their table the green earth. Order and silence prevail. There stands the Master of the feast; majesty and benevolence beaming in His countenance, as He looks around on the gathered throng. Before Him are laid *the five loaves and the*

two fishes. By His side stand the disciples, with their eyes directed to Him, awaiting His command.

In the distance a few fishing-boats are gently making their way on the lake. And now the Saviour, taking the scanty and humble provision into His hand before them all, *looking up to heaven, he blessed them*. It was customary with the Jews at every meal to offer a prayer, commencing with the thankful words, “Blessed be God.” Hence the Hebrew *to bless*, which originally had for its object God, as the author of the meal, took as its objective case the food itself, and thence arose the phrase, to bless the food, or to ask a blessing on the food. *And gave to the disciples to set before the multitude*. Having blessed the food before Him, and broken it, Jesus delivered it to the Apostles, who in their turn distributed it to the different tables, if such they might be called. The employment of the disciples in the service of distributing was doubtless intended, in part, to gain respect to them from the people. The marvelous multiplication taking place, as many say, first in the hands of the Saviour Himself, next in those of the Apostles, and lastly in the hands of the eaters, yet at all events so that all were satisfied—the fact that the hunger of the multitude had been fully satisfied being evident by the gathering by the Apostles of what remained. That which the Apostles thought an impossibility became a palpable fact—they fed the thousands with the few loaves and fishes. What does this teach us? That to use what we have is the way to get more. The man who will make good use of the little religious light he has, is sure to get more.

We are not told how the food was multiplied on this occasion. As it is not possible for us to realize to ourselves any act of creation, it was wisdom in the sacred narrator of this miracle to leave the description of the indescribable unattempted. His appeal is to the same faith which believes “that the worlds were formed by the Word of God.” (Heb. xi. 3.) All that we can do, is simply to behold in this multiplying of the food an act of Divine omnipotence, not, indeed, now, as at first,

of absolute creation out of nothing, since there was a substratum to work on in the original loaves and fishes, but an act of creative accretion, the bread growing under Christ's hands, so that from a little stock all the multitude were abundantly supplied. Wonderful as this miracle was, the same power that was seen in it is displayed every day. In the seed of the corn that shoots into the stalk, the blade and the ear, and in the acorn cast into the earth, that develops itself into the gigantic and overshadowing oak, we have processes just as marvelous as turning the few barley loaves into a bountiful and a gracious supply. But we are so accustomed to these things that we call them natural occurrences, and only when the same result is achieved by a more rapid or a more startling process, do we call it a miracle. It may be observed here that our Lord never performed a miracle without laying hold of a substratum to work upon, and certainly this seems by analogy to teach us that God is not going to supplant this earth by another earth, and to supersede our present bodies by other bodies, but out of the present earth to constitute a glorious one, and out of our present bodies to raise incorruptible from corruptible, and immortal from mortal, till death is swallowed up in victory.

17. And they did eat, and were all filled: and there was taken up fragments that remained to them twelve baskets.

They did eat, and were all filled. None of our Lord's miracles were better attested than this one. Five or more thousand witnesses could not be deceived, for the miracle was done openly, and was easy to be observed. The want of food was known to them all—they were in a desert where it could not be obtained. There was no delay to allow the disciples to buy it in the distant villages, and no secret supplies could have been obtained without detection. The senses of the people convinced them it was real. They *saw* the small provision enlarged more than a thousand fold; they *heard* the blessing given; they *felt* the food in their hands; they *tasted* it and were satisfied that what they received was real fish and bread. This miracle is, as it were, a revelation of

the Creator. The impenetrable and mysterious veil which conceals God from the creature in the midst of His creation is drawn aside, and we see, not indeed sunshine and showers, sowing and reaping, but Christ the compendium of them all, and from whom all of them issue, the Lord of the sunshine and the shower, the Lord of the spring and of the harvest, the Lord of the fertility of the soil and the produce of the earth. We are here taught confidence in the providence of God. "It is a greater miracle," says *Augustine*, "to govern and provide for the whole world, than to feed five thousand men with five barley loaves of bread." God will supply the wants of them that trust in Him, and withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly.

Baskets. The Greek word thus translated is only used in the New Testament, in the accounts given of this miracle. It means a wicker basket, such as the Jews were remarkable for carrying with them, as remarked even by the Roman poet *Juvenal*. It was in just such a basket that Paul was let down from the wall. (Acts ix. 25.) The twelve basketsful of fragments gathered by the Apostles were a greater quantity than the original five barley loaves and two fishes. It will be noticed there was one basket for each Apostle. In the increase of the loaves and the fishes, notwithstanding the large distribution, we have an apt symbol of that love which exhausts not by loving, but really grows after all its outgoings on others, and of the multiplying which there ever is in a true dispensing. (2 Kings iv. 1; Prov. xi. 24.) By feeding the hungry we shall often enrich ourselves, for God will bless our earthly substance. How much more will He bless those who feed souls with Divine truth! The teachers of Sabbath-schools, who in an humble spirit search the Scriptures, that they may scatter the crumbs among poor little ignorant children, and those missionaries who go abroad to point the perishing to the Redeemer, find that the Christian receives in the ratio in which He gives, so that the greatest giver is always the greatest receiver, and that the Christianity that unfolds itself in liberality or labor for others, by a beautiful reflex

operation, becomes deeper and richer in the heart of him that has it.

Fragments that remained. From John vi. 12, we learn that the fragments were gathered at the command of Jesus, that nothing might be lost. In performing this miracle Christ moved in the orbit of a God; in giving this command, He reassumed His place, reaccepted the laws, and re-entered the domain, of man. We see at once the mighty God and the dependent man. How strange the combination—bounty the most profuse, economy the most rigid! The gathering of the fragments by Christ's command shows us how precious He esteemed even the least works of God, that we may not dare to waste the food that our Heavenly Father has provided. If earthly bread is too precious to be wantonly trampled under foot, how inestimably precious must heavenly bread be! Yet how much of the Divine Word is suffered to fall to the ground! How carelessly we sometimes read the Scriptures! How many heart-stirring sermons have we heard, and then immediately forgotten! We should gather up all the fragments that can be made conducive to God's glory. "If," says an old divine, "the great Housekeeper of the world is so particular about saving fragments, what account will they give at the day of judgment, who think nothing of wasting time, money, health and strength, in the service of sin and the world?"

The bread which Jesus multiplied was an emblem of His own flesh, which He gave for the life of the world. The Apostles were appointed to proclaim the crucified Saviour to perishing sinners. It was necessary that they should believe that He could save by His death the souls of all believers. They now saw with their own eyes that He could make a *little* bread sustain a *vast* multitude. They would remember this in future days when preaching His name to assembled thousands. This lesson of Christ's ability to supply our spiritual wants is as precious now as it was then. We are poor sinners in the midst of a dreary and wicked world, without strength or power to save ourselves, and sorely in danger of perishing from spiritual famine. But He who said of the

starving multitude in the desert-place, "give ye them to eat," is ever pitiful, ever kind, ever ready to show mercy, even to the unthankful and the evil. He is not changed. He is just the same now that He was eighteen centuries ago. The simple truth that Jesus gave His flesh for the life of the world, has fed innumerable souls, and will feed innumerable more, till the multitude without number are gathered around the throne, and then the Lamb *Himself* will feed them through eternity with food which we know not of. (See John vi.)

18. † And it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him; and he asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am?
‡ Matt. xvi. 13; Mark viii. 27.

Our Lord's habit of private prayer is frequently mentioned in the Gospels. He sets an example to all who work for God. Much private prayer is one secret of success. Some of the most glorious acts and manifestations of Jesus were made in connection with a season of prayer. Together with the revelation which He here made of Himself to the disciples, as a suffering, dying, and rising Messiah, we might include in these seasons of prayer, the descent of the Spirit at His baptism, the ordaining of the Twelve, and the Transfiguration.

And he asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am? Not that Christ was ignorant of, or vain-gloriously inquired after, the opinion of the multitude; but, as the time had now come when He must speak more openly than He had to His disciples of His approaching suffering and death, before He would grant them a deeper view into the nature of His *work*, He designed to establish them more firmly in their faith in His *person* and His character. Though the world fluctuates amidst various errors, the truth must not, on that account, be despised, but rather the knowledge of it should be the more diligently sought, and the profession of it made with the greater constancy.

19. † They answering said, John the Baptist; and some say, Elias; and others say, That one of the old prophets is risen again.—Matt. xiv. 2; verse 7, 8.

The opinions of Himself reported to Jesus by His disciples, though different, are yet fully explicable. That *John the Baptist* had risen was perhaps an echo of

that which was talked of at Herod's court (verse 7, 8, 9); as to *Elias*, or *Elijah*, comp. Mal. iv. 5; and as to *one of the old prophets*, men believed, from Mic. v. 5 and other passages, that they were warranted to conclude that at the time of the Messiah different prophets would again appear. It will be observed that no one took the Messiah for an ordinary or insignificant person. It should not surprise us to find the same variety of opinions about Christ and His Gospel in our own times. God's truth disturbs the spiritual laziness of men. It obliges them to think. It makes them begin to talk, reason, speculate and invent theories to account for its spread in some quarters, and its rejection in others. Talk and speculation about Jesus and His Gospel are one of Satan's great traps for ruining souls. Many a man cloaks his indolence about religion under a pretense of the variety of opinions and the difficulty of knowing who is right.

^{20.} He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am?
^{21.} Peter answering said, The Christ of God.
 *Matt. xvi. 16; John vi. 69.

Having heard the echo of the people's views concerning Himself, our Lord will now hear an expression of the living, personal and independent faith of His disciples, to whom He had given occasion to mention the several errors of the world in relation to His person, that they might be the more fully convinced that their faith did not proceed from themselves. (Matt. xvi. 17.) *The Christ of God.* This reply of Peter was in his own name and in that of his brethren. Some make the words, *of God*, equivalent to *the Son of God*; others interpret the whole expression, as "the Messiah sent of God." Matthew has it: "The Christ, the Son of the living God." (xvi. 16.) Mark: "The Christ." (viii. 29.) All are varied forms of expression for the Messiah. The veil of Christ's human nature did not prevent the eye of the disciples' faith discerning Him in His true character. What a noble confession was that by which, notwithstanding the great, and wise, and learned, of the nation to which the disciples belonged, saw no beauty in their Master, they acknowledged Him *the Christ of God!* (See Dan. ix. 21.) We make a proper use of those mistakes and false

conjectures which prevail in the world, when we make them contribute to our establishment in the truth. It is of great significance that Peter does not in his Epistles once mention a word of Christ concerning *his* own personal priority among the Apostles, least of all as the institution of an official primacy.

^{21.} And he straitly charged *them*, and commanded them to tell no man that thing;—(Matt. xvi. 20.)

The premature and unreserved avowal of this truth must, without perpetual miracles, have excited the ill-judging multitude to such measures, as would have given the scribes and priests an occasion against Jesus, and even rendered the Romans jealous of His popularity, and thus He might have been cut off before His time. It was, therefore, highly proper that He should, in the most peremptory manner, forbid the disciples to declare openly that He was the Messiah. There is a time to speak, and a time to be silent, concerning the Divine mysteries.

^{22.} Saying, "the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day."
^{23.} Matt. xvi. 21 and xvii. 22.

The disciples being now in a measure prepared to receive the great and mysterious truth, that Jesus was to suffer and die for the sin of the world, He made it known to them. This was done, 1. To prevent that offense which otherwise they might have taken at His sufferings. 2. The better to prepare them for the great trial when it should come. 3. To correct the error which they had entertained of the temporal kingdom of the Messiah. Let it be noted that our Lord makes known, 1, who the accomplishers of His suffering should be; 2, in what form it was prepared for Him; 3, the necessity of this suffering, and, 4, the issue of this suffering, namely, His resurrection. By the necessity of Christ's suffering, just referred to, we mean becomingness, for the Greek word translated *must* in this verse, does not quite bear the sense of force and necessity which our English word "must" conveys. It rather means, "It is becoming, it is suitable, it is necessary for certain great ends and purposes." In chap. xxiv. 26, the same expression is rendered, "*ought* not Christ to have suffered?"

23. ¶ And he said to *them* all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

¶ Matt. x. 38 and xvi. 24; Mark viii. 34; Luke xiv. 27.

What is meant by the connection of this verse with the preceding one, if not that the mysteries of the Head must be accomplished likewise in the members, and that those who have by the baptism of the Spirit been made partakers of the Divine nature in Christ, are one day to partake of His resurrection, but not unless they have partaken of His sufferings and death? Will, here, and in the following verse, must be interpreted as "wills to," or "is willing to." It is not a future tense, but the same Greek word that is used in John v. 40: "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life," which means, "Ye have no will, or wish to come." Thus our Saviour recommends His religion to every man's choice, not attempting by force or violence to compel any to the profession of it.

If any man will come after me; that is, if any man choose and resolve to be a Christian. Observe our Lord's terms of discipleship. An impostor would have made easy conditions, and promised a prosperous and pleasant career to induce people to follow him, but Jesus pursued the opposite course. His terms are, 1. *Let him deny himself.* By self-denial is not meant that we are to ignore reason altogether in matters of religion, but that we should be willing to part with our earthly comforts, and abandon all our temporal enjoyments, for the sake of Christ and His religion. We are to deny ourselves, our earthly desires for ease, pleasure, riches, esteem. We are to habituate ourselves to give a flat denial to the most clamorous solicitations of our pride, ambition, avarice and carnal self-love, and to curb every sensual inclination to submission. The injunction does not solely or mainly refer to the renunciation of vice, which, of course, is to be renounced, but the advantages of this life, of which the followers of Christ must be prepared to suffer the loss with an undisturbed mind. Even if those to whom we bear the greatest natural affection, or any authority on earth should tempt us to do what Christ forbids, Christ must be loved

and obeyed before all these. 2. *And take up his cross daily.* By this is meant Gospel-suffering. There is here an allusion to a Roman custom, that the malefactor who was to be crucified, took his cross upon his shoulders and carried it to the place of execution, and an obscure intimation of Christ's own approaching suffering on the cross. The duty enjoined is, not the making of the cross for ourselves, but the patient bearing of it when God lays it upon our shoulders. The Christian is to be prepared even to die for Christ's sake. He is to have the *spirit* of a martyr, and to be ready to give up all things, even life itself, for Jesus. *Daily.* This word is peculiar to Luke, and has not only the sense day by day, but through the entire day, and also implies, that as day succeeds day, so would one cross follow another. Particular notice of the word, *daily*, and of the three words, *to them all*, should be taken. No person is excused, and no day is excepted. Of what, therefore, do those think, and what have they reason to expect, who make every day a day of pleasure, luxury and diversion? 3. *And follow me.* By this is denoted Gospel-service. *Let him follow me*, says Jesus; that is, obey my commands and imitate my example. He must set my life and doctrine continually before him, and be daily correcting and reforming his life by that rule and pattern.

24. For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

In order to make evident the indispensable necessity of self-denial, our Lord presents a motive in verses 24-26. *Whosoever will save his life, &c.* The meaning of this apparently paradoxical expression is, "Whoever will preserve his natural, selfish life, walking in accordance with his natural inclinations, may reckon upon it that he loses his true, his proper life; but those who, for the sake of Christ and His cause, set at stake the possession of life and the enjoyment of life, in the common sense of the word, will, through this very temporary perishing, become partakers in perpetually richer measure of the true and higher life of the spirit." This was a truth of infinitely deep significance for the first Apostles of the Lord, who, for His sake,

left all, yet not less significant is it for the history of the development of the Christian life of each one. It is evident that the word *it*, occurring twice, refers to the life or salvation of the soul, else how can he who *loses his life for Christ's sake, save his life?*

25. *For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?
*Matt. xvi. 26; Mark viii. 36.

In Matt. xvi. 26, and Mark viii. 36, the same word here translated *advantaged* is rendered, as it should have been in this place, "profited." The equivalent expression to *himself*, also in those Evangelists, is "his soul." *Lose himself*. What can this mean but final perdition? *Be cast away*, literally, *bring loss upon himself*. If a man should save his life, and gain the whole world, by apostasy from Christ, or rejection of Him, and thus lose the happiness and insure the destruction of his soul, where would be his gain? Nothing can compensate the loss sustained by him who loses his soul. Let us but weigh the gain and the loss which there is in following or not following the rules of the Gospel, and we shall soon be convinced that it is no better than madness to be in the least doubt or suspense what to do.

27. *For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.
*Matt. x. 33; Mark viii. 38; 2 Tim. ii. 12.

Whosoever shall be ashamed, &c. "Whosoever shall deny and disown me, either in my person, in my doctrine, or in my members, through the influence of shame, he shall be disowned by me, and rejected by me, at my second coming to judge the world." Three kinds of glory are mentioned here, as accompanying the second advent of Christ: His own, the Father's, and the glory of the angels. *In his own glory*. This, as distinguished from "the glory of the Father," denotes the glory of Christ as Mediator, exercising all Divine perfections through the medium of His human nature, in accomplishing and perfecting the grand purposes of His incarnation. Besides the *glory* which the *human nature of Christ* habitually wears in heaven, some additional splendor shall be given Him by the Father, when sent with *His commission* on an occasion so august as the

universal judgment. Whosoever is ashamed of the truth while it is humbled and oppressed in this world, shall be humbled and confounded before truth itself, glorious and triumphant, in heaven.

27. *But I tell you of a truth, there he some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God.—*Matt. xvi. 28; Mark ix. 1.

These words are interpreted in three ways. 1. As referring to the times of the Gospel after Christ's resurrection and ascension, when the Gospel was propagated far and near, and the kingdom of God came with power. 2. As referring to Christ's coming and exercising His kingly power in the destruction of Jerusalem, which some of the Apostles then standing by lived to see. 3. The right view, however, appears to be that which connects the verse with our Saviour's transfiguration, and regards the glorious vision of the kingdom, which the transfiguration supplied, as the fulfillment of the promise of the verse.

Practical Reflections. 1. Self-denial is an absolute necessity. It is not a mere accident of Christian character, but essential to it. Without it, and without following Jesus, our claim to discipleship is vain. 2. The soul is of unspeakable value. Other losses can be comprehended, and often repaired, but the loss of the soul is inconceivable, incalculable, irrecoverable. It is the loss of God, and Christ, and heaven, and glory, and happiness to all eternity. A sermon preached on Matt. xvi. 26, first led an English missionary to care for his soul. He was an ungodly youth at the time he heard it, but afterward he gave up the world, took up his cross, and followed Christ. At length he lost his life in His service. Having landed upon the island of Erromango, in the New Hebrides, hoping to preach the Gospel there, he was pursued by the natives. He had just reached the sea, when he fell down, was overtaken, and bruised to death by the clubs of the savages. His blood was mingled with the waves, his flesh was devoured by cannibals, and his bones made into fish-barbs. But will he regret the choice he made in the day when the Son of man shall come in His glory? 3. There is, perhaps, no sin, to which every convert to true Christianity is more powerfully tempted, than being

ashamed of Christ and His words, and no temptation which induces such large numbers to act habitually against the light and conviction of their own consciences in order to escape the reproach and scorn of men, and often of their dependents and domestics. The wickedness of being ashamed of Christ is very great, and the fear lest the Saviour and Judge should at last be ashamed of us, is the proper preservative from yielding to this temptation, in all those who desire above everything else to have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. 4. The most eminent servants of Christ, for faith, holiness, and service, must at length in God's appointed time, taste and have experience of death, as well as others. Yet although they must taste, they shall but taste of death, they shall not drink of the dregs of that bitter cup; though they fall by the hand of death, yet shall they not be hurt by it, but in the very fall be victorious. They shall "conquer though they die." The valley through which they pass shall be "the valley of the shadow of death"—the substance being gone, and the shadow only remaining.

28. † And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray.
*Matt. xvii. 1; Mark ix. 2. *Or, things.

The Transfiguration is also recorded by Matthew (xvii. 1) and Mark (ix. 1). According to them it occurred *six days* after the just mentioned conversation. If we assume that Luke has reckoned in the day of the discourse and a second day for the Transfiguration, which had perhaps already taken place in the morning, the difference is then almost reconciled. The expression, *after these sayings*, seems to make it plain that the words "see the kingdom of God," in the preceding verse, were spoken with special reference to the vision of the Transfiguration.

He took Peter and John and James. Why three witnesses? and why these three? As the Law required no more than two or three witnesses to constitute a regular and judicial proof, our Saviour frequently chose to have only this number of witnesses present at some of the most important and interesting scenes of His life. The three disciples whom He now selected were

those that generally attended Him on such occasions. They were chosen witnesses at the raising of Jairus' daughter, of the agony in Gethsemane, and of the Transfiguration. *And went up into a mountain to pray*—most probably *Tabor*. This mountain stands alone, and its top is not pointed like that of most mountains, but hard and flat, and therefore well suited for a resting-place. Its height is not great. In one hour it may be ascended.

29. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening.

Here, in this retired and lovely spot, our Saviour was *praying* with the three disciples named. *And as he prayed* His form underwent a most glorious alteration. *The fashion of his countenance was altered*, more literally rendered, "other," that is, His appearance was changed, "other than it generally appeared" (see Mark xvi. 12), but His bodily form remained the same, without which the witnesses could not have identified Jesus. *And his raiment was white and glistening.* The word *glistening* is only used once in the New Testament, and is explained as meaning "to emit flashes of light, to shine or glisten as lightning." (See Nahum iii. 3.) As the conjunction is not found in the original, the words *white* and *glistening* are highly intensive, literally, *whitely glittering*. There is here evidence of the fullness of the Spirit, which from within, over-streamed the Saviour's whole being.

30. And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: 31. Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.

Two men. Jesus was not alone. The two men who appeared beside Him were Moses and Elias, the chiefs of the Law and the Prophets, who came, as it were, to give testimony and homage to the Consummator, who had, in these latter days, appeared to finish the work which they had, in their day, been employed to advance and prepare. Moses and Elias *appeared in glory*, a glory somewhat similar, we may suppose, though far inferior, to that with which Christ was invested. Like Him, they were probably clothed in raiments of unusual whiteness and splendor, and the fashion of their countenances might also be changed to something more

bright and illustrious. Like their Lord, both these holy men, when on earth, had fasted forty days in the wilderness. But all their sufferings were over, while the bitterest sufferings of Jesus were yet to come. Hence they were well prepared, by what they had themselves endured, to comfort the Lord in the prospect of His agonizing death. That death, as Luke alone informs us, was the subject of their discourse.

And spake of his decease which he should accomplish, or fulfill, at Jerusalem, literally, "His exode or departure." It is remarkable that in Acts xiii. 24, we have a Greek word used for our Lord's "coming" to take the office of a Saviour, which might be translated literally His "entrance." Both expressions are singularly applicable to Him who came into the world, and was made flesh, and after doing the work He came to do, left the world and went to the Father. It is noticeable that Peter (2 Peter i. 15), calls his own death also, to which he is looking forward, an *exode*. The word *accomplish*, used in reference to Christ's death, is a very peculiar form of speech. To depart from life is the common lot; but to *fulfill* His decease or departure from the world was peculiar to Christ, because His death was the grand subject of prophecy, and the event upon which the salvation of the earth was suspended.

^{32.} But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep; and when they were awake, they saw His glory, and the two men that stood with him.

^{33.} Dan. viii. 18 and x. 9.

Heavy with sleep. It should be observed that the very same disciples who here slept during a vision of glory, were also found sleeping during the agony in the garden of Gethsemane. Flesh and blood does, indeed, need to be changed before it can enter heaven. Our poor, weak bodies can neither watch with Christ in His time of trial, nor keep awake with Him in His glorification. The grandeur and solemnity of a scene may induce drowsiness. (Dan. viii. 18, x. 9.) Perhaps the cause just mentioned united with the long-continued watching and fatigue of the disciples, to throw them into a deep slumber. This slumber accounts for the fact, that there was no ill-timed interrup-

tion of the heavenly converse by the disciples, until at or near its close. *When they were awake, &c.* The disciples awoke of their own accord, or, more probably, were aroused by the flashing upon them of the glorious light which emanated from Jesus, for the bright cloud, the Shechinah of God's presence, had not yet overshadowed them, as appears from verse 34. *Saw his glory,* which was so great, that the glory of the two men that stood with him is not here mentioned as being observed by the disciples.

^{33.} And it came to pass as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, 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; not knowing what he said.

The first feeling which animated the disciples in the view of the heavenly spectacle was naturally fear. (Mark ix. 6.) But scarcely had they recovered from that, when an indescribable feeling of felicity filled them, to which Peter, almost with child-like transport, gave expression. The full meaning of Peter's exclamation, uttered, perhaps, with a mingled feeling of joy and awe, was, "What greater happiness, Lord, can we experience than to continue here in the presence of three such great and excellent persons! Here, then, let us forever remain! Here let us erect three booths: for Thee, for Moses, and Elias, that you may all make this the constant place of your abode, and that we may always continue under the protection and government and united empire of our three illustrious lords and masters, whose sovereign laws and commands we are *equally* bound to obey."

It is evident that Peter's words were an utterance of immediate feeling, and an expression of a state of perfect complacency. They were spoken by a man who was wholly taken captive by the extraordinary-ness of the whole scene, hence the remark of Luke, *not knowing what he said.* That Peter's request was improper and unwise is evident, for these reasons: 1. He placed Moses and Elias on a level with his Divine Master. 2. Peter himself was not fit to continue in such a scene; flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. 3. He forgot the unwelcome truths lately revealed by his Master, that He

must be offered as a sacrifice for sin before He could enter into His glory, and that His disciples must *partake* of His *sufferings*, before they could partake of His *glory*. 4. He forgot also that there was much work to be done in the world. But though Peter's request betrayed an ignorant mind, it showed an affectionate heart, and we cannot but admire his delight in the company in which he found himself. It is a sign we have made one step in religion, if we really prefer the society of the godly to any other pleasure.

31. While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud.

The cloud of light which formerly filled the Sanctuary of the Lord now received the three (Christ, Moses and Elias), as into a tabernacle of glory, and withdrew the end of the manifestation from the eyes of the disciples, as its beginning also had remained hidden from them—they again being agitated with fear as they witnessed the overshadowing process.

35. And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.

^vMatt. iii. 17. ^eActs iii. 22.

The same voice which was heard before on the Jordan consecrating Christ as King of the Kingdom of Heaven, and afterward (John xii. 28), as the High Priest of the New Testament, here attests his supreme prophetic dignity. *This is my beloved Son: hear him.* This is an echo of an utterance of Moses (Dent. xviii. 15; comp. Ps. ii. 7; Isa. xlii. 1), "This is my beloved Son (not as Moses and the prophets were, my *servants*), Him and Him only, shall ye now and henceforth hear." Thus are we placed under Christ's tuition alone, and commanded from Him alone to seek the doctrine of salvation, to depend upon and listen to One, to adhere to One—in a word, as the terms import, to hearken to One only. (See on chap. iii. 22.)

36. And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. ^aAnd they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.

^dMatt. xvii. 9.

When the words referred to were uttered, and the cloud of light melted into thin air, *Jesus was found alone*, and had resumed His ordinary appearance, except that, perhaps, a Divine effulgence lingered on His face,

as on that of Moses when he descended from the Mount. The disappearance of Moses and Elias, and the fact that Jesus was *alone*, together with the words *hear him*, show that the law of ceremonies was about to pass away, and that the true Lamb of God and true Prophet was come. This seems to have been *one* of the great things the Transfiguration was intended mainly to teach. *Another* was, that the sufferings and death of Jesus were not, as the disciples and Jewish converts in general inclined strongly to think, incompatible with His dignity and glory.

From the scene of the Transfiguration, observe, 1. The value of prayer. God's people have many of their happiest experiences, and make many of their nearest approaches to heaven, in prayer. 2. The appearance of those departed saints on the Mount is calculated to comfort *us* also in the prospect of death. Moses had been dead nearly fifteen hundred years. Elijah had been taken up by a whirlwind from the earth more than nine hundred years before this time. Yet here these holy men were seen once more alive, and not only alive, but in glory. Is it not evident from the appearance of these saints, and their recognition by Peter, that the spirits of the saints do *immediately* pass into glory, not waiting for the general resurrection to be introduced into the presence of Christ, and that we shall *know* the saints in glory, not only our *own* friends, whom we loved upon earth, but *all* the saints? 3. The Old Testament saints in glory take a deep interest in Christ's atoning death. It is a grave error to suppose that holy men and women, under the Old Testament, knew nothing about the sacrifice which Christ was to offer up for the sin of the world. Their light, no doubt, was far less clear than ours; but there is not the slightest proof that any Old Testament saint ever looked to any other satisfaction for sin but that which God promised to make by sending the Messiah. 4. The glory which Christ will have at His second coming. To this scene on the Mount, Peter, who witnessed it, refers as a symbol of our Lord's second coming. (2 Peter i. 16, 17.) 5. The reason why heaven is not revealed to us fully is, the disclosure of its glory would be

insupportable. As there was necessity for a cloud to be put before the disciples' eyes, so we must be content in this world to see God through a cloud darkly: we could not bear an unveiled view. 6. Whilst enjoyment of the privileges of religion is proper, this must not be allowed to conflict with the claims of duty: we must often descend from the Mount to work for God. 7. The obedient ear honors Christ more than either the gazing eye, the adoring knee, or the applauding tongue. 8. Let us learn to bear with ignorance in others, and to deal patiently with beginners in religion. If Jesus could endure so much weakness in His disciples, we may surely do likewise. 9. Let us not fail to notice the difference between the manifestation of the Divine presence *here*, and *that* at the giving of the Law. On *Sinai* there was a *cloud*, but it was *dark and thick*, and there were thunders and lightnings, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud, and all the people that were in the camp *trembled*. (Ex. xix. 16.) On *Tabor*, the *cloud* was *bright*, the whole scene was *luminous* and transporting, and nothing was heard but the mild, paternal voice of the Almighty.

37. † And it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met him. 38. And, behold, a man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son: for he is mine only child. 39. And lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth again, and bruising him hardly departeth from him. 40. And I besought thy disciples to cast him out: and they could not.—Matt. xvii. 14; Mark ix. 14, 17.

When our Lord descended from the mountain, a scene of sin, sorrow and suffering, met His eye. There were the scornful scribes, the weak and wavering disciples, a poor demoniac, and his afflicted father, with the wondering multitude gathered around them. How unlike was this scene to that which the three Apostles had just witnessed on the top of the mountain! There all was light and love, perfect bliss and ineffable joy; Angels behold the same painful contrast; for, as they gaze upon the glory of God, they also watch over the sorrows of men.

Master, I beseech thee, &c. The appeal of the distressed parent to Jesus is peculiarly tender and touching. And as we notice the painful peculiarities of his affliction, we shall not wonder that when he came to Jesus, he *cried out*, beseeching Him to

deliver him from it. Not only was the son an *only child*, but he was a lunatic, in the bloom of youth deprived of reason, and, instead of being a comfort to his parents, was a continual cause of care and distress. Alarming fits often seized him, and so suddenly, that sometimes he fell into the fire, and at other times into the water (Matt. xvii. 15), so that his life was always in danger. Nor, at any intervals of reason, could he pour his sorrows into the ears of his parents, or hold affectionate communication with them; for, alas! he was dumb. (Mark ix. 17.) And what was worse than all, he was possessed by an evil spirit, who, acting on the disease, grievously increased his sufferings. When this spirit took him in its might, then in these paroxysms of his disorder he *suddenly cried out* (an expression not inconsistent with Mark's statement that he was *dumb*, for his dumbness was only in respect of articulate sounds; he could give no utterance to these), and it *tare* him, till he foamed and gnashed with his teeth, and *bruised* him, reluctantly leaving him, so that altogether he pined away (Mark ix. 18) like one the very springs of whose life were dried up. Besides, the application of the father to the disciples had been unsuccessful, and thus his hope was covered with a still darker cloud, by being made to know that the case of his son was one of such a degree of Satanic possession, and of so long-standing, as to baffle them. Perhaps the sight of the fearful condition of the boy had filled the disciples with mistrust as to their own powers; perhaps they had also become lately weary in fasting and prayer (Matt. xvii. 4); at all events, the attempt had failed: the evil spirit had not yielded to their word.

41. And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation! how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring thy son hither.

Our Lord's rebuke was designed, not for the father of the lad, but for the surrounding multitude, and the term *generation* seems to point to them as specimens and representatives of the whole Jewish nation: it was intended also for the disciples, in whom so brief an absence from Him had produced weakness of faith, and whom it had shorn of their strength, and left powerless against the kingdom of

darkness. (Matt. xvii. 20.) *How long shall I be with you, and suffer you?* are words not so much of one longing to put off the coil of flesh, as of a master, complaining of the slowness and dullness of his scholars. *Bring thy son hither.* This command was intended to contribute toward awakening the believing expectation of the father.

42. And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father.

As the first bringing of the child to Jesus caused another of the fearful paroxysms of His disorder, so the kingdom of Satan, in small and great, is ever stirred into a fiercer activity by the coming near of the kingdom of Christ. Satan has great wrath when his time is short. *And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, &c.* There was nothing intermediate, as usual in such cases—none of the customary appliances and seeming instrumentalities. He did not take the lad aside—He did not touch him—He made no application to His mouth, but covering the failure of His disciples with the glory of His own acts, He commanded the unclean spirit to quit the child, and enter him no more. The parting throe was indeed terrible, and the boy lay as dead upon the ground. But Jesus raised him by the hand, and delivered him, perfectly restored, to his father.

43. ¶ And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God. But while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, he said unto his disciples, 41. Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men. 45. But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying.

¶ Matt. xvii. 22. ¶ Mark ix. 32; Luke ii. 50, and xviii. 31.

The people were *all amazed at the majesty of God.* Here, as often in Luke, the glory redounding to God by the healing is the crown of the Saviour's miracle. Jesus was not to be misled by any false appearances, and hence, whilst the multitude were wondering at His mighty deeds, He proceeded to speak of his coming sufferings. *Let these sayings, &c.* By this Christ most probably meant that they should take heed to those intimations which He had made to them from time to time respecting His sufferings and death, and which He was now just about to repeat. We are disposed to pass over lightly those

things which we do not wish to hear. The disciples could not bear to hear of their Lord's painful and ignominious death. Each display of His power and His glory filled them with fresh hope that nothing but success and triumph awaited their beloved Master. Therefore, after every such display, He reverted to the unwelcome but profitable subject.

But they understood not, &c. The disciples seem to have understood the sayings which Christ had just uttered, in a degree, for "they were exceeding sorry" (Matt. xvii. 23), but it was in a very faint degree. The reason of this was that their minds and hearts were still too full of worldly desires—they were yet too much under the notion of Christ as a temporal, reigning, victorious Messiah. They could understand all *joyful* truths concerning Jesus, because they *loved* them, but they could not understand *mournful* truths concerning Him, because they did *not* love them. This explains the clause, *and it was hid from them*, showing that the hiding of the *saying* was entirely the result of their own worldliness of heart and dullness of understanding. And this is the more evident from the fact that the word "*that*" is to be regarded here as equivalent to *so that*, or, *inasmuch that*, and *not in order that*, as if it was the intention of Christ that the disciples should not understand His words, for if He so intended, why did He speak to them at all on this subject? It will be noticed that they did not venture, through fear, to interrogate personally their Master, who alone could have cleared up the obscurity of *that saying* for them, and hence remained much in the dark concerning it.

If Satan opposed a youth who was brought to Christ to obtain a bodily cure, how much more will he strive to prevent the young from seeking the salvation of their souls! Many have found that Satan has pursued them with the most painful temptations, just as they were escaping from his bondage.

Through the *father's* faith this son was healed (as in the history of the nobleman, and of the Canaanitish woman). Here is an encouragement for parents. If Jesus showed so much compassion to one who

prayed for a *bodily* cure for his son, how much more must He feel for those who implore *spiritual* blessings for their children?

46. † Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest.
 † Matt. xviii. 1; Matt. ix. 34.

Strangely enough, when we remember that Christ had just predicted to them His approaching sufferings, it was with reference to offices and position in an earthly kingdom that the question of their relative greatness was started. Probably the occasion for this strife, although the germ of rivalry must have been in their hearts before, was found in the singling out of the three intimate disciples to be present at the Transfiguration, &c., &c. Alas, the best and holiest of men are too subject to pride and ambition, too disposed to covet worldly dignity and superiority. There is no sin against which we have such need to watch and pray, as pride. It is a pestilence that walketh in darkness, and a sickness that destroyeth at noonday. No sin is so deeply rooted in our nature. No pope has received such honor as pope "self." How displeasing must it have been to our Lord, especially at such a time, to find that His disciples were disputing about personal preferment. Yet how gentle His reproof.

47. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him. 48. And said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name, receiveth me; and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.
 † Matt. x. 40, xviii. 5; Mark ix. 37; John xii. 44, xiii. 20.
 † Matt. xxiii. 11, 12.

Perceiving the thought of their heart. Their words spoken among themselves could not escape Him, who knew their thoughts, or *reasonings*. Took a child and set him by him, *i. e.*, by the side of Jesus, and said unto them, &c. As in John xiii. 1-11, so did Christ here give force to His instruction by a symbolic act. By the fact that He shows how high He places the child, He commends to the disciples the child-like mind, and in what this consists appears from Matt. xviii. 4. The point of comparison therefore is formed, not by the receptivity, the striving after perfection, the absence of pretension in the child, but most decidedly by its humility, which was so entirely lacking in the

disciples. By this humility the child's understanding was yet free from vain imagination, its heart from rivalry, its will from stubbornness. Great as was the affection our Lord showed to young children, we must beware that we do not wrest His language about them here and elsewhere into the false notion that they are naturally innocent and without sin. (Verse 48.)

In my name, i. e., acting from Christian principle. Not only did Jesus here show His love for little children, but also and mainly for such as resemble them in a child-like spirit, and those who receive them, resting upon His name, as a principle of action. For the attainment of this child-like spirit, there must be an entire transformation of the inner man. (Matt. xviii. 3; John iii. 3.) It is strong evidence of the tender interest and attachment cherished by Christ toward His followers who resemble children in their humility, that He regards the kindness and respect shown to them, for His sake, as shown to Himself. If we wish to please our Lord, we shall show great tenderness to His disciples who are least in their own eyes. God shall exalt, and men will honor, them that stoop to the meanest services for the good of souls.

49. † And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us.
 † Mark ix. 38; see Num. xi. 28.

It seems much to the credit of the disciples that the word and conduct of Jesus commanding humility, instead of wounding their self-love, awakened their conscience. *John answered and said, &c.* John had a fact in his mind which he must bring into the light of this act of Christ. It was frank and ingenuous in the Apostle to open up this matter to his Master. He suspected that he, with his colleagues, had acted wrong, but he did not on that account conceal their conduct. How apt are we to hide from the friends we most revere those actions which we fear have been faulty! Yet if we were frankly to acknowledge them, we might obtain valuable counsel. *We forbade him.* The disciples had hindered one who in the name of Jesus was relieving the miserable, and doing works of mercy. This

man was not a deceiver, for if he had been, he would not have been able to cast out demons by the name of Jesus, for this name wrought no magical effects. (Acts xix. 3.) He was one who, though he may not have been a decided believer, and thus known to John as such, yet had in him a measure of trust in the name of Jesus, a germ of true faith—one who, at a time when all the rich and great were joined against the Son of God, was not ashamed to acknowledge Him, and who, though not having a commission to work miracles as the disciples had, yet attempted to cast out devils, and sometimes had success, God granting this success for the honor of His Son. He belonged to those servants of our Lord who were not required, or even *permitted* to follow Him, as the Apostles did, yet *they* also were dear to Him. And yet this man, because he did not stately follow with them, and was not regularly sent forth as they had been, was forbidden to cast out devils by the disciples (“we”), nine of whom had themselves, very lately, from unbelief, failed in working a miracle; thus interdicting one whose faith was at least equal to their own! Perhaps, indeed, this prohibition in some measure grew out of the failure of the nine in healing the lunatic boy, rendering them unable to bear that another should succeed in this respect better than they. It arose, mainly, however, from the assumption by the disciples that the Messiah’s kingdom was to be essentially like human governments, that they were to form the regal court, and hence, that they, to whom the command, “cast out devils,” had been given, were to be the sole medium of the Messianic blessings to the people at large, and that no one had a right to usurp their prerogatives. The reason of the prohibition given, let it be observed, was not “because he followeth not with *Thee*,” but, “because he followeth not with *us*”—certainly the utterance of an excited human party feeling. They signified that the man should either follow Christ *as they did*, or abandon all working in the name of Jesus.

59. And Jesus said unto him, *Forbid him not: for the that is not against us is for us.*

⁵⁸ See *Mt. tt. xii. 30; Luke xi. 23.*

Forbid him not. By this command our Lord assured His disciples that the man in question would not dishonor His name; his experience would prevent him from turning round and going over to His enemies. Had not Christ secretly and effectually wrought by the man, he could not have succeeded in the attempt to cast out devils in His name. (Acts xix. 13–20.) And as the disciples could hardly have been unaware of this, they should have regarded the favorable result of this man’s endeavor as a proof, at least for the time, that they had to do with no enemy of the cause of the Saviour. They were, therefore, reprehensible in prohibiting him, especially without so much as asking their Lord’s advice. Hence Jesus warned them not to forbid any such an one, for the reasons which they gave for their action in this case. *Is for us* (Mark ix. 40), “is on our part,” *i. e.*, on our side, is our friend and co-worker. All who were not engaged *against them* were to be considered *as for them*. The rule given by Jesus here is not in the least conflict with His saying in *Matt. xii. 30.* *That rule is applicable in judging our own temper, this one must guide us in our judgment respecting others.* The one shows the *tolerance* of the Gospel, the other its *intolerance*.

There is no neutrality in the cause of Christ. All men are on one side or the other. Man is so constituted that he cannot be neutral in regard to anything that touches his interest, and Christianity must be to him either *the savor of death unto death*, or, *of life unto life*. Many persons *wish* to be neutral on the subject of religion. They are afraid of being on the side of Satan, but they have not resolved to be on the side of Jesus. The devil reckons these among his most trusty servants. Such cowardly spirits are *less* likely to escape from him than those who openly expose his cause and do his work.

Bigoted exclusiveness is to be eschewed. The words of Jesus, *he that is not against us, is for us*, embody a solemn and most important lesson for all God’s people. They are not to exhibit the spirit of unholy rivalry or contend with one another, but to rejoice in any good that is doing in the world, by whomsoever and by whatsoever

means it may be done. We do not understand the passage as at all intended to sanction such indifference to sound doctrine as would lead to the belief that it matters not of what religious faith men are, Jewish, Socinian, Papist or Protestant, so long as they seem earnest-minded men. The persons to whom the passage applies, as will be noticed, are persons who do apostolic work in the name of Jesus, who labor to pull down the kingdom of Satan by the use of Gospel weapons. We must beware how we ever forbid such persons, or hinder them in their work. As has been well remarked, a right understanding of these words of our Lord will prove most useful to us in these latter days. The divisions and varieties of opinion which exist among Christians are undeniably great. The schisms and separations which are continually rising about Church government, and modes of worship, and the sectarian jealousies which it requires no practiced eye to discern, are very perplexing to tender consciences, and exceedingly embarrassing to those who look at the Church from without. Is this the normal condition of the Church? Is it that state of believers for which Jesus prayed, in those tender words, "That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me?" (John xvii. 21.) Is it not true, as intimated in the last clause of the verse just quoted, that disunion is one cause of the slow progress of Christianity? And may it not be feared that this cause will operate still more fearfully in the future? Certain it is that those evangelical denominations which agree in very many points, and differ only in a few—the former essential, and the latter not only non-essential, but practically admitted even by those who insist on them to be so—have a solemn responsibility resting upon them, in view of their continued separation. Whatever may become of existing divisions, in union there is strength. And it should not be forgotten that men may be true-hearted followers of Jesus Christ, and yet for some wise reason be kept back from seeing all things in religion just as we do. When we at-

tempt to stop any such an one from doing service for Christ, because he does not wear our uniform, and fight in our regiment, and do battle in our way, we may be sure that Jesus is saying to us, "Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us."

51. ¶ And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.—*Mark xvi. 19; Acts i. 2.*

We have now arrived at an extended passage (including ix. 51–xviii. 15), which may be called *THE Great Lukean Section*, comprising Luke's largest independent contribution to Gospel history. It embraces the portion of our Lord's history developed during His last journey to Jerusalem. (Matt. xix. 1; Mark x. 1.) The journey was not a direct or continuous one to Jerusalem, but very circuitous, and embraced the interval of time, from the Feast of Tabernacles in October (to which He went up privately, John vii. 10), to just before the Passover, at which time He made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. It was a journey which the Saviour, on the approach of the end of His life, had entered upon with His view directed to His exaltation. At the same time, in the whole narrative of the journeying, different details do not appear in their strict historical sequence, which was the more to be expected as our Lord's whole public life might properly be called a journey to death.

When the time was come that he should be received up, &c. This clause, which refers to Christ's *assumption* into heaven at His ascension, is very erroneously translated, and gives the idea that the time of the ascension had fully come, whereas, it wanted nearly or quite six months to the time of His crucifixion. It should be rendered, *when the days were being fulfilled, that is during the period or stage of our Lord's earthly ministry, which was closed by His death.* Having now, at the beginning of the last six months of His life, left Galilee for the last time, the mission of Jesus thereafter was in Perea and Judea, and during this period Jerusalem was the center toward which, how often soever He diverged, He must ever gravitate until His final hour there. *Steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.* Though Jerusalem was the place

of residence of many of Christ's enemies, and where His bloody sufferings were to be endured, He resolved with an invincible courage and fortitude to go. The fact that there is here no mention made of Christ's death, but of His ascension only, as if all thought of death were swallowed up in His victory over death, teaches us, by His example, to overlook our sufferings and death, as not worthy to be named or mentioned with that glory we are to be received into after death, in the heavenly Jerusalem.

52. And sent messengers before his face, and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.

And sent messengers, &c. The large number of persons forming our Lord's retinue rendered it necessary to make some provision beforehand for lodging in the towns and villages through which they were to pass. Some have conjectured that these messengers were James and John. *A village of the Samaritans.* The central province or section of the land of Canaan, having Galilee on the north and Judea on the south, was called, in the time of Christ, Samaria. As but a single village is mentioned as thus rejecting Jesus, it would seem that His journey was generally pleasant. *Samaritans.* The Samaritans of the time of our Lord sprang from the colonists with whom the king of Assyria peopled Samaria after the ten tribes were carried away. (2 Kings xvii; Ezra iv.) The animosity between them and the Jews was very bitter.

53. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.

^aJohn iv. 4, 9.

This refusal of theirs was no piece of ordinary inhospitality, such as the Samaritans were wont to show the Galilean pilgrims on their way to the feasts at Jerusalem. It was not merely as such a pilgrim that they shut their doors against Him, but because, as they esteemed it, a Messiah going to Jerusalem to observe the feast there, did by this very act proclaim that He was no Messiah, for on Gerizim, as they believed, the old Patriarchs had worshiped (John iv. 20.), consecrating it to be the holy mountain of God—which, therefore, and not Jerusalem, the Christ, when He came, would recognize and honor as the central point of all true religion.

54. And when his disciples, James and John, saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?—2 Kings i. 10, 12.

Lord. The exasperation of these disciples was probably associated with their recollections of the scene of the Transfiguration, where Moses and Elias did Jesus homage. They did not say, "Master, will it please thee, who art Lord of the creature, to command fire to come down?" Nor did they say, "If it be thy pleasure, I would command us to call down fire," but, *Will thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them*, referring to lightning, which comes from clouds in the atmospheric heaven. This savored too much of pride, cruelty and revenge. *Even as Elias did.* (2 Kings i. 10, 12, xix. 12.) They so entirely overlooked the distinction between the Old and New Testament, that they, in the service of the mildest Master, continued to believe that they could act as was permitted Elijah, in calling fire from heaven, forgetting, too, that his office was that of a stern judge and reformer, and that he was the vicegerent of an avenging Deity, to execute judgment upon the worship of Baal, which had almost wholly superseded that of Jehovah.

The spirit exhibited by these two disciples, on this occasion, shows us that it was not without good reason that our Lord called them Boanerges, or Sons of Thunder, when He first ordained them to be Apostles. (Mark iii. 17.) It was commendable on the part of these men that they had so much love to Jesus, as to feel indignant at a denial of an act of kindness toward Him, but their fault was that they were so carried away with passion and revenge. It is also evidence of the transforming power of the grace of God, in John's case, that though we find him three times guilty of sins against charity—once when he asked to sit at Christ's right and left hand in His kingdom, and to be preferred before all the Apostles; another, when he forbade a man to cast out devils, because he did not follow the Apostles; and here again showing a fierce and cruel spirit against the Samaritan villagers for not receiving our Lord—yet this was the Apostle who proved at last most remarkable for preaching love and

charity. No change is too great for the Lord to work.

"Our Saviour," says *Paley*, "always had in view the posture of mind of the persons whom He addressed. He did not entertain the Pharisees with invectives against the open impiety of their Sadducean rivals; nor, on the other hand, did He soothe the Sadducees' ear with descriptions of Pharisaical pomp and folly. In the presence of the Pharisee He preached against hypocrisy; to the Sadducees He proved the resurrection of the dead. In like manner, of that known enmity which subsisted between the Jews and Samaritans, this faithful Teacher took no undue advantage to make friends or proselytes of either. Upon the Jews He inculcated a more comprehensive benevolence; with the Samaritan He defended the orthodoxy of the Jewish creed. (2 Tim. ii. 15.)"

55. But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of, 56. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village. John iii. 17 and xii. 47.

Jesus rebuked the revengeful spirit of the disciples as contrary to the design of Christianity, and as proceeding from ignorance of the dispensation under which they lived, of themselves and of Him as their Lord and Master. "You are missing your true position, which is, having been born of the spirit of forgiving love, to be ruled by that spirit, and not by the spirit of avenging righteousness." There is no slight cast here on the spirit of Elias. The spirit of the Old Testament was such that God was teaching men by "terrible things in righteousness" His holiness. But the spirit of the New Covenant, not contrary but higher, is that of forgiving love. In it He is overcoming man's evil with His good. *For the Son of man, &c., i. e.,* the proper intent and design of Christ's coming was to save and not to destroy, though the accidental effect of it may be otherwise, through the malice and perverseness of men. *Another village*, where the friends of Jesus may have been numerous.

A mild, merciful and forgiving spirit, should be cultivated and cherished by all Christians. God loves more to hear His people intercede for perishing sinners (as Abraham did for Sodom), than to hear them plead for their destruction. It better

becomes a creature, who deserves himself to be consumed, and who has been snatched by the arm of Divine mercy, as a brand from the burning, to ask for *mercy* for his fellow-sinners, than to invoke vengeance. How important it is that our zeal for God should be "according to knowledge!" John afterward came down to Samaria in a very different spirit from that manifested on this occasion. (Acts viii. 25.) Our Lord's rebuke to his disciples plainly expresses His entire disapproval of all persecution for religion's sake. Whatever we may think of men's doctrines or practices, we are not to persecute them.

57. ¶ And it came to pass, that as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest, 58. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. Matt. viii. 19.

A resolution to follow Christ is a good one, if made deliberately, and not rashly, nor for sinister and secular advantages, which, it is to be feared from the answer our Saviour gave, was the case here. There is no reason to suppose that this aspirant to discipleship meant at the time otherwise than he spoke, yet he had not in him true devotedness. (See Rev. xiv. 4.) Seeing this, Jesus met him with rather a repulse than a welcome, to throw him back on deeper heart-searching. *Foxes have holes, &c.* "Lookest thou for worldly advantages through the following of me? In this thou must needs be disappointed. These cannot be my followers' portion, since they are not mine. Beasts have dens, and birds have shelters, which they may call their own, but the Son of man is homeless and houseless upon earth, He has not where to lay His head." Nor does this answer of Christ our Lord come out to us in all its depth of meaning, till we realize that hour when upon His cross He bowed His head, not having where to lay it, and having bowed it thus, gave up the Ghost. (John xix. 30.)

The title, *the Son of man*, which Christ here gives to Himself, is, 1. An intimation that He who requires so much self-denial, also fully deserves it; 2. Shows the truth of His humanity, for the Son of man must be man; and, 3. Indicates the depth of His abasement; Christ humbled, yea,

emptied Himself, when, being the Son of God, He submitted to be made man. Had this *certain man* truly loved Jesus, he would not have been deterred by any prospect of privation from following His steps. As no further mention is made of him, it is most probable that he was discouraged by the reply Jesus gave.

59. "And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father." 60. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. *Matt. viii. 21.

Though Jesus deterred the former man who had offered to follow Him, He *calls* this man to do so. If the first was too sanguine and inconsiderate, the second was too melancholy, even in the most immediate neighborhood of the Prince of Life, finding himself pursued by the gloomy images of death, and therefore requiring encouragement. It was not *unwillingness* to obey His call, but a sense of duty to an aged parent, whose funeral he wished to attend that prompted the request. The Lord replied, *Let the dead bury their dead*, &c. "Let the other sons or relatives who are spiritually dead bury the naturally dead." *Go thou and preach the kingdom of God*. Spread far and wide the glad tidings of life, which as many as hear shall live. By this remarkable instance—strong even to seeming harshness—our Lord did most pointedly indicate the superior object and higher duty to which *all* others must give place.

61. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee: but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. 62. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.—See 1 Kings xix. 20.

It is not stated definitely in the case of this person whether the initiative proceed-

ed from the Saviour or himself. He declared his willingness to go with Jesus, but asked permission to delay his coming for a little while, *that he might bid them farewell*, &c. But he too must learn that there is no dallying with a heavenly vocation, that when this has reached a man no room is left for conferring with flesh and blood. (See Gal. i. 16; Ps. xlv. 10; Matt. x. 36, 37.) Our Lord, therefore, gives no allowance to His request, shuts out at once all dangerous delays and interludes between the offer of service and the actual undertaking of it.

Put his hand to the plough, and looking back.

This proverbial expression derived from the labors of agriculture, has been illustrated by parallel citations from the heathen poets. It was necessary that the ploughman should give his undivided attention to the work before him, that his furrow might be kept straight. This therefore aptly inculcates that he who would be a spiritual ploughman should not "cast one long, lingering look behind," upon the world and its concerns. If he does so, his work will be toilsome, ill-regulated and insignificant. Such a man is not *fit*, literally, "well-placed or well-disposed," *for the kingdom of God*, or Gospel work, any more than a man looking behind him is rightly placed for ploughing. It is not merely that he may not *turn* back or withdraw his hand. There must be no back *glances* of his eye, no turning of his head, but the forward throw of the man with all his might. It was by such a winnowing that our Lord selected His seventy. How hardly did even they fulfill the high office,

-
1. What power did Jesus give His twelve disciples?
 2. What did He send them to preach?
 3. What directions did He give them?
 4. What is said of Herod?
 5. What is said of the "desert place?"
 6. What miracle was performed there?
 7. What did Christ ask His disciples when He was alone?
 8. How did Peter answer the Saviour's question?
 9. Explain verses 23 and 24.
 10. What is said of those who shall be ashamed of Christ and of His words?
 11. What are the particulars of the Transfiguration?
 12. What miracle was next performed?
 13. Why did Jesus set a child by the disciples?
 14. Explain verse 50.
 15. State the peculiarities of the three men referred to in the close of the chapter.

CHAPTER X.

¹ Christ sendeth out at once seventy disciples to work miracles, and to preach: ¹⁷ admonisheth them to be humble, and wherein to rejoice: ²¹ thanketh his Father for his grace: ²³ magnifieth the happy estate of his church: ²⁵ teacheth the lawyer how to attain eternal life, and to take every one for his neighbor that needeth his mercy: ⁴¹ reprehendeth Martha, and commendeth Mary her sister.

Our Lord having finally withdrawn His rejected ministry from Northern Palestine, and having arrived at the northern boundary of Judea on His last setting His face in that direction, proceeds to perform, in the midst of apparent dejection, a public symbol of future triumph, by selecting a body of *seventy* to perform a mission of heralding His name and preaching through city and country.

AFTER these things 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.—¹Matt. x. 1; ²Mark vi. 7.

Of the commissioning the seventy Luke gives the sole account, and his narrative is limited to three paragraphs. We do not know the names of any of these disciples. Their subsequent history has not been revealed to us. The seventy were probably selected from the *messengers* mentioned in the last chapter, from the candidates so well sifted in its closing verses, and from some of our Lord's friends in Judea. But why the precise number *seventy*? The most common opinion is that as the number twelve had a reference probably to the number of the Patriarchs intimating the Lord's provision for His Israel, so seventy may have reference to the Elders chosen by Moses to aid him in the government of the people. (Num. xi. 16, 25.)

After these things. What precedes in the narrative. *Appointed.* The Greek word so translated is only found in one other place in the New Testament (Acts i. 24), where it is rendered "*show.*" It signifies, "to mark out, or appoint to an office by some outward sign;" and as ministers were so *set forth* or *publicly inducted* into their office, the word becomes synonymous with *ordain.* *Other seventy also;* more literally and correctly, *others, seventy* (in number). *Two and two.* It has been remarked that reformers in different ages seem to come in pairs: as Moses and

Aaron, Elijah and Elisha, Huss and Jerome, Luther and Melancthon. The disciples were sent forth, *two and two*, to make their message of more authority, and to encourage, strengthen and assist each other. Thus they went forth, heralding Christ's name, and preaching through city and country.

² Therefore said he unto them, ¹The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.

¹Matt. ix. 37, 38; John iv. 35. ²Thes. iii. 1.

As seventy men were too few to instruct all those who were perishing through ignorance, Jesus commanded them to pray that God would send forth laborers into His harvest. Let it be observed, 1. That the world is an harvest-field. 2. That ministers are laborers in this field. 3. That it belongs to God alone to send forth laborers into His harvest. 4. That the number of faithful laborers is comparatively small. 5. That it is the duty of the Church to pray earnestly and incessantly to the Lord of the harvest to send forth an increased number of faithful laborers. The Greek word translated *send forth* conveys the idea of *urgency.* Literally signifying, as it does, "to cast forth," or, "send forth with a degree of force," it implies that nothing but God's powerful and constraining call will ever move men to become ministers and laborers in the Gospel harvest. This declaration of Jesus to His disciples loses none of its force in its application to the spiritual harvest, which is now in readiness for laborers in almost every portion of the world. How small the number of ministers and missionaries scattered over the world! When the Sabbath dawns, how few rejoice to see its beams! It is the duty of Christians to pray for an increase of laborers. For though it be the act of God to *send forth laborers,* He has been pleased to connect this with the prayer of man. Divine operation will not dispense with human co-operation.

³ Go your ways; ⁴behold I send you forth as lambs among wolves.—⁴Matt. x. 16.

Go your ways, literally, *depart,* take your various routes—a word of dismissal, with the slight additional notion of haste.

Behold, I send you. The Greek for "I" is here emphatically inserted, as if to show the dignity of the disciples' office. *As lambs among wolves.* In Matthew (x. 16), the word *sheep* was used. Either word is a most impressive image of the contrast between the meek messenger of the Gospel and the persecutors by whom he will be surrounded; helpless, unarmed, undefended, and, to all appearance, his only destiny destruction. This prophecy of persecution had a special reference to the life-time of those to whom it was spoken. We see its fulfillment in the many persecutions described in the Acts of the Apostles. But the spirit to which it refers still exists, and ever will, as long as the Church stands. Christians must make up their minds to be hated, persecuted and ill-treated by those who have no real religion. (1 John iii. 13; 1 Peter iii. 8.)

4. *Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes: and salute no man by the way.

*Mark vi. 8; Luke ix. 3. †2 Kings iv. 29.

Notwithstanding the dangerous character of their mission, the disciples were commanded to make no provision for their necessary wants. *Purses*—the folds of the *girdle* served as a Jewish purse to carry money. *Scrip* was a wallet slung by thongs upon the person, to contain provisions or other necessaries. They are merely the skins of kids stripped of wool, and tanned by a very simple process. *Nor shoes.* In Mark (vi. 9) it is stated that when the Apostles went forth, our Lord commanded them to be "shod with sandals," which were a less expensive and luxurious thing than shoes—the sandal only covering the sole of the foot, and being fastened about the foot and ankle with straps, whilst the shoe covered the whole foot. In the passage before us the prohibition is only against shoes, and not against sandals. In this fearless reliance upon Divine support and protection, the disciples were to go forth, deterred by no danger, nor depressed by the apparent power of their enemies.

Salute no man by the way. In their salutations on meeting, much time is often consumed by the Orientals in mutual inquiries and compliments, manual and oral. That our Saviour did not intend to intimate any objection to proper salutations

of civility and respect, appears clearly enough from the courteous salutation enjoined in the next verse. At the same time, whilst ministers and all Christians are to obey the command, "Be courteous" (1 Peter iii. 8), they are not to waste their time in useless and empty ceremonies, as others do who have nothing better to do with their time. On the contrary, they are to beware of allowing the world to eat up their time and thoughts. They are to remember that care about money, concern about external comforts, and excessive attention to what are called "the courtesies of life," are mighty snares, into which they must take heed lest they fall. They must show to the men of the world that they find life too precious to be spent in perpetual feasting, and visiting, and calling, and the like, as if there were no death, or judgment, or life to come.

5. *And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house. 6. And if the Son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again.—Matt. x. 12.

The disciples, when they entered any house, were to salute those who resided in it, in the customary manner among the Jews, wishing that the peace and blessing of God might be communicated to them, and proposing the Gospel of peace and salvation. And if the family, or any person in it, was so disposed to receive the truth, as to be worthy of the salutation with which the disciples entered the house, then the blessing would permanently abide on him (Phil. iv. 7), and the messengers of Christ would further instruct and pray for him. But, where this was not the case, the prayers and endeavors of the disciples would return in blessings on themselves. The conclusion of verse 6 is like the expression in the Psalms, "My prayer returned into mine own bosom." (Ps. xxxv. 13.)

7. *And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house.

*Matt. x. 11. †1 Cor. x. 27. ‡Matt. x. 10; 1 Cor. ix. 4, &c.; 1 Tim. v. 13.

The disciples were to abide in the same house which they had entered, partaking of such entertainment as their host might give them. *For the labourer, &c.* This is the great principle on which they were to freely partake of the hospitalities of those for whose good they were ministering.

This expression is a proverbial one. It is remarkable as being the only expression in the Gospels which is quoted in the Epistles. Paul uses it in writing to Timothy, in connection with the expression, "the Scripture saith." (1 Tim. v. 18.) *Go not from house to house*, be content with such lodgings as have been provided for you, and be not hard to please either in the matter of bed or board. Spend not your time in convivial feasts. Show the people that you are seeking *them*, and not *theirs*. Not ministers alone, but all believers are here reminded of the necessity of simplicity and unworldliness in their daily life. We must beware of thinking too much about our meals, our furniture, and our houses, and all those things which concern the life of the body. We must strive to live like men whose first thoughts are about the immortal soul, and who realize that they are pilgrims and strangers in the world.

8. And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you: 9. ¹And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, ²The Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. 10. But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, 11. ³Even the very dust of your city which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. ⁴Luke ix. 2. ⁵Matt. iii. 2, iv. 17 and x. 7. ⁶Matt. x. 14; Luke ix. 5; Acts xiii. 51 and xviii. 6.

Our Lord concluded His instructions by denouncing woes upon the three favored cities in Galilee, Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum. Why did He speak to the seventy concerning the guilt of those cities? To remind them how He Himself, the Son of God, had been rejected by the cities in which He most frequently preached, and thus to prepare them for similar treatment. Our proud hearts are ready to rebel when we find that our instructions produce no effect upon the hearts of men. But can we reprove at want of success, when we remember how our *Lord*, in general, seemed to toil in vain? (See notes on ix. 1-6.)

12. But I say unto you, that ¹it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city. ²Matt. x. 15; Mark vi. 11.

According to the common conception, the judgment of retribution has already smitten Sodom, and Gomorrah, which is added by Matt. x. 15. The two places are generally named in connection. According to the steady teaching of the New Testa-

ment, on the other hand, this judgment, terrific though it was, is only a foretaste of that which is to be expected at the end of days. Compare, for instance, Jude, verse 7, where it is affirmed that the miraculous fire by which these cities were destroyed for their sins was but a symbol of eternal wrath, by which they were set forth as *suffering the vengeance of eternal fire*. The terrible judgment, moreover, with which the Lord here threatens those who reject His servants, is an unequivocal proof of the high rank which He ascribes to them, compared with the most eminent men of God, and indirectly, at the same time, a striking revelation of His own self-consciousness that He was Divine.

More tolerable, because *that city* was more highly favored with spiritual privileges. From this verse, in which our Lord is not threatening the innocent bricks and walls, but the guilty inhabitants of the cities which reject His Gospel, it is evident, 1. That there shall be a day of judgment. 2. That then some sinners shall fare worse than others. 3. That sinners are not to be annihilated, for then how could it be "more tolerable" for some than others? Where there is no consciousness there can be no degrees of suffering. 4. That there will be degrees of guilt and suffering among the lost. 5. That of all sinners, the condition of those will be the saddest at the day of judgment, and beyond, who, living under the Gospel, die after all in impenitence and unbelief.

13. ¹Wo unto thee, Chorazin! Wo unto thee, Bethsaida! ²For if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. 14. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you. ³Matt. xi. 21. ⁴Ezek. iii. 6.

Chorazin. This place is nowhere mentioned but in this and the parallel texts, and in these only by way of reference. It would seem to have been a town of some note, on the shores of the lake of Galilee, and near Capernaum, along with which and Bethsaida its name occurs. *Bethsaida* was in the same region with Chorazin. It was the birth-place of Andrew, Peter and Philip. (Mark xiv. 70; John i. 44.) *Tyre*. This celebrated city, the commercial emporium of ancient Phœnicia, was founded two hundred years before the time of Solomon. It stood on the eastern coast of the

Mediterranean, about midway between Egypt and Asia Minor. It was one of the wealthiest and most celebrated cities of antiquity. *Sidon*, or *Zidon*, was a still more ancient Phenician city, standing on the same shore, about forty miles north of Tyre. It was situated within the limits of the tribe of Asher, but was never conquered by Israel. It was celebrated for commerce and manufactures. Against these two cities Ezekiel prophesies. (Ezek. xxxviii.) They are now little better than ruins. There must, undoubtedly, have been so many miracles performed as well at Chorazin as at Bethsaida, that the judgment here denounced against them was fully deserved, and yet the Evangelists relate nothing whatever of them, a proof certainly that they have been rather frugal than lavish in writing their accounts of miracles. (Comp. John xxi. 24, 25.) Of the precise position of Chorazin and Bethsaida no infallible account can be given, as no certain traces of them now exist.

They had a great while ago repented, &c. Here is confessedly a difficulty. It is affirmed elsewhere, that "Jesus is exalted to give repentance," and that "no man can come to Christ except the Father draw him," and yet it is said in this passage, that if the miracles done in certain cities had been done in other cities, the inhabitants of those cities would have been led to repentance. Would the mere miracles have been able to produce this effect? And if repentance could thus have been produced in those cities, why was it not? We are not competent to solve these difficulties. It suffices, that Christ knew the hearts of the impenitent Jews to be more hardened in rebellion and enmity, and less susceptible of suitable impressions from His doctrines and miracles, than those of the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon would have been, and therefore their final condemnation would be proportionably more intolerable.

15. *And thou Capernaum, which art *exalted to heaven, shall be thrust down to hell.
 †Matt. xi. 23. ‡See Gen. xi. 4; Deut. i. 28; Isa. xiv. 13; Jer. li. 53. §See Ezek. xxvi. 20 and xxxii. 18.

Thou Capernaum. It is noticeable that the Saviour, among the towns whose judgment He denounces, does not speak

expressly of Nazareth. This, say some, was to avoid the appearance of a personal revenge. But may we not rather suppose that it was a manifestation of human tenderness for the home of His mother and of His own childhood? Of the precise position of Capernaum, as of Chorazin and Bethsaida, no certain traces now exist. It was a prosperous city, where Christ had chiefly resided after His entrance upon His public ministry; and as it had, by His presence, preaching and miracles, enjoyed privileges far above other places, so, by reason of its misimprovement of those privileges, its condition would be far sadder than that of those who had never heard of a Saviour. The words *heaven* and *hell* are here to be understood in a literal sense, as the abode of the blest, or that of the cursed. The figure, if there be any, is in the *exaltation*.

Learn hence: 1. That the enjoyment of Gospel ordinances is a great honor to the obscure people and place. 2. That Gospel ordinances enjoyed, but not improved, provoke God to inflict the sorest judgments upon a people. 3. That man is accountable for his belief, and that not believing the Gospel is a sin which leads to hell as really as not keeping the ten commandments. 4. That the clearness of the light against which sin is committed aggravates the guilt. The higher a people rise under the means of grace, the lower they fall if these means are not improved. They that have been nearest to conversion, being not converted, shall have the greatest condemnation when they are judged. 5. It is not alone the seeing of miracles that is necessary to convert souls. 6. Cities are difficult fields for the spiritual laborer to cultivate. Even Jesus, whilst He met with eminent success in preaching in numerous country villages, and among the hamlets of the poor, yet encountered peculiar obstacles in Capernaum, Bethsaida, Chorazin and Jerusalem. Far stronger is the likelihood, humanly speaking, that the mind will be led to receive the truth, and to live in communion with God, in the quiet village where there is time for meditation and worship, and where nature is constantly exerting her elevating influence upon the heart, and calling it to adore its

bountiful and benignant Creator, than in the city, where vice extensively prevails in its producing causes and sad effects, where business presses with unremitting demand, where pride and poverty both have their strongest temptations, and where the whole system of things strongly tends to hurry and hollowness, to superficial acquaintance with one's self and with others, and to the subordination of the eternal future to the life that now is.

16. "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me."
Matt. x. 40; Mark ix. 37; John xiii. 20. 1 Thess. iv. 8. John v. 23.

The vital and indissoluble union, subsisting between Christ and his followers, rendering every act of love or hatred exercised toward them the same as done to Him, is here asserted in the fullest and most explicit terms. The union also between Christ and the Father, affirmed in Matthew (x. 40), is here reiterated, as a ground of assurance in times of peril and persecution, and as giving dignity and authority to the message, which the disciples were to convey to their fellow-men. Men may think it no great matter to slight or neglect the message and messengers of Christ, but that contempt extends beyond them to Christ Himself, who gave them their commission, and beyond Him to God the Father, who gave Him His commission; accordingly ministers are called God's mouth (Jer. xv. 19), their message and their mission being both from Him.

There is probably no stronger language than this in the New Testament about the dignity of a faithful minister's office, and the guilt incurred by those who refuse to hear His message. It is language, be it remembered, not addressed to the Apostles, but to seventy disciples, of whose names and subsequent history we know nothing. It is one thing to regard the minister's office with idolatrous and superstitious reverence. It is quite another thing to despise it, and regard his warnings and exhortations as of no importance. Both extremes are wrong.

17. "And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.—Verse 1.

The exact period of the return of the

seventy is uncertain. It would seem that their mission was of short duration. They returned at short intervals, one after another. *With joy.* They were jubilant at their success according to their Master's commission, but especially in the subjection of demons to their authority. It may not be denied that, in comparison with the conversion of souls, or any permanent gain they brought to the kingdom of God, they gave undue prominence in their joy to the new power given to them over demons. Hence it was, our Lord deemed it necessary to caution them against making this a principal source of their joy. (Verse 20.) It is right and commendable in those who work for Christ, to long to see Satan's kingdom pulled down, and souls converted to God. But let them remember that success, no less than failure, in the good work, carries with it danger. There is such a thing as "being lifted up with pride." (1 Tim. iii. 6.) We are all inclined to sacrifice to our net, and burn incense to our own drag. (Hab. i. 16.) In the midst of our triumphs, let us cry earnestly, "Lord, clothe us with humility."

Even the devils. Rather *demons*, which in Greek is properly a different word from *devil*. The word *devil* is seldom used in the original in the plural, and commonly signifies Satan, the prince, while all the inferior evil spirits are *demons*. The *demons*, it was, who *possessed men*. *Are subject unto us.* Not merely cast out, but *subjected*, subdued and tamed. *Through thy name*, literally, *in thy name*, i. e., clothed with thy authority. They confessed that it was only in Christ's name they could do such a work. The laborer for Jesus may rejoice in the happy effect of his efforts, if he ascribe the glory to his Master, and not to himself.

18. And he said unto them, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven."
*John xii. 31 and xvi. 11; Rev. ix. 1 and xii. 8, 9.

It cannot be doubted that this verse, as a triumphal declaration, of which the report of the seventy was suggestive, is to be regarded as setting forth the total downfall of the prince of darkness, as it passed before our Lord's prophetic sweep of spiritual wisdom, and is destined to go on and be consummated in the future history of the Church. *Beheld*, here, is in the Greek

imperfect, *I was beholding*, embracing the past as well as the future, the entire downfall of Satan from the loss of his first estate, to his future overthrow in the great contest of heaven and hell on earth. *I was beholding*, the verb grammatically describes the action as *going on* while another action is being performed. We may properly call the whole inner life of Jesus a continuous spiritual beholding of the discomfiture of the kingdom of darkness, one which is to be restricted to no particular time. By Christ's words the seventy would understand that they had by no means deceived themselves, since He, accompanying them in spirit, had seen the downfall of Satan, whose servants the demons were. It will be observed that *Satan* is here referred to as a real and personal being. The words, *as lightning* (see Zech. ix. 14), express not only the suddenness of his fall, long since, but the fact that he was an angel of light. The words, *from heaven*, may refer to his original state of glory and bliss, or the greatness of his fall from such a height of power and glory. From this verse we are to learn, that the powerful and efficacious preaching of the Gospel is the special means ordained and appointed by the Lord Jesus Christ for the subversion of Satan's kingdom in the world: as the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to them that believe and obey it, so it is the power of God unto destruction to Satan, and all that fight under his banner against it.

19. Behold, ^{b1} I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

^bMark xvi. 18; Acts xxviii. 5.

Power to tread on serpents and scorpions. Are these words to be interpreted figuratively or literally? In favor of the literal view, may be placed our Lord's promise in Mark xvi. 18, and the fact that Paul took up a viper and was unhurt. (Acts xxviii. 56.) In favor of the figurative view, may be placed the fact, that Satan is called the "old serpent," that his agents partake of his nature, and that there is a promise in Gen. iii. 15, that "the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head," in which all Christ's members are interested. (See also Ps. xli. 14.) The probability is, that both interpretations are true. (See Acts xxviii. 56.)

Serpents are the well-known emblems of Satan's power, and part of the curse in the animal creation. *Scorpions* (poisonous insects about four inches long, with a sting in their tails, and found in tropical climates) are often put figuratively for crafty, wicked and malicious men. (Ezek. ii. 6.) The disciples were to go forth under the promise of Divine protection, assured that neither strength nor stratagem should overcome them. They were not only to be unharmed by poisonous reptiles (Ps. xci. 3), but to cast down all might in the spiritual world which exalted itself in hatred against Christ.

Over all the power of the enemy. This shows that spiritual evil is mainly referred to, it is supplementary and explanatory of what goes before, and includes every form of evil. *And nothing shall by any means hurt you, literally, in any respect.* The form is intensive. Neither the power, presence, nor protection of God shall be wanting to any of Christ's ministers or members, who go forth in His strength against the spiritual enemies of their salvation. Nothing shall really hurt them. Faithful Christians will be enabled by God's powerful grace to tread unharmed on the evil things of this life, and perform its secular business, which bite other men and kill them. To such faithful ones will be fulfilled the promise, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (James iv. 7.)

20. Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you: but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.

^cEx. xxxii. 32; Ps. lxxix. 28; Isa. iv. 3; Dan. xii. 1; Phil. iv. 3; Heb. xii. 23; Rev. xliii. 8, xx. 12 and xxi. 27.

In these words of our Saviour to the seventy, there is something corrective, and something directive. The corrective part lies in the first words, in which Christ checks their excess of joy for victories gained over evil spirits. *In this rejoice not, &c.* Let not your hearts too much overflow with joy upon this occasion. The negative is not absolute, but comparative. Christ does not forbid, but only qualifies and moderates their joy. One might cast out devils, and yet himself be still a child of darkness. (Matt. vii. 22.) Then, again, that joy must of necessity be ill-founded and defective, which arises solely from the success that attends labor for Christ. It might easily and unconsciously be joined

with self-seeking and pride. It must, too, be fitful and irregular in its exercise, rising high with every external indication of success, and depressed to an equal degree when unsuccessful in the object of pursuit. Our Lord, therefore, gave a better direction to the joy of His disciples. He called upon them to exercise that spiritual joy which springs from an assurance of personal acceptance with God, which will always be permanent, well-regulated and productive of all the Christian graces, and in which there is no selfishness, inasmuch as to rejoice in one's own personal union with Christ, is to rejoice in everything pertaining to a profession of His name, the salvation of men, the progress of truth, and the downfall of error. *But rather rejoice*—let this be your chief rejoicing—it is a far higher privilege to be converted and pardoned men, and to have your names written in the register of saved souls, than to be allowed to cast out devils. *Because your names are written in heaven.* It was the ancient custom that citizens in every commonwealth should be enrolled in a book, and when any were admitted to the rights of citizenship their names were registered on this list. "Our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven." (Heb. xii. 23.) The seventy knew undoubtedly, as we also do, the beautiful figure of the Old Testament, which depicts to us the Eternal One with a book before His face, wherein are recorded the names and deeds of His faithful servants. (Ex. xxxii. 33; Mal. iii. 16; Est. v. 1, 2; Ps. lix. 28; Dan. xii. 1. See also Phil. iv. 3; Rev. iii. 5, xiii. 8, xx. 12.) The assurance to them was: "You are registered in heaven as citizens of God's kingdom, and persons who by God's eternal love have been brought to salvation through Christ, pardoned, accepted and saved." Thus they were given to understand that their own deliverance from the power of the devil ought to dispose them far more to thankful joy than their most glorious triumph over His disarmed servants.

In this verse the important difference between grace and gifts is presented. Gifts, such as mental vigor, vast memory, striking eloquence, ability in argument, power in reasoning, are often unduly

valued by those who possess them, and unduly admired by those who possess them not. These things ought not so to be. Men forget that gifts without grace save no one's soul, and are the characteristic of Satan himself. Grace, on the contrary, is an everlasting inheritance, and, lowly and despised as its possessor may be, will land him safe in glory. Our Lord declares that many in the solemn day of final account and retribution, even of such as have preached the Gospel, prophesied in His name, wrought miracles, cast out devils, will be rejected by Him. Not only one Balaam who prophesied, or one Judas an Apostle, will be condemned, but *many* will plead in vain their profession, gifts, and services, and the miracles which they have wrought in the name of Christ. He will then, before commanding them to depart from Him, disavow all knowledge or approbation of them, as His disciples and servants, saying, "I never knew you."

21. ¶ In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.—Matt. xi. 25.

In that hour—at the season of that transaction. If from the preceding words (verse 20), it might appear as though the Saviour did not wholly share the transport of His disciples, and regarded the joy which they reaped in their work with less satisfaction than they themselves, we see here the contrary. *Rejoiced in spirit*, literally, *exulted*, the word being expressive of the most intense joy. (See Acts ii. 26; 1 Peter iv. 13; Rev. xix. 17.) Three times we are told in the Gospels that our Lord Jesus Christ wept. Once only are we told that He rejoiced. And what was the cause of His joy? It was the conversion of souls. It was the manifestation of the abundant grace of God, in gathering around Him this little band of disciples, as the messengers of His love, and endowing them with such power against the adversary. It was the reception of the Gospel by the weak and the lowly among the Jews, when the "wise and prudent" on every side were rejecting it.

We might learn to know ourselves better than we do, if each would inquire, "What are the things that please and grieve me

most?" We shall find that we are by nature selfish—that we are too much concerned about the events that befall *ourselves*, and too little about those that befall our fellow-creatures. Above all, we are naturally indifferent to the glory of God. None, except those who are converted, care in the least degree whether souls are saved or not, or whether God is honored or despised. But all such, in this respect, sympathize with Jesus.

I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, &c. Christ addressed the Father as the proprietor and governor of the universe, who "doeth whatsoever pleaseth Him," in heaven and on earth. And He *thanked* or adored Him, and professed an entire acquiescence in His wisdom, equity and goodness, which were worthy of all adoration, in that He was pleased to conceal the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven from some, and reveal them to others. The two classes of persons intended to be described were not the *really* "wise and prudent," but those who called themselves so, and who, for this world, might be called so—men with a swelling conceit of their proficiency in wisdom, but whose proud and carnal hearts, however sagacious in carnal things, were not favorably disposed toward, and understood not the things of the Spirit—not only the statesman, the general and the prince, but the scribe, the Pharisee, the rabbi, the priest and the pontiff. Not *really* "babes," either, but such persons as, being humble, modest, and having a low esteem of their own wisdom, gave themselves up to the Divine wisdom, and being free from carnal and worldly affections, were fitted to embrace it when it was revealed.

That thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. We are not to understand that God did, by any *positive influence*, hide the proofs of Christ's mission from the wise and prudent. They had the Scriptures in their hands; they saw or heard of His miracles, and heard, or might have heard, His doctrine, but they were blinded by pride and carnal prejudices, and He was pleased to give them up to be judicially blinded. God did not put darkness into their minds, but He left them to their

own darkness, or denied them that light which they had no desire to see.

Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. This God had done for wise and gracious reasons, which He was not pleased to assign. (See Eph. i. 9-12.) It *seemed good*—it seemed right to the Infinite Mind. As though Christ had said: "Father, thy choice pleases me, as being the choice and good pleasure of thy wisdom." The truth which this verse embodies is deep and mysterious. "It is high as heaven, what can we do? It is deep as hell, what do we know?" Why some around us are converted, and others remain dead in sins, we cannot fully understand. Why America is a Christian country, and India buried in idolatry, is a problem we cannot solve. We only know that it is so. We can only acknowledge that the words of our Lord Jesus Christ supply the only answer that mortal man ought to give, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." At the same time, it should be remembered that God's offers of salvation are free, wide, broad and unlimited, and that the same God who does all things according to the counsel of His own will, always addresses us as accountable creatures—as beings whose blood will be on their own heads, if they are lost. We cannot understand all His dealings. We see in part, and know in part. Let us rest in the conviction that the judgment day will clear up all, and that the Judge of all will not fail to do right.

22. "All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him."

"Matt. xxviii. 18; John iii. 35, v. 27 and xvii. 2. John i. 18 and vi. 44-46.

This verse expresses the Divine correspondence between the Father and the Son which had been implied by the thanksgiving of the previous verse. It is a very remarkable declaration of our Lord's personal and mediatorial dignity. The Father *had delivered all things unto Him*—the whole system of salvation, all power, authority and judgment over all creatures. None knew Jesus as the Son of God, but the eternal Father; even as none knew the Father, except the Son; neither could any man truly know the Father, except as the Son revealed His

nature and glory to Him; for this was committed to Him as Mediator, in respect of all the sinful race of men. This represents Christ as co-equal with the Father, and is an argument for His Divinity. (See Matt. xi. 25, 27.)

23. † And he turned him unto *his* disciples, and said privately, †Blessed *are* the eyes which see the things that ye see: 24. For I tell you, †that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen *them*; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard *them*.
†Matt. xiii. 16. †1 Peter i. 10.

Thus far the face of Jesus has been toward the face of the seventy, but now He so turns as to address the disciples who had gathered around, *privately, i. e., separately*. He congratulates *them* particularly on the blessedness of the Gospel revelation to them in connection with the seventy. This is one of our Lord's sublimest utterances. He proclaims Himself as Him in whom alone not only the expectation of the earlier time is fulfilled, but in whom also the ornament and crown of mankind has appeared. *Blessed are the eyes, &c.* Your blessed eyes see not only the outside shell of truth, but the inner kernel. *Many prophets*, as Moses, Isaiah and Daniel, and many *kings*, as David, Solomon, Hezekiah, Jehoshaphat and Josiah, and the other Old Testament saints represented by them, to whom the times of the Messiah, His character and kingdom were all a matter of profound interest, had earnestly longed to see and hear the things which the disciples and Apostles were seeing and hearing, but were denied the privilege. The men of old saw them only by faith in types, shadows and dim intimations, but the disciples saw them with their bodily eyes, as living and present realities. *They* looked forward to the Redeemer who was in due time to appear, and rested their hopes on Him; they had their light from this Sun, before He arose above the horizon, and they longed to see Him already risen, but this was reserved as a peculiar blessing for the Apostles and disciples, whose light was proportionably more distinct and clear. The word *kings* is here substituted for *righteous men*, in Matt. xiii. 17, and this was probably done to give emphasis to the sovereign grace of God, in revealing these great truths to those of lowly condition; also to magnify

the dignity of those to whom the revelation of the Son in the flesh is vouchsafed.

We have probably a most inadequate idea of the enormous advantages enjoyed by believers who have lived since Christ came into the world, compared to those of believers who died before Christ was born. It is the difference of twilight and noonday, of winter and summer, of the mind of a child and the mind of a full-grown man. The humblest Christian believer understands things which David and Isaiah could never explain. Let us see that we make a good use of our high and holy privileges, never forgetting that in proportion to our advantages will be our responsibility.

25. † And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tempted him, saying, †Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?—†Matt. xix. 16 and xxii. 35.

At some pause in our Lord's discourse, while the multitude still remained on the spot, expecting further instruction, a *certain lawyer*, or one who devoted himself to the study of the law of God, who was watching his opportunity, interposed with the demand, *Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?* Of all questions this is infinitely the most momentous for every man; and the wonder is that men generally can let so many far less important questions agitate and vex them, whilst this one is regarded with indifference. Though it is said that the lawyer *tempted Christ*, yet to *tempt*—as when it is said that God tempted Israel, which, in a bad sense, we know He could not do—is simply to *try*; and by the law of charity, which thinketh no evil, as well as from regard to his answers and whole bearing, this man is entitled to a favorable construction both of his motives and object. He had heard of Him whose fame filled the whole land, and to ascertain whether He was as great a teacher as fame—prone to exaggerate—reported, to measure His ability, perhaps to try His soundness, he tested Him by this fair and momentous question.

26. He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?

This reply of our Lord is as much as to say, the question you ask is already answered. What need to make further inquiries, when the answer is contained in the words of that very law of which

you profess to be a searcher and expounder? What is written there concerning this great question? A very strong testimony to the excellence and perfection of Scripture is found in the simple fact, that the Author of Scripture ever appealed to it for answers to all questions that were addressed to Him. The Bible, then, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible, should be the rule of our faith and practice. Holding this principle we travel upon the King's highway. The road may sometimes seem narrow, and our faith may be sorely tried, but we shall not be allowed greatly to err.

27. 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; and thy neighbour as thyself."

¹Deut. vi. 5; Heb. viii. 10. ²Lev. xix. 18.

That the lawyer should at once quote, as he did, the great commandment, from Deut. vi. 5, in connection with Lev. xix. 18, proved that he was superior to the common range of his countrymen. This reply was an answer to his own question. For there is no entrance into life, or inheritance in heaven for an unloving spirit. Whatever be the means by which that love to God and man is to be produced, one thing is clear, that unless it does exist, there can be no eternal life, for "God is love," and to love God is to live.

28. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right this do, and without shalt live.
¹Lev. xviii. 5; Neh. ix. 29; Ezek. xx. 11, 13, 21; Rom. x. 5.

In the view just given, our Lord's answer here is to be accepted in all simplicity as the great universal cardinal truth in the case. Life was offered at first, and life is offered still, as the reward of obedience. It is not safe, it is not needful to apologize for this statement, or to explain it away. It is not in any sense contrary to evangelical doctrine. It is really true that the fulfilling of God's law will secure His favor. Nor is this a thing merely to be admitted in its own place when it comes up. It is the truth that lies at the foundation, and on which all other truth leans. The basis of all is, obedience deserves life, and disobedience deserves death. Mankind have disobeyed; we all have sinned, and are, therefore, all under condemnation. Nothing but a perfect obedience can gain God's favor. Hence the covenant, and

hence the incarnation and sacrifice of Christ; hence the substitution of the just for the unjust. The Gospel is not an exception to the law, "This do and thou shalt live." The Gospel is founded on that law. This law Christ came not to destroy, but to fulfill. In these words, *Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live*, there is concealed the secret charge, that the lawyer was more concerned about knowledge and book-learning than to exercise himself unto obedience, and that he had almost wholly neglected this. *This do*, which is as much as to say, Lo, thou hast never done or fulfilled it; *this do, and thou shalt live*, as though Christ had said, "Your knowledge is correct and admirable, just convert it into action. You have plenty of light, now let it shine and glow through every act of your life and every utterance of your lips. Your answer is admirable; only let your head and your heart, and your hand be in perfect harmony, and the whole law will attest that you have fulfilled it. If you do perfectly fulfill it, you shall live; but this cannot be done by you, nor by others, and therefore life must be sought elsewhere." Well is it for those to whom the law, by convincing them of sin and misery, and teaching them their inability to obtain salvation by its works, has been a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ.

29. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor?—¹ Luke xvi. 15.

Much as he might have deceived himself as to his loving God, he knew and remembered—as we all do—many cases in which he had not loved his neighbor as he loved himself. How could he escape from the dilemma in which he was placed? He wished to *justify himself* in regard to these violations of law, and remove the blame from himself, on the ground that it might be laid upon the law itself and its Divine author, who had not sufficiently explained what He had meant by the term *neighbor*, and had hence given occasion to disobedience against this command. He knew that if he could confine the term *neighbor* within very narrow limits, he might evade the difficulty pressing upon him, and though he had failed doing to many what he would have wished them

to do to him, still satisfy himself that he had kept the whole law—hence the question, *Who is my neighbor?*

30. And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

A certain man, evidently a Jew. It could not have been said of a Samaritan, who was not permitted to go to Jerusalem, that he was departing thence to another place. Besides, unless we suppose this man to have been a Jew, having acknowledged claims upon the kindness and protection of the priest and Levite, the point of the parable is lost, namely, the striking contrast between the hard-hearted selfishness of these persons, and the great benevolence of the Samaritan. Indeed, the whole complexion of the narrative assumes that this unfortunate sufferer was a Jew, and we think his nationality is not stated precisely because it could not be mistaken. *Went down*, or, "was going down," not merely because Jerusalem, from the height of the mountains on which it was built was considerably more elevated than Jericho, which stood in the vale of the Jordan, but because the going to Jerusalem, as to the metropolis, was always spoken of as going up. (See Acts xviii. 22.) The distance between the two places was eighteen miles. Jericho was at this time an important city. Indeed, it would seem from *Josephus* to have been next in consequence to Jerusalem itself.

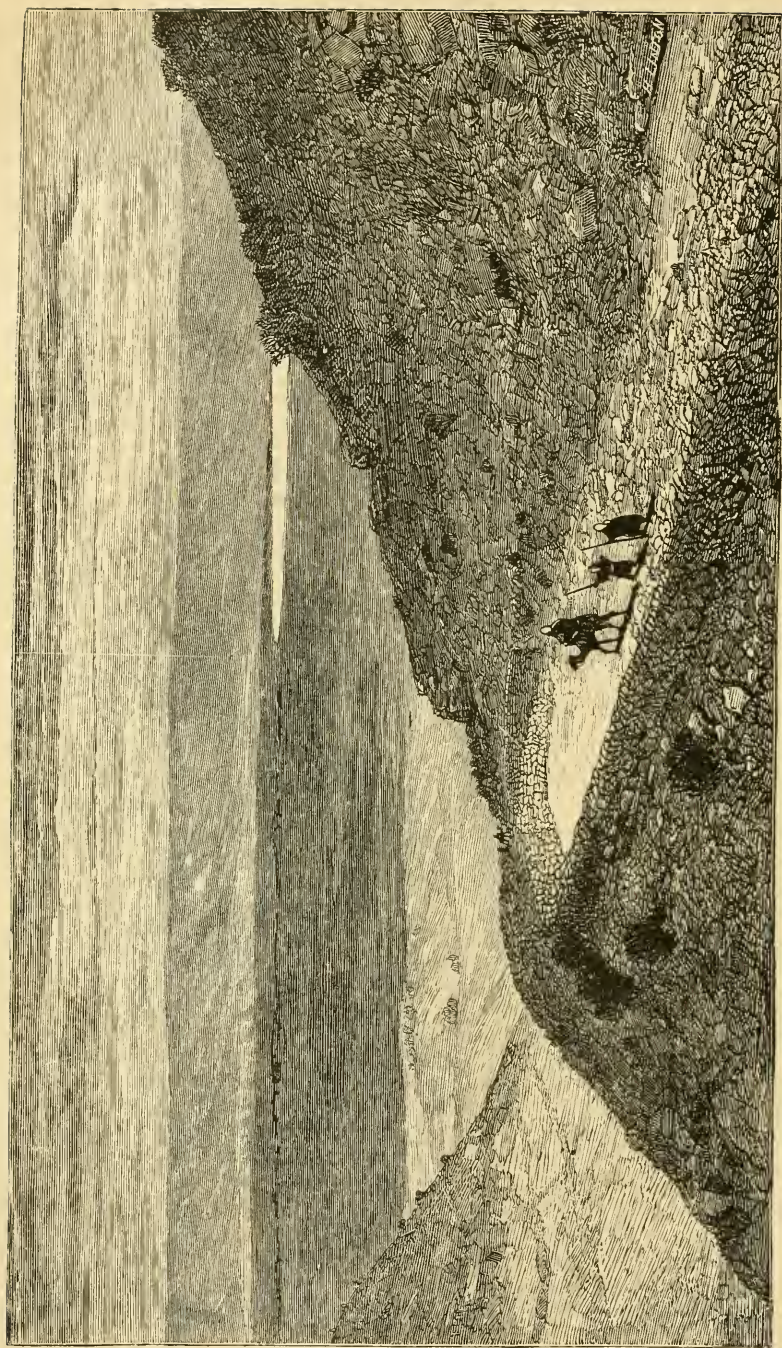
How fitly the road from one of these cities to the other was made the scene of this interesting story, will appear when it is understood that this road has always been infested by numerous daring and desperate robbers. *Fell among thieves*, not merely robbers, but men whose trade it was to take life with as little compunction as they would take money. *Which stripped him of his raiment, i. e.*, despoiled him of everything he had on or about his person, and because, perhaps, he made some slight resistance as they were despoiling him, or out of mere wantonness and cruelty, "wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead."

31. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.—Ps. xxxviii. 11.

And by chance. This is an unfortunate

translation. Strictly speaking, nothing happens by chance. It was not by chance that the priest came down by that road at that time, but by "coincidence," that is, by that *concurrency* of events which is so often to be seen distinguishing the acts of God's providence. Many good opportunities are concealed under these events which appear to be *fortuitous*. If we happen to come in view of a man in distress, that is just the intimation of God that we must help him as much as we can (Matt. x. 30), and not to regard such an intimation is not the humane and child-like disposition which our Lord so highly praises. Twelve thousand priests and Levites were stationed at Jericho with a view to the rotation of service at Jerusalem. Hence the peculiar propriety with which our Lord introduces the priest and Levite as passing this way. Whether the *priest* was traveling to discharge his office, or returning from the performance of its duties, we are unavoidably led to expect, on account of his standing and office, that he would be disposed to manifest a compassionate feeling. (Mal. ii. 6, 7.) But although he was a man consecrated to the service of God, and even now on his way from his turn of office in the temple, the sight of his countryman and fellow-worshiper moved in him no compassion—he passed by cold and unconcerned without so much as coming near to help or even console the unhappy sufferer.

He passed by on the other side, marks an intentional turning away and going past on the other side, in order not to permit himself to be moved by a nearer view, or to suffer any sort of detention. We are not informed what his excuses were, but we may be quite sure he had plenty, and that they were very good. Those who seek a good excuse for neglecting the labor of love always find one. He was alone, he could neither cure the unfortunate man there, nor carry him away. To make the attempt might bring the robbers down from their fastnesses upon himself, and thus he should throw away a good life after a damaged one. Love saw no excuses for leaving the man lying in his blood, for it was not looking for them; but selfishness saw them at a glance, and would have



THE WAY TO JERICHO.

created them in plenty if there *had been none at hand.*

32. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

Levites were a class who served at the temple, assisting the priests in sacrifices and other services. They belonged to the tribe of Levi, which was set apart to religion. (Num. viii. 5-22.) Priests were of the family of Aaron in that tribe. The Levites performed the humble services of the temple, as cleaning, carrying fuel, and acting as choristers. They were also writers, teachers, preachers and literati. This Levite was probably returning also from the temple service to Jericho, when he fell in with this wounded man. Curiosity led him near, to look upon the unhappy object, but though he obtained a more exact knowledge of his helpless position, he yet passed by without helping him, and thus manifested a still more inhuman heart, a still more criminal conduct, for whilst the first exhibited selfishness instinctively, the second did so upon calculation.

Thus did the priest and the Levite, who made their boast in, and were the express interpreters of that law, which was so careful in pressing the duties of humanity, that twice it had said, "Thou shalt not see thy brother's ass or his ox fall down by the way, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again." (Deut. xxii. 4; Ex. xxxiii. 5.) Here not a brother's ox or his ass, but a brother himself was lying in his blood, and they hid themselves from him. (Isa. lviii. 7.) These men had not learned that God "will have mercy rather than sacrifice;" they had not yet felt that to pour oil into the wounds of the sufferer is nobler and more acceptable to God than to raise the richest incense, or to perform with the most mechanical precision all the rites and ceremonies of the temple worship. How prone is religion to become a religion of rites and ceremonies, of fasting and feasting, and not a religion of mercy, of love, and of good will! And how apt, as experience shows, are those, who, according to their office and calling, ought to be best, if they are bad, to be not merely in their depravity similar to others, but to go beyond and exceed all others.

33. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him. 34. And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him: Take care of him: and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

John iv. 9. Ex. xxiii. 4, 5; Prov. xxiv. 17; Rom. xii. 20; 1 Thes. v. 15.

God's eye was on the sufferer, and He raised up one who would look upon and pity him. *A certain Samaritan.* His name is not mentioned, but he has left a broad footprint on the sands of time. The Samaritans sprang from the mixture that took place at the time of the captivity, between the Jews who still remained and the heathenish Assyrians and Babylonians. National hatred kept them still apart, even at the time of Christ. (John iv. 9, 20.) That a Samaritan is here represented as the deliverer was directed against this national hatred, and was meant to teach that one often finds in men utterly despised, and from whom nothing was expected, more humane feeling and truer love than in hypocritical believers. (See Luke xvii. 11-19.) The force and appositeness of the parable is enhanced by contrasting the conduct of the despised Samaritan with men of such public reputation as a priest and Levite. How many excuses might this Samaritan have framed for neglecting the sufferer before him! He might have pleaded the traditionary enmity between the Jews and Samaritans, and alleged that he, instead of returning leisurely to his home in Jericho, was on a journey, and could comparatively ill afford the expense or loss of time to which his benevolence subjected him, and that he, as such as others, had reason to apprehend danger from robbers lurking in the vicinity, and that, whatever he did for the sufferer, he would get no thanks, for the man was a Jew, and *he* was a Samaritan, and that the sufferer was beyond the help of man, and that he who was found near him might be accused of having been his murderer. But, instead of doing this, conquering his prejudices and those fears for his safety which, amid such scenes, and with such a sight before him, were not unnatural, he hastes to the rescue. He first *saw* him at a distance, as lying in his blood, yet living, then *had compassion on*

him, then *went to him*, and bending over the bleeding form, applied such remedies as circumstances permitted and his skill suggested. He closed the lips of his gashes, and bound them up, doubtless with strips from his own garments, then *poured in oil and wine*, a common remedial application at that time for wounds, with which, as a traveler, he seems to have been provided (Isaiah i. 6), the wine probably to cleanse the wounds, and the oil to allay the pain. It was common with travelers in the East to carry oil with them, the expressed juice of the olive, that they might anoint and strengthen their limbs, wearied with continued heat. (Gen. xxviii. 18.)

There are many persons who, on beginning a good work, go at it at first with zeal, but lacking perseverance and loving change, they soon turn to something else. But the Samaritan stuck by the cause on which he had embarked. He did not bind up and anoint the wounded man, and then think that his work of benevolence was done, but he *set him on his own beast*, no doubt with great difficulty, *and brought him to an inn*, over rough and steep declivities, probably being obliged to sustain and support him, to prevent his falling, through weakness, from the animal, *and took care of him*. The residue of that day, and the whole of the following night, he attended to the wants of the wounded man, denying himself the usual repose so necessary to a traveler. The *inn* to which the patient was conducted must have been more than a khan built on the wayside, and left empty, a free shelter to each party of travelers who chose to occupy it for a night. It must have been something more nearly allied to our modern system, for there was a resident manager or landlord, who kept in store such provisions as travelers needed, and supplied them to customers for money. But the Samaritan was not satisfied with conducting the wounded man to the inn. Mark the beautiful climax. First, the compassionate heart, then the helping hand, next the ready foot, finally the true-hearted charge. About to depart, next morning, as business required, he leaves the unhappy man in rest. He takes out of a girdle, *two pence*, which, being the amount of a fair day's

wages, was more than as many dollars' worth in our time (Matt. xx. 2), gives them to the innkeeper, engaging him to take care of the sufferer, and pledging his credit for the balance, when he next came that way, if the expense should ultimately exceed the amount of his deposit. Thus was he wise as he was humane, provident as he was generous—qualities that commonly shine in conjunction.

36. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? 37. And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

Here the tables are turned upon the questioner. In his question (verse 29), the lawyer, or scribe, contemplated other people, and speculated upon who had the right to receive kindness: the answer of Jesus, on the contrary (verse 36), contemplates the scribe himself, and inquires whether he is prepared to bestow kindness. The point on which attention is fixed is not, Who, of all mankind, have a right to receive kindness? but, Are you willing to show kindness, as far as you have opportunity, to every human being who is in need? It will be noticed that in his answer the lawyer did not mention the name of the Samaritan, but adopted the circumlocutory phrase, *He that shewed mercy on him*. This answer, drawn by our Lord from him, was, virtually, *The Samaritan is my neighbor*; since, if this man's compassionate service to the Jew was such as to entitle him, in the lawyer's estimation, to be regarded as the Jew's neighbor, then, by a parity of reasoning, the conduct of the lawyer to a Samaritan should answer to the relationship which he had just acknowledged. In other words, the obligation and exercise of kindness was to be mutual. Hence, our Lord closes with the brief but pertinent direction, *Go, and do thou likewise*. Deal with a Samaritan as this Samaritan deals with a Jew, and so you will, Jew and Samaritan, be *neighbors*. And then the lawyer finds himself placed upon that high platform by which the Divine law of love, ignoring the divisions of race, nation and color, unites mankind into one neighborhood and brotherhood. It is not without propriety that Luke, a Gentile, should furnish this most beautiful parable.

In addition to the lessons drawn from

the parable, as the exposition of it has proceeded, let the following, which are plainly deducible from it, be considered :

1. It is perfectly possible to be acquainted with all the truths of Christianity, and not to feel them. 2. We need to know the requirements of the law, before we can appreciate the provisions of the Gospel. 3. We are to do good to all men as we have opportunity. We are not to ask querulous or small questions when we see objects which we know to be suffering with hunger, cold, &c. We are not to ask, Can you pronounce my shibboleth? are you a member of my sect, or party, or denomination? Not that we are to love less the truth, but that our love is to go beyond the limits of our sect, and to express itself wherever suffering is found. 4. And this love, which we are bound to cherish toward others, must not be in word and in tongue only, but in deed and in truth. Our love must be practical, entailing on us self-sacrifice and self-denial, in money, time and trouble. Our charity should be seen not merely in our talking, but in our acting—not merely in our profession, but in our practice. We should think it no misspent time to work as hard in doing good to those who need help, as others work in trying to get money.

In the vast mass and complicated relations of modern society, says an eminent divine, it is extremely difficult to apply right principles in the department of material benevolence. On the two opposite sides we are liable to err, and we ought on either side to watch and pray that we enter not into temptation. 1. It would be a mischievous mistake to give money, food and clothes to every importunate beggar who contrives to cross our path and present an appearance of distress. There are men, women and children in our day, who trade upon their sores, and even make sores to trade upon. To give alms indiscriminately, in these circumstances, is both to waste means and propagate improvidence. But, 2, it is not enough to resist importunities which may proceed from feigned distress. Shut your hand resolutely against the whine of trained, unreal pauperism, but, at the same time, diligently search out the true sufferers, and liberally supply their wants. If from defective knowledge errors

must sometimes be committed, better far that now and then a dime should be lost, by falling into unworthy hands, than that our hearts should be drained of their compassion and dried hard by the habit of seeing human suffering and leaving it unrelieved. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth;" it is better that his abundance should be diminished by an occasional excess of disbursement, than that love, in which his life really lies, should wither in his breast for want of exercise. "The milk of human kindness" this compassion has been called, but let us remember, that if no needy child is permitted to draw it, this milk will soon cease to flow.

It is a point worth considering, whether the modern method of allowing benevolence to vent itself in contributions for the support and comfort of the suffering, unaccompanied with personal visits to the distressed, and personal care for them, either bestows the best culture on the heart, or meets the demands of this parable.

33. † Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.

‡ John xi. 1 and xii. 2, 3.

It is not quite clear at what period of our Lord's ministry, the history here recorded, comes in, nor what is the connection between it and the preceding passage. It has been suggested that one object is to supply a serviceable caution against the idea that active working charity, like that of the good Samaritan, was the only way to serve Christ, and to show that sitting still and hearing is just as useful in its season as relieving distressed people; that outward performance must be based upon an inner work.

He entered into a certain village. This was Bethany, on the south-east side of the Mount of Olives, about two miles from Jerusalem. It was the scene of some of the most interesting events of Christ's life. (Matt. xxi. 17, xxvi. 6; Mark xi. 11, 12, xiv. 3; John xi. 1-46 and xii. 1-3.) Our Lord did not often Himself enter a village, in the latter days of His ministry, when the increasing jealousy and hostility of His enemies rendered it prudent for Him to avoid the more public places.

And a certain woman named Martha re-

ceived him into her house. This is a common expression to denote a hospitable reception. (See xix. 6, ix. 53.) Martha, it is evident, not only from this place, but from her name being mentioned first in John xii. 5, was the housekeeper. Whether she was a widow or maiden lady we know not; we only know that she was mistress, if not proprietor, of the house. From the fact that Bethany is called the town of Mary and Martha (John xi. 1), it has been inferred by some that the sisters were large property-holders, and yet, though this may have been the case, all that is probably meant by this expression is, that they were permanent residents of the village. That the whole family was one of some consideration is evident from the fact that many persons came even from Jerusalem to condole with the sisters after the death of their brother. (See John xi. 9.)

^{39.} And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.

⁴⁰ 1 Cor. vii. 32, &c. Luke viii. 35; Acts xxii. 3.

A sister. Probably her only sister, which also sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word. May not "also" imply that Martha sat there too till household claims called her away? In the East it is the custom to sit upon the ground, or on low couches. Disciples sat near to the feet of the teacher or rabbi. So young Saul sat at the feet of Gamaliel. (Acts xxxii. 23.) There was, therefore, nothing unusual in Mary's posture, as she listened to the Saviour's instruction on things relating to His kingdom, and, possibly, to His approaching death. It will be noted that as soon as Christ entered this house, He began to preach. Whilst bodily food was being provided for Him, He was preparing spiritual bread for others. O that, in our place and measure, we might all imitate Jesus in this respect! Can we come into any house or company, and find nothing to say or do for God?

⁴⁰ But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.—John vi. 27.

But Martha was cumbered about much serving. She was over-occupied, deeply absorbed (the Greek word means "was drawn about distracted") in efforts to make suitable provision for Christ and His

friends—prepare, what she supposed to be demanded, a suitable entertainment for so illustrious a guest and His disciples—make ready their lodging apartments, &c. Thus was she anxious to show her respect and affection for her Lord. Was there anything censurable in this? Certainly not. Jesus is entitled to the best we have. Our most valuable possessions must be laid at His feet. But there *was* something censurable in the spirit and manner in which Martha addressed our Lord. Perhaps, as we have hinted already, Mary had at the beginning, before the Saviour's arrival, also assisted in the domestic labors, but soon afterward had seen that she could now use the precious time more profitably, and therefore left her sister.

Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. As if Martha had said, "Is it right that both thyself and all this company should not be provided for? or is it reasonable that the whole responsibility and labor should devolve on me, whilst Mary sits still utterly neglectful of household duties? send her, therefore, back to her post, which she has left too early, since she can no longer be spared there." What infirmity and weakness intermix with the virtues and graces of the best Christians, especially when they give way to unhallowed passion! Here was fretfulness of temper, and may there not have been something of domestic vanity? Martha's anxiety to make suitable provision for her Lord was commendable, but that anxiety was excessive as her concern for the entertainment was, compared with that which she manifested for the Saviour's teaching at that time. This is evident, not only from the whole tenor of her complaint, but particularly from the fact that, instead of telling her sister she wanted help, she sought, in a difference with that sister, to win the Saviour as her confederate—using, indeed, a sort of two-edged form of speech, which bore with some almost rebuking force upon our Lord and Mary. It will be observed that Mary was silent under her sister's complaint. She did not defend her course, but left it to her Lord to answer for her. When we are complained of for well-doing,

it is our duty, and may it be our prudence to seal up our lips in silence, and to expect our vindication from above.

41. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things:

How contrary to her expectation was our Lord's answer to Martha! She thought that her sister would have been sent away with a check, and herself with thanks; but instead of this, and that, too, notwithstanding the provision she had made for His comfort, Jesus failed not to tell her of her fault. No obligations to any particular persons, even our best friends, should keep us from reproving their faults. The double utterance of the name, as also afterward, "Simon, Simon," "Saul, Saul," was meant to express the dissatisfaction of the Saviour, not so much with the act as rather with the disposition of Martha. *Thou art careful and troubled about many things*—thou art solicitous and disquieted (as the waters when agitated by a violent storm) about a variety of interests comparatively unworthy of regard. Christ condemns not her hospitality, but her solicitude and superfluity, her distraction and perplexity. O how prone we are to exceed in things lawful and necessary! Martha's entertainment of Christ was a noble service, but she was too anxious and solicitous about it. One duty is to be limited by another, and each is to receive its just proportion of interest and attention.

42. But one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

^vPs. xxvii. 4; John xvii. 3; Gal. v. 6; Col. ii. 10, 14; 1 John v. 11, 12.

But one thing is needful. The term *needful* in the Greek is a noun—*necessity*. "Of one thing, even of salvation, there is necessity." This is the thing which ought first and principally to be regarded by us—the well-being of our immortal souls. Other things are needful to *some*, this is so to *all*; other things are needful *in a measure*, this is *infinitely* so; other things are needful *occasionally* and *for a season*, this is so *always* and *forever*. And wherever this interest is properly attended to, all other matters will be used or pursued in subserviency to it. *Mary hath chosen that good part.* It is not affirmed that Martha's occupation was wrong, but that, for the

time, Mary's occupation was better than Martha's. The phrase, *that good part*, is a general expression, and meant to be interpreted with a reference to the conduct of Mary at the time when her sister interposed. She was choosing soul-benefit. She was seeking more grace. She was striving after nearer and closer communion with God and His Christ. This was the portion which she preferred to everything else, and to which she was willing for a time to postpone all earthly care. *That good part*, or *portion* of the heavenly inheritance which Mary was by faith in Jesus receiving into her soul, in comparison with the excellence of which nothing else deserved to be named. *Hath chosen* refers to Mary's own voluntary choice and agency in receiving the blessing. It was her wise and happy choice to "sit at Christ's feet, and hear His words." She was not to be drawn into a neglect of His instructions by any secular cares and encumbrances, and as neither life, death, nor eternity would deprive her of her interest in His salvation, so our Lord would by no means consent to her being deprived of her present satisfaction of listening to His discourse, in order to assist in providing a *needless* entertainment for its plenty and variety.

It will be observed that our Lord, in His declaration that Mary *had* chosen the good part, does not imply that Martha *had not* so chosen. Nor is there any reason to think that this was the case. On the contrary, the indication is quite clear that she was possessed at this time, as we know she was afterward (John xi. 27), of vital piety. She erred, but rather from a mistaken view of the true mode of honoring Christ, than from any real disrespect manifested toward Him. She committed a mistake, which was very natural in the circumstances in which she was placed, but which, when enlightened in reference thereto, she was doubtless ready to acknowledge and renounce with tears of penitence. Martha was a true believer, and did not, in her general conduct, neglect "the one thing needful." In the day of affliction her grace shone clearly and brightly. There is hardly any confession, in all the four Gospels of our

Lord's office, which will compare with that which she made in the eleventh chapter of John.

This interesting narrative suggests the following reflections:

1. It is possible now to sit at Jesus' feet. This may be done by thinking over His words in faith and prayer. Christ is not far from any one of us, and to the humble, waiting spirit will make known His love, though now enthroned above. *Mary sat*—she stayed a while, she waited on the Saviour's words. With open heart, like Lydia's, she listened, anxious to learn, and held her memory, like a golden vase, to catch each precious, fragrant drop of truth which came distilling from His lips. Many, alas, rush into the presence of Christ with steeled hearts, and ears half-closed, attention fast asleep and reason's eye filmed o'er by prejudice, and rush away again, and wonder they are not wise.

2. Let us not suppose that our Lord would not have persons attend to their own household affairs. It is a duty to superintend our domestic concerns with watchful care and diligence. And we can serve God in the family, as well as in the closet and sanctuary, if only we are actuated by the right spirit. We may and should commune with our Lord in our common employments. Thus will they be sanctified, and become to us means of grace. The great danger is from the cares of this world. They come insensibly to eat up our spirituality, and bring leanness on our souls. It is far more frequently an excessive attention to things in themselves lawful that leads men to eternal ruin, than open sin, or flagrant breaches of God's commandments.

3. We must take *temperament* into account in judging of religion. Looking at these two sisters, we might be tempted to infer that the care for eternal things existed in Mary alone. But it was not so. Both were friends and disciples of Christ.

As water is colored by the soil over which it flows, so religion is modified in its features and development by the peculiar temperament of the individual in whose heart it has found a place. Martha and Mary both loved Jesus, and Jesus loved both of them, but they were evidently of very different turn of mind. Martha was active, stirring and impulsive, feeling strongly, and speaking out all she felt. Mary was quiet, still and contemplative, feeling deeply, but saying less than she felt. It was the heartfelt pleasure of both to serve Christ according to their best ability, only each had her own idea how this must be done. With Martha, productivity, with Mary, receptivity, stands in the foreground. Martha is the Peter, Mary the John, among the female disciples of Christ. Martha's character was one-sided, in attaching too much importance to the external, to outward activity; Mary also would have had something one-sided, if she regarded every work of Martha without restriction, as unworthy of her attention and below her dignity. We must not expect all believers in Christ to be exactly like one another. We must not set down others as having no grace, because their experience does not entirely tally with our own. "There is one Spirit, but a diversity of operations."

4. The true Christian's possession shall never be taken from him. He alone, of all mankind, shall never be stripped of his inheritance. Kings must one day leave their palaces. Rich men must one day leave their moneys and lands. They only hold them till they die. But the poorest saint on earth has a treasure of which he will never be deprived. The grace of God, and the favor of Christ, are riches which no man can take from him. They will go with him to the grave when he dies. They will rise with him in the resurrection morning, and be his to all eternity.

1. What is said about "other seventy"? 2. What did our Lord say to them? 3. What directions did He give them? 4. What was spoken concerning Chorazin and Bethsaida? 5. What concerning Capernaum? 6. What did the seventy report on their return? 7. What did Jesus say to them? 8. For what did Christ thank His Father? 9. What did He say privately to His disciples? 10. Who tempted Christ? 11. How? 12. What question did the lawyer ask Jesus? 13. By what parable was it answered? 14. What is said of Martha and Mary?

CHAPTER XI.

¹ Christ teacheth to pray, and that instantly: ¹¹ assuring that God so will give us good things. ¹⁴ He, casting out a dumb devil, rebuketh the blasphemous Pharisees: ²⁸ and sheweth who are blessed: ²⁹ preacheth to the people, ³⁷ and reprehendeth the outward shew of holiness in the Pharisees, scribes and lawyers.

Prayer is one of the great laws of natural religion. That man is a monster, that never prays, that never gives glory to his Maker, nor feels His favor, nor owns his dependence on Him. One great design, therefore, of Christianity is to assist us in prayer, to enforce the duty on us, to instruct us in it, and to encourage us to expect advantage by it.

AND it came to pass, that as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.

As he was praying in a certain place. It is not easy to determine the time or the locality here referred to. The circumstance recorded may have occurred very soon after the domestic scene in the house of the sisters in Bethany, and since we know from other passages that the Saviour was especially accustomed to pray on the summits of mountains, we are almost spontaneously brought to think here of the Mount of Olives, the subsequent theater of His conflict and of His coronation. (Comp. chap. xxi. 37.) When he ceased. These words do not simply indicate that the disciples, instead of interrupting Jesus, waited until He had finished His prayer, but convey the idea that when He ceased praying, there was a profound silence. Lord, teach us to pray, &c. Teach us the body of blessings we may hope to receive, and therefore what object is right, and not presumptuous to ask. It was well in the disciple who offered this request, not only to attach importance to prayer, and to feel his own ignorance and insufficiency in the performance, but to address One who is always able and willing to hear and help us. None teach like Him. Four ways He teaches to pray: 1. By His word; 2. By His example; 3. By His providence; 4. By His Spirit.

² And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, *Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.—Matt. vi. 9, on which see notes.

This was not the first occasion on which Christ gave "The Lord's Prayer" to the

disciples. It is embodied, with very slight variations, in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. vi. 9-13), which belongs to an earlier date. Twice the Lord God wrote the Ten Commandments on tables of stone. (Deut. x. 10, x. 4.) Twice the Lord Jesus delivered the Lord's Prayer. Why the repetition of this prayer? The disciples were defective both in understanding and memory, and the Master gave them "line upon line."

The existence of a progressive sequence in the prayer is seen, even on a casual view. At the outset the suppliant appears lost in the contemplation of the Being to whom his spirit ascends; next, he turns his thoughts upon himself and his own wants. Further, it is not difficult to recognize a progression in the three first petitions, and in the three (or four) last. The recognition of the name of God is the basis on which alone the kingdom of God can be established, and again, this kingdom is the sphere in which the will of God is fulfilled. Further, the prayer for the maintenance of the life of man precedes the prayer for the forgiveness of his sins; and again, it is only when the guilt of the past is removed that the thought is directed to the temptations of the future. The thoughtful reader, who has derived from other sources the knowledge of the Trinity, will also find a reference to that truth in the scheme of this prayer. The petitions of the first and second parts refer to God as Creator and Preserver, the second petition of either part refers to God as Redeemer, whilst the third of either part relates to God the Holy Spirit, by whom the Divine will comes to be fulfilled, and through whose power temptation is overcome.

When ye pray, say: (in Matt. vi. 9), "after this manner therefore pray ye." No rational man can think that it was our Lord's meaning that we should use these words exclusively. The prayer, as we suppose, was intended as a model rather than a mould. It was given rather as a specimen, by the spirit and order and proportion of whose several parts we should guide our own spontaneous petitions, than as a rigid and imperishable enclosure in

which all our pious acknowledgments and supplications should be compressed.

Our Father, &c. We have here grouped together the three principles which settle man's just relations to this and to the next world: 1. The *Filial*. We see in the Most High a Father. This representation of God as Father of those who worship Him, teaches us that He stands in a relation toward them similar to that in which a father stands to his children, and that He regards them in a manner similar to that in which a father regards and acts toward his children—really loving them, and disposed to bestow on them everything that is necessary to their true happiness. 2. The *Fraternal*. We come not with our private needs and vows alone, but with those of our race and brotherhood. "Our Father." Believers, in all their prayers, should think of others as well as themselves. They should remember all their brethren in Christ, and all their brethren of mankind. 3. The *Celestial*. Though we are now of the earth, and attached to it by these mortal and terrene bodies, we are not originally from it, nor were we made to be eternally upon it. We are of Heaven, and for Heaven, for there and not here our Father is, and where He is our true home is. God, though omnipresent, has Heaven as His special residence. The clause, *which art in heaven*, directs our thoughts to the difference between earthly fathers and this Father. "We are to have no earthly thoughts respecting the heavenly majesty of God." The very commencement of the prayer assumes in the suppliant a spirit penetrated with reverence and love and confidence—a spirit which, like the Psalmist, thinks of God as the highest and best portion. (Ps. lxxiii. 25, 26.)

Hallowed be thy name. (See on Matt. vi. 9.) By the name of God, we are to understand His revealed character, and attributes—even all that is implied in the appellation by which He is known among men. (See Ex. xxxiv. 5-7.) The word *hallowed* is nearly synonymous with "sanctified," or "glorified." God's name may be hallowed by us in three ways: 1. In our hearts, by entertaining suitable conceptions of Him; 2. By our lips, when we

acknowledge His Divine perfections, and tell of all His wondrous works; 3. In our lives, when the consideration of these Divine perfections engages us to suitable obedience.

Thy kingdom come. (Ps. xxii. 28; Dan. ii. 44; see on Matt. vi. 10.) This petition implies an earnest desire that the kingdom of God may be set up in our own hearts, reducing all within us to entire subjection to Christ, our king, that it may be set up in the hearts of our children, relatives, servants, friends, neighbors, that the word of the kingdom may, in all nations, "be preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven," that Christian churches may be established in every region of our earth, and that "the kingdoms of this world may become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ," that every opposing power may be put down, and God be all in all. The final setting up of this kingdom has been long predicted. (Gen. iii. 15; Rom. viii. 22; Rev. xi. 15 and xxii. 20.)

Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. (Ps. xl. 8, ciii. 20; see on Matt. vi. 10.) God's will may be considered either as preceptive or providential. To the former, reference is here made, for God's providential will is done in earth, equally as in heaven. Or, if the latter is also referred to, that submission, acquiescence and satisfaction in it, which angels feel and express, may be intended. It ought to be the prayer and care, the study and endeavor of every Christian, that the commanding will of God may be done by himself and by all men on earth, as it is by the saints and angels in heaven, with entireness, harmony, cheerfulness, diligence, constancy and ineffable delight. (Hab. ii. 14; Heb. viii. 11.)

3. Give us *day by day our daily bread.

*Or, for the day.

Daily bread. (See on Matt. vi. 11.) The bread which is convenient, or sufficient for our daily subsistence. Bread is one principal part of the things which are needful for the body, and here, as is often the case, it is put for the whole. By the use of this word, therefore, we are taught to ask only things that are necessary, without craving superfluities, and to refer it to our Heavenly

Father to determine what things are necessary, according to our station in life, our families, and various other circumstances. We are to ask "day by day" the supply of the *needs* of life. Not being warranted to ask, even of the necessities of life, very large supplies, which may serve for weeks, months, or years to come, but as children, continually exercising the spirit of entire dependence on, and complete confidence in, our Heavenly Father's care. The "our" gives rise to two very important thoughts: It points to necessary *labor*, the true way of asking and receiving, according to God's original appointment for man, in Gen. iii. 19, independently of which we eat not *our own bread* (2 Thess. iii. 12; 1 Thess. iv. 11, 12), but another's. Similarly, it points to the obligatory communication and fellowship, since as we in "our" and "us," pray with and for one another, so we may not hold anything that we receive exclusively and covetously, for ourselves alone. (Isa. lviii.; break thy bread to the hungry—comp. 1 Sam. xxv. 11.)

4. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

And forgive us our sins. (See on Matt. vi. 12; Lev. xix. 18.) In this petition the following things are supposed: 1. That we are all sinners, and, as such, stand in need of forgiveness. 2. That we are obliged to pray every day for pardon, as we do for daily bread, for our sins are many and daily. That man is a sad self-deceiver, dreadfully ignorant of God's law, and of himself; who does not see that there is much, very much, both wanting and wrong in him, and that he needs to say every day, "forgive me my sins." 3. That since we are to pray for pardon of sin, it is impossible for us to ever satisfy the justice of God for sin. *For we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.* The willingness of the suppliant is by no means a ground upon which God can bestow on him forgiveness, but rather a subjective condition without which he has no boldness to entreat the forgiveness of his own sins. (Comp. 1 John iv. 18, 19.) This condition, or qualification, let it be observed, requires: 1. That our minds be full of charity, free from rancor and ill-will, and all desire of revenge and secret

grudge against another. 2. That we stand ready to help, and to do any office of love and service for him that has offended us. 3. That we admit our offending brother into friendship and familiarity, which is called *a forgiving him from the heart*; our heart must be toward him as formerly. It is a very striking consideration that this petition is so framed that, if presented in an unforbearing spirit, it is, indeed, an imprecation of Divine vengeance.

And lead us not into temptation. (Gen. xxii. 1; see on Matt. vi. 13.) "Temptation" means "trial." God never put evil into our hearts, or stirs it up there by any positive influence: in the former respect, "a man is tempted by his own lust and enticed," in the latter, by Satan or wicked men. But Providence may permit us to be brought into such circumstances as have a tendency to give our inward corruptions, and the temptations of Satan and his agents, peculiar advantage against us. This the Lord sometimes does, to prove the reality or power of our grace, the sincerity or hypocrisy of our profession, or the remaining prevalency of sin. This petition asks that God would graciously prevent us from being brought into circumstances of strong temptation, that He would not leave us to struggle with temptation in our own strength, that He would instruct us to avoid, that He would enable us to overcome our temptations. He who would honestly and acceptably present this petition, must guard against going into temptation.

But deliver us from evil. (Ps. i. 15; see on Matt. vi. 13.) This may mean, either from that which is evil, or from him who is evil—from the evil thing or from the evil one. We prefer the first sense as the more comprehensive one, and as including the second. It is a prayer to be preserved from everything that is really prejudicial to us, especially from sin, that evil in which there is no good. In this petition we confess that ever since the fall, the world "lieth in the wicked one." (1 John v. 19.) We confess that evil is in us, and about us, and near us, and on every side, and that we have no power to deliver ourselves from it. We apply to the strong for strength. We cast ourselves on Him for protection. It will

be observed that Luke omits the doxology appended to the prayer. (Matt. vi. 13.)

5. And he said unto them, which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves:

After giving to His disciples the form of prayer in verses 2-4, Jesus proceeded in this parable to urge very forcibly on them the duty, not merely of praying, but of praying urgently, inopportunately, yea, of never ceasing to pray until the prayer be granted. The picture refers to a simple, primitive condition of society, and reveals corresponding social habits.

He said unto them, intimating that much was said in the same current which is not reported, but the following parable was clearly recollected. *Which of you shall have a friend* In teaching how God will do, Jesus, at the same time, teaches how we should behave. The same argument is used here as in the parable of the *unjust judge*, one from the less to the greater, or, more accurately, from the worse to the better, with this difference, however, that *here* the narrow-heartedness and selfishness of man is set against the liberality of God, while *there* it is his *unrighteousness* which is tacitly contrasted with the righteousness of God. *At midnight*. This unusual hour is chosen to give force to the reluctance of the man to rise and supply the wants of his friend, and the power of continual entreaties to overcome such well-grounded reluctance. *Midnight* means the time of the greatest internal darkness and necessity. Intercession in behalf of others can never be of any avail, except in this day of gloom and thick darkness, but now may be made in circumstances the most discouraging. *Friend, lend me three loaves*. That he required three loaves for the use of his friend, clearly shows that the bread of the Jews was in very small loaves, or else in broad or thin cakes, according to the present custom of the East. That the applicant had no bread, or anything else in his own house to set before his friend, is to be accounted for by the fact that the Orientals generally only prepare sufficient of bread and other food for the current day; so that a person who arrives at night is more than likely to find the house bare of victuals.

6. For a friend of mine *in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.
*Or, out of his way.

He urges the grounds of entreaty, 1, the unexpectedness of the visitor; 2, his own inability. Of the words translated, "in his journey," the margin gives a very striking rendering, and, most probably, the true one—"out of the way." The benighted traveler represents the poor sinner "out of the way," walking on still in darkness, not knowing whither he goeth, and then obtaining help from one who is a fellow-sinner, and yet a believer, who asks for him from God the bread of life, which he is not himself able to furnish him.

7. And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.

This person is meant to represent Him to whom the believer must go. *He from within*. This, in addition to referring to the person within, intimates that the door was not open, that he did not come forth to converse with his friend. God, from within His house, which is heaven, hears those who pray on earth. *Trouble me not*. He is short and sharp. He echoes not the honeyed word *friend*. We trouble God by our sins, but not by our prayers. *The door is now shut*, that is, fastened, barred and bolted for the night. The door of Divine mercy is always open during this life. *My children are with me in bed*. In the East whole families frequently sleep in the same room. The man excuses his disinclination by the disturbance and vexation it would cause to him and his household. *I cannot rise and give thee*. It does not necessarily follow that the children were in the same bed with their father, the meaning is that they would be disturbed and fretful, if he should rise and thus wake them at such an hour. The supreme rest and happiness which God enjoys in Himself with His saints, does not make Him insensible to our pains and miseries, and He need not quit the least part of that happiness in order to assist and relieve us.

8. I say unto you, ^bThough he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.
^bLuke xviii. 1, &c.; Rom. xv. 30.

The term translated "importunity" signifies freedom from the bashfulness which

cannot ask a second time. The shamefacedness which prevents a modest man from importuning a fellow-creature for a gift after the request has been refused, is out of place in the intercourse between an empty but believing supplicant and the God of all grace. If this Jewish countryman in his perplexity had been ashamed to ask a second time, he would have failed to accomplish his object, but because he was not so ashamed, or at least did not permit the shame to drive him from his purpose, he obtained at length all his desire—even more, not only the three loaves which he asked, but “*as many as he needeth.*” The case was similar to that of the Syro-Phœnician woman (Matt. xv. 21-28). It is not true, in the sense that many affirm it, that our prayers have an effect on *us only*, and *not on God*. As the same unchangeable sun softens the wax and hardens the clay, so does God, who is “without variableness,” sustain and save us in our penitence, and harden and condemn us in our obduracy. We are not to conceive of prayer as an overcoming of God’s reluctance to give; it is, in fact, a laying hold of His highest willingness, as we see illustrated in the case of the woman just referred to. Refusals to a believer are only trials of his faith, to prove his confidence in God, and make the gift, when bestowed, a suitable confirmation of that confidence.

9. *And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.
 *Matt. vii. 7 and xxi. 22; Mark xi. 24; John xv. 7; James i. 6; 1 John iii. 22.

The parable concludes with words in which the same duty of prayer is commended, and no longer in a figure, but plainly. The three repetitions of the command are more than mere repetitions. There is an ascending scale of earnestness. Each one of the words, “ask,” “seek,” “knock,” manifests increased importunity, so that each apparent refusal will add earnestness to the entreaty, until the required blessing is received. The man in the parable did *ask, seek, knock*, and it was *opened, granted, obtained* by him, according to the promise. So must all suppliants do. A man, in order to offer up a good prayer, must ask with the humility of a beggar;

he must seek with the carefulness of a good servant; and he must knock with the confidence of a friend. This three-fold command to pray is, indeed, a commentary on words of our Lord spoken at another time: “The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.”

10. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Lest the strong but general assurance of the preceding verse should be neglected as a customary or unmeaning form of speech, it is repeated here in terms still stronger and more universal, not as a promise to be verified in future, but as a fact of actual experience. The change from the future to the present, therefore, is significant, and not to be neglected in the exposition. “I say, not only that you shall receive hereafter what you ask, but that, in point of fact, whoever does ask, does receive accordingly.” That is to say, believing prayer is never vain or unsuccessful, and the knowledge of this truth is among the most efficient antidotes to skeptical misgivings and excessive care. When we do not receive that which we ask, let us always believe either that we do not ask it as we ought, or that it is good for us not to receive it.

11. *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? 12. Or if he shall ask an egg, will he *offer him a scorpion?

*Matt. vii. 9. *Greek, give.

Our Lord now draws from the domestic circles of earth some precious arguments for confidence in approaching our heavenly Father. From that which the *friend* will do, the discourse of the Saviour rises even to that which one could expect of a *father*; from that which an imperfect earthly father does, even to that which the perfect Father in heaven bestows. *If a son shall ask bread, &c.* The phrase would be better translated, *when your son, &c.* In the original, the question has a negative form, which implies a negative answer. This is not the way you ever dream of dealing with your children who depend on you for their support. *Bread*. Probably the round cake now used in the East, and bearing some resemblance to a smooth, flat *stone*. The same resemblance may be traced between some kinds of serpents

and some kinds of *fish*. *Egg*. This third example is found only in Luke, the two others also in Matthew (vii. 9, 10). Old writers say that there was a white *scorpion* in Palestine, which, when folded up, resembled an egg. Now, if earthly parents will not mock their children, when hungry, by giving them that which is not food, and especially if they will not give them a noxious and a deadly thing instead of food, it may not be expected that God will refuse humble and earnest suppliants the good things which they ask. He will not give us a stone instead of bread, but we may ourselves, and we should fear lest we do, change the bread of God into a stone, by the hardness of our heart. When, too, we do not get whatever we ask, and when we ask it, we may be sure that, in our ignorance and short-sightedness, we asked a stone or a serpent, because they seemed beautiful—not knowing that the one was destitute of nourishment, and that the other would sting.

13. If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

This is the formal argument or inference from the facts indirectly stated in the preceding verses. *If ye then, being evil*—not a comparison of the morally corrupt man with God, but rather a contrast. Men, notwithstanding their depravity, which blinds their judgments, and makes them defective in moral purity, and tends to make them weary through repeated provocations, and selfish, will satisfy the demands of their children, if possible. How then could it be that a holy God should not do that which even sinful man does? The argument of Jesus in this verse seems to derive its force from three considerations. 1. God is the Fountain of natural affection. From Him all the kindness, pity, compassion and love have proceeded, which have flowed through all the successive generations of the world. If, then, the love of offspring be so strong in our nature, how purely and how powerfully must it operate in Him, who tells us that the instinct which Himself has planted in our hearts, but feebly expresses the affection that is in His own breast to the family of mankind! 2. The reception of

the Holy Spirit has relation to our highest welfare. It concerns us in our spiritual and eternal interests. How, then, can it be, that He who blesses our bodies, and inclines our hearts to give our children what is requisite for their subsistence and comfort, will not give us, if we ask, the great blessing which is needed by our rational, depraved, accountable and immortal nature? 3. The influence of the Spirit can never fail of being intrinsically and eternally good. This is not certainly known of any gift which a parent bestows upon his child. But it is true of the Holy Spirit, His influence is absolutely and invariably beneficial. Will not God, then, willingly give the Spirit? It is a precious truth that this view of God, as so human, so paternal, is given us by one who knows what He affirms. "No one knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son may reveal Him." (Matt. xi. 27.) Nothing can exceed the kindness and grace which are thus represented as belonging to our Father in heaven. This great gift of the Holy Spirit, be it remembered, we may ask unconditionally and without limit, as we are permitted to supplicate for nothing else, at the throne of grace. But we must ask in the name of Him whom the Father heareth always.

14. † And he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake; and the people wondered.

† Matt. ix. 32 and xii. 22.

The connection between these verses and those which immediately precede them, is striking and instructive. In the preceding verses our Lord had been showing the power and importance of prayer. In the verses before us He delivers a man from a dumb devil. The miracle is evidently intended to throw fresh light on the lesson. The same Saviour who encourages us to pray, is the Saviour who destroys Satan's power over our members, and restores our tongues to their proper use. It was the *devil* who was dumb; it was the *man* who spake; the demon was the cause of the dumbness of the afflicted person. *And the people wondered*. According to Matthew they were "amazed," and on the point of publicly proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah. This culmination of enthusiasm awakened the strong reaction of the Phari-

sees, and led to the sudden and malignant accusation mentioned in the next verse.

15. † But some of them said, † He casteth out devils through ^aBeelzebub, the chief of the devils.
^cMatt. ix. 34 and xii. 24. ^bGr. *Beelzebub*; and so verses 18, 19.

Some of them—they were Pharisees and scribes from Jerusalem. These persons, let it be noted, were unable to deny the fact of the miraculous healing, and therefore used the only other means at their disposal to discredit Him who wrought it, by malignantly accusing Him of impious collusion with the very demons whom He dispossessed. Thus their very charge against Him may be reckoned as involuntary testimony to the truth of His pretensions to a superhuman power. *Beelzebub*, or *Beelzebub*. *Beelzebub* means “Lord of flies,” and was worshiped by the Philistines in earlier times at Ekron. (2 Kings i. 2.) This god was so called as protecting his worshippers from noxious insects; or as being himself worshiped under an insect form. This contemptuous description of a heathen deity is perfectly agreeable to Jewish usage, and its application in the case before us is a conclusive proof of the extremes to which these enemies of Jesus had carried their contempt and hatred of Him, when they chose the grossest nickname of a false god to describe the unseen power by whose aid He wrought His miracles. The preposition *through* denotes not mere assistance, but union and identification. *Chief* means one who goes first, takes the lead, presides or governs. There never was any person so good as not to be subject to censure and misconstruction. What a trial to the holy and innocent Jesus to be charged with familiarity with the devil!

16. And others tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven.—(Matt. xii. 38 and xvi. 1.)

The words, *from heaven*, show that it was a sign of Christ's Messiahship which these *others* demanded of Him. They appear not to have been satisfied respecting the expulsion of the demon, and now ask a *sign from heaven*, as opposed to a sign from hell, or one on earth, in proof of our Lord's pretensions. It is always one mark of a thoroughly unbelieving heart, to pretend to want more evidence of the truth of religion. To one who has a sincere faith, it is enough that God has once declared Him-

self. He who is not content with this, wants faith, not proofs.

17. † But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them: Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth.
^bMatt. xii. 35; Mark iii. 24. ^cJohn ii. 25.

Knowing their thoughts, by His omniscience. *Said unto them*. Notwithstanding the very awful and most flagrantly wicked charge preferred against Him by His enemies, Jesus, not in the least angry, but rather pitying the misguided men who had made the charge, reasons with them quietly and calmly as rational men, thus teaching us, that, however extravagant the charge may be that is made against us, yet, if we speak calmly and sensibly, there is something in human nature that will lead it to listen the moment we do so. *Every kingdom divided against itself*—in which there is nothing but divided council and separate action, making on one side, and unmaking on the other, setting up and pulling down, internal discord and civil war—is *brought to desolation*, or, as Mark has it (iii. 24), *cannot stand*, cannot be established, made to stand, by such a process. The same thing is true in a sphere still narrower: a *house or family divided against itself*, composed of hostile and discordant members, *falleth*.

18. If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub.

If Satan also be divided against himself, as the Pharisees intimated, when they accused Jesus of casting out Satan by Satan's own power, *how shall his kingdom stand?* No. He is not so weak, so ignorant of what his strength is, nor so reckless of his resources. His bad power is yet a *united* power, and it will not be for lack of oneness of purpose and action that his kingdom shall at length fall. *Because ye say*. These words mean this, I put this question in order to show you the absurdity of supposing Satan to be thus arrayed against himself. The whole argument of Christ was this: “If Satan were to cast out Satan, he would commit suicide. Therefore, how can you suppose that he will help me to depress and put down that very kingdom which is his strength, glory and stronghold?” It is an unwarrantable calumny to endeavor to make it believed that a man is an enemy of the Church, because he is trying to es-

establish truth of doctrine and promote holiness of life, and to cast out error and sin. We must not cease to serve the Church in the midst of all the oppositions of false brethren.

19. And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast *them* out? therefore shall they be your judges.

Here is a second refutation of the charge of the Pharisees: their objection, by parity of reasoning, would extend to their own exorcists, which they would not have been willing to admit. *Your sons*. That is, your disciples. That there were among the Jews *exorcists*, who at least professed to cast out devils, we know from the Apocrypha, from *Josephus*, and from Acts xix. 12-14. It appears, by the writings of the earliest Christian fathers, that this power of *exorcism* remained for some time in the primitive Church. *Therefore they shall be your judges*, to convict them of injustice and malignity in ascribing what Christ did, to demoniacal collusion, when they made no such charge against them and their real or pretended dispossessions. The corruption of the heart is the cause of the corruption of the understanding and judgment. Passion makes men frequently condemn in some that which they approve in others.

20. But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.

^{Ex. viii. 19.}

So numerous and powerful had been our Saviour's works, that the Jews had ascribed them, not to a spirit of common order, but to the very *chief* of hell. But if they were as beneficent as they were powerful, why not ascribe them to the Prince of Heaven, and so conclude that the kingdom of Heaven had come? The argument here appears to be this: "If these miracles which I work are really worked by the finger of God (See Exod. viii. 19), and I am clearly proved by them One sent from God, then, whether you will allow it or not, the times of Messiah have evidently arrived. The kingdom of God has come down upon you unawares, and these miracles are signs that it is so." There was solemn irony in this suggestion to the leading Jews, that, in spite of their unwillingness to see or own it, the Messiah and His kingdom might be come after all. We cannot be assured that God reigns in a soul, but only when the lusts

and evil habits which possessed it are cast out, not by other lusts or evil habits, but by the love of righteousness and the hatred of sin, which is done by the finger of God—namely, by His Holy Spirit.

21. When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace.—Matt. xii. 29; Mark iii. 27.

Strong man. This, the context clearly shows, is "the chief of the devils," Satan, the great rebel against God, and the great adversary of man. His *palace* are the world and the sinner's heart. His *goods* are the temptations of the world, and those lusts and passions of the poor, fallen soul, all those wondrous faculties which once followed hard after God, but are now alienated from him, degraded by reason of the vileness of the objects on which they now fasten. He allows nothing to mitigate their abomination, or change their character; they are in *peace*. The phrase *keepeth*, implies military vigilance. We have, therefore, three qualities brought to view—strength, completeness of the means of defense and watchfulness. Satan is, indeed, *strong*, by not only entering in, but now holding in complete subjection such a palace as he occupies. He "works in the children of disobedience," and that so constringently, that they are called his "children." He "carries them captive at his will," and "the whole world lieth in the wicked one." He is called the "Prince of this world." He is *armed*. He is well supplied with defensive armor, not to be overcome by slight assaults and feeble exertions. He is also well supplied with offensive weapons, never at a loss for means to injure the soul of man. He has snares of every kind, and engines of every description. He knows exactly how every temperament, rank, class, age, nation and people can be assailed with most advantage. We are all born under the dominion of this strong man armed, and have been his habitation by being born slaves to sin. Would to God we had never been so by our own will!

22. But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.

^{Isa. lili. 12; Col. ii. 15}

A *stronger*, literally, the *stronger*, that is, he who is stronger. That stronger one is

the Friend of sinners, Jesus, the Son of God. Mighty as the devil is, he was overcome by Jesus on the cross, when He triumphed over him openly. Christ can pluck the devil's captives from his hands, and break the chains which bind them. If this *stronger* than Satan undertakes to dissolve the terrible union between the evil one and the sinner's soul, nothing can keep Satan and that soul together. Power, irresistible power, dissolves the compact, severs the union and destroys the dominion. The steps of this deliverance are as follows: He (*the stronger*) enters into the soul, *comes upon* the usurper there, falls upon him in His might, *overcomes* him, grasps him by a hand which is "mighty to save," *takes from him all his armor, wherein he trusted*, makes the wondering soul fully aware of his subtleties, and unmasks the secret of his power, so that it is no longer "ignorant of his devices," and *divideth his spoil*, "recovers all those powers and faculties of the soul, which before only sounded as voices from the pit, and tunes them to the melodies of Heaven, at one time causing them to burst forth in the grand swell of victory gained over the tyrant; at another, to join in the new song of praise, with all its sweet cadences of unutterable joy."

23. *He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.—*Matt. xii. 30.

This proverbial maxim, illustrative of the contrariety of Christ's own kingdom and that of Satan, as shown by the opposite works of the two, was addressed especially to such as, on the one hand seized with astonishment at the miracle, on the other hand struck by the blasphemous allegation of the Pharisees, did not know what they should think of Jesus, and were secretly inclined, at least for the moment, to remain neutral in respect to the two parties. These He gives to understand, that in the case of so intense a conflict of principles, such a neutrality was impossible, and at bottom was no better than open enmity. *He*—any one. *Not with me*—that does not harmonize with me in spirit and in action. *Is against me*—is opposed to me. *Gathereth . . . scattereth*. These two words allude to a *gathering* in harvest. Co-laborers gather in concert—

the ravager of their fields *scattereth* the produce. This aphorism, and that other which is the converse of it (Mark ix. 40), do not in the least conflict. The rule, "He that is not against me," must guide us in our judgment respecting *others*. The other, "He that is not with me," is applicable in judging of *ourselves*. The first warns us against bigoted exclusiveness, the other gives us to understand that entire neutrality in the Saviour's cause is impossible. Let it be the settled determination of our minds that we will serve Christ with all our hearts, if we serve Him at all. Nothing is so offensive to Christ as lukewarmness in religion. Let there be no reserve, no compromise, no half-heartedness, no attempt to reconcile God and mammon in our Christianity. Let us resolve, by God's help, to be "with Christ," and "gather" by Christ's side, and allow the world to say and do what it will.

24. *When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest: and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out.

*Matt. xii. 43. *Prov. iv. 16: Isa. xlviii. 22 and lvii. 21.

Sometimes an evil spirit *forsakes* his habitation. This devil having left his house, traveled through *dry* or desert places, but found no *rest*, no satisfaction and repose. It seems probable that in the course of his wanderings he found no opportunity of injuring souls. Our enemy, we know, walks about seeking whom he may devour. Sometimes there is a restraint laid upon him, and he *cannot* perpetrate the evil that he desires, for he can do nothing without the permission of God. Perhaps this devil had left the man, hoping to make new conquests, and to increase the number of his victims, but when disappointed, he thinks of returning to his old abode. He says, "I will return unto my house whence I came out." He *claims* the heart as his own property—"my house."

25. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished.

On his return he finds no obstacle to regaining possession of the soul he once inhabited. Nor is the house less acceptable to him because it is "*swept*." He is greatly satisfied with some appearance of reformation, certain significant tokens of

cleanness, for he knows that these are all for him. Had it been swept or cleansed for another, he would have fled from it with dismay and hatred, but as it is for himself, he exults over it with fiendish delight, as only making the habitation at length more thoroughly his own—and it is “*garnished*,” too. Many ornaments are found within. The soul has put forth some of its inherent powers. It has enriched itself from the stores of art, science and philosophy. It has shown rare skill in works of social benevolence. It has gained a good name for integrity and uprightness. And all this, too, is gain to the evil possessor, not to the rightful owner of it. All these he takes into his hand, and turns them to his own bad purpose of keeping the soul still further from God, and making use of it for the enlargement and increase of the dominion and the power of darkness.

^{25.} Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first.
²⁶John v. 14; Heb. vi. 4 and x. 26; 2 Peter ii. 20.

The unclean spirit will not re-enter weak and alone, but will take with him a strong reinforcement, so as not again to be ejected. He selects some *more* wicked than himself, seven in number, to be his associates, and *share his spoil*. The number seven is often used in Scripture, probably to denote great increase in number, or size, or quantity, or intensity. (Ps. cxix. 164; Prov. xxiv. 16; Matt. xviii. 21; Dan. iii. 19.) There are degrees of wickedness, even among *devils*, and no doubt pre-eminence in wickedness is their glory. It had been better for this miserable man if the first inmate of his heart had never quitted it. His last state was at least seven times worse than the first. How infinitely better would it have been for him, if, when the devil had left him, he had opened his heart to the gracious Saviour!

The case above described is not that of one outwardly going on in a course of vile pollution and rampant ungodliness, but of one in whom outward appearances are favorable, and yet, these very things, externally so fair and good, are turned, by the power and subtlety of Satan, into increased means of rebellion against God. As long as the soul is “*without God* in the

world,” no matter what it may be in other respects, in its outward manifestations, no matter what men may think of it, nor what it may think of itself, it is still the slave of sin, and the bond-slave of Satan.

^{27.} ¶ And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, “Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked.”—Chapter i. 28, 48.

A certain woman. She sympathizes with Christ as a great rabbi, but *especially*, we suppose, in His eloquent denunciations of that class who not only *blasphemed* Him, but *devoured widows’* houses. We are not told who she was, but that she was a mother appears from the nature of her felicitation. *Of the company*—out of the crowd or multitude. *Lifted up her voice, and said unto him*—her feminine voice overtopping all other sounds in the crowd. The scene is truly Oriental, it being the custom in those countries, even now, to implore blessings or imprecate curses upon the heads of the parents of friends or enemies. The words of this woman are to be attributed rather to wonder and astonishment at the sayings and doings of our Lord, than to a spiritual perception of the true excellence and glory of His character and mission. Hence, in His reply, He administered a gentle rebuke for her admiration of His words and miracles, unless accompanied by a lively and productive faith in the truth of God.

^{28.} But he said, Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.

²⁹Matt. vii. 21; Luke viii. 21; James i. 25.

The Greek word here translated, *Yea, rather*, is only found in three other places, and in each is variously rendered: “Nay, but” (Rom. ix. 20), “Yea, verily” (Rom. x. 18), “Yea, doubtless” (Phil. iii. 8). Christ does not gainsay the woman’s utterance, but He rectifies it. “Very true, blessed,” &c.—an intimation to the woman not to let herself be borne along too much by transient impressions. Mary’s blessedness proceeded from having borne the Son of God in her heart, even before she bare Him in her womb. While our Lord admits the truth of the woman’s asseveration, He refers to a state or condition of blessedness enjoyed by the believer, compared with which the previously expressed cause of gratulation diminishes into insignificance. *Word of God.* Christ does not say *my word*,

but the word of God. He frequently turns the attention of His auditors from Himself to the Father who sent Him; not, however, intending to intimate thereby that they were other than one and indivisible, but only that in the work of redemption the Son is subordinate to the Father, and as such, makes it His supreme delight to honor and obey Him. (Comp. Luke i. 48, ii. 19-51; Matt. xii. 45, 48; Luke viii. 19-21.)

What a trenchant blow is here struck against the folly and sin of deifying the mother of Jesus for an honor, which our Lord Himself places below that which is conferred upon every believer in the spiritual relation which he sustains to God, as an obedient and devoted follower! We have reason to rejoice that this great and gracious privilege is not denied unto us now. Although we cannot see Christ, yet love Him we may; His bodily presence cannot be enjoyed by us, but His spiritual, gracious presence is not denied us.

29. †And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, "This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet."
 †Matt. xxviii. 39. †Matt. lii. 7; John viii. 44; Acts vii. 51, 52.

They sought a sign. They had a mob-like desire to see splendid shows in the sky, not unlike the excitement of the populace for fireworks on some day of public celebration. They wanted a miracle so far different from the other miracles of our Lord as this, that it was to be performed, not on men who surrounded Him, but on objects which were apparently elevated above Him, and was therefore to strike the eye so much the more strongly. *An evil generation.* Nothing shows more clearly the hardness and corruption of the hearts of that people, than their asking a new miracle—counting, it seems, all those as nothing which they had seen before. Heart unbelief always professes to want evidence. Our Lord, in view of their extraordinary perverseness, refuses any sign, but the sign of Jonas the prophet.

30. For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation.
 †Jonah i. 17 and ii. 10.

The sign of the prophet Jonah was full of warning to the Jews. Jerusalem was the modern Nineveh; a living parallel to Jonah, greater than Jonah himself, was predicting its destruction. Jonah proph-

esied a destruction in forty days; forty years elapsed between our Lord's ministry and the destruction of Jerusalem. The days and nights during which Jonah was in the whale's belly, and his coming forth alive at the end of them, were typical of our Lord's being in the grave, and rising again the third day. This rising of Jesus should be for His cotemporaries a sign, but not from heaven; from the depth of the earth would this sign be given, yet it served for the condemnation of that unbelieving people. Christ's prophecy of His burial, after the manner of the swallowing of Jonah, was in itself a miracle of foreknowledge, and so a proof of His Messiahship.

31. "The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth, to hear the wisdom of Solomon: and behold, a greater than Solomon is here."—1 Kings x. 1.

The allusion here is to the queen of Sheba. (1 Kings x. 1.) Her name is not known at all. *Sheba* (or *Saba*, of profane history) is a province in the northern part of Arabia, between the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. It was probably settled by Sheba, a descendant of Shem, and the inhabitants are called Sabæans. (Job i. 15.) *For she came from the utmost parts of the earth*—a hyperbole, found also in the best Greek writers, for a great distance. It may have been intended to suggest a difference of race and of religion. The queen may well be supposed to have had some traditional knowledge of true religion, and, in the commercial intercourse of her country with that of the Hebrews, might have heard much of the wisdom and piety of Solomon, and to see and converse with him she undertook a journey from what was then regarded as the uttermost parts of the earth. *To hear the wisdom of Solomon.* Solomon was the wisest man, and one of the greatest kings that ever lived on the earth. He exceeded the Orientals and Egyptians in wisdom and prudence, and his reputation spread through all nations. He composed, or collected, three thousand proverbs, and one thousand and five canticles. He was the greatest philosopher of antiquity, as well in natural history as in morals, being acquainted with the nature of plants and trees, from the cedar on Lebanon to the hyssop on the wall; also

of beasts, of birds, of reptiles, of fishes. He was favored with a remarkable promise of the Divine favor. (1 Kings iii. 12-14.) *And behold, a greater than Solomon is here.* In order to feel the power of this comparison, we must realize to ourselves what is written in the Old Testament regarding Solomon. (1 Chron. xxii. 9, 10; 1 Kings ii. 19, 27, 31, iii. 1, 9, 16-28, iii. 12-14; 2 Chron. ix. 29.) Here, and in the end of the next verse, the Greek word translated "a greater," is literally, "a greater thing." May it not be that the "thing" referred to is "the sign?" There is One here who is a sign of far greater moment than either Solomon or Jonah. The point in which the queen of the South surpassed the Jews of our Lord's time and put them to shame, was "faith." She had faith enough to come a long journey to hear a wise man. The Jews, on the other hand, had "the wisdom of God" actually in the midst of them, and yet they would not believe.

^{32.} The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and behold, a greater than Jonas is here.—Jonah iii. 5.

Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian empire. It was a very ancient city. It was built by Nimrod. (Gen. x. 11.) Its name denotes "the habitation of Nin, which seems to have been the proper name for that "rebel," as Nimrod signifies. It was, as we learn from Jonah (iii.) and profane authors, a city of nineteen miles in length and eleven in breadth, and from forty-eight to sixty miles in circumference. It contained a population of about six hundred thousand. It was surrounded by a wall one hundred feet high, and wide enough for three carriages to go abreast, and was fortified by fifteen hundred towers of two hundred feet in height. *Rise up in the judgment* does not mean to rise from the dead at the day of judgment, but stand at the bar to be tried. *With*—not against, but at the same time, or in company. *Condemn it*—not in words, but by example. *For they repented at the preaching of Jonas, and behold, a greater than Jonas is here.* The point here in which the Ninevites surpassed the Jews, and put them to shame, was repentance. They had among them for a short time a prophet, and a very weak and erring prophet, too. Yet they

repented and turned to God. The Jews had among them the mightiest and most faithful preacher that ever warned a people, and yet they would not repent. The sins of unbelief and impenitence are exceedingly aggravated from the means afforded by God to bring men to faith and obedience.

³³ No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light. ¹Matt. v. 15; Mark iv. 21 · Luke viii. 16.

This verse is very similar to Matt. v. 15, vi. 22, 23. The saying is a weighty one, repeated at various times for the sake of emphasis and illustration. In the present instance it may have been used for a two-fold purpose. 1. As a rebuke to the unbelieving Jews, who had the light, but would not use it. Our Lord intimates that if He worked a miracle among such an obstinate people, who were determined to disbelieve every evidence of His Messiahship, He should act as a man who lighted a candle, and then covered it with a bushel, which must prevent the accomplishment of the end for which it was lighted. 2. As a warning to our Lord's disciples, who believed in the light, that they ought not to conceal the light, but display it to the world. "Men light candles. God has lighted you for His candles to the world. Men are not so foolish as to light a candle to be covered up. So God is not so unwise as to light you for concealment. You are lighted that you may illuminate." *Candle.* A word denoting any movable artificial light, whether candle, lamp or lantern, though the first is entitled to the preference from long familiarity. *Secret place*, literally, in a *crypt, vault, a dark hole or corner.* *Bushel.* The fact that this measure really came nearer to our *peck* than our *bushel*, can have no effect upon the meaning of the passage, which would be the same if the word used had been *basket, box or bed* (as it is in Mark iv. 21). *A candlestick*, or, more exactly, the candlestick, *i. e.*, the one found, of course, in every house. *Light.* Reference is here had both to the beauty and use of the light, a two-fold reason why it should not be concealed in the way here mentioned.

The truths of the Gospel are not to be

concealed nor held captive in unrighteousness, but the people are to be instructed in them. The Scripture, and particularly the Gospel, is our candle. It is the Spirit of God which has lighted and placed it on the candlestick of the Church, that the light of it might be seen by all. The neglect of this light will be a heavy charge against many at the last day. To forbid or discourage the reading of the Bible, or to oppose its circulation, is a heinous sin.

34. *The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when *thine eye* is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. 35. Take heed therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness.

*Matt. vi. 22. *Ps. lxxx. 12; Prov. xxviii. 22; Jer. v. 21; Rom. xi. 8, 10; 2. Cor. iv. 4.

The Saviour fears that the here-indicated darkening is already found in part in His hearers, and warns them, therefore, to look to it that it does not become a total darkening. *Therefore*, since the safety and the comfort of the whole frame thus depend upon the singleness and clearness of the vision. *The light which is in thee*—not the light in general, but that part of the animal economy by which its blessings are secured to the whole body. *Darkness*—the correlative of *light*, and used in the same way, not to denote absolute privation, but any obscurity, caused by the diseased state of the organ. An irregular intention corrupts the whole action. A false light causes a man to fall into abundance of faults. It is one of the most dangerous for us to be unwilling to examine, according to Christ's direction, whether that by which we are led be not rather darkness than light.

36. If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.

The meaning of this verse appears to be as follows: "If the eye of thy soul is thoroughly healthy, and thy heart thoroughly right in the sight of God, so that thy whole character is enlightened and influenced by it, then shall thy whole character shine after the manner of a candle which enlightens thee by its shining. Thou shalt not only have light for thyself, but reflect light on others." The second expression, "full of light," should be read in close connection with the likeness of the candle which immediately follows. If thou art really full of light, thou shalt be like a lighted candle on a

candlestick. Thou shalt be a light to the world. The doctrine that is contrary to the Gospel may say, *Ignorance is the mother of devotion*, but Christ shows that there can be no devotion without heavenly light. Ignorance is the mother of superstition, but with this the heavenly *light* has nothing to do.

37. † And as he spake, a certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him: and he went in and sat down to meat.

It is not known who this Pharisee was. It seems clear that he was not a disciple of Christ. *Besought him*, doubtless, in full concert with the set mentioned in verse 53. The invitation was given, not by interrupting the Saviour, but when He had spoken. *Dine*. The Jews made but *two* meals in the day; the first may be called their *breakfast* or their *dinner*, because it was *both*, and was but a slight meal. Their chief meal was their *supper*, after the heat of the day was over, and the same was the principal meal among the Greeks and Romans. As this was not the chief meal, it would appear that the disposition of the entertainer toward Christ was not by any means friendly. *Went in*. The form of expression conforms to the fact that He occupied no time in ablutions, between His entering the house and reclining at the table. *Sat down, lay down or reclined*, as was the custom of the ancients at their meal.

The conduct of our Lord, on this occasion, as on all others, is meant to be an example. Christ is our pattern as well as our propitiation. There are evidently times and occasions when the servant of Christ must mix with the ungodly and the children of this world, but he should converse with them with prudence and circumspection. There may be seasons when it may be a duty to hold social intercourse with them, to accept their invitations and sit down at their tables. Nothing, of course, must induce the Christian to be a partaker in the sins or frivolous amusements of the world. But he must not be uncourteous.

38. And when the Pharisee saw *it*, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner.—^bMatt. vii. 3.

Perhaps Christ omitted washing (Mark vii. 3), because He had just accepted the invitation, or because He was wearied by

His work. It is more probable, however, that, knowing that the Pharisees imagined that washing of their hands before dinner rendered them holy, He purposely neglected to observe this custom.

39. "And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness." 40. "Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without, make that which is within also?" 41. "But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you."
†Matt. xxiii. 5. †Titus i. 15. †Isa. lviii. 7; Dan. iv. 27; chap. xii. 33.

Ye Pharisees. The class of Pharisees to which the host belonged. The figure here is very simple. It is that of a person who takes great care to make the outside of the vessels used at meals thoroughly clean, while he knowingly allows the inside of those vessels, with which, of course, the food he eats must be brought into contact, to remain foul and uncleansed. This is altogether different from "the form of godliness." There is a satisfaction with inward corruption, only so that the exterior is fair and plausible. *Your inward part, i. e., your heart:* the figure which began with the *outside of the cup and platter* is here dropped, and the heart or internal moral state is substituted for what, if the metaphor had been continued, would have been the *inside of the cup. Is full, literally, loaded. Ravening* is the same word rendered in Matthew, *extortion. Wickedness.* The word thus rendered is a general term for *excess*, found in the parallel passage in Matthew. Who can say that he is entirely free from this Pharisæical hypocrisy? Where is that person to be found who, by the inward purity of the motives of his heart, takes as much care not to offend the eyes of God as he does not to displease men by his outward behavior?

Ye fools, &c. The literal meaning of the Greek word translated "fools," is, "persons without mind or understanding." It is the same word that Paul used. (1 Cor. xv. 36.) Since God has created the inside as well as the outside, one as much as the other must be held holy; and it is not only evil, but foolish, to wish to separate, even in thought, to say nothing of act, that which, in the nature of things, is absolutely inseparable.

But rather give alms, &c. Some hold this to be ironical. Give alms, forsooth! and that is to make compensation for your ex-

tortions, a purification of all your guilt! If this is the right interpretation, as it seems to be, of course our Lord intended to cast no slur upon alms-giving, but upon using our alms-giving as a cover for sin.

42. "But woe unto you, Pharisees! For ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."
†Matt. xxiii. 23.

Woe is a word of solemn denunciation of punishment. It implies, as here uttered, that calamities of the most awful nature are impending over its guilty objects from the Divine justice. *Tithe.* The law of *tithes* is found in Lev. xxvii. 31. The "tithe" of a thing is its tenth part. Of the yearly products of the land of the Israelites, the first fruits were deducted; out of the rest, the tenth part was taken for the Levites. (Num. xviii. 21.) *Mint and rue.* The herbs mentioned in this verse correspond mainly to those of the same name in Europe and America. The Pharisees pretended to such excessive scrupulosity about giving a tenth of all their possessions to the service of the temple and to the maintenance of the ceremonial law, that they were not content with tithing their corn, but even tithed their insignificant garden herbs. Yet all this time they *passed over*, did not enforce, or pay regard to, justice and equity toward all mankind and real love to God. *These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.* It is an admirable proof of the heavenly composure and impartiality of our Lord, that, whilst not abrogating the fulfillment of minor duties, or declaring it unimportant, He, on the other hand, permits and commands it, but then also insists on the performance of the higher duties. (Comp. Matt. xxiii. 23.)

The neglect of the distinction between that which is great and that which is small, first and second, essential and non-essential, has been the source of enormous evil in every age of the Church. It is a distinction which the never-dying school of the Pharisees is unable to draw. There are many now who are enthusiasts in the secondary things of religion, who know little or nothing of the great practical duties of humility, charity, meekness, spiritual-mindedness, Bible reading, private devotion, and separation from the world.

43. ^aWoe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets.—^bMatt. xxiii. 6, xii. 38, 39.

Behind the pulpit, in the Jewish synagogues, were ranged high seats of honor, "chief seats," where the scribes and Pharisees loved to sit facing the people. They also loved *greetings in the markets*, that they might pervert the ordinary tokens of social respect to the purpose of establishing an abject submission on the part of the people, and a spirit of man-worship. Pride does not consist in being first or chief, but in loving the esteem and distinction which attend upon the first place, and seeking the advantages which accompany it. It is a misfortune to be exposed to them, because it is very rare not to be corrupted by them.

44. ^bWoe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them.

^cMatt. xxiii. 27. ^dPs. v. 9.

The allusion here is to the notion which existed among the Jews, that by walking over a grave a man contracted ceremonial uncleanness. And so here the hypocrite is represented as the means of defilement and pollution to others. Passers-by become, before they are aware, infected by him, and allured to evil. Thus Jeroboam set up the calves at Dan and Bethel, and said, "These be thy gods, O Israel," but his heart-purpose was simply, by this outward respect for God, to secure himself, as he thought, in the kingdom, and so, we are told (2 Kings x. 29), he "made Israel to sin." It is a dreadful judgment on hypocrites when God suffers them to conceal their corruption according to their hearts' desire. Their being exposed to public shame would be a step toward their conversion.

45. ^fThen answered one of the lawyers, and said unto him, Master, thus saying thou reproachest us also.

One of the lawyers, or doctors of the law. These Jewish lawyers, as our translators call them (though the term *lawyer* naturally suggests to us a modern idea of an office which did not at this time exist among the Jews), were the most considerable species of scribes, who applied themselves peculiarly to study and explain the law. Probably some of them were Pharisees, but it was not essential to their office that they should be so. This man considered himself and his brethren as superior to all

censure or reproof, and therefore wondered that Jesus should join the scribes with the Pharisees, in the preceding wo, and charged Him with reproaching so honorable a body.

46. And he said, Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers.—^eMatt. xxiii. 4.

These words are a striking instance of our Lord's boldness in rebuking sinners. They added to the ceremonies of the law others of their own invention, which were not only burdensome and oppressive, but had neither reason, expediency, nor revelation to countenance them. Neither would they lighten them to those over whom they had power, not even touch them, that is, either to modify or repeal them, when they saw them to be burdensome and grievous. They would come in with *both hands* to dispense with a command of God, but not with *a finger* to mitigate the rigor of the unauthorized traditional observances which they imposed.

True charity is compassionate, willing to take upon itself the burden of others, and far from laying upon them one which is oppressive; whereas, hypocrisy aims at nothing but gaining to itself honor from the austerities which it imposes on others, without consulting their strength. Here is a word in season to all teachers of young people, masters of families, heads of households, fathers and mothers, and especially to all ministers of the Gospel, to beware of the inconsistency of telling others to aim at a standard which they do not aim at themselves.

47. ^kWoe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets; and your fathers killed them. 48. Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres. 49. Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and *some* of them they shall slay and persecute. 50. That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation: 51. ^mFrom the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation.

^kMatt. xxiii. 29. ^lJob xv. 6. ^fProv. viii. 1: 1 Cor. i. 30. ^mMatt. xxiii. 34. ⁿGen. iv. 8. ^o2 Chron. xxiv. 20, 21.

We are not to understand this as though any part of the guilt lay in the building or adorning the tombs of the prophets, considered in itself, but in their falseness in giving this testimony of respect to the prophets, whilst they were actuated by the spirit, and following the example of their

persecutors and murderers, insomuch that they appeared to erect those sepulchres, not to do honor to God's prophets, but to serve as monuments of the success of their progenitors in destroying them.

The word "*truly*" is a particle, denoting that this verse is an inference from the assertion contained in the preceding one. If the persons referred to had been of a better sort than their fathers, they would have erected no monuments of a damnable deed, which ought rather to be buried in the dust of oblivion.

It is a disputed question what the words, "*said the wisdom of God*" mean. Some regard them as merely referring to the wisdom of God speaking, in 2 Chron. xxiv. 18-22, of which Jesus here gives an amplification in the same spirit of Divine or avenging wisdom. They are, however, generally understood as denoting Christ Himself; and, as the words which follow are not found in the Old Testament, we may suppose that He meant, as the Word and Wisdom of God (1 Cor. i. 24), immediately to reveal to the hearers His wise counsels and purposes respecting them. In the parallel passage of Matthew (xxiii. 34), our Lord evidently spoke in His own person: "Wherefore, behold I send," &c. *Prophets and Apostles*. Prophets or preachers (for as the word of God is a great prophecy of the world to come, so he who preaches it truly prophesies), to reprove the people for their sins, and warn them of the judgments of God, and who should prove themselves Apostles, or messengers, sent from heaven, by signs, and wonders, and gifts of the Holy Ghost. Christ thus gave His enemies to understand that, though they builded the sepulchres of the prophets, yet such was their hostility to those, in their *own day*, that came to them in the *spirit* and *power* of those prophets, that as soon as they had an opportunity they would show that hostility by slaying and persecuting them. A large share of the first preachers, thinkers and writers of the Church, were martyrs.

That. In order that—a statement of the inevitableness of the result. *The blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation*. It may justly aggravate the

guilt of a criminal, if, though he have seen a long series of misdeeds punished, yet he has not even suffered himself to be deterred from similar delinquencies; and this, as it evinces a most incorrigible mind, so it is worthy of *severer* punishment. *This generation*. Both here and in the following verse, it seems probable that the word "generation" means nation or people, as in Matt. xxiv. 34. It is certain that the greater part of the men who were alive when our Lord said these things must have been dead forty years after, when the great inquisition for blood took place, at the destruction of Jerusalem.

From *Abel*, who was the first martyr. Abel is counted among the prophets, because he prefigured Jesus Christ by his innocence and death, as Cain did Judas, &c. *Blood of Zacharias*—the last of the prophets, whose martyrdom is, according to the arrangement of the Hebrew canon, recorded in the Old Testament. Jesus here couples the first and last of Old Testament martyrs. *This generation*—nation or people.

The number of those who have been put to death for the faith of Christ in every age of the world is exceedingly great. Thousands of men and women have laid down their lives rather than deny their Saviour, and have shed their blood for the truth. At the time they died they seemed to have no helper. The frequent triumphing of the wicked is perplexing. The frequent depression of the godly is a problem that appears hard to solve. But it shall be made clear on the judgment day. The great white throne and the books of God shall put all things in their right places. Then shall all the world see, that however they may die, "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." (Ps. cxvi. 15.)

52. "Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye enter not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered."
*Matt. xxiii. 13. *Or, *Jorbaad*.

Lawyers. (See on verse 45.) *Key of knowledge*. The doctors of the law are said to have been distinguished by the symbolic figure of a *key*, intimating that their proper office was to open and explain the Scripture, and to admit men into the knowledge of God, and of His truth

and will. The meaning would then be, "Ye have been by profession the instructors of the Jews in spiritual knowledge. Ye have, so to speak, carried the keys. Yet ye made no use of them yourselves, and allowed nobody else to use them. By your traditions ye have taken away the true method of interpreting the prophecies; ye have given a wrong meaning to those Scriptures which speak of the kingdom of the Messiah, and the people are thereby hindered from entering into it."

The sin here denounced is awfully common. It is the sin of the Romish priest, who forbids the poor man to read his Bible; of the unconverted Protestant minister, who sneers at the idea of conversion; of the ungodly, thoughtless husband, who dislikes his wife becoming "serious;" and of the worldly-minded mother, who cannot bear the idea of her daughter thinking of spiritual things, and giving up the gayeties and follies of the world. All such are bringing down on themselves our Lord's emphatic "wo."

53. And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things: 54. Laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him.—Mark xii. 13.

Began to urge him vehemently—they began to be furious. As they found themselves completely unmasked, they were indignant, and therefore questioned Jesus on a variety of points, and hoped, by the multitude and impertinence of their questions,

to puzzle or irritate Him, so as to induce Him to *speak rashly*, that they might find some ground of accusation against Him. The Greek word here rendered *provoke*, is applied to the practice among teachers of requiring the pupil to speak and answer accurately from memory. Hence it means that the scribes and Pharisees *put prepared questions*, and *required immediate answers*, in order to draw out expressions of hostility to Moses and the traditions, to the temple, or to the Jewish nation, or to Cæsar, so as to excite the hierarchy, the people, or the civil authorities against Him. *To speak of many things*, literally, to *extemporize*, that something inconsiderately uttered might be caught up. *Laying wait for him*—laying snares as for an animal, *seeking to catch*, or lay hold of, as in hunting, *that they might accuse him*, either to the civil authorities, as a seditious person, or to the people, as one who was a transgressor of the Mosaic law.

There is hardly an instance to be found, where hostility to Jesus appeared in a more deep-seated and diabolical form, than on this occasion. The vileness of the conduct of His enemies is enhanced by the fact that their efforts to effect His ruin were put forth while He sat at the table of one of their number, who, we can scarcely doubt, invited Him with hostile and crafty intent, and who was among the foremost to find wherewith to accuse Him.

-
1. What did one of our Lord's disciples say unto Him as He was praying? 2. What is said about the "Lord's Prayer?" 3. Explain the parable in verses 5-10. 4. What encouragement to pray does Jesus give us? 5. What charge was brought against Him as He was casting out a devil? 6. How did He reply? 7. What did Christ say to the people when they were "gathered thick together?" 8. Who invited Jesus to dine? 9. What objection was made to Him? 10. How did He answer it? 11. What effect was produced by His reply?

CHAPTER XII.

1 *Christ preacheth to his disciples to avoid hypocrisy and fearfulness in publishing his doctrine; 13 warneth the people to beware of covetousness, by the parable of the rich man who set up greater barns. 22 We must not be over careful of earthly things, 31 but seek the kingdom of God. 33 give alms, 36 be ready at a knock to open to our Lord whensoever he cometh. 41 Christ's ministers are to see to their charge, 49 and look for persecution. 51 The people must take this time of grace because it is a fearful thing to die without reconciliation.*

We have lately read the Saviour's warnings to the scribes and Pharisees, now we find Him addressing His own disciples. Many of the sayings here joined in a connected discourse by Luke, are related by Matthew as spoken on other occasions. These will be noted in their appropriate place.

IN the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, inasmuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, *Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.*

^aMatt. xvi. 6; Mark viii. 15. ^bMatt. xvi. 12.

In the mean time, while our Lord was reclining at the table of the Pharisee, and while the Pharisees were occupying themselves with ensnaring questions and plotting. *Trode one upon another.* The crowd was so great, that in their eagerness to see and hear Jesus, they well nigh trampled one another down. *Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.* The disciples doubtless were often exposed to the influence of the conversations of the Pharisees when our Lord was not present. They would, of course, stand on their guard against persons openly vicious, but they needed to be cautioned against Pharisees, who were great pretenders to devotion. *Leaven*, here, is used to denote false doctrine, because it spreads, works secretly and silently, and insinuates itself into and changes the whole character. Those who come under its influence are puffed up with pride, embittered with malice, and their service is unacceptable to God. *Hypocrisy* was the great sin of the Pharisees, the leaven of which permeated and converted to its own vile and odious nature their hearts, lives and conduct. Pharisaism lives still. Its principles are deeply engrained in human nature. It shows itself in attention to the *outward* in religion, whilst the *inward* is overlooked or despised. Let us *beware* of it, as a most

subtle and pernicious influence. Let us be real and true in our Christianity.

2. ^cFor there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. ^dMatt. x. 26; Mark iv. 22; Luke viii. 17.

Here our Lord suggests a powerful motive to guard the heart against hypocrisy—the discoveries and exposures of the judgment day. *Then* all that has been hid will be known. Not only will the mask be torn from the deliberate hypocrite, but the veil which has been cast over any part of the conduct of true believers will be lifted up. *Nothing*, good as well as evil, that which is greatest as well as that which is least. (Eccl. xii. 14; Rom. ii. 16.) In vain, when we are about to commit a sin, do we shun the sight of men, since we cannot possibly avoid that of our Judge. The darkness of the night, and the light of the day, to Him are both alike.

3. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets, shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops.

Closets—any close room for stealth, or chamber for privacy. *Shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops.* “At the present day,” says a modern traveler through Palestine, “local governors in country districts cause their commands to be thus published. Their proclamations are generally made in the evening, after the people have returned from their labors in the field. The public crier ascends the highest roof at hand, and lifts up his voice in a long-drawn call upon all faithful subjects to give ear and obey. He then proceeds to announce, in a set form, the will of their master, and demands obedience thereto.” The more a sinner endeavors to hide himself here, with the greater shame and confusion shall he be covered hereafter in the sight of all the world. That which constitutes the peace and satisfaction of a good man, is that he does nothing in secret of which he need be ashamed at the day of judgment, and that he shuns the eyes of men on no other account but only that he may not receive from them his reward.

4. ^eAnd I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. 5. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him. ^fIsa. li. 7, 8, 12, 13; Jer. i. 8; Matt. x. 28. ^gJohn xv. 14, 15.

How tenderly Jesus addresses those who would be called to suffer for His sake! *I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body.* He does not promise His disciples to preserve them from death, but He does promise to keep them from hell. *And after that have no more that they can do.* From these words it follows that the body may be dead, and the soul alive. Men can murder the body, yet the soul is still alive. *Body—soul.* * We have here the two parts of man's compounded nature placed in contrast.

Fear him, as opposed to the sinful slavish fear of man, which was just condemned. The holy, awful and prudential fear of the omnipotent God is commended. The persons on whom this fear is enjoined are disciples and ministers, all the friends of Christ. They not only may, but ought to fear Him, not only for His greatness and goodness, but also for His punitive justice, as having ability and authority, *after he hath killed,* that is, after death has been inflicted, *to cast into hell,* or, as in Matthew (x. 28), "to destroy both soul and body in hell." In these last words our Lord does not say *kill* both soul and body. To destroy is not to kill, still less to annihilate, but to *ruin.* Our Lord's words teach, not the dismissal of the soul from *existence,* but its catastrophe and ruin *in existence.* And this is an evil, a destruction which we are bound to *fear,* as a possible reality beyond our bodily death.

Into hell. Hell is represented by *Sheol* in the Old, and by *Hades* in the New Testament. The word is used by the sacred writers in several senses, which it is important to distinguish. The Hebrew word, translated *hell* in our Bible, sometimes means simply the *grave,* the receptacle of the dead, or the place of departed spirits, as in Job xi. 7-9; Ps. xvi. 10, cxxxix. 8; Isa. v. 14, xiv. 9; Amos ix. 2, 3; Acts. ii. 31; Rev. xx. 14. In other passages it denotes the place of future punishment, as in Ps. ix. 17; Prov. v. 5, ix. 18, xxiii. 14, which punishment consists, in part at least, in the eternal separation of the soul from God and from the presence of His glory, and in the suffering of inconceivable anguish and remorse forever and ever. In the New Testament, hell, as the place of final

punishment for sinners, is more distinctively indicated by the term *Gehenna,* or *valley of Hinnom* (2 Chron. xxxiii. 6), which is the word translated "hell" in the verse now before us; also in Matt. v. 22, 29, 30, x. 28, xviii. 9, xxiii. 15, 33; Mark ix. 43, 45, 47; James iii. 6. It is also distinctively indicated by such phrases as "the place of torment" (Luke xvi. 28); "everlasting fire" (Matt. xxv. 41); "the hell of fire," "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." (Mark ix. 44.)

6. Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? 7. But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.—See Matt. x. 29.

The Saviour, in these verses, gives a third reason to His disciples for not shrinking from the execution of their great commission on account of the dangers which attended it. Not only was the power of their enemies restricted to the body, but their very bodies would be under God's protection. The little value of the sparrows is indicated by the market price, two being sold for an *assarion,* a coin intermediate in value between one cent and an English penny. The argument is this, that as God's protective care extends to the most insignificant and worthless of the feathered tribe, it must, and does, extend to man, and will especially extend to those who have been honored with a most important mission. *And not one of them is forgotten before God.* God's providential care extends over the minutest of His creatures. As nothing was too little for Him to create, so nothing is too little for Him to preserve. Of the providence of God over the least things, the heathen philosophers had no conception. They maintained that the gods regarded the universe in general, but not particular persons and things. *But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.* This is a strong proverbial expression for minute knowledge and exact care. The hairs are numbered for the purpose of protection and careful preservation, so that if one be wanting, it is missed and looked for. It would be impossible to frame in human language a more forcible description of unerring oversight and sleepless care. God's providence exalts, instead of debasing Him. He acts in

everything without growing weary, and is sufficient for everything, without multiplying Himself. *Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.* Here is a continuation of the argument from less to greater. *Thomson*, in his "Land and Book," speaking of the habits of this little bird, says: "When we see their countless numbers, and the eagerness with which they are destroyed as a worthless nuisance, we can better appreciate the assurance that our Heavenly Father, who takes care of them, so that not one can fall to the ground without His notice, will surely take care of us, who are of more value than many sparrows." *Ye are of more value.* None can estimate the value of a soul, for which Christ has given His blood and life. Did the poet intend to contradict Christ when he said:

"He sees with equal eye, as God of all,
A HERO perish, or a SPARROW fall."

How cold and meager is this shallow, deistical saying! That is, a *sparrow* is of as much worth in the sight of God, who regards (if we may believe the poet) things only in *general*, as an *immortal soul*, purchased by the sacrifice of Christ!

8. "Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: 9. But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God."
Matt. x. 32; Mark viii. 33; 2 Tim. ii. 12; 1 John ii. 23.

Whosoever, whether of yourselves who preach, or of those who hear your preaching. *Confess me*, that is, own Christ as Lord and Master, *before men*, in this present life. *Him shall the Son of man also confess.* The reciprocal act here ascribed to Christ is that of owning as His Apostle, disciple or follower. *Before the angels of God.* The time here referred to, as well as in the next verse, must doubtless be the day of judgment. The angels shall be specially employed on that day in gathering God's people, and separating the wicked from among them. *But he that denieth me before men*, more literally, "he that has denied," that is, disowned, *shall be denied before the angels of God.* Let it here be observed: 1. That not to confess Christ is in His account to deny Him, and to be ashamed of Him. 2. That whosoever shall deny or be ashamed of Christ, either in His person, in His Gospel, or in His members, for any fear or favor of man, shall with shame be

disowned and eternally rejected by Him. Christ may be denied three ways: doctrinally, by an erroneous and heretical judgment; verbally, by oral expressions; vitally, by a wicked and unholly life. Those are guilty of this sin, who, from unbelief or indolence, or love of the world, or fear of man, shrink from confessing Him as their Saviour and their King.

10. "And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven.—Matt. xii. 31, 32; Mark iii. 28; 1 John v. 16.

The distinction here made seems entirely unaccountable, if made between the second and third persons of the Godhead, simply as such, without anything to qualify or specify the statement. This difficulty disappears, however, on observing that the person mentioned in the first clause is not the eternal Word or Son of God, but the Son of man, and this describes the Saviour in His humiliation, in the form of a servant, as He was while resident on earth. To *speak a word* against Him while His Godhead was thus veiled and as it were in abeyance, was a very different offense from *blaspheming against the Holy Ghost.* The sin of thus speaking against the Son of man was committed by those who did not know Christ to be the Messiah in the days of His humiliation, and did not receive Him, believe Him, or obey Him, but ignorantly rejected and crucified Him, and many of whom, so sinning, were pardoned, we cannot doubt, as, for example, on the day of Pentecost, after Peter's preaching.

The original meaning of the word *blaspheme* is simply to *reproach* or *slander.* At the present time it is applied almost exclusively in reference to the Supreme Being. It may, therefore, in general, be defined "to utter a presumptuous insult toward God." But as such a sin may be as truly committed in *thought* or in *act*, as in *speech*, it may rather be defined the *offering* a presumptuous insult to God. It is a great sin. Humanly speaking, there may be greater *crimes*, but there can be no greater *sin.* This sin of blasphemy *against the Holy Ghost*, regarded by Him as an *insult to Himself*, it is declared, *shall not be forgiven.* He resents the insult with a justice that knows no mercy. This sin was committed by those who, after the

day of Pentecost, and the outpouring of the Spirit, and the full publication of the Gospel, persisted in unbelief and obstinate impenitence, and were given over to a reprobate mind. These especially grieved the Spirit, and resisted the ministration of the Holy Ghost. That this was the state of many of the Jews, appears from several places in the Acts, and especially Acts xxviii, 25-28. See also 1 Thess. ii. 15, 16. This sin was the sin of the Pharisees who maliciously disavowed, blasphemed and resisted the operation of the Holy Ghost, at the very moment when they were most fully convinced that in so doing they were fighting against God. And it may now be committed by any one, in continuing to oppose the Gospel from deliberate malice, while at the same time the Holy Ghost has convinced the mind of its truth. The sin, therefore, to which our Lord here refers, seems to be the sin of deliberately neglecting God's truth, while the truth is clearly known with the head, and deliberately choosing sin and the world. It is a combination of light in the understanding, and determined wickedness in the will. *It shall not be forgiven.* So says He whose prerogative it is to forgive. Why it is so is sufficiently answered by the reply, because God has willed it so. No sin can be forgiven without repentance, but repentance is the gift of God, and as the blasphemer against the Holy Ghost drives from him the only person who could "give repentance" (Acts v. 31), he seals himself up, under final and total apostasy, until the day of doom. Such a man, indeed, will never seek to have his sins forgiven. This is exactly the root of his awful disease. He might be pardoned, but he will not seek to be pardoned. He is Gospel-hardened, and "twice dead." His conscience is "scared with a hot iron." (1 Tim. iv. 2.) That those who are troubled with fear that they have committed the unpardonable sin, are just the persons who have not committed it, is the judgment of all the soundest divines.

11. And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: 12. For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.

¹Matt. x. 19, Mark xiii. 11; Luke xxi. 14.

Our Lord here informs His Apostles

that, for preaching His doctrine and professing His religion, they should be brought before all sorts of magistrates, and into all kinds of courts; but counsels them, when they should be thus brought, not to be anxiously thoughtful, or solicitously careful what they should say, for it should be suggested to them by the Holy Ghost what they should speak in that hour. The assistance promised should be so complete, that they would be mere instruments or organs of the Spirit. *How* relates to the form, and *what* to the substance, of their public defenses or apologies. Christ does not forbid all forethoughts what to say, but only distrustful thoughts; that they should not, like orators or advocates, strive to make studied pleas or rhetorical apologies for themselves. This is so far from being a promise of Divine assistance to unprepared and off-hand preachers, that it is not given even to the twelve indefinitely or forever, but expressly limited to one particular emergency, not only by the first words of verse 11 (*when they bring you*), but also by the words, *in the same hour* (verse 12). This promise gives the highest authority to all the apostolical defenses upon record, and precludes the supposition of unhallowed anger in such cases as that of Paul's reply to Ananias. (Acts. xxiii. 3.) The doctrine of inspiration is here stated in its strongest form. In the Apostles, in the moment of trial, the Holy Spirit would reside, and the words they spake would be His words. And if they were furnished with this inspiration in their momentary times of trial, how can it be doubted that, in recording their words for ages for the instruction of the Church and the conversion of the world, they should possess the same high qualification?

13. ¶ And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.

One of the company. It seems that a contention had arisen between himself and his brother concerning their proper shares of their common inheritance, and he wished the matter to be adjusted. There was nothing sinful in this request that Jesus should act as an umpire or arbitrator, for if the half of the inheritance belonged to this man, or was bequeathed

to him by a legal and proper will, it was his duty, as it was his right, to require that half. (1 Cor. vi. 1-6.) The man's sin, therefore, lay not in asking for his rights, but in interrupting so importunately a discourse so precious, so beautiful, so instructive to the multitude, with a petition, purely, intensely and exclusively selfish.

14. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?—John xviii. 36.

Man. The word in the original has a shade of disrespect, there being another word for *man*, as a term of respect. *Who made me a judge or a divider?* This reply of our Lord is generally referred by expositors to Ex. ii. 14. The word *divider* is probably explanatory of *judge*, which means a *judge* or *umpire* to settle disputes. *Over you*, over mankind, men in general. *Who made me*, &c. Who constituted me a civil ruler, to judge or arbitrate between men, in regard to worldly matters of dispute? This is not my office. I was not sent into the world on such a mission. It is undoubtedly the duty of ministers of the Gospel to mark our Lord's conduct in this case, and as far as possible to walk in His steps. To this they are urged by the shortness and uncertainty of life, the state of the world, the worth of souls, and the immense importance and arduousness of their work. "Give thyself wholly to these things," is a sentence which they should never forget. It was eminently characteristic of the Lord Jesus Christ, during His ministry on earth, that He was a reformer of principles, a purifier of hearts; not a distributor anew of the mechanical and civil arrangements of society. He undertook to change men's hearts, not their circumstances, or rather to change their circumstances by first changing and ameliorating their hearts. He worked from the inward to the outward. He did not interfere with the laws, or the arrangements, or the polity of the world, but endeavored to implant in men's souls living truths, living principles, which should germinate and grow until the whole world should be overspread with that kingdom whose great elements are righteousness, and truth, and peace, and joy.

15. And he said unto them, Take heed and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

†1 Tim. 6 7, &c.

He said unto them, i. e., the multitude around Him, be on your guard against covetousness. The word in the original signifies *greediness, grasping selfishness*. It is derived from a concrete noun, denoting *one who has, or claims more than his share, one who has never enough*. Covetousness is avarice, the insatiable desire of more, springing out of ungodly love and too high an estimation of earthly things. It is not what a man has that makes covetousness, but it is the hunger after what he has not, and the concentrating all his thoughts upon it, and drawing from it the main elements of his joy, his comfort, his satisfaction, his repose. The desire of having wealth, in order to enjoy it, or the desire of having and adding to our wealth, in order to have more influence or more power, not to do more good—this is covetousness. *For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.* Christ here denies that our life consists in abundance, thus indicating the internal origin and fountain-head from which the mad desire of possessing issues. The word translated *life*, is to be taken in its twofold meaning, according to which it marks a happy state of being, in time and in eternity, so that the sense is, riches by no means secure for us, of themselves, a life of satisfaction upon earth, nor do they insure us of eternal blessedness, or, real well-being is no necessary consequence of the possession of riches. It is not for ministers to meddle with the partition of estates, or with the differences in families, but they ought to teach the rules of true religion, and the means of avoiding all injustice. This vice still proceeds from covetousness, and therefore this is the thing which must be rooted up.

Covetousness is wide-spread and a fearful sin. It estranges from God, by putting something else in the heart in place of Him. It leads to a suspension of that Divine influence which is essential to nearness with God. It cripples confidence in God. More than any other sin, it *grows* upon men. It dishonors Christ. What must men of the world think of Christ's spirit, as they see it displayed by a covetous Christian? It injures the cause of Christ, being like a moth fretting a garment,

which, however costly and beautiful it may be, will, by degrees, be destroyed. Of all sins, it most assimilates the soul to Satan, whose heart is covetous, whose desires are inordinate, yet all terminate in himself, irrespective of the glory of God, thus producing the misery of this great but fallen spirit. It would be vain to decide positively which is the most common sin in the world, but it would be safe to say that there is none to which the heart is more prone than covetousness. The warning of Jesus in this verse is a word more in season for the members of Christian Churches than an exhortation to beware of theft.

16. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

This parable springs from the untimely and intensely earthly interruption of our Lord's discourse by one of the company that heard it. Thus the Saviour makes the covetousness, as well as the wrath of man, to praise him, and restrains the remainder thereof. *A certain rich man.* His name is not given. It is not a sin to be rich. We read of Gaius, who exercised hospitality to the saints. Joseph of Arimathea was a wealthy man, and yet he was a good man. *The ground* may denote a large territory, or property in land. *Brought forth plentifully.* The reference is to the crop of that particular season, which was so large that, if it could be well stored, it would suffice for the wants of many years to come, even if such rich harvests should never be yielded him again. On the fields of the covetous man the rain fell and the sun shone. God makes His sun to shine on the evil and the good. We cannot judge of what we are by what God's providence does to us, but must judge by what God's word says respecting us. Yet many persons reverse this rule, and judge that they are good because they are successful in business, and that others are bad because their property is swept away. Let the means be noted by which this rich man became richer. It was not by craft, dishonesty and fraud. He was a *farmer*—one of the most harmless ways of becoming rich. It was important to our Lord's purpose that such a case as this should be selected, for He was not aiming

His rebuke against what is regarded as fraudulent between man and man, but to illustrate the case of one who, by no unfair or improper means, was increasing in riches, but who, as they increased, had "set his heart upon them," and neglected God.

17. And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

The expression, that this man *thought within himself*, implies mental excitement and anxiety. He was perplexed, not as other men, to *get* wealth, but to *dispose of* it. And surely the fact that riches and cares are inseparably wedded together, ought to go far to reconcile the poor to their poverty, whatever the pains, and mortifications, and inconveniences of that condition in life. This expression means more: it shows that the man was eminently *selfish*; he thought *in himself*, and *to himself*, as is indicated not only by the words "*my fruits*," but also by the words, *what shall I do?* which were in all probability not the utterance of one brought to sore straits and difficulties through the abundance, for the sake of which others were envying him, but of a worldling's heart, rejoicing over his abundance, and realizing to the very letter the making "provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof." It means still more: it shows that the man was too reliant upon his own judgment in a matter in which his judgment was likely to be warped in his own favor; he ought to have gone to God, who seems not to have been "in all his thoughts," but of whom it is said, "in all thy ways acknowledge him; and he shall direct thy paths." (Prov. iii. 6.) *What shall I do?* How many answers might have come back, if only time had been given, from many an object of compassion, many an orphan, many a widow, many an ignorant family, many an avenue for doing good! But no such answer was wanted by this man, as many do not want them now.

18. And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

This will I do. The words are expressive of a well-formed and final determination, after full consideration. "*I will*" pull down, *I will* build up. *I will* bestow my goods. He is the only party, in his own

opinion, capable of devising or executing any plan in reference to the storing and preserving of the property. He does not say, "If God permit;" he has no reference to God, but full confidence in himself. "All my fruits and my goods." Persons of that sort call riches *goods*, not simply from falling into the popular mode of speaking, but because they consider these the chief good. *My fruits and my goods*. His language is full of pride, vanity, folly and atheism. *Pull down my barns and build greater, and there will I bestow*, &c. Here was the turning point in the poor man's history—determining to do this thing. As God's goodness was showered upon him in such abundance, he should have opened his treasures and permitted them to flow: for this end his riches had been bestowed upon him. But self was the man's pole-star: he cared for himself, and for none besides. Hence the proposal to enlarge his barns, in order to hoard his treasures.

19. And I will say to my soul, Soul, ^{thy} *thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.*

¹Eccles. xl. 9; ²1 Cor. xv. 32; James v. 5.

The dialogue which he had commenced before, proceeds; the man has something more to say to his soul: *Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years*. Because he has *much* to enjoy, he flatters himself with the hope that he shall have *long* to enjoy it, and promises himself a great age; in his folly he thinks as little of the possible loss of life, as of his goods; nay, he looks upon his riches as conveying a sort of right to a long life. He also speaks of his *goods*—as if the fruits and stores of earthly things had any thing in common with the *soul*, so as to be capable of satisfying that. However praiseworthy frugality is, as not suffering any of God's gifts to go to waste (John vi. 12), it does not render less blameworthy the purpose here expressed, of applying everything for one's self, in the gratification of selfish desires. *Take thine ease*. From the very torture of anxiety and care, he feels how sweet rest is, which he is unable to provide for himself. "Cease to gather and be careful any more, withhold thyself from any further pains and applications." So must it ever be with the covetous—poor in the midst of their overflows, they

enjoy it not, for they think with anxiety on some possible future want, and hence strive and labor without getting satisfaction. This rich man, however, is not of such a covetous disposition, as desires only to have, and keep, and handle wealth or other possessions; he is bent upon enjoyment, he has been working only for future satisfaction; now he counts himself quite sure of attaining his end, and hence he goes on to say, *eat, drink and be merry*. The man stupidly imagines that he could lay up in a barn an adequate and satisfying portion for his soul. The prophet's words are applicable to him. "He feedeth on ashes, a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" (Isa. xlv. 20.) What a mockery it is to address the soul, whose food and sustenance alone can be the knowledge, love and fear of God, in such terms as these, and yet it is just what thousands and thousands are doing practically every day. Every one in whom is the love of the world plays this trick with his soul, and eagerly covets one thing or another, in the vain and delirious hope that he is laying up "*goods for his soul for many years*."

20. But God said unto him, *Thou fool, this night ^{thy} *thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?**

¹Or, *do they require thy soul?* ²Job xx. 22 and xxxvii. 8; Ps. lii. 7; James iv. 14. ³Ps. xxxix. 6; Jer. xvii. 11.

It is not necessary to inquire in what way God spoke to the man: whether by a sudden presentiment of approaching death, by some strong alarm of conscience, by some mortal sickness at this instant falling upon him, or by what other means. *Thou fool*. Literally, *fool!* The deep scorn of the epithet being weakened by the unnecessary pronoun in our English version. The Greek word so translated means, literally, without mind, or sense, or understanding. It is the same word as in Luke xi. 40. This epithet was applicable to the man: 1. As conveying God's estimate of him, as opposed to the opinion he entertained of his own wisdom. 2. For saying "*my soul*," as if he had made it, redeemed it, could command its presence, and determine the hour of its separation, as if it were like his fruits and goods, part and parcel of the stock or prop-

erty which belonged to him. 3. Because he put off his comfort, in his abundance, till he had compassed his projects concerning it. 4. Because he made such strong calculations on an uncertain future, forgetting how soon he might be parted from his property. 5. Because he counted on *certain* ease, from his abundance, whereas there were many things that might make him uneasy in the midst of all his abundance. 6. Because he made no other use of his plenty than to *eat*, and *drink*, and be *merry*, never thinking of distributing the overflowings of his granary among the poor—thus robbing God, and failing to “lay up in store for himself a good foundation against the time to come.” 7. Because he believed that his *soul* would be satisfied by the abundance of things he possessed. What a mistake! Everything which God has made requires a good suited to its nature. The bird seeks, and must have, its native air; the fish exists, and only can exist, in the water; the beast craves a plentiful provision for its body, and is satisfied therewith; the human body cannot subsist on ideas, but must have earthly food; the mind must receive suitable nourishment: so the soul thirsts for some higher enjoyment than this world can afford.

This night, stands opposed to *years*, in verse 19. It is here implied that it was in the night, the usual hour of repose, that the rich man formed the determination expressed in verse 19. His great and unexpected wealth threw him into such a state of restless, feverish anxiety, as to the disposition for safe-keeping which he should make of his treasures, that he lay awake, planning and revolving one scheme after another, until he came to the conclusion stated in verses 18, 19. One commentator remarks, that night is the time for Divine revelations to men (Job xxviii. 20), and also of sudden deaths. *Thy soul*, which thou hast debased to the mere sensual enjoyment of the brute. The man had formerly addressed his soul, and now he is addressed about his soul. It is not the whole man, but only his soul that is wanted: his body will be left behind. But the body, though left behind, cannot claim, cannot use the goods. The treasure that was not improved, and over which the man

claimed a monopoly, shall be recalled. *Shall be required of thee*. Here is the announcement of the sudden termination of the man's course. He was given to understand that he was on the verge of the eternal world. He was like the unconscious mariner, who is whistling at the helm, and only thinking of the many months of his pleasant voyage, when suddenly he sees that he is approaching the rock on which he will be wrecked and ruined. The man has received the summons; and in obedience to it, he must arise and go; he can neither resist nor delay. He may weep, tremble, rage, but he must go, and go on the instant. The child of God yields up his soul to God; commits, commends it to God and the Father of spirits, willingly, joyfully bids it depart and be with Christ; but the sinner who has enfolded his soul, and embodied it, and made it earthly, has prepared to render its divulsion from the body most hard, and hence it is said *to be required* of him as a disobedient debtor, that is delivered to pitiless exactors. *Then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?*—those fruits, those enlarged barns, this accumulated property—whose shall it be? What will it do for thee? Will it encounter death and conquer him? Will it follow thee to the judgment seat, and prevail with the Judge to acquit you? The obvious scope of the inquiry is, that these things should not be his after death, and could therefore furnish no happiness to his soul beyond the grave. (Ecl. ii. 18, 19, 26, v. 15; Job xxvii. 16, 17; Ps. xxxix. 6, xlix. 16–20.)

21. So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

•Matt. vi. 20; verse 33; 1 Tim. vi. 18, 19; James ii. 5.

Such a fool is every one who thinks and acts after the manner of this rich man, whose accumulations have no aim but the gratification of the selfish desires and appetites; since he is not rich in God, he is much more to be pitied than to be envied, and notwithstanding his riches in the account of the world, he is still poor in the eyes of God. (Rev. iii. 17, 18.) *And is not rich toward God*. In respect to God and Divine things, these riches consist in the imperishable blessings of faith, love and hope. (Eph. i. 3.) Those are not rich toward God, who give nothing to God's

glory—neither money, affection, time, nor interest.

Let us strive to be rich toward God. Those are truly rich who have faith in the Lord Jesus, a faith which is accompanied with good works. God has declared that some of the *poor* in this world are *rich* in *faith*. (James ii. 5.) *Faith* is the gold that Christ offers to bestow on all that *ask* it. "I counsel thee to buy of me *gold* tried in the fire, that thou mayest be *rich*." (Rev. iii. 18.) If faith is in our *hearts*, we shall never hear the summons, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." But rather, shall we hear, in God's appointed time, a voice saying to our spirits, "Come up hither." (Rev. iv. 1.) And when we ascend to heaven, we shall find a treasure—an inheritance which death cannot snatch from us, which is incorruptible, and fadeth not away. (1 Cor. iii. 23.) How dreadful must be the approach of death to him who, having pampered his body, has starved his soul—lived for the present, and had no supreme and controlling regard to the endless future!

"How shocking must thy summons be, O Death,
To him that is at ease in his possessions,
Who, counting on long years of pleasure here,
Is quite unprovided for the world to come!
In that dread moment, how the frantic soul
Raves round the wall of her clay tenement,
Runs to each avenue, and shrieks for help,
But shrieks in vain! How wishfully she looks
On all she's leaving, now no longer hers!
A little longer, yet a little longer—
Mournful sight!
Her eyes weep blood, and every groan
She heaves is big with horror. But the foe,
Like a staunch murderer, steady to his purpose,
Pursues her close through every lane of life,
Nor misses once the track; but presses on,
Till, forc'd at last to the tremendous verge,
At once she sinks to everlasting ruin."

22. † And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat: neither for the body, what ye shall put on. 23. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.—Matt. vi. 25.

Therefore, in consequence of the danger and vanity of earthly riches. *I say unto you*, as my disciples, with the authority belonging to me as your Master, *Take no thought for your life*. *Life*, a word which properly denotes the vital principle or living substance. It is sometimes used to distinguish the *soul* from the *body*, as in Matthew x. 28. *Take no thought*, be not anxious or excessively solicitous. Our Lord does not here forbid what His Apostles elsewhere enjoin—the use of lawful means to obtain for ourselves and those who depend on us the necessaries

of life—nor that exercise of thought which is requisite for this purpose—but He does forbid us, while we use these means, or after we have used these means, to be anxious and fearful as to their being effectual for the purpose for which they are intended. *What ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on*. Our Lord's meaning is, "When, in prosecuting your great object—the heavenly happiness—the attainment of the necessaries of life for yourselves and your families, be not anxious, God will provide for you. He has given you life; He has given you a body, and, while it is His will that you should continue to possess this life and this body, He can and will take care of them." *The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment*. Here is an argument from greater to less. Surely He who gave life *can* give food; surely He who gave you a body *can* give you clothing for that body. And, as to give life is a far greater favor than to give food, to give a body than to give clothing, surely He who has given the more valuable blessing *will* not withhold the less.

24. Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap: which neither have storehouse nor barn: and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?—Job xxxviii. 41; Ps. cxlvii. 9.

Consider. This means more than a superficial view, rather an observing and studying. *The ravens*. The ravens are specially mentioned in Psalms (cxlvii. 9) and Job (xxxviii. 41), as objects of God's care. In the history of Elijah, the Holy Ghost shows us the ravens providing for others, as well as for themselves. (1 Kings xvii. 6.) Of this miraculous history of the prophet, there is, perhaps, an indirect reminiscence here. *For they neither sow nor reap, &c.* They do not even use the means which man is bound to use, and does use, but are wholly dependent on their instincts and the bounties of their Maker. Sowing, reaping and ingathering, are three stages of agricultural employment and provision for the food of man, all of which are here denied in reference to the birds, which is equivalent to saying that they use no means at all for the production of their own food. *And God feedeth them—provideth for them*. *How much more are ye better than the fowls?* The reason—

ing is made more pointed and popular by being compressed into a question instead of being stated as a formal proposition. You are much better than the birds. As men you occupy a far higher place in the scale of being. You are creatures of a nobler order than they, and designed for a higher destiny. You are created in God's image—you are acknowledged as "his offspring." He has taught you more than the beasts of the field, and made you "wiser than the fowls of heaven." (Acts xvii. 28; Job xxxv. 11.)

25. And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? 26. If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?

The word *cubit* signifies primarily the human arm, from the elbow to the end of the longest finger. This part of the human frame (like the *foot*) became, very anciently, a *measure* of external objects. The ancient Egyptian cubit was six handbreadths, or two *spans*, a span being the measure from the end of the thumb to the end of the little finger of the extended hand. These are somewhat variable measures, but the cubit was about eighteen inches. *Stature* would be more properly rendered *life*. The word here relates to *time*, and not to *corporeal growth*. *With taking thought, i. e.,* caring, being anxious; *can, is able; add, or put to.* As thus explained, our Lord's words contain a strong argument why we should not be anxious about life or food. It serves no purpose; no anxiety of ours can protract life. If we cannot by all our anxiety secure that object for which a supply of food is chiefly desirable—the lengthening out of life—why should we be anxious for that which is valuable, only because it is fitted to gain this object?

27. Consider the lilies, how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 28. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to-day in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?

See on Matt. vi. 28.

Consider. The original means, to learn thoroughly, and then, as a necessary means, to study closely, to observe attentively. The idea is, that what is thus proposed is not a mere indulgence of the taste or curiosity, but a moral lesson to be learned by studying the works and providence of God, a method of instruction practiced

long before by Solomon (see Prov. vi. 6-8, xxx. 24-31), to which there may be here an intentional allusion, as his name is introduced just afterward. *The lilies.* Dr. Thomson, in his "Land and Book," says: "The Håleh lily is very large, and the three inner petals meet above, and form a gorgeous canopy, such as art never approached, and king never sat under, even in his utmost glory." *How they grow, &c.* They neither practice the labors of husbandry to procure the materials of clothing, nor engage in the processes of art to form them into raiment, and yet they are clothed in garments of beauty far surpassing anything which the wardrobe of royalty can display. *Solomon*—in the estimation of a Jew the most illustrious of sovereigns, Solomon—in *all his glory*, decked out in purple, and gold, and jewels, was not arrayed like one of these. *If then.* "If God so clothe" such short-lived, and such comparatively useless vegetables; if God so clothe "the herbage of the field"—for the word rendered "grass" signifies herbage generally, including the lilies of the field—the flowers which grow up among the grass; if God so clothe this herbage, "which is to-day in the field" flourishing in all its beauty, and "to-morrow is cast into the oven," employed as fuel—for, in Eastern countries, where fuel is scarce, herbage is often employed to heat the ovens and baths—"how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?" From the appellation, *O ye of little faith*, it is obvious that those to whom our Lord addressed Himself were in a state of mind like that of Nicodemus, when he came to Jesus by night—persons disposed to admit His Divine mission, yet afraid of the consequences of acknowledging this, and delivering themselves entirely up to be guided by Him—disposed to lay up treasures in heaven, yet not quite sure about abandoning all hope of the treasures on earth, which they had long so fondly anticipated.

29. And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. 30. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after; and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.

*Or, *live not in careful suspense.*

A practical application of the argument of God's care of inferior creatures. *Seek*

not. A strong expression for anxious desire. *Neither be of doubtful mind*, refers to the vacillation between hope and fear, which characterizes those whose confidence is not fully reposed in the protecting care of God. The expression is probably one borrowed from ships out at sea, which, especially when seen from the shore, appear lifted up, tossed to and fro, and restless. There are here two additional reasons why those whom Christ addressed should not be anxious. 1. *For all these things*, all worldly goods and earthly treasures, *do the nations of the world seek after*. Such anxieties were characteristic of the nations of the world, Gentiles, heathens—the world outside of the Jewish nation. 2. The other additional reason is, “Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.” He has made us, He knows our frame, and if we regard him as our Father, who, we know, is able to bestow them, can we imagine that they shall be withheld from us when He knows that we need them?

31. † But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.—Matt. vi. 33.

But rather seek ye—*seek* is emphatic, opposed to the *seek* in the preceding verse. The phrase in the parallel passage in Matthew is, “seek ye first:” as the Gentiles *seek* “all these things,” first and supremely, so do ye seek first and supremely *the kingdom of God*, that is, the dominion or supremacy of God—the kingdom, as then about to be erected, and the cause which they were bound, as Christ’s disciples, to promote. Make the attainment for yourselves and others, of the holy spiritual happiness which that kingdom—the new spiritual economy—secures to all its genuine subjects, your great object. Subordinate and sacrifice everything else to it. In doing this, *all these things shall be added unto you*, everything really necessary and useful shall be secured to you, *added*, given over and above the spiritual good directly flowing from devotion to God’s service. (Ps. lxxxiv. 11, 12; 1 Tim. iv. 8; Rom. viii. 28.)

The great, important lessons taught for every age in these sayings of our blessed Lord, are, 1. Confidence in God. Whilst using the means for earthly support, and shunning negligence and sloth, yet we are

not to be unduly anxious about it, nor rely on our own industry, care and labor, but, having God as our Father, we are to trust to His wisdom, power, love and tenderness. 2. We are to make it the chief business of our lives to secure a place in the number of saved people, to have our sins pardoned, our hearts renewed, and ourselves made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

32. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.—Matt. xi. 25, 26.

To banish inordinate cares, our fears must be suppressed. Therefore Jesus uttered these words of consolation and encouragement. *Little flock*, or, literally translated, *very little flock*. This is what some term a double diminutive. Though this expression refers solely to the Apostles and first believers, of whom it was *literally* true, yet we may say that the number of genuine believers *has* been, and *is* still, small, in comparison with *heathens* and *false Christians*. Jesus Christ is here referred to as the great and good Shepherd of His Church, which is the *flock*; the love and care, the compassion and tenderness, the guidance and vigilance of a good Shepherd are found in Him. (John x. 1–18.) *For it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom*—the kingdom of heaven, mentioned in the last verse as the object of those who seek it. *Your Father’s good pleasure to give*, literally, “well pleased.” It is the same expression used in Matt. iii. 17, xvii. 5; Mark i. 11; Luke iii. 22. It is your Father’s benignant purpose to *give*, not of debt, but of grace. Special stress is here laid on the fatherly relation of God to all believers, as an antidote to over-carefulness and anxiety.

33. † Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.
 † Matt. xix. 21; Acts iii. 45 and iv. 34. † Matt. vi. 20; Luke xvi. 9; 1 Tim. vi. 19.

Sell that ye have, a strengthening of the admonition which in Matt. vi. 19–21, appears in another form. Rather than want wherewith to relieve those that are truly *necessitous*, sell that which you have *superfluous*, all that you can spare from the support of yourselves and families, and give it to the *poor*. *Sell that ye have*, if ye find it a hindrance, or incumbrance, in the

service of Christ. Thus giving *alms*, the treasure *laid out* shall be as *laid up* for yourselves and families in heaven. This *purse* shall not *grow old*, and this *treasure* shall not decay. The *thief* represents sudden and violent loss, the *moth* gradual and silent waste or exhaustion. The lesson here taught is, not that a man must literally sell all his possessions (Acts v. 4; 1 Tim. v. 8), and distribute the avails to the poor, but that he must give liberally, and cherish such a whole-hearted benevolence, that he would be willing to part with all his possessions, if the cause of his Redeemer and the interests of his fellow-men demanded the sacrifice, and thus giving he will lay up imperishable treasure in heaven.

31. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

There is here indicated the deepest knowledge of men. The principle stated is the obvious but momentous one, that what men value they will love, and that the two things cannot be divided in experience. Whoever constitutes his god of gold, his heart becomes as cold and hard as metal; whoever takes flesh for his arm, or makes it his idol, becomes more and more sensual, and takes on the properties of that which he loves above everything; but whoever has invisible treasures keeps spontaneously eye and heart fixed upon the invisible world. Our Lord condemns no true earthly good, no true earthly enjoyment; He simply claims that in these shall not consist our *treasures*, and that all their value shall consist in their enabling us to be better servants of God, and winners of the true happiness. Happy is that person who has nothing on earth which detains and fixes his heart there.

35. *Let your loins be girded about, and *your lights burning: 36. And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding: that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.

*Eph. vi. 14: 1 Peter i. 13. *Matt. xxv. 1, &c.

We have here the case of certain servants to whom is intrusted the care of their master's house during his absence from it. He has gone forth, and is expected to return from his marriage, bringing his bride with him. They are to have *their loins girded about*, in allusion to the long,

flowing robes of the Orientals, which were drawn up and held fast by the girdle when active exercise is demanded; they were to be in continual readiness for active duty. They were to have *their lights burning*. (Matt. xxv. 1, &c.) They were to "wait for their Lord." They were to be in their right place, not taking advantage of his absence to be out of the way, but remaining at home, ready, as soon as the master came and knocked, to open unto him immediately, just at the moment when they heard him, to open the door. Thus we are taught what believers ought to be in their present condition—their Lord being absent from them, and faithlessness abounding in His professing Church. They ought to be "waiting" for Christ. As the Apostle has it, "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ." This means steady, calm endurance even to the end, not moved by "evil tidings," or "casting away confidence," but kept in perfect peace, having "the mind stayed on God."

37. *Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.

*Matt. xxiv. 46.

Encouragement is here given to the disciples, by announcing the reward to be bestowed upon the faithful and watchful servants. *Verily I say unto you*. (See Matt. v. 18, xxiv. 46.) *He shall gird himself*, &c. At the Roman Saturnalia, the masters put on the servile dress, and waited on and served their servants. As our Lord bases this parable upon the ancient relation of master and servant, so He uses this custom for an image to express the great honor He will confer upon the servants at the judgment day, when all the blessings accruing to His followers, from His ever having worn "the form of a servant," will then be conferred by Him. Wonderful promise! Some think there will be a literal fulfillment of it, and that our Lord refers to this when He says at the last Supper, "I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come." (Luke xxii. 18.) A reference to the same literal fulfillment is supposed to exist in Isaiah xxv. 6. What a joyful view is here given of the coming of Christ!

33. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find *them* so, blessed are those servants.

Anciently the Jews divided the night into *three* watches, consisting of *four* hours each. The *first* watch began at six o'clock in the evening, and continued till *nine*; the *second* began at *nine*, and continued till *twelve*; the *third* began at *twelve*, and continued till *three* next morning, and the *fourth* began at *three*, and continued till *six*. The first watch is not mentioned in this verse, because the wedding-feast took place during that time. Neither is the fourth watch mentioned, because the return at so late an hour was improbable. *Find them so*. That is, in such a state of readiness to receive Him. *Blessed are those servants*, &c. An emphatic repetition of verse 37. The Christian must look upon every hour as that which may possibly be his last. He must not only believe in Christ, but look and long for His appearing.

39. [†]And this know, that if the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through.

[†]Matt. xxiv. 43; 1 Thess. v. 2; 2 Peter iii. 10; Rev. iii. 3 and xvi. 15.

The *good man of the house*, that is *householder*, simply. The word *good* implies here no moral character. There is here a modification of the figurative language, in which those who had hitherto been represented as servants now, during the supposed absence of their lord, are compared with the master of the house, who has to take care that his goods be not stolen. *Had known what hour the thief would come*—had been warned, as you are warned, especially if he had known the precise hour the thief would come, he would have kept watch against his approach, *and not have suffered his house to be broken through*—be digged through, for the walls of the Eastern houses are often of clay, and the house would be attacked by excavation. It is noticeable how frequently the coming of the day of the Lord is compared, in all manner of forms, with the coming of the thief. (1 Thess. v. 2, 6-8; 2 Peter iii. 10; Rev. iii. 3, xvi. 15.) Life is the time of probation. It is the watch time in which we are to be on the alert for the coming of the Son of man. How unlike is this parable to that which precedes it! The

reason of this difference is, that our Lord intended to teach that while some have reason to *rejoice* at the expectation of His coming, others have reason to *tremble* at the thought.

40. [†]Ye therefore ready also; for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

[†]Matt. xxiv. 44, xxv. 13; Mark xiii. 33; Luke xxi. 34-36; 1 Thess. v. 6; 2 Peter iii. 12.

Be always on your guard, that you may not be taken unawares. We are kept uncertain concerning the precise time of our Lord's coming, that we may be always ready. The coming here referred to is the second personal advent of the Lord Jesus Christ, at the end of this dispensation. To apply the expression, as some do, to death, is an entire perversion of Scripture. The coming of the Lord is one thing, and death is another.

41. [†] Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?

Some of the foregoing directions appeared to be of such general application, that Peter wished to know whether they were intended for the Apostles alone, or for all Christians. *This parable* means all the cautions, directions and illustrations contained in verses 32-40. It is worthy of remark, that this question was proposed by that very Apostle who afterward most of all needed the admonition, and so sadly forgot it. (Matt. xxvi. 41.)

42. And the Lord said, ^{*}Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?—^{*}Matt. xxiv. 45, xxv. 21; 1 Cor. iv. 2.

Who then is that faithful and wise steward—whoever, and whenever, and wherever he is? As the *steward* was burdened with the care of the whole domestic establishment, his post was in the fullest sense one of confidence, and therefore faithfulness in every respect was required. *Over his household*. The construction of the original refers to a constant and vigilant oversight, as though his authority and supervision rested upon his charge continually. "To give them their portion of meat in due season." The family is here properly the Church of God, considered as a great congregation, through all ages, waiting for the coming of Christ. It is that Church of all ages to whom He said of the Lord's supper, "Ye do show forth the Lord's death until He come." The *servant* seems to be more specially the *ministry* of Christ through the

ages, to whom He said, "Lo, I am with you until the end of the world."

43. Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. 44. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.

^aMatt. xxiv. 47.

Blessed (Rev. xvi. 15), when he cometh—cometh to the judgment, the same coming as in verses 37, 38, 39, 40—find so doing, referring to the specifications of duty previously made; ruler over all that he hath, simply the image of his master, drawn from the custom of appointing a competent or favorite servant to be head steward, as was Joseph in the house of Potiphar. The more extended sphere of action is represented as the reward of fidelity.

45. But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the men servants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken: 46. The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.

^bMatt. xxiv. 48. ^cOr, cut him off, Matt. xxiv. 51.

If that servant, the same servant in whom the lord had placed so much confidence, and whom he had set over others, say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming: the speech of folly which believes the day of reckoning and judgment to be far distant, only to abandon itself to the more unrestrained indulgence of its lusts. It is remarkable that every mistake on the subject of Christ's coming hitherto made, arises from requiring it to be too soon. And shall begin to beat the men servants and maidens, laying claim in arrogance and hard-heartedness to a right belonging to the lord. And to eat and drink, and to be drunken, revelling upon that which has been withdrawn from others, and, at the same time, wickedly squandering the goods of his lord. Cut him in sunder: false security sees itself confounded by the unexpected arrival of the lord, and is severely punished. Cut him in sunder means quarter him, the image of a very hard punishment. This was the punishment at that time threatened against a villain who first appeared to be faithful, but who afterward manifested himself as unfaithful. Appoint him his portion with the unbelievers, hypocrites (Matt. v. 51), that is, he shall have the same fate. It is here taught that the Lord will judge His servants according to the condition in which He finds them, and that no earlier manifested faithfulness can deliver them if they

afterward, in view of the delay of His coming, shall fall into negligence and unfaithfulness. Let it be observed also, that it is after the punishment of being split into pieces that the unfaithful servant has his part appointed with the hypocrites, and yet he is represented as still living.

47. And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. 48. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

^cNum. xv. 30; Deut. xxv. 2; John ix. 41 and xv. 22; Acts xvii. 30; James iv. 17. ^dLev. v. 17; 1 Tim. i. 13.

Which knew his lord's will, either actually by an open and express command, such as Jesus was then giving His disciples, or, virtually, because Divine revelation was within his reach. Prepared not himself, literally, did not hold himself in readiness to execute his lord's command. Neither did according to his will, i. e., his declared will and purpose. With many stripes. Although the fixed number of stripes, according to the Mosaic jurisprudence, amounted to forty (Deut. xxv. 2, 3), it is of course understood that such determining of the number in this case would be in conflict with the spirit of the parable. But the same principle which is expressed (Deut. xxv. 2), namely, that a righteous relation must exist between the greatness of the offense and the punishment, is also emphasized here by the Saviour. (See Num. xv. 30; John ix. 41, xv. 22; Acts xvii. 30; James iv. 17.) But he that knew not. This refers to comparative and not absolute ignorance. In Rom. ii. 14, 15, it is clearly shown that none are absolutely devoid of the knowledge of God's will. God has not only bestowed on men the light of a special revelation, but also the light of conscience. Ignorance itself is guilt, and hence even sins committed in ignorance are punishable. All the subjects of a kingdom are under obligation to make themselves acquainted with its laws; and misconduct, arising from neglect, is punishable guilt. Few expressions in the Bible are more unfavorable to the heathen who die in ignorance of the Gospel than this. In Rom. i. 20, the heathen are declared to be without excuse for sin, in consequence of the abundant knowledge of God, derived from the works of crea-

tion. *Did things worthy of stripes.* His acts of disobedience may have been even more glaring than those of his fellow-servant, who knew his lord's will, but his sins being comparatively unintentional, his punishment will be less severe, "he shall be beaten with *few stripes.*" The discrimination here drawn, though in one view merciful, yet, in another, is full of terror, for whatever may be the case respecting past, forsaken and repented sins of ignorance, no man is entitled to take comfort to himself from this passage respecting his present or future course of life; the very thought of doing so proves that the person entertaining that thought has sufficient knowledge to place him beyond its favorable operation. We may infer from this passage, as well as from the grades of bliss and glory in the rewards of the righteous (1 Cor. xv. 41), that there are different degrees of punishment among the lost. Here, also, is evidence that the souls of the ungodly are not *annihilated*, for, if they receive stripes, they must *know* it, and they must know also whether they are receiving *many* or *few*.

For unto whomsoever much is given, &c. In this sentence our Lord lays down a great principle in His kingdom as an appropriate conclusion to the parable He has just been speaking. From it we learn, 1. That whatever we receive from God is both a gift and a talent. 2. That every one has received some gift or talent to improve for God. 3. That God's gifts or talents are not given to all in the same measure. 4. That, whether we receive little or much, all is in order to an account. 5. That, answerable to our present talents will be our future accounts. The greater opportunities a man has of knowing his duty, and the greater abilities he has for doing good, if he do it not, the greater will be his condemnation, because the neglect of his duty in this case cannot be without a great deal of willfulness and contempt, which is a heinous aggravation. If our gifts are few and feeble, the less we have to account for; if they are greater than those of others. God expects we should do more good than those others. This principle of God's government is the principle on which *men* judicially act. It accords with

the universal conscience and common sense. And if *men* universally know the principle, it is right that they should be judged as knowing it.

49. ¶ I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?—Verse 51.

We are disposed to think that the true, literal meaning of the passage is, "I am come to set the earth on fire—I am come to produce a general conflagration." If this be admitted to be the literal meaning of the terms, there can be very little difficulty in fixing on their spiritual signification. They indicate that His religion, His doctrine, accompanied by His Spirit, should rapidly, and at length universally, overspread the world, diffuse itself among mankind, and either thoroughly impregnate with its own spirit, or utterly consume all human institutions—purifying whatever will submit to purification, and destroying what is incapable of purification. "Fire" is, in Scripture, the emblem both of the word and of the Spirit of God. "Is not my word a fire and a hammer, breaking the rock in pieces?" The cloven tongues of fire, the forked lightning flames, which sat on the heads of the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, were appropriate representations of the rapid dissemination of the doctrines they were to propagate, and the powerful destructive energy with which they were instinct, against all the varied forms of evil. (Acts ii. 3.) *And what will I, if it be already kindled?* These words express desire rather than exultation. *What will I*, or, "What do I wish? but that it were already kindled," or, "What do I wish? O, that it were already kindled!"

50. But ¶ I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!
 ¶ Matt. xx. 22; Mark x. 38. *Or, *pained*.

How am I straitened till it, that is, my baptism of suffering, *be accomplished!* *How am I straitened*—compressed and grasped as if by a pressure enclosing on every side. The words, so far from denoting only a pressure of longing and desire, or merely oppression by anxiety and fear, mean both these states of feeling. They express the feelings with which we look forward to an event, in itself extremely disagreeable, absolutely inevitable, and which, when taken in connection with its

consequences, we do not wish to avoid. We may be assisted in forming a conception of the Saviour's state of mind at the moment He used these words, by endeavoring to realize the feelings of an advanced Christian in the immediate prospect of dissolution—dissolution likely to be the result of agonizing suffering. He instinctively shrinks from pain and death for their own sakes, but he knows that there is no entrance for him into heaven, to be with Christ, and to behold and share His glories, except through death, and the assured hope of obtaining this great honor and blessedness makes him more than willing to die, desirous "to depart, to be with Christ, which is far better." Still this desire has a very peculiar character, easily distinguishable from the desire of unmixed good. He is, as the Apostle says (Phil. i. 23), "in a strait betwixt two," even when desiring to depart. So Jesus, whilst realizing the dreadful agony through which He would pass, in bringing forth His Church by His pains, washing her in His blood, giving her life by His death, and establishing the kingdom and the glory of the Father by the sacrifice of Himself, was more than willing to suffer and to die. "For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame."

51. ¹Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division. 52. ²For from hence forth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. 53. 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.
¹Matt. x. 31; verse 49. ²Mic. vii. 6; John vii. 43, ix. 16 and x. 19. ³Matt. x. 35.

Suppose ye. The words imply a disposition to so think, or imagine, and to act accordingly. "If, from the meekness of my character and my Gospel you imagine that I am to send peace, not only in spirit, but in result, among mankind," "I tell you, Nay; but rather division." Is not the Lord Jesus called the Prince of Peace, and did not the angels join in chorus at His birth, saying, "Peace on earth, good will to men?" How, then, are we to understand the expression that *He came to give division*? We must distinguish between the intentional aim of Christ's coming, and the accidental effect of it. Christ's intentional

aim was to plant, propagate and promote peace in the world; but, through the lusts and corruption of men's natures, the issue and event of His coming is war and division, not that these are the genuine and natural fruits of the Gospel, but occasional and accidental only. Because Christ is the Sun of Righteousness, it cannot but be that torches of strife and funeral pyres should be kindled by its fiery glow. When the Holy One of God comes into personal contact with an unholy world, a shock and strife is inevitable; and that not only against Him personally, but also among men themselves, inasmuch as these begin to distinguish themselves into adversaries and subjects of His kingdom. (See Luke ii. 34; John ix. 39.)

The expression, *five in one house divided*, &c., and the expressions in the following verse, are not to be pressed too literally. In some houses there are not five persons; in others, there are more than five. In some families, where the work of conversion begins, the father and son are entirely of one mind, and so also are the mother and daughter. The expressions are manifestly proverbial. The plain lesson they are meant to convey is this, that the Gospel will often produce divisions in families; and that even two persons who are most nearly related may become estranged from one another, in consequence of one being converted and the other not. That this is constantly the case is well known to all who know anything of true religion. So faithful Abraham was divided against his father, the idolatrous Terah. So religion sets the pious child in opposition to the impious parent. So temperance sets the sober child at variance with the drunken father. So piety divides the fashionable, godless mother or mother-in-law, against the pious daughter or daughter-in-law, or the fashionable, frivolous daughter or daughter-in-law against the devoted mother or mother-in-law. We find in the *Acts of the Apostles*, that wherever the Gospel came, persecution was stirred up; *it was everywhere spoken against*, and there was no small stir about that way. The disciples of Christ, therefore, must not promise themselves peace on earth. They must also hold themselves ready to break any

union, how close and natural soever it may be, when faith and the interests of God are in question. And those ministers whose preaching is marked by a carnal peace and a sensual repose, should earnestly inquire how far this effect may be attributable to their failure to proclaim the truth in all its plainness, purity and power.

54. ¶ And he said also to the people, when ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is. 55. And *when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass.—Matt. xvi. 2. *Job xxxvii. 17.

Having addressed His disciples, Christ now addresses *the people*, the immense multitude who surrounded Him, and who were pressed so closely together that they trode upon each other. *When ye see a cloud.* The cloud which rose out of the west, on the side of the Mediterranean sea lying on the west of the whole Jewish territory, was regarded as a sign of approaching rain (1 Kings xviii. 44), while the south wind from the great wilderness of Sinai and hot deserts of Arabia, lying to the south of the Jewish territory, was considered as a sign of heat to be expected (Job xxxvii. 17), and the people accordingly either housed their hay and corn or threw it abroad, and equipped themselves for a journey, according as they foresaw the weather would be.

56. Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time? 57. Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?

Our Lord here rebuked the multitude for not discerning *this time*, as the time of the Messiah's appearing, and He called them *hypocrites*, that is, dissemblers or deceivers, a term entirely appropriate to them, as men who could foretell the changes of the weather by its dubious and variable signs, and yet were not able to discern that the time had come when the Messiah long promised in the Scriptures and expected by the people should appear. All this, too, in face of the facts, that Daniel's seventy weeks of years were drawing to a close, at which time the Messiah was to appear, and the scepter was departing from Judah, at which time their predicted Shiloh was to come, and the harbinger of the Messiah had appeared and warned them all with his warnings, and Herod, alarmed by a sign from the

sky, had summoned the Sanhedrim to inform him of the place of the Messiah's birth, and there was a general presentiment prevalent through the East that the great *One* was about to appear, and *He* was now before them, as *One* who, by their recorded pedigrees of the line of David, was proving by miracles—miracles which they confessed were such as no power less than the highest spiritual agent could perform—that *He* was the Messiah of prophecy. *Yea, and why even of yourselves, &c.* Our Lord does not here mean to say that the Jews could understand spiritual things, and see the kingdom of God by their own unassisted judgment, and without the teaching of the Holy Ghost. His meaning is, "Why do ye not of yourselves, by simply observing what is going on around you, form a right judgment about my claim to be received as the Messiah, and a just decision upon the matters in dispute between me and your teachers, the scribes and Pharisees?" Righteousness and truth seldom find admittance into the minds of men, unless some interest open their eyes, or grace work this miracle.

58. ¶ *When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, *as thou art* in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison. 59. I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite.

¶ Prov. xxv. 8; Matt. v. 25. *See Ps. xxxii. 6; Isa. lv. 6. *See Mark xii. 42.

When, that is, for instance *when*. *Adversary*, a plaintiff at law, to whom a debt, or payment of penalty, is due. *Magistrate*, "as thou art in the way," to the place of trial, an allusion to the Roman law, by which the plaintiff himself seized the defendant and drew him before the court for trial. *Give diligence*, take pains, do thine utmost, *that thou mayest be delivered from him*, rescued from his demand, *lest he hale thee to the judge*, by prosecution or complaint, *deliver thee to the officer*, by passing sentence, and ordering the ministerial attendants to execute it, and those attendants *cast thee into prison*. *Thou shalt not depart thence*, thou shalt not be freed from incarceration, *till thou hast paid*—though it implies the possibility of paying, at the same time suggests the debtor's hopeless capacity to make it—the *very last mite*. The coin mentioned is of much less value than our cent, and therefore was adapted to

convey what is here the essential idea, that of an infinitesimal residuum. The whole is a symbolical representation of Divine judgment. The *adversary* stands for the law of God, under the condemnation of which we are, on account of our sins, a condemnation from which nothing but the intervention of the Saviour could deliver us; *the way* stands for the brief period of our probation; the *judge* is the Son of man, at His coming; the *officer* is the judicial agent (Matt. xxv. 31); the *prison* is hell. The attempt to sustain the doctrine of purgatory from the words, *not depart thence, until thou hast paid, &c.*, is vain. Such an argument would prove

many absurdities, if applied to other texts where the expression "until" is used. (See Ps. lxxii. 7, cx. 1, and Matt. i. 25.)

It is of immense importance that we seek reconciliation with God before it be too late. His law is against us, and contrary to us, and its demands must be satisfied. We are moving on to the judgment. There is not one moment to be lost, since we cannot be certain of one moment. We ought, therefore, to be in the greatest earnest in seeking pardon and forgiveness through the blood of Christ. When we are once out of the way of repentance and mercy, what can we expect but the rigor of an inflexible justice?

1. What did Christ say unto His disciples first of all? 2. In what verses is a particular providence taught? 3. What is said of confessing Christ? 4. What of denying Him? 5. Explain verses 11, 12. 6. What are the main points of the parable of the rich fool? 7. For what purpose is reference made to the ravens and the lilies? 8. What is said of watchful servants? 9. What is taught in verses 47 and 48? 10. Explain verses 51-54. 11. What is said about hypocrites? 12. What is meant by "adversary"? 13. What by "way"? 14. What by "judge"? 15. What by "officer"? 16. What by "prison"?

CHAPTER XIII.

1 *Christ preacheth repentance upon the punishment of the Galileans, and others.* 6 *The fruitless fig tree may not stand.* 11 *He heareth the crooked woman.* 18 *sheweth the powerful working of the word in the hearts of his chosen, by the parable of the grain of mustard seed, and of leaven.* 24 *exhorteth to enter in at the strait gate,* 31 *and reproveth Herod and Jerusalem.*

At the solemn close of the discourse of the last chapter, the assembled myriads broke up their congregation, but a lesser circle remained round our Lord, with whom a colloquy now ensued. The incident with which this chapter opens is connected with the foregoing discourse by the words, *at that season* (more literally, *on that same occasion*). Some persons who, perhaps, had arrived lately from Jerusalem, reported the slaughter which had just been committed there by Pilate, of certain Galileans. Perhaps they wished to get Christ's judgment on the matter, and thus lead Him into a snare. This led to the solemn admonition which Jesus uttered.

THERE were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

Galileans. There were two eminent sects among the Jews in our Saviour's time, namely, the Herodians and the Galileans. The former stood stiffly for having tribute paid to the Roman emperor, whose subjects the Jews now were; but the Galileans (so called probably from Judas of Galilee, mentioned Acts v. 37) opposed this tribute, and often raised rebellion against the Roman power. The heads of this party, Judas and his coadjutor, Sadduc, were put down by the Romans, and measures of active opposition suppressed; but the party still survived, and it is fair enough to conclude that the Galileans here mentioned belonged to this party, and having by some acts or declarations made their principles known, were slain by Pilate, when they had proceeded to Jerusalem to worship at the temple. *Mingled with their sacrifices.* An arrowy shower of death upon the Galileans would cause the blood of the sacrificers and of their sacrifices to *blend in the same stream*. This massacre, besides being

intrinsicly a heinous crime, had its hideousness increased by being perpetrated where and when it was.

2. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? 3. I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish,

From these verses we learn: 1. That a violent and sudden death is no evidence of God's displeasure. 2. That people are more ready to talk of the deaths of others than their own. A murder, a sudden death, a shipwreck, or a railway accident, will completely occupy the minds of a neighborhood, and be in the mouth of every one you meet. And yet these very persons dislike talking of their own deaths, and their own prospects in the world beyond the grave. Such is human nature in every age. 3. That though no man suffers without being a sinner, *they* are not to be regarded as the greatest sinners who suffer most in this life. Whilst it is true that even temporal suffering is a penalty for wickedness, and that all mankind are sufferers because they are sinners, it is not true that the greater sufferings are proof of the greater guilt. It is only in the next world that God punishes with the view chiefly of inflicting punishment, and that His justice proportions the punishment to the sin. Here the punishment proceeds, either from His mercy, which would fain save the sinner, or from His holiness, which purifies believers, or from His Providence, which establishes the belief of His justice, or from His wisdom, which, by means of fear, puts a stop to sin. 4. To repent is not a matter of counsel, but of absolute necessity. He who defers doing it, hazards no less than eternity. He who dies without doing it, must perish eternally. This was to be the doom of the Judeans and Jerusalemites as *individuals*, however true it was also prophetically of the tremendous slaughter of the Jews by the Romans under Titus, which was to take place in a few years at the siege of Jerusalem, and it is true of every man. Repentance, beginning with knowledge of sin, going on to work sorrow for sin, leading to confession of sin before God, showing itself by a thorough breaking off from sin, resulting in a habit of deep hatred for all sins, and, above all, inseparably connected

with lively faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—this repentance must be ours, if we would escape the perdition of ungodly men. Without repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, no man can be saved.

4. Or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were *sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? 5. I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.
*Or, debtors, Matt. xviii. 24: Luke xl. 4.

The tower in Siloam. This tower, no doubt, stood near the pool of that name, which was the only one whose waters gladdened the city, and flowed at the base of Mount Moriah, to the south-east. These and other similar instances in which our Lord avails Himself of recent occurrences, which were doubtless the subjects of general conversation, to give point or illustration to His instructions, are of much interest, and must have made a strong impression upon His actual auditors. (See on verses 2, 3.) *I tell you, Nay, &c.* The repetition of this sentence shows the general importance of repentance. *Philip Henry* is represented as having said: "Some people do not like to hear much of repentance. But I think it so necessary, that if I should die in the pulpit, I should desire to die preaching repentance, and if I should die out of the pulpit, I should desire to die practicing it." The word *likewise* is not to be pressed to signify precisely the same kind of death which the *eighteen* suffered by the falling of the tower, although this was doubtless true of many who fell before the Roman sword, in the sanguinary scenes which followed; the similarity consisted rather in the completeness and awful nature of the ruin which was to come upon them, and the passage cannot be limited to the temporal judgments impending over the nation, but has a higher and more awful import in the judgments which will overtake the finally impenitent in the world to come. There is no medium: either repentance or damnation.

6. ¶ He spake also this parable: *A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard: and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.
*Isa. v. 2: Matt. xxi. 19.

And he spake also this parable. It should not be overlooked how significantly typical the fig tree was which was employed by our Lord to represent the rapidly approaching overthrow of the Jewish nation,

in righteous vengeance for their deep and wide-spread corruption, and their inconsiderate and obstinate impenitence, notwithstanding the many provisions made by God for their improvement. For though that fig tree, the Jewish nation, has been cut down, the *roots* are yet left in the earth, and the words of Job may be applied to that afflicted people: "There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branches thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof was old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground, yet through the scent of *water*, it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant." (Job xiv. 7-9.)

But whilst this parable referred to the Jews as a nation, it is not meant for them only. It refers to every individual in every age, and in every country enjoying the means of grace. Indeed there is a personal application made of the image which supplies the ground-work of the parable, by the Baptist (Matt. iii. 10), and of an image very nearly the same by Christ Himself. (John xv. 2.)

A certain man, that is God, *had a fig tree planted*. As the fig tree is a fruit-tree, which should bear fine fruit, and besides was planted in a vineyard and treated with special care, this represents the favorable circumstances and relations which the mercy of God had granted to Israel, His design to obtain fruit from the tree, and the just expectation of the same. In the Scriptures men are frequently compared to trees, and their work to fruit. (Ps. i. 3; Jer. xvii. 8; Luke vi. 43; John xv. 2, 4, 5; Rom. vii. 4.) *In his vineyard*. The introduction of this feature in the parable is evidently designed to show that the tree had a position in favorable soil, and where it was prominently exposed to the view of the owner, as he passed along through his vineyard inspecting its condition, and seeing what fruit was ripening for his use. Besides the life and faculties which they possess in common with others, those who dwell in Christian lands have spiritual privileges which are peculiar to themselves. Civil and religious liberty, the Scriptures, the Sabbath, the Church, place us in the position of the fig tree within the vine-

yard, while other nations, destitute of these privileges, are more or less like a tree rooted in the sand, or exposed on the way-side. *And he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none*. Here is a description of those for whom God has done so much. Long before, the prophets had upbraided their people with thanklessness and disobedience. And, at the time of Jesus, Israel was actually in the condition of deep moral corruption; excessive wickedness and hypocrisy reigned in almost every heart. God, who gives us our advantages, that we might bear fruit unto holiness, has His eye upon us, and expects this result, and has a right to expect it.

7. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?

The dresser, manifestly the Son of God, Himself, the Intercessor for men. (Job xxxiii. 23; Zech. i. 12; Heb. vii. 25.) *Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit, and find none*: a lively representation of the numerous attempts and movements of God to remind sinners of their obligation to comply with His gracious design. He comes always anew in His word, by means of conscience, and through other media. Along with this, however, we have here depicted the patience and long-suffering of God, which waits for the expected fruits. (2 Peter iii. 15; Rom. ii. 4.) *Three years* seems to have been selected as a number neither too great nor too small. A tree may for some reason remain barren for one or even two years. But if it be fruit-bearing, it will hardly remain barren the third year. Yet that, in extreme cases, this was so, is evident from the plea of the dresser, to spare it another year, in hopes of bringing it by extra culture into a productive state. *I come*. This is a verb of *continuity*. During the whole three years, again and again *have I been coming*. The visits of God are secret and unrecognized, though they be ever recurring. *Seeking fruit*. The Master seeks and seeks from season to season. There may be no fruit, there may be leaves, there may be the leafless branch; in either case He departs in sorrowful disappointment. *Cumbereth*, rather, *makes sterile*. The sinner can never sin by

omission alone. He will commit positive sin, and produce positive evil and destruction. Public chastisements, calamities and diseases are so many admonitions from God in order to our conversion, and threaten us with His wrath and indignation. They are the voice of God, and when we are deaf to them, it is He whom we refuse to hear. Life is conferred upon us to no other end but that we should serve God, exercise repentance, and work out our own salvation. He who does no part of this, well deserves to have it immediately cut off and taken from him.

8. And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: 9. And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.

Let it alone. It is the voice of the Intercessor. No worth or worthiness in the sinner preserves him. He lives upon sufferance, and dies when the pleading voice becomes silent. *This year also*, seems to imply that it was not the first time the owner had threatened to cut down the tree, but was induced to let it remain by the entreaty of the dresser of the vineyard. *Dig about it*, &c. Three things were necessary to the cultivation of the fig tree—digging, dunging and watering, and especially the first. We are told that fig trees exhaust the soil. *If it bear fruit, well.* In that case there will be no occasion to remove the tree. *And if not, then after that*, &c. Future time is here specified, but it is left indefinite. One thing was certain, if the tree afterward continued unproductive, it was to be cut down. The decree had gone forth. Even He who was the impersonation of love, the Intercessor, had yielded so far as to say, *after that thou shalt cut it down.* *And if, and if not.* Upon these two *ifs* hangs eternity. The patience of God with respect to sinners is one of the most surprising things imaginable, when we consider what God and what the sinner is; and yet how few frequently think of this, adore it, render thanks for it, and co-operate with it! But this patience, though great and of long continuance, is wearied out at last, when it has no effect upon sinners.

10. † And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath.

Frequent reference is made to our Lord's attending the services of the synagogue on

the Sabbath days. These services consisted of prayers, reading the Scriptures, and preaching or expounding the law. We should make conscience of attending the house of God, as we have opportunity, and not think we can spend the Sabbath as well at home in reading a good book, for religious assemblies are a Divine institution. We must give our testimony to them, however small the number may be of which they consist. *Was teaching* denotes a continuing act. *He still taught the people knowledge.* He was in His element when teaching.

11. And behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in nowise lift up herself.

The woman was present, with the other worshippers, in the synagogue. *Spirit of infirmity.* Had we only these words, we might be doubtful whether Luke meant to trace up her complaint to any other cause beyond the natural causes whence flow the weakness and sufferings which afflict our race. But our Lord's words, *whom Satan hath bound* (verse 16), are more explicit, and leave no doubt of His meaning. The power of wicked spirits to produce disease is abundantly shown in the word of God. (Mark x. 1; Acts x. 38; 2 Cor. xii. 7; Job ii. 7.) Though this woman should be classed with those possessed by evil spirits, the type of her possession was much milder than that of most, as is shown by her permitted presence at the public worship of God. Her affliction had lasted for the long period of *eighteen years*. Her nervous energies were so weakened that she could not stand erect. She was *bowed together*, bent down to the earth, a situation equally painful and humiliating, the *violence* of which she could not support, and the *shame* of which she could not conceal. She could in no case stand straight, or look toward heaven.

Sin is the origin of all our diseases and afflictions. Had this never entered into the world, there had been neither pain, distortion nor death. Many persons are called to peculiarly painful and protracted sufferings. Can we look back to uninterrupted years of health and activity? What cause for thankfulness! The power of Satan binds the *souls* of sensual men to the earth. They are unable to look up to the

God above them. It is the power of the Redeemer that can loosen their bonds, if they apply to Him, and give them power to raise themselves up, and to use their tongues in praise of His strange mercy. How does the conduct of this suffering Jewess put to shame many strong and healthy professing Christians, that allow frivolous excuses to keep them away from the house of God! Souls that thirst after God spare no pains to get a refreshing draught from the wells of salvation.

12. And when Jesus saw her, he called *her to him*, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity.

She did not apply to Him for relief—perhaps she did not know that He would be at the synagogue, and as she could not lift herself up, she may never have seen His gracious countenance. But her heart and her distress spoke loudly, though her lips were silent, and, as she was thus calling for help, the Saviour called her to Himself that she might receive help. How must she have felt when she heard the Lord Jesus desire her to approach. If our Lord does so much for a person when unsolicited, how much more will He do for those who call upon Him in prayer! *And said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity.* Satan's grasp had fastened and tied her down with stiffened sinews and muscles, but now she was LOOSED from her infirmity, the nature of her disease rendering this form of address appropriate. O, what a surprise, what a deliverance was this! How unexpected, how free! Her only merit was disease, but one word brings her cure.

13. ^bAnd he laid *his hands on her*; and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.

^cMark xvi. 18; Acts ix. 17.

The hand of Christ's *holiness terrified*, and the hand of His *power expelled* the demon. The imposition of His hands may also have been intended to confirm the woman's faith, and rendered the cure, in the eyes of the spectators, palpable and unmistakable as to its source. *Immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.* She at once stood erect before them all, in the vigor of health, and free from the oppressions of Satan, and full of joy and gratitude, she broke forth in devout praise to God for her instant and wonderful cure.

It will be noticed that this cure was, 1. A *speedy* one—it was done in an instant. 2. It was a *perfect* one—the woman was made *completely* whole. 3. It was a *public* one—there were many to attest and render it credible. 4. It was a *stable* and *permanent* one—she was *loosed*, forever loosed from her infirmity. 5. Her soul partook of the good done to her body—*she glorified God.*

We need not doubt that this mighty miracle was intended to supply hope and comfort to sin-diseased souls. With Christ nothing is impossible. He can soften the hardest hearts, and bend the most stubborn will. He can enable sinners who have long been poring over earthly things, or wasting themselves in soul-defiling excesses, to look upward to heaven, and see the kingdom of God. Let us never, therefore, despair about the salvation of others so long as they live, but pray on, labor on, and faint not. Jesus is "able to save to the uttermost."

14. And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day; and said unto the people, *There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day.*
^cEx. xx. 9. ^dMatt. xii. 10; Mark iii. 2; Luke vi. 7 and xiv. 3.

There were some present who, instead of being touched by the sight of the woman's joy, were filled with indignation. *The ruler of the synagogue* was one of these. He had not dared to prevent the Lord from teaching in the synagogue, because he knew the admiration in which He was held by the people. But now he could no longer restrain his rage, and he angrily addressed the congregation loud enough for Jesus to hear him, saying, *There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day.* The people had not come to the synagogue *in order* to be healed, they had come to worship God. The ruler knew this, but he only sought for some *pretense* to hinder the glorious triumphs of the Redeemer. *There are six days, &c.* The bitterness and sarcasm of this unhappy speech are very remarkable, and show that the wonderful miracle the man had just witnessed, instead of convincing him that Jesus was the Messiah, called forth the corruption of his heart. He affected to be hurt at what he chose to consider a desecration of the Sabbath, but the true

reason for his indignation was the fact that Christ was glorified. He feared the effect of the miracle which had just been wrought, and under the influence of this fear, he covertly and meanly endeavored to convey the impression that the cure performed by our Lord was not supernatural, but such as those effected by human agency, and not therefore to be distinguished from the common medical treatment of patients.

15. The Lord then answered him, and said, *Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?* 16. And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, 10, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?—Chap. xiv. 5. (Chap. xix. 9.

"*Thou hypocrite,*" literally, hypocrite! This caviling at healing on the Sabbath day was one of the stereotype tests of the hypocrite. The epithet, though severe, was spoken in love, and precisely suited the case, for the man was not disturbed because the Sabbath was violated, but because Christ was glorified, and besides, not daring directly to find fault with the Lord, he sought obliquely to reach Him through the people, who were now under His influence, and whom he feared less. *Doth not each one of you on the Sabbath, &c.* The Talmud states that a beast might be led forth to watering on the Sabbath day, so that it bore no other burden than its collar and halter. Indeed, it was held lawful to draw water for them and pour it into the trough, but it was not lawful to bear water to the beast, which must be led to the well, pool or river, and watered there. *And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, &c.* It is not easy to doubt that this woman was not only a natural descendant of Abraham, but his daughter by spiritual relation, in the highest sense of the term. (Gal. iii. 7.) Our Lord's reasoning was this: Is your loosing and watering the beast a work of necessity? much more is mine. Is yours a work of mercy? mine much more. Your compassion is to a beast, mine to a rational creature, to a woman, and that not a stranger, an heathen woman, but one of your own, a Jewish woman, a daughter of Abraham: nor this only; my work was one of far greater necessity, and more special mercy than yours, for the beast might live

a day without water and not be sick, but this woman was in sore distress for eighteen years—she was in the hands of the enemy of mankind, bound by Satan. Your work, moreover, is a process of unfastening and leading away to water, whilst I have but spoken a word and released a body from suffering. Was it not then a greater act of compassion and mercy, and is it not more lawful to loose this woman, *on this very sabbath day* (for so the original literally signifies) than to lead a beast? There will be noticed at the root of this argument, as of so much else in Scripture, a deep assertion of the specific difference between man, the lord of creation, for whom all things were made, and all the inferior orders of beings that tread the same earth with him, and with whom on the side of his body he is akin. He is something more than the first in this chain and order of beings, he is specifically different. (1 Cor. ix. 9; Ps. viii. 8.)

17. And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

The ruler of the synagogue had his party, but they were thoroughly put to shame. Their shallow and malignant hypocrisy had been so thoroughly exposed by Jesus, that they were conscious that they had forfeited the respect of the common people, and hence they were filled with a sense of shame and disgrace. But whilst Christ's *adversaries* were ashamed, the *people* were affected differently. They rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him. The view of the miracle which they had just witnessed renewed again the recollection of the former ones, wrought, as we have reason to believe, on the same day, and the continuity of this beneficent activity disposed heart and mouth to the glorifying of God.

18. ¶ Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? And wherunto shall I resemble it? 19. It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast it into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.—Matt. xiii. 31; Mark iv. 30.

The comparison which Christ uses, likening the growth of His kingdom to that of a tree, was one with which many of His hearers may have been already familiar from the Scriptures of the Old Testament. (Ezek. xvii. 22-24; Ps. lxxx. 8.) *Like a grain of mustard seed.* The

plant here spoken of was probably the "Kharda," or Turkish mustard (botanically, the *Salvadora Persica*), which, from a very small seed, grows to a tree with a wooden fibre, and to such a size that it can be climbed by a man, and so it truly becometh a tree. It produces numerous branches and leaves, among which birds may and do take shelter and build their nests. The peculiar aptness of the particular kind of seed mentioned by our Lord for His purpose, will be manifest, when it is remembered that the point of comparison in the parable is the greatness of the effect from so small and unpromising a beginning, and that the mustard seed was the smallest of domestic garden seeds in proportion to the size of the tree which it produces. The point presented by our Lord is, not greatness in itself, but the greatness of the tree when compared with the smallness of the seed from which it springs. By *the kingdom of God*, we may understand saving truth, living and growing great, either in the world or in an individual human heart.

Cast into his garden. The grain of mustard seed is here represented as sown in a good soil, and a select spot, a garden, and not a field. *And the fowls of the air lodged, &c.* Though this last circumstance may have been introduced to complete the image of a goodly tree, yet it is also to be recognized as a prophecy of the refuge and defense that should be for all men in the Church; how that multitudes should thither make their resort, finding their protection from worldly oppression, as well as the satisfaction for all the needs and wants of their souls. (See Ezek. xvii. 23.)

Like the mustard seed, the "kingdom of God" was at its commencement, to outward sense, *small and insignificant*. Behold the stable in Bethlehem, and that weak babe sleeping in the manger. In the quiet of domestic privacy the child increases; in His thirtieth year He comes forth into public, teaches three years, and then dies upon the cross. (Matt. xiii. 54, 55.) Fishermen and publicans, plain and unlettered men, having no countenance or support from the ordinary forces of the world, are His first scholars and messengers, and they gathered themselves to

Him only by degrees (John i. 35-51); besides the twelve, the whole multitude of disciples amounted to but one hundred and twenty (Acts i. 15). So small at first was the company of our Lord's followers; small also is the beginning of the heavenly kingdom in the human heart; it begins by a word of truth reaching the conscience, a ray of light from above finds its way into the darkness of the inner man, and perhaps some trifling circumstance gives rise to consequences infinitely important.

It grew, and waxed a great tree. The Gospel spread on all sides from Jerusalem, manifesting itself as an effect of the power given to the exalted Son of man, and of His blessed influence, since He accompanied the preached Gospel with the gracious workings of His Spirit. In spite of persecution, opposition and violence, Christianity gradually spread and increased. Year after year its adherents became more numerous. City after city, and country after country, received the new faith. Individual believers, also, experience only a gradual increase in faith, discernment, love, hope, humility, and all the Christian graces. Amid many storms, both of external and internal temptation, the new creature still grows, and the old more and more decays. (2 Cor. iii. 18.)

The kingdom of God is like the mustard seed in its great and glorious issue. The parable places before us in a lively and striking image such truths as these: "The earth shall be covered with the knowledge of the glory of God, even as the waters cover the sea;" "all shall know me, from the least to the greatest." The appearance presented by a heart which wholly belongs to Christ is in like manner great and glorious. What did not a John, a Paul, become? And all from the small beginning that the word of God had been implanted in the heart!

20. And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? 21. It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.—See Matt. xiii. 33.

To the agricultural analogy just given, our Lord added another borrowed from domestic life and female industry, as if to leave no part of every-day experience un-

employed in the elucidation and enforcement of religious truth. *The kingdom of God.* This phrase may be understood as denoting the reign of grace by which Christ rules in the hearts of men; also, and mainly, as relating to Christianity in its workings with the race. The following points are noticeable in the parable: 1. As "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," so our holy religion had a small and slight beginning in the world, and has also in the human heart, generally beginning by a word of truth reaching the conscience. 2. As this leaven was a foreign importation, so Christianity was not of earthly origin, and Divine grace is something introduced into the soul from without. 3. As leaven is of an assimilative nature, so the Gospel transforms society into the likeness of itself, and Divine grace makes the subject of it a new creature. 4. The Gospel, like leaven, is diffusive in the world and in the individual heart. 5. The Gospel and Divine grace, like leaven, work silently, gradually and outwardly. Beginning in the center, they reach an external development. 6. The Gospel and Divine grace, like the leaven, are destined to work until their saving power reaches the full completion of its design—until the whole mass is leavened. Their triumph is sure.

A woman took. In the Scriptures the Holy Spirit is frequently referred to in such terms as these: "As a mother comforteth her son, so will I comfort thee." "Under the apple tree (a name by which Christ was denoted), thy mother brought thee forth; there she brought thee forth that bare thee." "Ye must be born again." *Three measures of meal.* A measure was the third part of an ephah, and these three were the usual quantity for a baking. (Gen. xviii. 6; Judg. vi. 19; 1 Sam. i. 24.) *Till the whole was leavened.* There are some who see in the three measures the constituent parts of our compound being, soul, body and spirit. But it is more than probable that our Lord had not in His mind any of the various allegorical meanings which have been attached to His words. The Gospel is destined to conquer the world, and subdue it to itself. It is now spreading, elevating society, and it will

continue to do so, until at the mean of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess. Nothing can prevent its progress and dominion. So with the grace of God in the heart, "The righteous shall hold on his way." God "will perfect that which concerneth us." The "good part" which has been "chosen" "shall never be taken away." "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

22. ¹And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. ²Matt. ix. 35; Mark vi. 6.

He went through the cities and villages. This is Luke's general heading for the *Peræan ministry of Jesus.* The cities and villages were those of the trans-Jordanic region, including Bethabara and the localities generally of John's baptisms. Jesus preached by His holy doctrine, but also by His exemplary life. Wherever Providence brings us, we should endeavor to be doing all the good we can. The pastor who instructs his people with care, visits his flock, and is continually intent on his duty, advances very fast toward the heavenly Jerusalem.

23. ¹Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, 24. ¹Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. ²Matt. vii. 13. ³See John vii. 34, viii. 21 and xiii. 33; Rom. ix. 31.

Then said one. The time, place and person are not particularly stated. *Lord.* The respectful address, and the confidence of the inquirer in our Lord's ability to answer, show that he had some proper view of Christ's character, and render it probable that his question was not one of captiousness or curiosity, but grew out of some anxiety on the subject of salvation. *Are there few that be saved?* The question was much debated by the Jewish doctors, some maintaining that all Israelites are saved by birthright, others asserting that the saved will be few, just as but few of the original Israelites arrived in Canaan.

That the Saviour's instruction contains an answer—it is true, indirect, but yet satisfactory and powerful—to the question addressed Him, strikes us at once on comparing the two. *Strive.* The word used to denote those extraordinary efforts, made by the combatants in the Olympic games, to

gain the victory. It is that from which we take our English word "agonize." It is like our expression, *strain every nerve to enter in at the strait gate*. The *strait gate* was a wicket-gate in a larger one. *At* would be better translated "through." The idea is that of a struggle to press through the narrow entrance-way, to renounce the world and sin, accept the offered salvation through Christ, and press toward the kingdom with great earnestness and perseverance. Men may make devotion as easy as they please—they may widen the gate of heaven, and flatter themselves and others that their salvation is continually in their hands. The direct contrary is true; since truth itself assures us so. Salvation is neither for the slothful and idle, who will not strive; nor for such as will not enter in at the strait gate; nor yet for those who presume to the very last, either upon their own strength or upon the grace of God. God has His proper seasons, which we must by no means let slip.

For many, I say unto you, &c. We are to understand such a *seeking* as is in the wrong direction and at the wrong time. The word here translated "*seek*" is the very same which is used in the familiar promise: "Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." It does not, therefore, mean faintness or feebleness of effort, but effort to enter, at the wrong time, and by the wrong way, into everlasting life, into which there is but one entrance-way, and that through the strait gate. We are not to suppose that many who are very anxious to be saved, may, notwithstanding, come short of salvation. But if men do not find eternal life, it is because they do not seek it in the way in which God hath appointed it to be sought. No man who thus seeks it shall seek it in vain. Neither are we to infer from this statement of our Lord anything discouraging as to the number of the human race that will be saved. The Scriptures inform us that there are to be "nations of the saved," and that they are to form "a multitude whom no man can number."

25. ¹When once the master of the house is risen up, and ²hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, ³Lord, Lord, open unto us: and he shall answer and say unto you, ⁴I know you not whence ye are; ⁵Ps. xxxii. 6; Isa. lv. 6. ⁶Matt. xxv. 10. ⁷Luke vi. 46. ⁸Matt. vii. 23 and xxv. 12.

When once, literally, from the time, the master of the house, the hospitable entertainer of his friends, is risen up, from his seat, in order to shut to the door. This expresses deliberate forethought and determination, after the exercise of patience and forbearance. *And ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, or, ye shall take to standing without and knocking, showing a change from carelessness to concern; saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.* This appeal implies earnestness and expectation; all they ask is an open door and a refuge. *And he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are.* The word "know" here is used in a somewhat peculiar sense. It is equivalent to acknowledged or approved—a sense of the term of not unfrequent occurrence in Scripture. "The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous" (Ps. i. 6)—He approves, and gives tokens of His approval, of their way. "I know"—acknowledge—"my sheep, and am known"—acknowledged—of mine. The words *whence ye are* should be given interrogatively, "Whence are ye?"

26. Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.

We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. They had, perhaps, partaken of His miraculous feedings with the five thousand. Jesus, doubtless, often ate and drank, and was on terms of friendship and social intercourse with those whom, as a public teacher, He addressed. It is eating and drinking before the Lord that is spoken of, without inward communion with Him. It was customary with Jewish doctors to teach in the streets. It will be observed that there is a striking climax in the earnestness of those who applied for admittance: first, standing some time without, then knocking, then calling, finally reminding of former acquaintance; but all in vain.

27. ¹But he shall say, I tell you, I know ye not whence ye are; ²depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.

³Matt. vii. 23 and xxv. 41; verse 25. ⁴Ps. vi. 8; Matt. xxv. 41.

The words, *I know you not whence ye are*, are repeated, yet with still greater emphasis, showing that the judgment is inexorable. *Depart from me all ye workers of iniquity.* The word *workers* here signifies

hired operatives. He charges them, therefore, with being the paid fabricators and laborers of wickedness. The similarity between this expression and Matt. xxv. 41, appears to show clearly that the time described is the second coming of Christ, and the judgment day.

28. ²⁸ There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.
²⁹ Matt. viii. 12; xiii. 42 and xxiv. 51. ³⁰ Matt. viii. 11.

Those who by procrastination and inaction suffer the time of admission to the Gospel feast to pass by, and hence are excluded, are here represented as in the midst of night (hell.) Yet they are said to see heaven, thus showing that the lost shall see afar off the glory and blessedness of the saved, and the sight shall add to their misery, as they behold the patriarchs and prophets of the Old Testament participants of this joy, and they themselves as the children of those spiritual ancestors, *thrust out*. *Weeping and gnashing of teeth*, is a strong image of that utter despair, darkness and death of a soul excluded from God.

29. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.

The word *many* is here omitted, which we find in the parallel passage in Mark viii. 11, 12. Probably this omission is to be accounted for by the fact that, by the repetition of that word here, the Saviour would have given a decided answer to the question (verse 23), which, however, was not in His intention, and was in conflict with His wisdom in teaching. *Shall come*, are to come hereafter: the reference is to the calling of the Gentiles of all nations, and people, and tongues, into the Church. *From the east*, &c. The points of the compass are given in their usual order, but it is something of a coincidence that they follow the course in which the Gospel seems in human history to proceed. It first took root in Syria and Asia Minor, then spread to the west of Europe and along the shores of the Mediterranean, then turned northward to the Scandinavian nations and Britain, and since that time has spread, wherever it has spread, toward the south, in Africa, Asia, South America and the South Pacific ocean. We must cooperate by our prayers, desires, cares and

acts of charity, to enlarge the bounds of the kingdom of God, if we cannot do it by our labors and ministry. *Sit down*, literally, lie down, or recline.

30. ³⁰ And behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.
³¹ Matt. xix. 30 and xx. 16; Mark x. 31.

The idea here is, that, in regard to the Gospel feast, there shall be such a reversal of present relations, that many of those who seemed most likely to have been the favored guests will be excluded, while others whose prospects for such an honor were far less favorable will be selected as the recipients. The Gentiles, who were last, have become first; the reverse has been the history of the Jews. And so in the following chapters (xiv.-xvi.) the Pharisees and publicans are reversed from first to last.

31. ³¹ ¶ The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence; for Herod will kill thee.

The same day—the day on which the question of verse 23 was answered—*there came certain of the Pharisees*, Herodian partisans among the Jews, flatterers and tools at the court of Herod Antipas. They were Pharisees in profession, but Sadducees in life and practice. *Saying unto him*, &c. Not only Galilee, but also Perea, and the boundary district in which Jesus now was (verse 22), belonged to the jurisdiction of Herod.

32. And he said unto them, Go ye and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.
³³ Heb. ii. 10.

The threats of Herod did not alarm the Lord. He showed His abhorrence of Herod's character by the name which He gave him, a fox. It adds much to the force, and points to the meaning of the message sent, to understand that our Saviour called the tetrarch of Galilee a "fox," in allusion to a proverb at that time current, to the effect, "Honor even the fox in the day of his power." A fox among the Jews appears to have been the emblem of a wicked ruler, who united cunning with cruelty, and was always plotting how he might aggrandize himself by robbing the people. *Behold, I cast out devils*, &c. Intentionally the Saviour speaks not of His words but of His miraculous deeds, because these had most strongly excited the uneasiness of Herod. (Chap. ix. 9.) *And the third day I shall be*

perfected. These words do not refer to bringing His works to a close on the third day, but to His death. "I shall continue my work, notwithstanding Herod's threats, and at the end of that time I shall be perfected or finish my course by death." (See Hosea vi. 2.)

33. Nevertheless I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.

This is an intimation by our Lord that He has nothing to fear from Herod, as long as His day of life endures, and that He united the fullest repose in the present with the clearest consciousness of His impending departure.

Walk. This conforms to the itinerant ministry of Jesus, and is equivalent to, *I must proceed from place to place in the fulfillment of my prescribed duties. It cannot be, literally, it is not admissible.* As John the Baptist, to say nothing of other prophets, did not die at Jerusalem, the sense here must be, "It would be an unusual thing, an exception to a rule, for a prophet to die in any place but Jerusalem. When I do die, it will be at Jerusalem. But I am not there yet, but in Galilee." This was a rebuking irony upon guilty Jerusalem. Jesus assigns the time and place of His death, as having them more in His own power than those who were to inflict it on Him. The victim was not to be sacrificed far from the temple, the truth was to be accomplished near its types and figures, and Jerusalem to fill up the measure of her sins, in crucifying the Saviour of the world.

34. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!—Matt. xxiii. 37.

The prospect of Christ's death, with all its attendant horrors, did not excite angry feelings in His breast. Instead of expressing anger, He burst forth into these most tender lamentations over His murderers.

O Jerusalem. Jesus reiterated the same apostrophe, in fuller terms, at a later moment in Jerusalem itself, as His closing sentence before His retirement to the sacrifice of Himself for the sins of the world. (Matt. xxiii. 37–39.) *Killest the prophets*—identifying the Jerusalem of the

then present day with the Jerusalem of past ages. *How often would I.* The beautiful tenderness of this verse shows that the warnings of the previous verses are the language, not of human anger, but of terrible Divine justice. Love, deep love, may dwell in the breast of the judge who pronounces the sentence of death. *Would I . . . ye would not.* The Greek word in both these phrases is stronger than appears from our English translation. It is, literally, "I willed, and ye willed not." *As a hen, &c.* The emblem of "a hen gathering her chickens under her wings" is similar to what is used, with respect of JEHOVAH, in several places of the Old Testament. (Deut. xxxii. 11; Ruth ii. 12; Ps. xvii. 8; xxxvi. 7; lvii. 1; lxiii. 7; xci. 4.) Nor does all nature furnish a more apt emblem of the Saviour's tender love and faithful care of His redeemed people, but His *power* is also adequate to the confidence reposed in Him. *Ye would not.* Our Lord does not say, "thou wouldest not." By this mode of speaking He makes it plain that He charges the guilt of Jerusalem on its inhabitants, and the men and women who dwelt there, and specially on the priests, and scribes and Pharisees, who governed the city. They were neither willing to be gathered themselves into the kingdom nor allowed others to enter. Christ was willing, but they were unwilling. Most deplorably and inexcusably will they perish, who perish by their own willfulness and obduracy under the Gospel.

35. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate; and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

*Lev. xxvi. 31, 32; Ps. lxxxix. 25; Isa. i. 7; Dan. ix. 27; Micah iii. 12. *Ps. cxviii. 26; Matt. xxi. 9; Mark xi. 10; Luke xix. 38; John xii. 13.

Your house is left unto you desolate. Jerusalem is pictured as from a future standpoint, as a person whose habitation has been completely desolated and abandoned to the pillager. The *house* may be an allusion to the temple. "Your temple (now not God's house, but *your house*), in which you glory, your holy and beautiful house, is now deprived of its glory. God has departed from it, and has no longer any pleasure in it." *Ye shall not see me.* In the word *ye*, Jesus still considers Jerusalem

as being the same historical and national person through all ages. *Till ye*—in your posterity in a future age. *Blessed is he that cometh, &c.* The language by which the children in the temple recognized Him as the Messiah. (Ps. cxviii. 6.) Some think that Christ here refers to the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, when the fulfillment of all His predictions would oblige the Jews to confess that He was the Messiah. Others think that our Lord's words are not yet fulfilled, and that they refer to

the last times, when the Jews, after their last tribulation, shall "look on Him whom they pierced," and believe, at the time of His second advent in glory. Though Jerusalem be still desolate, and Israel scattered, the unseen person of Jesus is still on Zion, and His unseen *feet still stand on Olivet*. His ever preserving care perpetuates the race in its vicissitudes, waiting for the day when devoted Israel shall say, *Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord*.

1. Who told Christ of the Galileans? 2. What did He say to them? 3. What parable did Jesus speak? 4. Explain it. 5. What miracle did He perform? 6. State the particulars of it. 7. How did our Lord answer the objection of the ruler of the synagogue? 8. Explain the parable of the grain of mustard seed. 9. Also that of the leaven. 10. What did Jesus answer to the question, "are there few that be saved?" 11. What message did Christ send to Herod? 12. State our Lord's lamentation concerning Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XIV.

² *Christ healeth the dropsy on the sabbath: 7 teacheth humility: 12 to feast the poor: 15 under the parable of the great supper, sheweth how worldly minded men, who contemn the word of God, shall be shut out of heaven*
²⁵ *Those who will be his disciples, to bear their cross must make their accounts aforehand, lest with shame they revolt from him afterward, 34 and become altogether unprofitable, like salt that hath lost its savour.*

Notwithstanding the severe language of our Lord to Pharisees at their own table, these Pharisees were themselves very *apt to repeat the invitation*. It often happens that men return, again and again, to hear the preaching of ministers who offend them through a wounded conscience. At the feast, with a reference to which this chapter commences, our Lord is a central object for all eyes and ears, while He Himself is calmly at perfect ease.

AND it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day, that they watched him.

One of the chief Pharisees. As they had as a sect no chiefs in the common sense of the word, we are probably to understand here a Pharisee who, by his rank, learning, or influence, had obtained a moral predominance over those of his sect, like Nicodemus, Gamaliel, and others. *To eat bread on the Sabbath day.* The tables of the Jews, as their Rabbinical writings show,

were generally better spread on the Sabbath than on any other days, and that, as they themselves reckoned, on account of religion and piety. As the Saviour so often borrowed the images of His parables from that which was actually present before His eyes and the eyes of His hearers, and as He represented a certain man as having made a *great supper*, it would seem that this also at which He was now sitting was more than an ordinary entertainment. As inns and places of reception were doubtless far more uncommon in our Lord's time than they are now, and thus the duty of entertaining strangers often devolved on the chief man in each village or town, we may regard this Pharisee, though not a friend of Christ, as having done only what was customary for a man in his position in inviting to his table a stranger who was teaching religion, and whom some regarded as a prophet. *They watched him*, doubtless for the purpose of finding something of which they might accuse Him. Jesus went among sinners as a physician goes into the wards of a hospital, only because there is good to be done.

Those who cannot, like Christ, render a

Sabbath social gathering a profitable occasion, had better absent themselves. As the world takes notice of everything in Christians, what particular care should they exercise in all their actions!

2. And behold there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy.

Before him, as Jesus sat, perhaps, on the divan, before the company had taken seats at the table. There is the strongest probability that the man placed himself "before Christ" in faith, hoping that He would see and heal him. Any difficulty as to how the man without permission could have found entrance into a private house rests upon an ignorance of the almost public life of the East, and a forgetting how easily, in a moment of excitement, such as this must have been, the feeble barriers which the conventional rules of society would oppose might be broken through. The *dropsy* is a disease in which the body, or some part of it, is filled with water, most usually the abdomen. It is sufficient sometimes that our miseries be only exposed to the eyes of mercy. Mercy is of a preventing nature, and, without waiting for our solicitation, is disposed to do us good. Jesus did not omit any opportunity of helping and healing the distressed, though He knew that His enemies, the Pharisees, might carp and cavil at it, it being the constant guise of hypocrites to prefer ceremonial and ritual observances before necessary and moral duties.

3. And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?"—Matt. xii. 10.

As we are not told that anything was said or spoken by the *lawyers and Pharisees*, we are to understand that our Lord answered their *thoughts*. He knew their usual objection (Matt. xii. 11; Luke xiii. 15), and anticipated it by a question, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?" Had they answered this question affirmatively, they would have sanctioned His miracle; had they answered it negatively, they would have betrayed their own want of love. It was not out of ignorance, but charity, that Christ asked this question, on purpose to give those men an occasion of reflecting upon their own thoughts, and by their answer to engage them in such as are good.

4. And they held their peace. And he took *him*, and healed him, and let him go;

They had been so often put to silence before the people, that, at this time, they feared to encounter Christ's arguments and rebukes, and hence kept quiet. Observing they were silent, He took hold of the man, healed him, and dismissed him from the assembly—perhaps, lest they should visit him with their malice, as they had lately done to the man born blind at Jerusalem. There is, in wicked persons, a silence proceeding from pride, malice, impotence, dissimulation and craft, but it cannot hide their hearts from Him who sees their inmost recesses, nor ought we to have any manner of regard to them, when an opportunity of doing good works presents itself. We should do nothing which can give occasion to the Lord's enemies to blaspheme. The thing is possible. By the grace of God it can be done. The haters of Daniel were obliged to confess, "we shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." (Dan. vi. 5.)

5. And answered them, saying, "Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?" 6. And they could not answer him again to these things. ^bEx. xxiii. 5; Deut. xxii. 4; Luke xiii. 15.

"You grudge that I should deliver this man upon this day from the water which is choking him, yet if the same danger from water threatened one of your beasts, *an ass or an ox*, you would make no scruple of extricating it on the Sabbath from the dangers which threatened it; how much then is a man better than a beast?" *And they could not answer him again to these things.* They were convinced, no doubt, but we read nothing of their conversion. The obstinate and malicious are much harder to be wrought upon than the ignorant and scandalous. It is easier to silence such men than to satisfy them; to stop their mouths than to remove their prejudices, for obstinacy will hold the conclusion, though reason cannot maintain the premises.

7. ^a And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them. 8. When thou art bidden of any *man* to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honorable man than thou be bidden of him; 9. And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. 10. ^c But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher; then shalt thou have worship in the

presence of them that sit at meat with thee. 11. ⁴For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

⁵Prov. xxv. 6, 7. ⁴Job xxii. 29; Ps. xviii. 27; Prov. xxix. 23; Matt. xxiii. 12; Luke xviii. 14; James iv. 6; 1 Peter v. 5.

Chose out the chief rooms. In the East it is still the custom for guests to occupy seats that mark their degree of rank. The Pharisees showed a great anxiety to occupy the most honorable seats. Our Lord openly censured their conduct, and alluded to one of Solomon's proverbs (xxv. 6), an authority that they professed to revere. The sinner is bidden to enter the household of his Father, and to hold fellowship with that Father himself, and with all his family. Everything that is needful for his refreshment and comfort is spread out for him within the house, where he has been admitted. And having entered, he is in a very different position from what he was before he had heard or replied to that invitation. Formerly an outcast and an alien, now he is a recognized and welcome guest. Now the "table is spread for him in the presence of his enemies." But he must take good heed to himself. There is no room for self-exaltation here. He must not *begin to take the highest room*. The same spirit which led him to feel so unworthy of the least benefit from his Father—which led him to stand afar off, and hardly to dare to lift up his eyes unto heaven, must characterize him *still*. In other words, we are to obey the Divine command, "Let each esteem others better than themselves." The injunction is to take *the lowest room*—not to think of others at all, but to feel that to be admitted to sit down in such communion is sufficient, and the soul asks no more. Our Lord says that this conduct will be followed by the master of the feast calling the lowly one higher. He does not put forth this as a motive *why* we should take the lowest place, but merely to show that the whole ordering and arranging of these things are of the Lord. *He may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher*, or, He may not. You have nothing to do with that. It is enough for you to be at the feast—leave all the rest to Him—with this certainty, however, that *whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted*. God will Himself, according to His own will, and in His

own way, establish this truth. We must honor Him by putting all this into His hands with real heartfelt humility. And He will take care just to give us that place by which He will be honored, and we ourselves made happy *and glorious forever*.

12. ¶ Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor *thy rich neighbours*; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense he made thee. 13. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. 14. And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.—Neh. viii. 10-12.

To him that bade him. We must not even allow the hospitality of those who appear friendly to interrupt us in our duty, or induce us to be unfaithful, though the contrary conduct will probably, on some occasions, draw on us the censure of rudeness or ingratitude. *A dinner or a supper*. The inhabitants of the East generally, and as well the Greeks and Romans also, took a slight dinner, chiefly of fruits, milk, cheese, &c., about ten or eleven o'clock of our time, and then, on account of the burning heat of noon, deferred their principal meal till about six or seven in the afternoon. *Call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbors*. These terms merely mean the higher classes of society, to which the host himself belonged. *A feast*. A general entertainment, or banquet. Some suppose that Christ alludes here to the festival of the second sort of first fruits (or the feast of weeks), at which Moses enacted that servants and widows, orphans and Levites, should be made free partakers. (Deut. xvi. 11-14, xii. 12-18) *For thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just*. We are not to understand here that resurrection is the special privilege of the righteous. It is hard to put any other sense on the expression than this: that there is a resurrection of which none but the just, or righteous, shall be partakers—a resurrection which shall be the peculiar privilege of the righteous, and shall precede that of the wicked. The last words, *of the just*, would have been purposeless if the Saviour had here had in mind the general resurrection which he describes, *e. g.*, John v. 28, 29. He distinguishes, like Paul (1 Thes. iv. 16; 1 Cor. xv. 23) and John (Rev. xx. 5, 6), between a first and a second resurrection. (Comp., also, Luke xx. 34-36.)

Our Lord, in these verses, gives no lesson against the interchange of hospitalities among friends. He does not deny that they have their healthful, social influence among men. The repayments of the social debts of life, performed in the right spirit, have the blessing of God upon them. He would be evidently condemning Himself in attending them, if He were rebuking the inviters. Neither did Jesus mean, absolutely and universally, to prohibit men from entertaining their wealthy friends, relatives and neighbors. Nor did He intend to encourage an injudicious, useless and profuse expenditure of money in giving to the poor. But the sentiment is simply this: that we are not to lavish our attentions upon those only from whom we may expect some favor in return, which is the very essence of selfishness, but are to expend them upon those rather whose condition in life forbids the hope that they can repay our kind attention. Only where one does something, not out of an every-day craving for advantage, but out of disinterested love, does the Saviour promise the richest reward. The venerable reformer and martyr, Hooper, of England, while he was Bishop of Gloucester, entertained a certain number of the poor every day, with a dinner of whole and wholesome meats, in his great hall, having first examined them in the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments; nor would he himself sit down to the table until his poor guests had been served. But though he had given his goods to feed the poor, and though at length he gave his body to be burned, so far was he from trusting in his good deeds for salvation, that, when brought to the stake, he was heard to pray thus: "Lord, I am hell, but thou art heaven; I am a sink of sin, but thou art a gracious God and a merciful Redeemer."

15. ¶ And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God."

Rev. xix. 9.

The moment our Lord touched upon the resurrection of the just, one of the company laid hold of His words, as affording a welcome opportunity to turn the conversation into another channel, and expressed a great desire to participate in

the blessedness of that day, of which, however, his heart knew nothing, so that he only feigned this stroke of piety with his lips.

To *eat bread* is a well-known Hebrew phrase for sharing in a repast, whether it be at a common meal or at a sumptuous feast. *Kingdom of God*. By this the Jew meant a *resurrection kingdom*, when the Messiah should come. Perhaps he wished, in saying what he did, to end Christ's discourse, which contained nothing flattering for the host, and thus, with worldly covetousness, come to the help of the Pharisee who had invited him, and avert the threatening storm. At all events by what was previously intimated of the moral condition of the guests, and still more by the whole structure of the parable, in which it is manifested, by means of the guests first invited, how an earthly disposition and the love of this present world withhold so many from a blessed participation in the great supper, and how those only made their appearance there, in whose case no such hindrance existed, we are justified in thinking that the man's language was not expressive nor indicative of a real earnest desire for participation of the blessedness of the finally saved.

16. ¶ Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many:—*Matth. xxii. 2.*

This parable, though there are some points of resemblance between it and that recorded in *Matth. xxii. 1-14*, is perfectly distinct from it. This occurred at a meal, that in the temple; this at an earlier period, that at a much later. At the time of Luke's narrative, the hostility of the Pharisees was not yet so intensely expressed, and there was some hope of softening down and winning to a better mind, and therefore all is gentle and persuasive. At the time of Matthew's narrative, the hostility and hatred of the Pharisees to the Son of man had risen to its highest possible pitch. There seems to have been left no hope, and therefore there is a tone of stern and unsparing severity.

A *certain man*, that is, the Saviour. In this case it is not a king, but a person in a private station, who provides the feast. And the occasion of the rejoicing is not

the marriage of the entertainer's son; it is an ordinary example of hospitality exercised by an affluent citizen. *Made a great supper.* The representation of the blessings of the Messiah's kingdom, under the image of a feast, was very common (Isa. xxv. 6; Prov. ix. 1-5; Matt. viii. 11; also various passages in the Book of Revelation). As men's relish is so little, their desire so faint for the things heavenly, they are therefore presented to them under such inviting images as this, that if possible they may be stirred up to a more earnest longing after them.

The word translated *supper* was, in ancient times, employed generally to signify the principal meal, without reference to a particular period of the day; and, from the circumstances of this case, it would appear that the feast was a dinner at an early hour, not a supper in our sense of the word. The *supper* may be called *great*, as well on account of the abundance of the refreshing viands, as on account of its being intended to be celebrated by many. How rich and abundant the provisions which God has made in His Gospel for those who will come to His house, enter the Church, and become true members of it by repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ! For such there is refreshment in the discoveries and promises of the Gospel (Luke i. 78; Mal. iv. 2); in its privileges and blessings, such as the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins, the favor of God, regeneration, adoption, &c. (Matt. xi. 28); in the communications of grace through the Spirit, and the prospects of future glory and felicity. (Isa. lv. 1-6.) Provision is made in the Gospel for the sustenance or support of the Divine life in all penitent believers, namely, the blood and righteousness, or the merits, of Christ (John vi.), received and fed upon by faith; "this is the bread that came down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die" (verse 50).

And bade many. It was a custom existing among the Jews, in giving entertainments, first to issue their invitations to their guests generally, and then on the day appointed to send out again to them who were invited to call them to the feast.

The Jews, as sprung from Abraham, were invited to the feast, for to that patriarch was the seed promised through which the blessing was to come, and accordingly the prophets carried it forward, and showed the people that there was no failure in regard to the Lord's will concerning the glorious festival for which He had made all previous preparation, and pressed on them His invitations. At the opening of the Gospel dispensation, God sent the harbinger of the Messiah, John the Baptist, the Messiah himself, His son and servant, with His servants, the Apostles, first twelve and then the seventy, and by them invitations had been given. The invitation comes from the free grace and love of God; on the part of the invited there is found no worth or desert. The invitation is still always made through the proclamation of the blessed Gospel in churches, schools and families, by all who communicate its truth to others. The fact of many invitations being given, is evidence of the greatness and expensiveness of the feast, and renders the conduct of those refusing attendance more inexcusable.

17. And bade his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. — Prov. ix. 2, 5.

It was an Eastern custom to bid the guests a *second* time, by a messenger, who announced that they might come because everything was ready. *Servant.* When the fullness of time was come (Gal. iv. 4), John the Baptist and the Apostles went forth to say to those that were bidden, to the people of Israel, now is the time, come. *Servant*, however, is to be taken in a collective sense. It is the *calling voice of God*, as uttered through all His messengers. *Supper time*, literally, *at the hour of supper.* *Coming* denotes the necessary internal change and readiness for receiving what was prepared, just as corporeal coming implies a change of place. The *repeating* of the invitation manifests the earnest desire and gracious purpose of God to do everything on His part to bring men to a participation in the offered salvation, and at the same time, also, the utter invalidity of the alleged grounds of excuse, *for all things are now ready.* *Now* is indicative of the present time, in the New Testament. *All things are now ready.* All preceding

dispensations were a preparation for Christ. When He appeared in the flesh, those who had been all along brought up within the lines of the privileged people were invited to behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. This is repeated in the experience of every generation, and every individual that grows up within the circle of Christian ordinances, as soon as the mind comprehends the message of mercy. As each attains maturity, he is informed that all things are now ready—he is invited and pressed to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ that he may be saved.

It is a blessed truth that there is nothing wanting on God's part for the salvation of man. If man is not saved, the fault is not on God's side. The Father is ready to receive all who come to Him by Christ. The Son is ready to cleanse all from their sins who apply to Him by faith. The Spirit is ready to come to all who ask for Him.

18. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it; I pray thee have me excused.

They began to beg off; they did not give a plain and flat denial, but "made excuse," thus acknowledging themselves the necessity of an excuse in some manner plausible, and thereby indirectly establishing the fact that they were under obligation to appear. It is to the honor of Christianity that so few deny its claims, and only ask to be excused from yielding to them.

With one consent. There is no reason to believe that they met together and framed a plan to insult their entertainer. The servant saw them separately and received their answers; the meaning is, with one spirit or accord, unanimously. We must not suppose that our Lord meant *absolutely* that *all* the leading men among the Pharisees begged off, for there may have been some exceptions, such as Nicodemus, for example.

The first said unto him, &c. He alleges he had bought the land without seeing it, being thus a type of the folly of worldly men, who spend their time, thoughts and strength on things of which they do not know the real worth. *Must needs: I am under the necessity of going away from home.*

He wished to see his possession that he might glory in it, as Nebuchadnezzar gloried when he walked in his palace and said: "Is not this great Babylon that I have built by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" (Dan. iv. 30.) *Have me excused*, not only now, but always. This entreaty to be excused is an acknowledgment of the groundlessness of the pretext, the worthlessness of the excuse, the impropriety of remaining away, the guiltiness of the man's conduct, and hence shows the greatness of his perverse, worldly state of mind.

19. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.

The number *five* has no special significance. *To prove*, test their strength, endurance and docility. *I go; am going even now*—he has only just time to add, "I beg thee," while he already desires to be with the oxen.

20. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

Married a wife, &c. The other two, even when they plead their excuses, are themselves conscious that they are hardly valid, hence pray to be excused. This man makes no such request, seems to regard his excuse legitimate, and declares it in a tone of self-confidence which does not even deem an excuse as necessary. The greater peremptoriness of his refusal shows that the force of his temptation lay in the difficulty of reconciling conflicting duties. Attendance upon the feast, however, would not have involved the violation of any duty arising out of his new relation, but simply the holding it of inferior importance on a given occasion.

Here we have a vivid picture of the reception which the Gospel is continually meeting with wherever it is proclaimed. It is not avowed dislike to it which is so much to be feared. It is that procrastinating, excuse-making spirit, which is always ready with a reason why Christ cannot be served *to-day*. Let the words of our Lord on this subject sink down into our hearts. Infidelity and immorality, no doubt, slay their thousands, but decent, plausible, smooth-spoken *excuses* slay their tens of thousands. No excuse can justify a man in refusing God's invitation, and not coming to Christ.

In relation to the excuses of the men in the parable, let the following things be noted:

1. They were frivolous. They did not constitute a real hindrance. Neither sickness nor the death of friends detained them at home—they could have *foreseen* those events; but it showed great contempt to purchase land or oxen, or to contract a marriage at the time they had agreed to come to the feast. It would have been far better to have refused at *first*, than to accept the invitation, and then to make excuses when the feast was prepared and the master was waiting. 2. They were the same. Though variant in *form*, they were identical in *origin* and substance. They all manifest the same perverse state of heart, only the object of the sinful love is not uniform. 3. The excuses were all based on things *lawful in themselves*. The abuse of lawful things ruins many souls. 4. There was an ascending scale of contumacy in these men. The first pleaded *necessity*; the second did not plead necessity, but went to prove his oxen; the third gave a rude, point-blank refusal—"I cannot come." 5. All these excuses were probably false, for it is not likely that the first two would buy ground and oxen before seeing and trying them. As to the third, see on verse 20. 6. If these excuses were not false, they were *falsely applied*. Men often give a reason different from the *real* one, for not being Christians.

21. So that servant came, and showed his lord 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.

Ministers must lay before their Lord their good or bad success. They must do it now at the throne of grace, going to God with thanksgivings, if they see the fruit of their labor, or with complaints, if they labor in vain. They will do this hereafter at the judgment seat of Christ, witnesses against those who persist in unbelief and perish, to prove that they were fairly invited, and witnesses for those that have accepted the call. (Heb. xiii. 17.) *Being angry*. God is not liable to the passion of anger, as the giver of a feast whose feast is despised. Yet these words are meant to teach us that unbelief and rejection of the Gospel are very provoking to God. At

the same time that they indicate the righteous displeasure of God toward the conduct of the guests; they show once more His earnest desire for their welfare, the unsatisfactoriness of all their excuses, and the justness of His expectation, that the invited would accept the invitation.

Quickly, in haste, soon these offers must cease, this opportunity shall have passed away. This second sending forth of the servant refers to the commission given to the Apostles of Christ to preach the glad tidings of His Gospel, and invite sinners to the feast of salvation. By the terms of this commission, they were to "*begin at Jerusalem*." And so here it is "*the streets and lanes of the city*" to which the servant is sent. *The poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind*. These words describe primarily the Gentiles, who were just in this miserable condition as compared to the Jews. Secondly, they describe all sinners to whom the Gospel is offered, who feel their sins and acknowledge their own spiritual need and poverty. In these words there seems to be a reminiscence of the precept Christ gave (verse 13.) Outward want and corporeal wretchedness are easily apprehended by the eye and the mind; hence under this description are meant all such as feel the necessities of their soul and their spiritual wretchedness. (Matt. v. 3.)

22. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.

Much humility is shown in the servant's reply. He does not say, "I have done as thou hast commanded," lest it should look like taking some glory or credit to himself, but, "It is done as thou hast commanded," so that the instrument is lost and obscured in the luster of him that uses it. A true minister of the Gospel will thus feel. *Yet there is room*, the feast must have its full complement of guests. It has been prepared at a most costly price, and there must not be one vacant place at the table. Since now the will of the Lord has been executed, the invitation held out to others, and by them accepted, the greatness of Divine grace is expressed in these words, as is also its universality in verse 23. The *room* is, indeed, as vast as the merits of the atonement, capacious as heaven itself. This expression seems to show that there

is more willingness on God's part to save sinners than there is on the part of sinners to be saved, and more grace to be given than there are hearts willing to receive it.

23. 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.

Highways and hedges, that is, the public roads, and paths hedged in, and passing through or along by vineyards. *Compel them to come in*. It yields a most delightful consolation, that God orders men to be compelled, for it intimates that He *really* seeks our salvation, and *really* wishes us to be saved, as when a father is seriously concerned about the government of his son, he not only employs cold admonitions, but also a certain severity of discipline toward him, and constrains him to do what is required. The meaning is, that the moral compulsion of love must be used. Men are to be *compelled*, by argument, by the force of moral suasion, by commending the thing to their consciences, to *come in*, and partake of those benefits provided for them in the Gospel. *That my house may be filled*. It is only God's design of mercy to save sinners (Eph. i. 3), not any proper merit on the part of men, which is the ground of the invitation; it must not be that His grace has been prepared in vain. If some reject, others will thankfully accept it. "Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength," &c. (Isa. xlix. 5, 6.) God will have a Church in the world, though multitudes may reject the Gospel.

24. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden, shall taste of my supper.

¹Matt. xxi. 43 and xxii. 8; Acts xiii. 46.

The ingratitude of those that slight offers of grace and mercy, and the contempt which they put on God, is a very great provocation of Him. Mercy abused turns to the greatest wrath. When the ungrateful Israelites despised the land of promise, God "swore in His wrath that they should not enter into His rest." Grace despised is grace forfeited. They that will not have Christ when they may, shall not have Him when they would. Do not the words, *none of those*, &c., seem to indicate that a time would arrive when those who had made excuses would repent

of their folly, and seek to be admitted to the feast? But they would find the door shut against them. When they knocked, they would hear a voice within, saying, "I know you not." They would not be permitted even to *taste* the supper, of which they had once been invited to partake.

25. ¶ And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them,

Jesus was now on His way to Jerusalem. The multitudes which followed Him probably did so only as He walked from the feast to His place of abode. At all events, it is to be supposed that they returned to their homes, as He approached the Jordan to cross over to Jericho. They were under a slight and transient impression. He knew that they had generally very erroneous notions of His kingdom, and were not prepared to submit to the losses and privations, or to encounter the various dangers and difficulties which certainly awaited His true disciples. From love, therefore, He is stern enough to portray to them in darkest colors the conditions of being His disciples, that they may be held back from foolish fancy, and led to self-examination. The temptation to admit people to full communion, and endorse and approve them as true Christians, before they have given evidence of decided grace, is very strong. The inclination to set before young inquirers the joys and comforts of the Gospel, without any proportionate exhibition of the cross and the fight, requires constant watching against. The close imitation of our Lord's conduct in this passage would probably greatly lessen the number of our communicants. But it may be doubted whether we should not gain in quality what we lost in quantity, and whether we should not be freed from many of those disgraceful backslidings and gross inconsistencies, which so often nowadays brings discredit on religion.

26. ¶ 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.

¹Deut. xiii. 6 and xxxiii. 9; Matt. x. 37. ¹Rom. ix. 13. ²Rev. xii. 11.

The coming *to* Jesus is not the same as the coming *after* Him. (Matt. xvi. 24.) The latter presupposes that one is already

His disciple, the other that one desires to become such. *And hate not his father, &c.* None can suppose that Jesus disapproves of natural affection. This would have been to contradict the fifth commandment. His whole life and teaching, His conduct to His mother when He was on the cross, refute such a notion at once. By the words themselves He guards himself against possible misconstruction, for He says not only, *if any man hate not his father and mother, &c., but his own life also.* To know what He means by the hate in the one case, we have only to consider what it can mean in the other. One thing is said to be loved, another hated, in Scripture, when the former is much preferred, and especially when, out of regard to it, the latter is neglected and forsaken. (Comp. Gen. xxix. 31; Deut. xxi. 15-17; Mal. i. 3; Rom. ix. 13 and Matt. vi. 24.) Matthew x. 37 expresses the true meaning of the words *hate not*, when He says, *He who loveth his father and mother more than me.* The meaning of the expression, then, is, that love to Christ in order to be genuine must be supreme. Earthly affections, when they come into collision with His claims must be postponed. He has done more for us than our nearest relative. When, therefore, the drawings of affection stand in the way of our entire surrender to Him—our supreme devotion to His interests—their power must be rejected. If one or another dearly cherished object stands on one side, and Christ on the other, we need not love them *the less*, because we cannot go with them, but we must love Him *more*. Even *life* and its attendant blessings are also to be regarded as worthless, when placed in an opposing scale to the love of Christ, and therefore to be freely surrendered when required to be yielded up in His service. Without such a spirit, no one can be Christ's disciple. He builds without a foundation, who pretends to be the servant of God, without loving Him, or to love Him as he ought, without preferring Him above all things whatsoever.

27. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.
 *Matt. xvi. 24; Mark viii. 34; Luke ix. 23; 2 Tim. iii. 12.

Our Saviour had not been crucified, but death by crucifixion, though a Roman

punishment, had already been made by the Roman dominion familiar to the Jewish eyes. In adopting this symbol of self-denial, He had Himself, doubtless, even already in the distance, beheld this instrument of His own pain and ignominy. The *cross* is a large and comprehensive word, but, with whatever variety applied to individuals, it cannot lose its essential nature—it still carries the nails that pierced the body, and the shame that penetrates the soul. What our Lord here commands, is that each follower should bear, not his Saviour's cross, but his own. The requirement is, that as Christ bore His own cross to His own crucifixion, so His followers should bear each his own cross to his own crucifixion.

And come after me. Christ is here presented as our *example* in *bearing of the cross*. He is everywhere described as being ever *tempted*, just as we are, though ever victorious, as—alas!—we are not. Nor can we doubt the disciplinary character of this constant and painful struggle, when we are told that, “though a Son, He learned obedience by the things which He suffered,” that He was “made perfect through sufferings,” and by that means “became the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him.”

Those, therefore, who would be Christ's disciples, must *come after Him* in those sufferings which, under the blessing of God, purify and fit for heaven. Each follower, who has the spirit of the Master, is crucified in behalf of Christ and of truth—crucified in fact or in readiness. They are not ambitious to share with Jesus in the merit of His sufferings as the *Atoner*, for this is absolutely and forever impossible; but there is more than a willingness to participate with Him in the benefit of His sufferings as the *Purifier*, and also to be conformed to Him in their own sufferings. Paul joyfully suffered *the loss of all things, and counted them but dung*, that he might *have the righteousness which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith, that he might know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death.* (Phil. iii. 8-10; see Col. i. 24.)

Christ never discouraged a sincere soul

from following Him. But He has given a true description of the nature of His service, so that none can say that it was represented as easier than they found it. A poor Madagascar woman, who had undergone great persecutions, was once asked whether she was surprised when afflictions overtook her. She replied: "No, from the first we knew it was written, that through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of God, and when our troubles came, we said, 'This is what we expected.'" This poor woman was once shut up for five months in an iron case that prevented her moving a single limb, yet, having counted the cost, she proved more than conqueror through Him who loved her.

23. For which of you intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?—Prov. xxiv. 27.

Though there is no immediate external connection between this parable or the one that immediately succeeds it, and that of the great supper, yet a certain internal relationship may be recognized. *That* points out the carnal mind and the love of the world as the main hindrance which stands in the way of the sinner's salvation, whilst *these* similitudes represent the discipleship of Jesus to be a difficult thing, which demands the greatest sacrifices, so that its cost should be duly and carefully estimated by all who would become His followers. *A tower*. We are not so particularly to understand a tower in the strict sense of the word, but an expensive edifice requiring a more than ordinary development of resources. The words, *which of you*, would indicate that Christ addressed the *multitudes*, and they were not of a character and condition to justify the supposition of their building a tower, such as kings, governors and military commanders generally erected. Possibly nothing more was meant than a *dwelling house*, on the top of which, according to the Asiatic manner, battlements were built, both to take fresh air on, and to serve for refuge from and defense against an enemy. It was also used for prayer and meditation. *Sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost*, whether he have sufficient to finish it? The meaning is, a man about to build a house, if he is wise, will be careful what he is doing. He wishes to have a house in which to shelter him-

self. His first duty is to sit down calmly, and to look over everything connected with his plans, to satisfy himself that he is about to commence what he will be able to finish. That plan alone secures a good beginning, and a happy, successful ending. In like manner, any one proposing to become a disciple of Christ should weigh deliberately whether he is able and prepared to bear all the losses, conflicts and persecutions incident to such discipleship.

29. Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, 30. Saying, ¶ This man began to build, and was not able to finish.
 ¶ Matt. vii. 27, xxvii. 3-8; Acts i. 18, 19; 1 Cor. iii. 11-15; Heb. vi. 4-8, x. 35; 2 Peter ii. 19-22; 2 John viii.

Mock means to *deride*, *scoff at*. The words, *this man*, throw a shade of sarcasm on the expression. In the ground-work of this parable there is an allusion, it would seem, to the spiritual edifice referred to in 1 Cor. iii. 11-15, which must be reared on the one Foundation which shall be tried in the day of the Lord. While the decidedly Christian life constrains the world to involuntary respect, half Christianity provokes it to not unnatural scoffing—so absurd is it to undertake to be disciples of Jesus, without seriously considering what difficulties are to be met with. We must take great care, however, that our deliberation and consideration of difficulties do not deter us from, but work in us, a steady resolution to go forward. The design of Christ here is not to discourage, but to prevent men following Him lightly and inconsiderately, and to admonish all in taking up the cross, to gird themselves with fortitude.

31. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first and consulteth, whether he be able, with ten thousand, to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? 32. Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an embassy, and desireth conditions of peace.

Here is another view of what a disciple of Christ must make up his mind to, if he would walk in the narrow path. The king who declares war against another without comparing his forces with those of his enemy, and considering whether the bravery of his troops and the conduct of his generals, will be able to make up what he wants in numbers, is sure to be ingloriously defeated, unless he humbly sue for peace before the matter comes to an engagement. The *two kings* here are the *man desirous to become a disciple*, to

work out his salvation, and *God*, with whose just and holy law he is *naturally at variance*; and the question for each man to ask himself is, "Can I with my ten thousand stand the charge of him who cometh against me with twenty thousand?" The numbers *ten thousand* and *twenty thousand* are designedly chosen to denote an entirely unequal military power.

Or else, that is, if on deliberation, he is of opinion that he cannot cope with the more powerful enemy—cannot reckon on a successful issue—he will not hazard a battle, but *sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace*, that is, an embassy, to obtain the terms on which peace will be granted. This is spoken for the sake of verisimilitude. It would not have comported with royal usage for the king to have gone in person to sue for conditions of peace. But this feature belongs exclusively to the costume of the parable. In seeking the forgiveness and favor of God, each one must go in person. He must go, as a penitent sinner, to God whom he has offended, seek to be reconciled, supplicate for pardon and peace. He must send his petition to his Heavenly King, plead with Him through Jesus Christ, the all-prevailing Mediator and Intercessor, *take with him words, and turn to the Lord*, his God, giving up all confidence in himself, and confessing that he is "poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked," that he is utterly unable to save or help himself, and cast himself on the forbearance, the compassion and the kindness of the Being whom he has offended.

It may be taken as the general teaching of both the parables, that the consciousness of our own incapacity should lead us to seek for a higher power, to join ourselves to the great empire of light and its Prince, which, in all circumstances, contends against the empire of darkness.

We are not to think of God as a *real* enemy to us, but only an *apparent* one. He desires our salvation, for He so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life. It is only because of our sins that we are obnoxious to His wrath and curse, and He invites us to come and *reason* with

Him, that our sins, though as scarlet, may be as wool, and though red like crimson, may be made whiter than the snow.

33. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

So likewise, that is, like the person who "began to build, and was not able to finish," or, like the king, who, being afraid to face his enemy, sent an embassy and desired terms of peace. *Whosoever he be of you*—of you who are in great danger of supposing that to be my pursuer is to be my follower—that *forsaketh not all that he hath*, who does not engage so earnestly and resolutely in the Christian warfare as to hold all things cheap in comparison to life eternal, and be ready to forsake them when I call him to it, *he cannot be my disciple*; he lacks the proper prerequisite of supreme love for me, he cannot be acknowledged by me as a disciple, for my disciples will be exposed to such trials and afflictions, that unless they prefer me, and the cause in which I am engaged, to all visible and temporal things whatever, they certainly will not steadily adhere to me, or continue faithful and constant in my service.

34. † Salt is good; but if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned? 35. It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dung-hill; but men cast it out. † He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

† Matt. v. 13; Mark ix. 49, 50; Col. iv. 6; Heb. ii. 4-8. † Heb. viii. 8, ix. 44; Matt. xi. 15; Rev. ii. 7, 11, 17, 23.

These verses do not stand here independently, but are in some measure the application of the previous remarks. (Comp. Matt. v. 13; Mark ix. 50.) As the disciples were a purifying salt with reference to the unbelieving world, so was Israel (here represented in the people following) called to be such a salt for the heathen nations. *Salt is good*, literally, salt is excellent, *but if the salt have lost its savor*, is insipid, wherewith shall it be re-endowed with its saline power? It is such a vile and worthless thing, that it is neither fit to be used of itself as manure for the land, nor even to be cast upon the dung-hill, to be there mixed with other manure, *but men cast it out*—it is thrown out of doors, and trampled under foot like mire in the streets.

Our Lord could not have selected a more striking illustration of the worthless character of false discipleship than the one

here made use of. When the Church, or any of its members, fail to exercise the salutary influence for which they were created, they become not only absolutely worthless, but just objects of contempt to those who ought to have revered them, and been benefited by them. But what is all the disgrace which the useless professor of Christianity (the savorless salt) can draw upon himself here, in comparison to the shame and everlasting contempt which awaits him in the other world? (Matt. xxv. 30.) *If the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned?* That is, "if the salt lose its taste, how is it to recover it?" The sentiment intended to be conveyed seems to be this: A professed Christian, especially if he has seemed to be distinguished for the knowledge and experience of the saving truth, and by being so has seemed to be useful in making the world wiser and better, who becomes careless, and ignorant, and worldly, and irreligious—who loses the hold he seemed to have of truth—who ceases to manifest anything like its native influence on his temper and conduct, is in a state peculiarly deplorable. There is less probability that he shall be reclaimed than that the grossly ignorant, the openly profane, should be converted. An ignorant, wicked heathen is in a less helpless condition than an apostate Christian, whether the apostasy be avowed or silent. This is a sentiment very strongly expressed by the inspired

Apostles, who had the mind of Christ. (Heb. vi. 4, 8; 2 Peter ii. 20-22.) It is clear that "salt may lose its savor," and that true Christians might lose the principle of Divine life, unless God had engaged to preserve it, but in respect of all those mentioned in Scripture, who became like "salt which hath lost its savor," some intimation is annexed that there was previously a radical defect—"No root in themselves," "No oil in the vessel," "They went out from us, because they were not of us." (Jer. xxxii. 39-41; Ezek. iii. 20, 21; Matt. xiii. 20, 22, xxii. 11-14, xxv. 1-13; John xv. 2, 6-8; 1 John ii. 18, 19.)

He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. This whole discourse (25-35) can only be fairly understood by remembering that the audience to which it was so kindly directed consisted of a retinue of loose, but admiring attendants, who applauded at every step, but who were liable, under opposing influences, to cry, *Crucify Him, to-morrow.* This expostulation aims to call them to consider their depth of feeling and the true method of being an earnest disciple of Jesus. Every man who had *ears to hear* Christ's touching words is earnestly admonished to accept them in their true force. How can the faculty of hearing be better employed than in attending to the word of Christ, particularly to the alarms He has given us of the danger we are in of apostasy, and run ourselves into *by* it?

-
1. Who watched Jesus in the house of the Pharisee? 2. What miracle did He perform? 3. What parable did He put forth? 4. What did one of them that sat at meat with Christ say? 5. What parable did He then utter?
 6. Who are meant by the "servants?" 7. Who by the "bidden?" 8. What different excuses were made? 9. What was the result? 10. What did our Lord say to the great multitudes with Him? 11. How are we to understand what is said about a man intending to build a tower? 12. Explain verses 34 and 35.

CHAPTER XV.

¹ *The parable of the lost sheep: 8 of the piece of silver: 11 of the prodigal son.*

An eminent expositor thinks that this chapter forms a contrast with the severity of the discourse in the preceding chapter, the point of junction between the two being our Lord's rejection of some and acceptance of others. This view appears the more plausible from the character of the persons to whom the discourses were addressed; the former being, as this expositor thinks, a company of self-reliant, curious persons, who had flocked together and were following Jesus to hear or see something strange and wonderful, while the present company were poor, despised publicans and sinners. To the former He laid down, in the most explicit terms, the stern requirements of discipleship; the latter He invites to come to Him by the most tender and winning appeals.

THEN drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.—²Matt. ix. 10.

Then does not mark time by the mere continuation of the narrative: it seems to have the meaning of *as*. We suppose these transactions to have taken place as our Lord passed through Perrea, on His way to Jerusalem. *All the publicans and sinners*. As *Bethabara* was probably the rallying point of His Peræan ministry, this being near Jericho and the fords of the *Jordan*, with their custom houses, many publicans and sinners would be in the neighborhood, to whom the preaching of our Lord presented powerful attractions. *Publicans*. (See on v. 29, 30, vii. 34.) By *all*, we are to understand all in that particular neighborhood where our Lord was. *Drew near unto him to hear him*. This expresses a confidential and continued concourse of such persons about Jesus, with the design of listening to Him.

² And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.
³ Acts xi. 3: Gal. ii. 12.

Pharisees and scribes. (See on xi. 42, 43, 44, xii. 1) *Murmured*. In their self-righteous spirit they were offended when they saw the publicans and sinners gathering around our Lord, and said: *This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them*. This

objection was a most plausible one: it was one which was likely to turn the tide of opinion against Christ; nay, it was an objection which, if in a *certain* point of view it could have been substantiated, would have utterly condemned His mission. Had our Lord's fellowship with the persons here spoken of been such as this—that He descended to their level, that He held converse with them without rebuking their sins—*then*, indeed, the objection, "this man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them," would be well founded, and nothing else of power or love on the part of Him who did so could wipe away that stain. Jesus, therefore, without giving heed to the spirit which prompted the objection, at once proceeded carefully to vindicate His conduct from any false construction which might be put upon it, while, at the same time, He took occasion from the accusation itself to set forth, under the most remarkable imagery, the true nature of that fellowship in which He Himself rejoiced, His receiving sinners, and eating with them.

3. ¶ And he spake this parable unto them, saying,

The three parables which follow, the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Prodigal Son, refer all to the same subject, and describe the same fact. They contemplate that fact, however, from opposite sides, and produce accordingly different pictures. The two first set forth to us mainly the *seeking* love of God, while in the third there is exhibited the *receiving* love of God. Whilst the two first teach the same doctrine, they differ in this: that in the case of the living creature, the loss is sustained through its spontaneous wandering; in the case of the inanimate silver, the loss is sustained through its inherent inertia. Both parables alike represent the sinner lost and the Saviour finding him; but in the one case the loss appears due to the positive activity of an evil will, and in the other to the passive law of gravitation. Not that, in the spiritual sphere, one sinner departs from God by an exercise of his corrupt will, and another is drawn away by the operation of an irresistible law: it is one transaction represented successively on

two sides. The representations are different, but both are true. In the fallen, sin is both active and passive. The sinful select their own course, and go astray in the exercise of a self-determining power; they also gravitate to evil in virtue of an inborn corruption, which acts like a law in their members.

Some have noticed gradations in the three parables: 1. A gradation of guilt—the stray sheep wandering from the shepherd, and scarcely aware of the error into which it has fallen, as representing the stupid, foolish sinner; the lost coin, as representing the sinner as altogether ignorant of himself; and the prodigal son, as representing the daring and willful sinner. 2. A gradation in the value of the lost articles, rendered prominent by the decreasing proportion in the number of what remained, compared with what was lost—one out of a *hundred*, one out of *ten*, one out of *two*; this last one, also, being a *son*, for whom there was a yearning of affection, and depth of longing desire for his recovery from sin and restoration to virtue and happiness, which casts very far into the background any grief for a lost animal or piece of silver. Certain is it that all the three parables represent a loving disposition, for it is love which moves the man to seek his sheep, and the woman her money, and love, also, which prompts the father to take back his lost son.

4. What man of you having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

See Matt. xviii. 12.

What man of you? The Saviour here, as also in verse 8, appeals to that universal human feeling which impels, as well the man as the woman, to seek what is lost, and to rejoice with others over what is found again. *Having an hundred sheep.* That the shepherd in the parable means Christ there can be no doubt. His own assumption of this character and name in John x. is conclusive here. The *lost sheep* is sinful man, as originally created safe and happy, in want of nothing, lying down by pastures of tender grass, and by the waters of quietness, but now straying on the bleak and barren mountains of sin. *Lost sheep.* What expression could exhibit

more graphically the hopelessness of a sinner's state? The lost dog finds his way back to his master or to his kennel, but the lost sheep rarely finds its way back to its fold; it goes farther and farther into the wilderness, till it dies of hunger, or is devoured by beasts of prey. No lost sinner ever yet of himself found his way back to God. Man by nature is lost to God, and to the grand purposes of his creation. And he has lost God—His image, His friendship, communion with Him, and the hope of His favor and beatific presence.

The shepherd missed his sheep. What an idea does this give of Christ's surveillance over us! His eye is upon every stray sinner in all his wanderings. He sees him from first to last, as He missed him at the first. How natural the conduct of the shepherd! The mother, who has many children that are all equally dear to her, and would not have one of them taken from her, when one of them falls sick and comes into jeopardy, finds a difference among the children; the sick one becomes now the dearest, and she can neither interest herself much in anything besides, nor pay much heed to it. Thus, then, the conduct of Christ, as set forth in this parable, is in harmony with the analogies of nature.

As soon as the shepherd misses the sheep, he goes after it. Christ's love is an active, working love. He did not sit still in heaven pitying sinners. He left the glory which He had with the Father, and humbled Himself to be made in the likeness of man. He came down into the world to seek and save that which was lost. *The shepherd pursued the sheep till he found it.* He knew the nature of the country in which the sheep was straying, and also the nature of the sheep that was straying there. He knew the roughness of the mountain passes, and the silliness of the solitary, truant sheep. He divined accordingly what track it would take. He followed and found the fugitive. In like manner Christ's love has no ebb and flow; it has no flux and reflux; it has all the fixity of an everlasting principle, and all the fervor of an inexhaustible passion. He never lets the eye of His compassion light upon a sinner without, by and by,

letting the weight of His power to save be felt by that sinner also.

5. And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

We have here a sweet intimation of the compassion of Christ. He transfers our burden to Himself, becomes a victim for us; thence bearing us, he carries us to His own flock, bears, feeds, sustains and governs us. As the shepherd dealt with the sheep, not by law or force, as well he might, driving it before him like other sheep, and letting it go itself, but took all the labor and trouble upon himself, that the sheep might have ease and rest, so Jesus lightens the sinner's return by this exercise of love, helping him to overcome hindrances, removing difficulties and strengthening weakness with Divine power. We are here taught that the work of saving the sinner is done by Christ alone. This fundamental truth, however, that salvation is begun, carried on and completed by the Saviour alone, does not, of course, come into collision with another fundamental truth, which expatiates on another sphere, and is represented in the parable of the Prodigal Son, that except the sinful do themselves repent, and come to the Father, they shall perish in their sins. *Rejoicing.* Whatever trouble the shepherd may have had, whatever care and anxiety he may have gone through, all is merged in the grandeur of that flood of joy that the lost sheep is brought back to the fold. So Jesus lifts His ransomed, His redeemed one, by His strong hand and His almighty power, and "makes a show openly" of what He has done in delivering His poor, erring child, and He does all this "rejoicing." His joy begins not when the work is over, but when the work begins.

6. And 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.
^a1 Peter ii. 10, 25.

The shepherd succeeded in his search which took him from home, or from his house, and he returned home with his lost one found. The evident purpose of the introduction of such words is to impress upon the hearts of all God's ransomed ones this precious truth, that when the Saviour carries them by His power from

the place of danger to the place of safety, *He* is going home, and therefore so are *they*. His home is their home; His place of rest theirs. The kingdom of God recognizes two successive home-comings in the history of every citizen: one when, by the discriminating mercy of the Redeemer, though he was an exile, through the regeneration he enters a state of grace; another when, under the leading of the same chief, in the resurrection he enters a state of perfect glory. It is over the first, the repentance of a sinner, our Lord tells us, a jubilee is held in heaven. They do not wait till the ransomed one shall appear in bodily presence near the great white throne. There is no need, the entrance into grace insures the entrance into glory. By the *friends and neighbors* we are to understand the different orders of heavenly beings. The heart of our Lord Jesus Christ is here represented so full of joy and love that it were impossible for any one to make Him appear more kind and joyful.

7. I say unto you, That likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.
^aLuke v. 32.

I say unto you. The truth which follows these words is wonderful in the extreme. It assures us that heaven and earth are united by a chord of sympathy. They are not isolated provinces of the same empire, but bound together by a tender tie. The inhabitants of heaven take a deep interest in the souls of our race. Heaven is not in sight of earth, but earth is in sight of heaven. The Church above forever watches the Church below. *Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth*—a single sinner—*any* sinner, in a cottage or an almshouse, a palace or a prison, on a throne or in a hovel; any one, even though his condition be so obscure, and his abilities so mean, that his conversion stops in his own soul's salvation. *One sinner that repenteth*—trusts in God's goodness through Christ, believes in the forgiveness of sins, receives Jesus as a Saviour, and shows a changed mind, by amendment of life both outwardly and inwardly. Over one such sinner there is and *shall be joy in heaven*, joy with the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and with the holy angels.

More than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance. It is not, of course, meant that a repenting sinner on earth is worthy of more esteem than ninety-nine confirmed saints in heaven. All that is meant is, that the interest for the time being is concentrated upon him, and the others are comparatively lost sight of.

8. † Either what woman having ten *pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?
*Gr. *Drachma*, equal to the denarius. See Matt. xviii. 23.

This parable, as we have shown, is not identical with the one preceding it. Our Lord never repeats the same sentiment under the same symbol, or with precisely the same contemplated effects. The disproportion between nine to one, and ninety-nine to one, gives this parable an increased emphasis over the former one. In the case of the wandering sheep, there may remain some faint, instinctive recollection of the fold, and when darkness and danger surround it, or the pangs of hunger fasten upon it, some instinctive effort to recover what it has lost. But the figure of the *piece of money* tells us that, in the case of the lost soul, even the consciousness of his condition is wanting. He is lost, but he knows it not. He is in danger, but he heeds it not. *Either what woman.* By this is meant the Holy Spirit. Sinners, when regenerated, are "born of the Spirit." *Ten pieces of silver*—in the original a *drachma*. The value of this coin, which was a Greek one, was about fifteen cents. These ten pieces seem a small amount; for the woman, however, the loss of one was of great importance, since her whole treasure consisted of the ten *drachmæ*. Thus the idea is brought out, that not the material worth of what is lost, in itself, but the worth which it has in the eyes of the possessor, is the cause of the carefulness of the love which seeks it. Notice the increasing value of the *sheep*, the *coin*, and the *son*, by the diminished number from which they are lost. The *sheep* is but the hundredth part of the flock; the *coin* is but the tenth part; the *son* is one of two. *If she lose one piece.* Here the primeval dignity of the soul, in its original state, is compared to a piece of silver, having the image of the great Sovereign of the universe stamped upon it. "God made

man upright," bearing resemblance to Himself in His intellectual and moral attributes, capable of an endless progress toward perfection. But man, being left to the freedom of his will, degenerated from the rectitude of his nature, so that his original glory is departed from him. In this state of moral corruption, he is compared to a piece of beautiful coin, for a time lost in the dust of the earth, where its former luster is miserably tarnished, and its value diminished. (Lam. iv. 1; Isa. i. 22; Jer. vi. 30.)

Doth not light a candle. This indicates an earnest desire to recover what was lost. The lighting of the candle may be explained by the help and hints of such passages as these: Matt. v. 14, 15; Phil. ii. 15; Eph. v. 13. When the Spirit of God takes the Divine Word, and, carrying it into the recesses of a man's soul, reveals its foulness, danger and misery, then the sinner discovers his lost condition, and, feeling his need of a Saviour, cries, "What shall I do to be saved?" *And sweep the house.* Here is further evidence of the great effort made to recover the lost coin. The sweeping, which disturbs the house and reveals a foulness that, so long as it lay unstirred, was perhaps never suspected, may indicate the convictions, the alarms, the dread discoveries, the searchings and agitations of heart, which not unfrequently accompany conversion. Thus is it with the Word of God. For only let that Word be proclaimed, and much of latent aversion to the truth becomes open enmity, much of torpid alienation against God is changed into active hostility, and there is an outcry against the troublers of Israel, the men that will not let the world alone. But amid all this, the Holy Spirit is diligently seeking for the lost, not ceasing labor, care or diligence, till the lost is found. Let it be noticed that the coin was lost in *the house*. It is unfortunate to lose a piece of money in the house, but much more so in a field, forest or sea. Sins forgiven are lost in the sea, but souls under condemnation of the law and in danger of hell, are lost in the house. Though deformed by sin, and defiled by corruption, yet, being within the house, they are within the region of hope and the reach of mercy.

And seek diligently till she find it. The search, it will be observed, was not only earnest, but successful. The Holy Spirit seeks lost sinners by speaking to their conscience, by affliction, by the preaching of the Gospel. The sinner is *found*, when he realizes his lost condition, and yields to God on the terms of the Gospel.

3. And when she hath found it, she calleth *her* friends and *her* neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.

Her friends and her neighbors. The feminine gender is employed in the original. It was natural that the *woman* should call together her female friends to rejoice with her. The angelic hosts have not the distinction of sexes; they are considered, however, as remaining at home, or going abroad—abroad, in manly attire, prepared for war; at home, in the domestic and peaceful garb of females. By this verse a gracious God, accommodating His language to our ideas, expresses His joy in saving sinners, and in seeing sinners saved. As the angels here referred to are not “in heaven,” as they were represented to be in the last parable, some suppose that they are angels that walk up and down the earth, are present in the congregations of the faithful, offended at aught unseemly among them (1 Cor. xi. 10), joying to behold their order, but most of all rejoicing when a sinner is converted.

10. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. ^fEzek. xviii. 23, 32; Matt. xviii. 10, 11; Acts v. 19; Heb. i. 14.

Not as in the former parable (verse 7), joy *shall* be; but joy *is*, &c. Neither is it here said, “more than over ninety and nine,” &c. This special characteristic of the joy seems to be left as its crowning one, when the whole story of fallen and restored humanity shall be made known from first to last, with all its springs and all its consequences. Here there is the present joy expressed when one after another of the family of man is taken out of the kingdom of darkness and brought into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. (See on verse 7.)

11. † And he said, A certain man had two sons:

This parable has justly been called “the pearl and crown of all the parables of Scripture.” “What human teacher,” says one, “has placed the folly of human nature, and the consequence of this folly, in such

simple, clear and graphic colors before our eyes, and, in contrast therewith, has given of the long-suffering and compassion of God so inexpressibly rich an exhibition, as is done in this discourse, which, also, has no parallel for its adaptation to the capacity of all!” *Two sons.* One of the greatest difficulties meets us in this first verse. It is evident that God, as specially manifested in the Gospel, is represented by the father; but who are represented by the two sons—the elder, who remained at home, and the younger, who went away? On this point three distinct interpretations have been suggested: angels and men, Jews and Gentiles, or Pharisees and publicans. We shall probably more fully and more correctly ascertain the mind of the Lord by employing all these, than by selecting one.

12. And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. ^eDeut. xxi. 16, 17. ^hMark xii. 44.

Father, give me the portion, &c. His claiming of his share in this technical and almost legal form is a delicate touch, characteristic of the entire alienation from all home affections which had already found place in his heart. Though treated with kindness, and provided with every reasonable comfort, he was restless and uneasy. He found the sober, rational enjoyments of his father’s family dull and insipid, and he sighed after other amusements and pleasures more suited to his taste. He wished to get rid of godly discipline and pious restraints, which were irksome to him. He longed to be independent, to be his own master, and to follow his own inclinations. To have restrained him would have been to increase his alienation and disobedience. The portion asked by the younger son, according to the Jewish laws of inheritance, would be the half of what the elder brother would receive. (Deut. xxi. 17.) This request, in its spiritual significance, is the expression of man’s desire to be independent of God, to be a God to himself (Gen. iii. 5), and to lay out his life according to his own will and for his own pleasure.

And he divided unto them his living. The case would seem to have been that the younger son, having a right to expect a

certain proportion of his father's movable property ("goods") on his death, was also entitled, by usage, to demand that portion before the demise of his father—probably that he might thus be enabled to establish himself in life. Thus we see, in patriarchal times, that Abraham in his lifetime gave his other sons their portions and sent them away, while Isaac (as does the elder son in this instance) remained with him and succeeded to the residue of the inheritance.

13. 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 riotous living.

Not many days after—a litotes for *very soon after*. He made off as soon as possible. *Gathered all together*. His means were now all in a movable form, perhaps converted into money or into valuables that he could easily carry, and he was fully prepared for a profligate squander. *And took his journey into a far country*. Here is exhibited the spirit of apostasy and departure into open sin. *Wasted his substance in riotous living*—scattered even the patrimony which through the kindness of his father had become *his own property*. The essence of all sin is separation and departure from God. Men are said to remove themselves far from God, who lay aside all fear of Him. (Ps. lxxiii. 27.) The gathering together of all and departing intimates, on man's part, the collecting of all his energies and powers, with the deliberate determination of getting, through their help, all the gratification he can out of the world—the open preference of the creature to the Creator. It is only when man is, or imagines himself to be far from God, that he dares to indulge his vicious propensities, and when thus distant, by putting God far from His thoughts, he continually sinks deeper, so that all the powers and faculties of his soul are misapplied and squandered upon what is worthless and vile.

14. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

His profligacy soon made way with his means. Distress, disgrace and ruin was all the fruit which he reaped from his sin and folly. For a time he enjoyed himself, and took his pleasure. But this was soon over. His substance was squandered, and

he felt the pinchings of want. His distress was increased by the fact that a mighty famine had arisen in the land. Without money, without friends, in a foreign country, far from home, his affliction must, indeed, have been great. The words, *he had spent all*, mark the internally degraded state of the sinner, his ignorance, his unbelief. (Eph. iv. 18, 19; Rom. i. 21.) From the expression, *there arose a mighty famine*, we learn that the desire of good, the longing after bliss, is never wholly extinguished in the human heart, however far sinners are from rightly understanding it, and if at times it seems quite gone, and sinners think themselves happy, other times again come when they *begin to be in want*, i. e., to have a keen feeling of their necessities, their misery, and the unsatisfying nature of all that is temporal; for they hunger or seek after what can afford a better and truer satisfaction to the wants of their nature.

15. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

Joined himself, i. e., became a servant to a citizen of that country. As he himself was an alien and a foreigner, he hired himself to a citizen. Is not this citizen the devil, or one of his angels? Is any man a citizen of the realm of sin? *To feed swine*. This was deemed an ignoble employment among all nations, and especially by the Jews, to whom swine was an abomination. His proud heart was yet unsubdued; his confidence in his own resources not altogether exhausted. Human sorrow is not all or always godly sorrow. Convictions and terrors seldom bring the wanderer at once to the door of mercy, he generally tries in succession several other methods in order to obtain relief. (See Isa. ix. 10; Jer. v. 3; Isa. lvii. 10; Amos iv. 6-10.) As the prodigal attempted to keep body and soul together, by the most desperate and loathsome expedients, rather than throw himself on his father's compassion, so an alienated human soul, conscious of having offended a good God, and therefore hating deeply the Holy One, will bear and do the will of the wicked one to the utmost extremity of misery, rather than come home a beggar, and be indebted for all to a Father's love.

16. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. Isa. xlii. 20, iv. 2; Lam. iv. 5; Hosea xii. 1; Rom. vi. 19-21. *Ps. cxlii. 4; Isa. lviii. 3; Jonah ii. 2-8.

The pods of the kharub trees were called *husks*, from their resemblance to a horn. With these *husks* the prodigal would gladly have filled his belly—the expression was chosen of design—all he could hope from them was just this: to dull his gnawing pain, not that he should with them truly satisfy his hunger, for the food of beasts could not appease the cravings of man. None but God can satisfy the longings of an immortal soul. As the heart was made for Him, so only He can fill it. *And no man gave unto him*, rather, *for no man*, &c. No one, in this state of extreme scarcity of food, gave him anything to eat, and hence he was glad to eat the husks. What a reverse! Was this all the fruit he gained by leaving his father's house and following his own inclinations? Such are the consequences of sin. Sinners will forsake one another in the time of adversity.

17. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!
*Jer. xxxi. 13, 19; Ezek. xviii. 28; Acts ii. 37.

He came to himself. The prodigal's first act, when light dawned on his darkness, was to converse with himself. Hitherto he had been acting the part of a fool and a madman. It is a characteristic of the insane that they never know or confess their insanity until it has passed away. The two beings to whom a man living in sin is most a stranger are himself and God. When the right mind returns, he becomes acquainted with both again. We cannot return to ourselves until God returns to us. It is a beginning of happiness for a man thoroughly to comprehend the misery of sin, and to envy the happiness of those who serve God.

18. I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee. 19. And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.
*2 Kings ii. 3, 4; 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12, 13; Ps. xxxii. 5; Jer. xxxi. 6.

In the midst of the prodigal's distressing thoughts, a ray of hope broke in. The very remembrance of his father's kindness, which pierced him to the soul, yet raised an idea in his mind that possibly he might yet receive him, and at least might save him from perishing. This idea, once raised, is cherished as his only hope. *I will arise.*

He did not propose to remain at a distance, until, by efforts of his own, he should make himself, in some measure, worthy to resume his original place in the family, but to come in want of all things, that out of his father's fullness all his wants might be supplied. *And go to my father.* In returning to his father, though bringing with him poverty and hunger, he would leave the instruments of his lusts, his associates, habits and tastes behind. This is a distinctive, discriminating feature of true repentance. *And will say unto him*, &c. By the term *father* he expresses his confidence in the still unchanged and loving disposition toward him of his much-wronged parent. He determines freely and fully to confess his great sinfulness, without any attempt to excuse, palliate or diminish it. We are not to suppose that a man can turn to God in his own strength, or that a sinner's repentance alone is sufficient to reconcile him with his God, that he needs not a Mediator and a sacrifice. Both these errors are sufficiently guarded against by innumerable passages of Scripture—the first by such as John vi. 44, the second by such passages as Heb. x. 19-22. We cannot expect that every portion of Scripture is to contain the whole circle of Christian doctrine.

20. 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.—*Acts ii. 39; Eph. ii. 13, 17.

He not only resolved to go, but went—went promptly, too, suffering no delay. Many are always on the eve of resolving, "I will arise and go to my father," and not a few come to the very point, but the prodigal carried his purpose into action, with firm, unshaken confidence in the exercise of his father's love. *But when he was yet a great way off*, &c. The kind and tender-hearted father no sooner sees his returning son, than, forgetful of all his guilt, he only feels *compassion* for his present sufferings. Regardless of his own age and dignity, he runs to meet him, and instead of upbraiding him with his faults, *falls on his neck and kisses him*, giving every evidence, according to the custom of the East, of a cordial and welcome reception. The gentlest motions in the sinner's heart are known to the all-seeing God. He with His grace antici-

pates the penitent in all the steps he takes in order to return to Him. (Isa. lxxv. 24; Psa. xxxii. 5.) He is careful to receive him with a fatherly tenderness, since it is His goodness which causes him to return. He *runs*; that is, while we languish, He draws us by His holy Word and Spirit. He *falls upon our neck*, embraces us, supports us in trouble and distress, for we should be overwhelmed with grief and sorrow were we not aided and upheld by God. He *kisses us*; that is, He intimates to us the remission of sins, and assuages our pains and fears by new light and consolation.

21. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.—Psa. li. 4.

Father, I have sinned against heaven, &c. He recognized his sins to have been committed not merely against man, but against heaven, or against God. Sin is committed against God. We may injure ourselves by our evil, we may wrong our neighbor; but, strictly speaking, we can *sin* only against God; and the recognition of our evil, as first and chiefly an offense against Him, is of the essence of all true repentance, and distinguishes it broadly from many other kinds of sorrow which may follow our evil deeds. As the prodigal confessed his sin by a name of love—*Father*—we learn that the love of God is the foundation of true repentance. The chief motive to the hatred of sin is, because it is contrary to the goodness of God, and because He, who is the best of all fathers, is offended thereby. Confessing of sin is a sign of true repentance. (Prov. xxviii. 13; Jer. ii. 35, xvi. 10; Hos. xiv. 2; 1 John i. 9, 10.)

And no more worthy to be called thy son. Melted, and, in some measure, confused by the undeserved, unexpected warmth of his reception, the son bethought of the speech which, at the turning-point of his repentance (verses 18, 19), he had resolved to address to his father, and began to recite it, but stopped short before he came to the words, *make me as one of thy hired servants*. Some say the father may have cut the prodigal's speech short by giving aloud an order to the servants for the kind and honorable reception of his child. There is, however, a deeper significance in the

omission. The son lying on the father's bosom, with the father's tears falling warm on his upturned face, is some degrees further advanced in the spirit of adoption than when he first planned repentance before the swine in his master's field. There and then the legal spirit of fear, because of guilt, still lingered in his heart; he ventured to hope for exemption from deserved punishment, but not for restoration to the place of a beloved son. Now, the spirit of bondage has been conclusively cast out by the experience of his father's love, and he could not finish the speech which he had prepared—he could not ask for the place of a servant, for he was already in the place of a son.

22. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: 23. And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: 24. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Gen. xli. 42; Esther iii. 10 and viii. 2. Verse 32: Eph. iii. 1 and v. 14; Rev. iii. 1.

Let it be noted that the father does not say a single word to his son about his profligacy and wickedness. *Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him.* The words, translated "the best robe," are extremely expressive in the original—the robe, that first one, the most distinguished, that chiefest, that best one. In the East, wedding-garments hang upon the pegs in the hall, and an individual had only to take one and put it on. The father commanded the servants, "Bring forth one of the robes: there is going to be a great festival, a high feast; take from my child the rags which have degraded him as the prodigal, and clothe him in the robe that indicates the accepted son." By this is especially signified that act of God, which, considered on its negative side, is a release from condemnation, a causing the sinner's iniquity to pass from him—on its positive side, is an imputation to him of the merits and righteousness of Christ. *And a ring on his hand.* This was a mark of honor, confidence and distinction. (Gen. xli. 42; Ex. iii. 10; James ii. 2.) In ancient times, rings were invariably used for seals. The giving this ring or seal, therefore, was the evidence that the prodigal was now no more a servant, nor to seek a servant's place, but a son that had received a father's welcome. (2 Cor. i. 22; Rom. viii. 23; 2

Cor. v. 5.) *And shoes on his feet.* The Apostle speaks of being "shod" with the preparation of the Gospel of peace: so the putting shoes on the prodigal's feet teaches that he was not to wander any more, but, like Abraham, to "walk before God;" like Enoch, to "walk with God," and to lead a life that should be the evidence of his sonship.

And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it. Eastern hospitality always had in a state of readiness a calf, or some such animal, to be slaughtered and served up. (See Gen. xviii. 7, xli. 2; 1 Sam. xvi. 20, xxviii. 24; 2 Sam. vi. 13.) This "fatted calf," literally, "the calf—that fatted one," seems to have been one kept for a special occasion. It was killed—plainly not for sacrifice, but simply for the feast, or the festival to which they were called. *And let us eat, and be merry.* As the shepherd summoned his friends (verse 6), and the woman her female neighbors (verse 9), so here the householder his servants, to be sharers in his joy. It is the very nature of true joy—that it runs over, that it desires to impart itself. *For this my son was dead, &c.* The prodigal's life before his repentance, and the change when he repented, was a state of *death*, after this change, it was a state of *life*. All life, even when most prosperous, without fellowship with God, is but death and misery. (Eph. ii. 5, 6.) *Was lost*, in all that pertains to virtue and happiness. *Is found* marks deliverance from the condemnation of sin. *And they began to be merry.* The strong contrast between this expression and the one at the end of verse 14 ought not to be overlooked. Unconverted man begins to be "in want." Converted he begins to be "happy."

25. Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing.

In the field, engaged in the duties of superintending the farm. As he approached the house, *he heard music and dancing.* It would appear that a party of musicians and dancers had been hired to enliven the rejoicing entertainment given on this occasion. In Oriental towns there are large numbers of musicians and dancers who derive their subsistence from their exertions on such occasions. The guests

and members of the family are spectators and auditors merely.

26. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. 27. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

The cool and calculating selfishness of the elder brother betrayed itself in the fact that, instead of entering the house, as his position in the family would have justified, and learning by personal observation the cause of the unwonted joy, he called one of the servants, and sought information from him. *And he said unto him, &c.* The father was overwhelmed with the moral transformation of his son, but the poor servant, who attended merely to duty, and had no sympathy, except with outward facts, replied to the elder brother, that his brother had returned, had been welcomed, and was received by his father, *safe and sound*—none of his limbs broken or features defaced.

28. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him.

¹ 1 Sam. xvii. 28; Isa. lxxv. 5.

Our Lord now holds up to the murmuring Pharisees of verse 2, a likeness of themselves, for them to recognize and avoid. As the elder son, because of his cold, selfish and contracted disposition, is angry at the joy which welcomes the prodigal home from his wanderings, so have these men murmured at the mercy with which Jesus had received the publican and sinner. *Came his father out, &c.* He went forth to meet the prodigal; now, though he saw his son acting in a manner so unworthy of the affections and duties of a son, he does not utter one word of anger or rebuke, but treats him to lay aside his anger and enter the house.

29. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: 30. But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

¹ Isa. lviii. 2, 3; Zech. vii. 3. ² Mal. iii. 14.

The words, *many years*, stand opposed to *as soon as*, in verse 30. *Do I serve thee.* The word *serve*, here, is the service of a slave, and hence some have held it as characterizing the Pharisee's devotion to God. *Neither transgressed I, &c.* In this profession of invariable obedience, contrasted with the implied disregard of the father's

command, evinced by the desertion of the younger son, there is strongly displayed the self-righteous spirit of this elder brother. He boasts of perfect obedience, while at the very time his conduct belies his words, and shows that he was devoid of all true filial respect and moral uprightness. *A kid*, far inferior to the fatted calf. See how expressive the language of this brother is of the chagrin, envy and hatred of his heart. He does not say, "as soon as my brother is come," but "as soon as *this thy son*," this contemptible fellow, "which hath devoured *thy* living with harlots." That was not matter of fact. The elder son had had his share, and the younger had had his. It had ceased to be his father's, and became his own. There was no evidence that he had wasted his father's living "with harlots." This was a mere guess, because there was nothing in his past history to warrant it. It may have been, or it may not, but there was no evidence on which the son could say so. Next he says, "*as soon* as he was come," not, "as soon as he repented and reformed himself, and became a better man," and, as if there were sinfulness and excessive indulgence on the father's part, the elder son added, "thou hast killed for him the fatted calf." Envy, jealousy, ill-will, uncharitableness, were all compressed into this speech.

31. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. 32. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother

was dead, and is alive again: and was lost, and is found.—^vVerse 24.

Son. The father speaks to him affectionately, and does not immediately drive from him the elder brother. *Thou art ever with me*. Always, and therefore it was not necessary that there should be any special rejoicing. *With me*. It is better to be happy with a father than with a multitude of friends. *All that I have is thine*, for the younger brother had received his portion, and the elder was sole heir to his father's goods. *It was meet, i. e.*, right, proper, *that we*—the elder son is affectionately included in this general expression, notwithstanding his contemptuous and sneering words—for *this thy brother*, purposely repeated from *this thy son*, but with different manner, denoting the deepest affection. *Was dead and is alive, &c.* (See on verse 24.) This answer of the father was wisely intended and adapted to avert the wrath and jealousy of the elder brother. From the spirit manifested by the elder son, it was evident that *he* was lost, as well as the younger, but as far as the parable reveals his history, he was not like him found again. He, like his brother, went astray, but unlike him, for anything we know to the contrary, refused to come back. That which really in the last resort hinders a man's salvation and secures his doom, is not his sin, but his refusal to know and own that he is a sinner, and flee to God, through Christ, for pardon, peace, hope and heaven.

1. Who drew near to Jesus? 2. Why did they do so? 3. What did the Pharisees and scribes say? 4. Explain the parable of the lost sheep. 5. Who are the "friends and neighbors" referred to? 6. What is said of one sinner that repenteth? 7. Who are the "ninety and nine just persons," &c., referred to? 8. How does the second parable differ from the first? 9. Who are meant by the "younger son," in the third parable? 10. Who by the "elder son?" 11. What were the evidences of the genuineness of the prodigal's repentance? 12. How was he received by his father? 13. What does this teach us? 14. What do we learn from the spirit and conduct of the elder son?

CHAPTER XVI.

1 *The parable of the unjust steward.* 14 *Christ reproveth the hypocrisy of the covetous Pharisees.* 19 *The rich glutton, and Lazarus the beggar.*

The object of our Lord's teaching in this chapter is to awaken and quicken us all, so to use this world as not to abuse it, so to manage all our possessions and enjoyments here as that they may promote our happiness, and not increase our misery, in the world to come. He also aims to rouse us to take the warning given us by the written Word, and not to expect immediate messages from the other world.

AND he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward: and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.

Unto his disciples. Not exclusively the Apostolic circle, but rather the whole body of those who had attached themselves to Jesus to be taught of Him, whom His word had found out in the deep of their spirits, and who, having left the world's service, had decidedly passed over into the ranks of His people. *A certain rich man.* This may denote an ancient nobleman of very high rank—probably a satrap, or the governor of a very large district of country. This *rich man* is not like the one referred to in another parable, as preparing to build new barns and storehouses in the miserable hope of a future of peace, prosperity and comfort; nor like another spoken of at the close of this chapter, who was "clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day," but a rich man who was careful of *his goods*. He does not appear to be exceedingly anxious as to their increase, nor yet lavish and luxurious in their expenditure, but he takes good care not to lose sight of them. *Which had a steward.* This officer was one who superintended domestic concerns, and ministered to the support of the family, having the products of the field, business, collection of rents, &c., put into his hands for this very purpose, and having only to render annually to his lord his accounts of all his expenditures and receipts. As our property increases, our personal control over it diminishes; the more we possess, the more we must intrust to others. Every man stands in the relation of a

steward to God. *Wasted his goods*, had been profuse and profligate, embezzling his master's substance, and concealing the fraud for a time under the folds of complicated accounts. Some person discovered the facts and informed the proprietor. Not to use what has been intrusted to us according to the design and intention of God is to waste it. Nothing is concealed from God.

2. 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.

How is it that I hear this of thee? This is the expostulation of indignant surprise—an intimation of the abuse of the confidence that had been placed in him, to which he had so illy responded, and in which he had shown ingratitude and inconsiderate forgetfulness of his obligations: of *thee*, whom I had trusted so far, to whom I had committed so much. Never is rebuke so poignant as when it is given in soft and gentle accents. *Give an account, &c.* Produce thy books of receipts and disbursements, that I may see whether the accusation against thee be true or false. Here is expressed God's holy zeal against all unfaithfulness, and that the application made by men of earthly goods is far from being a matter of indifference to Him. *For thou mayest, &c.*, literally, "Thou wilt not be able to be steward any longer." It is impossible that thou canst be. I cannot allow thee. In this intimation of the removal of the steward, God's righteousness shines forth. A short respite, however, was still allowed him, which he might employ, and which is to be referred to the period of life granted to every one, always uncertain, and never long in continuance. There are three things at the death of an unfaithful man which are very terrible: 1. His being obliged to appear with a guilty conscience before holiness itself. 2. His having an exact account to give of his whole life, and of whatever he has received. 3. His seeing himself deprived of all forever.

3. 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.

*Isa. x. 3; Hos. ix. 5; Acts ix. 6.

The steward seems to have given up his

case as soon as he was accused. He attempted no excuse. He uttered not a word in his own defense. There was no proof on the one side, and no denial on the other. He said *within himself, what shall I do?* &c. He thus displayed his perplexity. He felt that he was about to lose his position and support, and he was, for the moment, at a loss what course to pursue for a livelihood. With habits, both mental and physical, cast in another mould, he cannot win his bread as a laborer, and his pride revolted against the prospect of becoming a beggar on the spot where he had long been owned as master by the multitudes. The aphorism repeated for many hundred years is still true—"Honesty is the best policy." No man ever gets rich with that which is not his own. A little, with the conscience at peace with God and man, is sweet; much, amid the fever of remorse, generates no happiness.

4. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.

So he said within himself, after a little consideration; a lucky thought, as he doubtless accounted it, coming into his mind. As he was not yet ousted from office, he resolved to use his power, for the little time it remained, in such a manner as to make himself friends, who would succor him in his need. *That they may receive me into their houses*—that the tenants or debtors of his lord, who paid their rents or debts, not in money, but in wheat, oil or other produce of the ground they rented or possessed, might give him entertainment in their houses, or provide for him some other means of subsistence. Dishonest men are often found to have very sharp wits.

5. So he called every one of his lord's debtors *unto him*, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord?

It is quite evident, from the debts being stated to consist of corn and oil, that these debtors were the *tenants* of the steward's lord, and consequently that the transaction refers to the terms on which the corn-fields and olive grounds were held.

6. And he said, A hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. 7. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, a hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write four score.

An hundred measures of oil, supposed to

be the Hebrew *bath*, containing nearly nine gallons. What the quantities mentioned may have been in relation to our standards, is only a question of critical and antiquarian interest. The amount of the debt has no influence on the meaning of the parable. The point which is really important is the proportion between the amount owed by the debtors and the amount exacted by the steward. Olive oil and wheat were two of the staple products of the country. *Take thy bill*, obligation, bond. These bonds, it seems, were kept in the hands of the steward, and of this we have instances in the Roman law. *Sit down quickly*, &c., says the steward. No time to be lost. If you do not change your bill now, you will never be able to do it afterward. If you do, I will take care in my reckoning that you are not exposed. He displays his tact and shrewdness in taking advantage of the very last moment at his disposal, and also by implicating others with him in his fraud. The parable narrates the case of two debtors as a specimen of the whole. Wicked as the steward was, he had an eye to the future. Disgraceful as his measures were, he provided well for himself. He did not sit still in idleness, and see himself reduced to poverty without a struggle. He schemed, planned and contrived, and boldly carried his plans into execution. How different the conduct of most men about their souls! In this general point of view, and in this only, the steward sets us all an example. Like him we should look far forward to things to come, provide against the day when we shall have to leave our present habitation, and secure a home in heaven. (2 Cor. v. 1.)

8. And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

^bJohn xii. 36; Eph. iv. 5, 8; 1 Thess. v. 5.

The lord, i. e., the landlord, the same lord as in verses 3 and 5. Great care should be taken so as not to confound the *lord* or master of the steward here spoken of with the Lord Jesus Christ. *Commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely.* He did not commend him for his injustice. He turned him out of his office on that account, but as a man of the world, he could not withhold from him commenda-

tion for his cleverness and shrewdness in the plan he had formed for his future provision and comfort. Our Lord now proceeds to make the application. By *the children of this world* we are to understand *worldly* persons, those who make this world their god, are devoted to the cares, pleasures or pursuits of the present life; mind earthly things, have their treasure here, and desire no better portion than this world can yield. These, says Christ, *are in their generation, i. e., are for their life, or for their day, wiser, more shrewd and active than the children of light* are in relation to their eternal good. By *the children of light* are meant Christians; those who, having been "some time in darkness, are now light in the Lord"—whose understandings have been enlightened to see the truth as it is in Jesus, who no longer walk after the course of this world, and profess to be seeking a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Our Lord's meaning is, that Christians are not as prudently careful over what spiritual interests they possess, not as watchful that none shall in any way rob or defraud them of them; not as clear-sighted and watchful in regard to these interests as was this *rich man* in relation to "*his goods*," neither are they as quick and prompt to take advantage of every moment, in order to make provision for the time to come, or as eagerly vigilant not to let slip any opportunity which might be improved for this purpose, as was this *steward* in relation to his future prospects in the world.

9. And I say unto you, "Make to yourselves friends of the *mammon* of unrighteousness, that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations."
^cDan. iv. 27; Matt. vi. 19 and xix. 21; Luke xi. 41; 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18, 19. ^{*Or, riches.}

And I say unto you—I give you the following counsel and advice. *Mammon* is a Syriac word, and signifies riches or wealth. In verse 13 our Lord beautifully represents this as a person whom the folly of men had deified: "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." *Mammon* may be called *unrighteous*, because it is generally unrighteously obtained, unrighteously retained, or unrighteously employed. Trade is not unlawful, neither is property founded in sin; but because the spirit which pervades trade, if not purified by Christianity,

and as it exists in heathen countries, and as a heathenish element in Christian countries, is *unrighteous*, mammon, riches or property is so called. That cannot be unrighteous in itself which God gives to so many persons by His blessing their diligence, frugality and economy, so as to make them rich, that they may be a source of blessings to others by their beneficence. We are not to suppose that we can *make to ourselves* friends, in the sense here intended, by *ill-gotten wealth*. This must be restored, as in the case of *Zaccheus*. (Luke xix. 8; see, also, Isa. lxi. 8.) Neither can any one fulfill the injunction of the text who is still an unpardoned sinner. The first thing to be attended to, by those who would make a right use of their money, is, that they themselves be justified, be at peace with God, and have Him for their friend. (Eph. ii. 14.) The verse evidently teaches that Christians are to make use of their money, which has been righteously obtained, not only for their own necessities, but also for the support of the cause of the Gospel, and for the relief of the afflicted and destitute. (Matt. ix. 13; Luke vi. 36; Matt. v. 7; Luke xii. 13; Matt. v. 44; Heb. xiii. 16.) *That when ye fail*—become a bankrupt. The Greek may be rendered, "when ye suffer an eclipse." Death brings us under it; our health, strength, beauty, honor, glory and renown, our powers of body and mind will suffer an eclipse. In the final hour we shall *fail*, as far as all earthly resources are concerned. *They may receive you into everlasting habitations*. *They, i. e., the friends* just spoken of, which are to be referred to God. *Everlasting habitations*. This expression must evidently mean heaven. Heaven will be the eternal home of all God's people. There those will be received with welcome who brought forth fruits worthy of repentance, whose love labored, whose hope produced a patient continuance in well-doing, and made them steadfast in the faith, who, as they had the ability, were "rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate." (1 Tim. vi. 17, 18.)

10. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.—^aMatt. xxv. 21; Luke xix. 17.

Faithful. Our Lord commends, not pru-

dence, but *fidelity*; for fidelity begets and directs prudence. *In that which is least.* This refers to the mammon of unrighteousness, or the earthly stewardship committed to us. *Is faithful also in much*, i. e., *the true riches.* If we are faithful in this world's *least*, we shall be faithful for eternity's *much*. This, of course, does not mean that honesty about money can justify our souls, but that dishonesty about money is a sure sign of a heart not being "right in the sight of God." *Unjust in the least . . . in much.* Our least sin is committed for eternity, and, if unforgiven, must result in an eternal woe proportionate to its guilt. We may, by our degrees of unrighteousness, more or less sink ourselves deeper into perdition; but the slightest unremoved condemnation is eternal. It is an acknowledged truth, that a man's conduct in little things is a sure test of what he is likely to do in great things.

11. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous *mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?—*Or, *riches.*

Jesus speaks from a heavenly point of view. He calls the blessings of salvation by antithesis **THE TRUE**, because they are not, like the unrighteous mammon, untrustworthy, deceitful and unsatisfying, but fully deserve the name of genuine and true good, whereby the highest ideal is realized. (See John i. 9; Heb. ix. 24.) The doctrine is, that he who is dishonest and unfaithful in the discharge of his duties on earth, must not expect to have heavenly treasures, or to be saved.

12. And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?

The argument here is the same with that in the preceding verse, though the expressions are different.

Mammon is called by our Lord, not unrighteous merely, but also a strange thing (*another man's*), intimating that it is a temporal good, and not always abiding, like that which is spiritual. We are made Christians in order to enjoy heaven and eternity, and therefore heavenly and eternal treasures are those alone which are properly *our own*. And these are *given* to us, not of debt, or claim, but of grace.

13. † No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.—Matt. vi. 24.

If any one should think that possibly he might reconcile the criminal employment of temporal riches with the attainment of eternal life, our Lord anticipates and explodes this vain refuge. *Mammon* is the Syriac word for riches, and seems here to be an idol. The covetous man is an idolater, and therefore no true servant of God. The point contended for in respect to God is not exclusive *possession*, but exclusive *dominion*. Other things may occasionally, for a certain time, and to a certain degree, have possession of our minds, but they must not *rule*, must not *reign* over them. We can serve but one master faithfully and effectually, and that one must be God. The concerns of this life may have their *due* place in our hearts, but they must not aspire to the *first*. This is the prerogative of religion alone—religion must be supreme and paramount over all.

14. And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him.—Matt. xxiii. 14.

The Pharisees who were covetous, of a very worldly spirit, literally, *silver lovers, derided him*, as a visionary, who did not understand human life, or only appeared to despise the world, because (as they suppose) it was out of His reach. The original word is very emphatic, signifying *they mocked Him*, by a scornful motion of the mouth and nose, as well as by what they spake to Him. It is natural for the human heart to shrink from the touch of truth. Ministers often find that their hearers have been offended by the most searching parts of their sermons. Though it be painful to be told of our sins, we should not become angry when this is done; it is better to know our sins *now*, than to wait till we stand before God.

15. And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

‡ Luke x. 29. † Ps. vii. 9. † Sam. xvi. 7.

By shunning the company of sinners, and your care of external appearances, you make specious pretenses to extraordinary sanctity before the world, and you seldom fail to acquire a great reputation for it. You also endeavor to make it appear that ye can still feel an insatiable thirst after the present world, and yet secure the blessings of another—that ye can reconcile God and mammon. *But God*

knoweth your hearts—you cannot justify yourselves before Him. He sees through your pompous and plausible disguise. He knoweth that ye are *alive* to the world, and *dead* to God and goodness. For that which is highly esteemed, &c. How often do we see this solemn truth illustrated! Riches, honors, rank, pleasure, are the chief objects for which the greater part of mankind are living; yet these are the very things which God declares to be “vanity,” and of the love of which He warns us to beware! Praying, Bible reading, holy living, repentance, faith, grace and communion with God, are things for which few care at all; yet these are the very things which God in His Bible is ever urging on our attention!

16. The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the Kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.

¹Matt. iv. 17 and xi. 12, 13; Luke vii. 29.

The law and the prophets, the Old Testament, the whole revelation of God's will in that form. Until John—as far as, down or up to John, as the last in the succession of such agencies. Since that time, &c. You forget that the dispensation of the law and prophets was only intended to pave the way for the better dispensation of the kingdom of God, which was to be ushered in by John the Baptist. That dispensation has come. John the Baptist has appeared. And humble men, who feel their wretchedness as sinners, are receiving the glad tidings of the kingdom, whilst ye proud, self-righteous men are deriding me and my doctrine.

17. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fall.

²Ps. iii. 26; Isa. xl. 8, li. 6; Matt. v. 18; 1 Peter i. 25.

The idea that the law shall never cease to be authoritative and obligatory is expressed by a comparison, familiar to the style of the Old Testament, with the frame of nature or the constitution of the universe, a striking emblem of immutability. The immutability of the Divine Word, in relation either to happiness or misery, yields as much comfort to the righteous as it gives despair to the wicked.

18. Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery; and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband, committeth adultery.

¹Matt. v. 32 and xix. 9; Matt. x. 11; 1 Cor. vii. 10, 11.

Here is an example of the permanence and the violation of the law. The Phari-

sees had unconverted hearts. They professed to love God; but in reality they hated Him. How did they show that they hated Him? By hating His law. They did not keep His holy commandments. Jesus reminds them of one great sin, which they frequently committed. They broke the seventh commandment by putting away their wives in order to marry others. They had lowered the standard of the law of divorce. They had allowed divorce for trivial and insufficient causes. They had perverted and abused, for licentious purposes, the Mosaic law (Deut. xxiv. 1), that if “uncleanness” were found in a wife, the husband might “write a bill of divorcement, and put it into her hand, and send her out of the house.” What was then permitted, and that, too, only to prevent greater evils, and because it was found to be necessary in view of the hardness of the hearts of the people, was now regarded as *precept*, and when thus regarded, sadly misinterpreted and applied. This language of our Lord is to be interpreted in harmony with Matt. v. 32, on which see notes. According to this law, adultery or unchastity, is the only sufficient reason for divorce.

19. ¶ There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:—¹Judg. viii. 26; Esth. viii. 15.

From the very earliest days it has been a matter of dispute, whether this portion of our Lord's teaching ought to be regarded as a parable or a real history. It would be safe, perhaps, to regard it as mainly historical, and partly figurative; in other words, as the relation of events which actually occurred, though somewhat colored with borrowed imagery, which the great Teacher, according to His usual custom, employed to convey the important instruction communicated. It is, however, of no real importance to inquire whether this is the history of men who actually lived at Jerusalem, or whether our Lord borrowed only general and probable characters, and worked them into a parable. In either case the moral is the same. It cannot, for a moment, be supposed that Jesus would use any embellishment, even in a parable, that would leave any impression on an honest mind inconsistent with truth. If the parable in part consists of

drapery, it is not the drapery of error, but of truth.

A *certain rich man*. No name is given to him, because it would have been invidious, and have provoked ill-will, to name any one in such a description, but he is commonly called *Dives*, a Latin word signifying a *rich man*. The omission of the name is a means of generalizing the representation. We are not told how this man became rich. *Which was clothed in purple and fine linen*. Purple was the color in that age appropriate to princely rank. It was obtained from the blood taken from a vein in the throat of a certain shell-fish. The wearing of fine linen (called *byssus*) was then, because the manufacture of it was in its infancy, considered a proof of the greatest wealth, or greatest luxury. *And fared sumptuously every day*. He gratified his palate with the most exquisite food which nature, assisted by art, could furnish. The original expression is very expressive, signifying that *he feasted splendidly*, or *delighted and cheered himself with luxury and splendor every day*. This rich display was not reserved for special days, festivals or galas, it was his ordinary style. It is important, in order that the edge of the parable may be retained, that the character of *Dives* as evil should not be exaggerated. He is not said to have been dishonest, nor a calumniator, nor a false accuser, nor an oppressor of the poor, nor avaricious, nor a spendthrift, nor an adulterer, nor a murderer, nor a criminal. There is not exhibited to us any flagrant crime or peculiar wickedness in his conduct. But the design of the parable is to admonish us, not that a monster of wickedness shall be punished in another world, but that the man who, though not chargeable with doing much *ill*, does little or no *good*, and who, though not perhaps *intemperate* or *sensual*, is yet careless about the situation of others, and exists only for the gratification of himself, the indulgence of his own appetites and vanity, shall not escape punishment. It shows the danger of living in the *neglect of duties*, though not chargeable with the *commission of crimes*, and particularly the danger of considering the gifts of Providence as our own *property*, and not as a *trust* from our Creator, to be employed in

His service (*i. e.*, in doing His will), and for which we are accountable to Him.

20. And there was a certain beggar named *Lazarus*, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

This *Lazarus* was not the brother of *Martha* and *Mary*. *Lazarus* was by his own name known in heaven. The rich man was not distinguished by any name (verse 25); he had only a genealogy in this world (verse 27). This is the only one of our Lord's parables in which He introduces parties to us by *name*. *Which was laid at his gate*—placed there by others, who either wished to rid themselves of him, or to secure to him what fell from the rich man's table; in sight of the rich man, that he might not have ignorance to plead. *Full of sores*, entirely covered with them, ulcerated, one of the natural effects of a mendicant's life. It is one of the blessed fruits of the Gospel, that it provides for the poor and the suffering. We are apt to wonder at the ways of Heaven, and perhaps tempted to arraign the conduct of Providence, in crowning so worthless a man as *Dives* with wealth and prosperity, whilst all that diversified the lot of *Lazarus* was scene after scene of poverty and pain. But let us suspend our judgment. We see but one link in the great chain of Providence. We live but in the infancy of being. The great drama of life is but begun. When the curtain between both worlds is undrawn, the morn will arise that will light the Almighty's footsteps in the deep, and pour full day upon all the paths of His providence.

21. And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

And desiring to be fed, &c. The expression, in the original, does not afford a sufficient foundation for supposing that he was refused the crumbs, the word rendered *desiring*, not implying so much in the Scriptural use of it. Nor does such supposition seem to be warranted by the facts, that the rich man afterward immediately knew *Lazarus*, asked that he might be made the instrument of the relief wanted, and that, though the patriarch upbraided the rich man with the carelessness and luxury in which he lived, he said not a word of the refusal of the crumbs to the beggar at the gate. Besides, as the beggar

appears to have been laid there repeatedly, this implies some success. *Moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores.* The act attributed to the dogs accords, as is well known, with their instincts and habits. It was soothing to the sufferer in the sensations of the moment, and healthful in its effects. The true Christian, building on the one foundation, even Christ, must be ready not only to *do*, but to *suffer*. He must make up his mind to a cheerful acquiescence in the will of God, even if God shall be pleased to send him manifold "evil things" in his outward lot—even if he be dependent on the merest charity for his daily food.

22. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;
—Ps. xci. 11, 12; Heb. i. 14.

Lazarus died first. The earliest death is not the evidence of judgment; the ripe is oftenest taken—saints are frequently gathered first. No mention is made of Lazarus being *buried*. His poor, diseased body was probably hid out of sight in any obscure grave which the hand of charity might provide for it. But his dust was precious in the sight of that God in whom he trusted, and in the resurrection morning God will show how much He prizes the redeemed bodies of His saints. *Abraham's bosom*, we may assume, was already an expression employed by the Jews to designate the place of the blessed beyond the grave. It is plain that heaven is a *place*. The joys of the blessed after death are here represented as a feast. Abraham, the father of the faithful, is placed, as it were, at the head of the table. Heaven will be a feast of the intellect, of love, of memory, of anticipation. *And was carried by the angels*, that is, his soul. (See Heb. i. 14; Ps. ciii. 20.) It is not in vain that Christ assigns this office to the angels, whom we know to be given as ministers to the faithful. How great and sudden the change! He who was lately the sport, not only of man but of dogs, is now honored by the presence and kind offices of angels! *The rich man also died, and was buried.* Death is no respecter of persons. "It is appointed unto all men once to die." No earthly resources, however great or grand, can shield us from the

assault of the destroyer. The rich man was buried, we may suppose, with much pageantry and pomp. But what a mockery was this marked attention to the lifeless body, now that his soul had passed into punishment!

It must not for a moment be supposed in relation to the parties mentioned in the parable, that *because* the one was rich he was excluded from heaven, and *because* the other was poor he was admitted into heaven. The true lesson here taught is in one aspect the very reverse of this: an ungodly man is in the highest sense poor, in spite of his wealth, and a godly man is in the highest sense rich, in spite of his poverty.

23. And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.—Ps. ix. 17; Prov. v. 5; Isa. xli. 9.

Both were now in the world of spirits, but the beggar in that world was in Abraham's bosom, and the rich man in torment; the ransomed man entered the Father's house and joined the company of the holy, the ungodly gravitated according to his kind into the place of woe. It is evident that hell is a place. *He lifted up his eyes, being in torments.* In interpreting these expressions we must carefully remember that our Lord's language is adapted to our understandings. It is plain that lost souls can suffer intensely before the resurrection, but how a lost soul can be susceptible of *bodily* suffering before the resurrection of the body we cannot fully comprehend. *And seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.* Among the Jews, the rabbins say that the place of torment and paradise are so situated that what is done in one may be seen from the other. The Grecian poets represent the abodes of the blest as lying contiguous to the regions of the damned, and separated only by a great impassable river, or deep gulf, in such a way that the spirits could talk with one another from its opposite banks. Grecian mythologists also tell us that the souls of wicked men lie in a river of fire, where they suffer the same torments they would have suffered while alive had their bodies been burned. It does not follow, however, from these resemblances, that the parable is formed on the Grecian mythology, or that our Lord

approved of what the common people thought or spake concerning those matters, agreeably to the notions and language of the Greeks. In parables, provided the doctrines inculcated are strictly true, the terms in which they are inculcated may be such as are most familiar to the ears of mankind, and the images made use of such as they are best acquainted with.

24. 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 tormented in this flame.

℞ Zech. xiv. 12. 1 Isa. lxvi. 24, Mark ix. 44, &c.

He cried and said. He did not acknowledge the justness of his punishment, or the greatness of his sins. *Father Abraham.* His pride on account of his fleshly descent from Abraham, and his Judaism, had gone with him; he thinks of laying claim to salvation as a right wholly standing in himself; and is quite blinded in regard to his unfilial state of heart (Matt. iii. 8; Rom. ix. 6, 7), though he recognizes Abraham as his father. In such a state of mind his condition must have been doubly painful to him. (Matt. vii. 22, &c.) *Send.* He still treats Lazarus as of little account, as afterward Moses. (Verse 30.) It appears probable, that those are always present to the thoughts of the wicked whom they remember to have been ill-treated by them. *Cool my tongue, &c.*—marking the continuance of his lusts and desires, which were now without any means of satisfaction, and consequently increased his torment; the thirst bespeaks a longing desire after an absent good, the suffering of pain a present feeling of distress; the flame is an image of the highest degree of pain, he begs, not for entire deliverance, but only for alleviation; he sues for mercy who himself had been so unmerciful. As this is the only prayer to a saint recorded in the Bible, and it, though for a small relief, was not answered, of course, prayers to saints are unwarranted. *Tormented in this flame.* The evil passions which now rankle in the bosoms of sinners here will hereafter produce in them inconceivable anguish, by being released of every restriction, and being left unshackled to revel in full and exasperated expansion forever. Each passion which it was the concern of a lifetime to indulge, but which it must

now be the employment of an eternity to deny, will be as a fire-sheet around them. The punishment of the wicked is often represented by Christ, not only in parables either, but in His explanations of parables, by fire. (Matt. xiii. 41, 42; Mark ix. 44, 46, 48; see also 2 Thes. i. 7, 8, 9; Rev. xiv. 9, 10, 11.)

25. But Abraham said, Son, remember, that thou, in thy lifetime, receivest thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.—Job xxi. 13; Luke vi. 24.

Thy good *things*—the things you have chosen as your portion—the things of earth, and time, and sense, in the enjoyment of which you lived contentedly and happily, as *your own*. God put them into your hands as a steward, to be taken care of and used for Him; you have appropriated them to yourself, as if they were your own property. They have been *your good*. *Receivest*. This word, in the original, has great emphasis. It expresses the *receipt in full*—the exhaustion of all claims on. “Those that were good things to thee came to an end in thy lifetime; there are no more of them.” Whatever *can* be derived from the guilty use of the things of earth, apart from the Giver, and in neglect of fidelity to Him, had been received by this rich man. He had taken them as *his own*, and he received his reward. They gave him as much as they could, and then left him to perish. *But now he is comforted.* His afflictions are all past, he has exchanged his place at the gate, for a home in heaven, his want for abundant satisfaction of every necessity, his rags for a robe of glory, his obscure and despised condition for the sweet society of God and angels, and the spirits of the just made perfect. *And thou art tormented*—thy gorgeous attire has given place to a robe of flame, instead of sumptuous fare thou art fed with bitter tears, and gnawed continually by a condemning conscience, and instead of thy past elegancies and comforts, nothing but torment and anguish surround thee. Memory will follow the soul into the future state. There is reason to believe that no impressions made upon the human soul in connection with the body are ever permanently erased. In the coming world of vivid intellection and endless meditation,

“— the *past* lives o'er again
In its effects, and to the guilty spirit
The ever frowning *present* is its image.”

25. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

²² Thes. i. 9; Rev. xx. 10 and xxii. 11.

• *Besides all this*—as to the favor thou desirest from the hand of Lazarus, it is a thing impossible to be granted, for *between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, a great chasm, or void, is established. They which would pass from hence to you, cannot*—if any should be so compassionate as to desire to help you, they are not able—*neither can they pass to us, that would come from you*—but we must still continue in an unapproachable distance from each other, the passage is forever closed, the *great gulf* is forever fixed. The righteous will be “forever with the Lord.” The wicked shall be “unjust still.” The same word, “eternal,” is written on the gate of heaven and the gate of hell. (Matt. xxv. 46.) There is nothing intermediate between heaven and hell. How the doctrine of a *purgatory* can be reconciled with this verse, it is impossible to imagine. How solemn the thought, that whether a person be happy or miserable in the future world, his state is unchangeable!

27. Then he said, I pray thee, therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: 28. For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

The first prayer of the rich man (verse 24) being refused, he offered another prayer for himself. Alas! what could give us a more complete idea of the hopelessness of his condition in the world of woe, than his ceasing to ask for mercy! Having given himself up to his fate, he now appeals from justice to grace, and begs that Lazarus might be sent to his brethren, and warn them, *testify unto them*, the certain truth of the immortality of the soul, and of a future state of rewards and punishments, and of the infinite importance thereof. Some have inferred from this request that in the future world some good and kind sentiments may remain in those who are themselves forever lost. It is more reasonable to suppose that there was in this request of the rich man the tormenting thought, that he had himself been the means, by his example and his life, of leading his brothers into careless, irreligious habits, which were most likely to involve them in eternal

ruin, and that their presence with him in torment would increase his misery. He dreaded the reproaches of those whom he had loved in a wrong manner, and thereby made companions in his misery. How important it is to consider what kind of influence we are exercising on the community at large, and especially on those whom Providence has placed under our immediate supervision and control! Those who have sinned together on earth, instead of being able to lighten each other's burden in the world of darkness, will only increase each other's misery.

29. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets: let them hear them.
¹ Isa. viii. 20 and xxxiv. 16; John v. 39, 45; Acts xv. 21 and xvii. 11.

They have Moses and the prophets—from these they might learn (not that it is wicked to be rich and blessed to be a beggar, but) that a rich, infidel, sensual worldliness meets a terrible retribution from a just God. From this answer of Abraham, it would seem that these five brethren were all Jewish believers; they had these writings in their hands, but they did not permit them to influence their lives. It is often asserted that the doctrine of future punishment is not taught in the Old Testament. Doubtless, like the correlative doctrine of heavenly reward, it was not announced in terms as distinctly as in the New. But the general doctrine of retribution, both for the righteous and the wicked, is abundantly taught there, so that, as the reply of Abraham indicates, men were sufficiently warned of the coming wrath. (Gen. ii. 17; Num. xv. 31; Ps. vii. 11; Prov. xiv. 32; Ezek. xviii. 4, 31, xxxiii. 8; Dan. xii. 2, &c.)

30. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

Whatever aspect of sympathy the rich man's prayer may have worn, it is plain that it breathed the spirit of audacity. It assumed that there was not sufficient evidence of the authenticity, genuineness and fullness of the Old Testament Scriptures to warrant their reception as a rule of faith and practice. It was a reflection on the wisdom of God, inasmuch as He had made a revelation unaccompanied with evidence adequate to produce conviction of its Divine origin, or so obscure as not

to be intelligible for practical purposes. And it was a reflection on His justice, because it had doomed *him* to suffering, for not yielding to the influence of a system of truth thus imperfectly attended with marks and means of credibility. It was, indeed, an effort on his part, for tacit exculpation of himself, by taxing God with having formerly used only imperfect and improper means for his conversion. Thus is it evident that the sinner carries with him to his cheerless abode the same disparaging thoughts he had of the Bible when on earth, and the same conceit of wisdom superior to the Divine, which supposes itself competent to dictate a more effectual method of salvation than God was pleased to appoint. Thus regarded, therefore, we are prepared for the disposition which was made of this prayer.

31. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.—John xii. 10, 11.

“They will repent,” says Dives, but Abraham replies, “They will not even be persuaded.” “They will repent,” says Dives, “if one went unto them from the

dead;” but Abraham, with a prophetic glance at the world’s unbelief in a far greater matter, further replies, “No, not if one *rose* from the dead;” as if he had said, “A far greater act than you demand would be ineffectual for producing a far slighter effect. You suppose that wicked men would repent on the return of a spirit; I tell you they would not even be persuaded by the rising of one from the dead.” The state of heart in which the Bible is rejected is such, that it would not be overcome or changed by any external evidence. This was the point which Jesus had mainly in view in this part of the parable. He wished to explain the nature of faith, to show that it is a moral act, an act of the will and affections no less than of the understanding, something therefore which cannot be enforced by signs and miracles; for where there is a determined alienation of the will and affections from the truth, no impressions which these miracles will make, even if they be allowed to be genuine, will be more than transitory.

1. With what parable does this chapter open? 2. What was the parable of the unjust steward designed to teach? 3. What is said about “two masters?” 4. What did Jesus say to the Pharisees when they derided Him? 5. What is said about the possibility of the law falling even in the smallest particular? 6. What is said of “a certain rich man?” 7. What of “a certain beggar?” 8. What is meant by “Abraham’s bosom?” 9. Is memory a source of anguish to the lost? 10. Why did Dives wish Lazarus to be sent to his five brethren? 11. What answer was made to the request that this should be done? 12. Explain verse 31.

CHAPTER XVII.

1 *Christ teacheth to avoid occasions of offense.* 3 *One to forgive another.* 6 *The power of faith.* 7 *How we are bound to God, and not he to us.* 11 *He healeth ten lepers.* 22 *Of the kingdom of God, and the coming of the Son of man.*

The awful parable of the rich man and Lazarus, which had been specially spoken to the Pharisees, seems to have caused them to depart in silence. But, though silent, they were not penitent. They were still bent upon opposing Christ. Their busy and active hostility may have led them to influence others to forsake the company of Jesus, and to such they proved

stumbling-blocks in the way of salvation. Some suppose that our Lord may now have had in His mind the stumbling-block that conduct like that of the rich man toward Lazarus put in the way of weak believers, or that possibly He referred again to His lesson about “faithfulness in little things” in the parable of the Unjust Steward, and proceeded to warn His disciples not to give occasion to the enemy to blaspheme.

THEN said he unto the disciples, “It is impossible but that offenses will come; but woe *unto him* through whom they come! 2. It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.

*Matt. xviii. 6, 7, on which see notes; Mark ix. 42: 1 Cor. xi. 19.

Offenses, i. e., *stumbling-blocks*. So the word is elsewhere translated. (Rom. xi. 9, xiv. 13; 1 John ii. 10.) Christianity, or true religion, is considered as a path, or way, and whatever occurs that tends to prevent men from beginning to walk in it, or to turn them out of it, or to hinder them in pursuing it, is an offense or stumbling-block. (Rom. xiv. 13, 21.) *It is impossible*, &c. Considering the general corruption of human nature, the snares of the world and the temptations of Satan, it cannot but be that, one way or other, offenses will be given and taken. *But woe unto him*, &c. Woe unto the man who is the intentional author of these offenses by persecution, or deceitful infidelities, or heresies, or ungodly example.

A millstone, &c. Drowning a person with a stone tied about the neck was an ancient mode of punishment. *One of these little ones*. One of these feeble believers. Probably Jesus pointed to some of the weak and unestablished followers who accompanied Him and the twelve Apostles. There are always many who are "babes in Christ." (1 Cor. iii. 1.) Those who are *strong* in faith must be careful not to injure the *weak* in faith, even as the *elder* children in a family must carefully avoid hurting the tender frames of the younger children.

3. ¶ Take heed to yourselves: if thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. 4. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.
*Matt. xviii. 15, 21 on which see notes. *Lev. xix. 17; Prov. xvii. 10; James v. 19.

Take heed to yourselves, that you may neither offend others, nor be offended by others. *If thy brother*. If, in this community of Christ's little ones, there shall be one who trespasses against thee who art also one of the same childlike brotherhood. Personal offenses or aggrievances are here referred to. *Rebuke him*. While our Lord cautioned them against all angry passions, and that quarrelsome temper which they naturally produce, He thus prescribed a seasonable and prudent reprehension of any fault that might be committed, accompanied with forgiveness on the part of the person injured, as the best means of disarming the temptations that

might arise from such a disposition. *And if he repent, forgive him* immediately, without insisting on any rigorous satisfaction. Whether a brother acknowledges his offense or not, our hearts must stand ready to forgive the wrong done to us, and pray for forgiveness on his behalf at the hands of God.

Seven times in a day denotes frequent repetition. *And turn again to thee, saying*, &c. This cannot mean that we are not to forgive men unless they do repent. At this rate there would be much bitterness constantly kept alive. But it does mean that when there is no repentance or regret for an injury done, there can be no renewal of cordial friendship, or complete reconciliation between man and man. *Thou shalt forgive him*. Thou shalt consent to be at peace with him, and hold him as not having trespassed. You may be conscious of his changing and careless disposition, but beware of cherishing a purpose of revenge. It is important to compare the precept which Christ here gives for private intercourse with that which He ordained for the exercise of discipline in the Church. (Matt. xviii. 15-18.) To the individual brother, there is *not* permitted what at last may be allowed to the Church, namely, to put one out as a publican and heathen. The forgiveness must be repeated as often as even the least trace of repentance is shown.

5. And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.

If we consider these words—in reference to *the Being* to whom they were addressed—"the Lord," they teach us that He is the source of grace and the object of worship. If in reference to *the persons* who addressed Him—"the Apostles"—they teach us that even the Lord's disciples themselves have their imperfections, but feel them, and are concerned to be freed from them. If in reference to *the subject* they express "our faith," they teach us that faith is not finished at once; it admits of degrees, and higher measures of it are attainable. If in reference to *the occasion* which excited them—our *Saviour's preceding charge*—they teach us that an increase of faith is not only always desirable, but sometimes necessary. Why did the disciples offer up

this prayer? Not because our Lord had just revealed some *mystery* that it was difficult to *believe*, but because He had enjoined a *duty* that it was difficult to *practice*—the duty of forgiving oft-repeated trespasses. Whoever has been deeply or often injured, and has endeavored freely to forgive, knows that the wicked heart rises up against the righteous deed, and that the struggle is sharp between the sense of injury and of duty.

6. ⁴And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea, and it should obey you.

⁴Matt. xvii. 20 and xxi. 21; Mark ix. 23 and xi. 23.

A grain of mustard seed was a proverbial expression for anything diminutively small. This *sycamine tree*. Probably the same as the *sycamore*. The expression seems to intimate that they were standing by such a tree. The sycamore is a spreading tree, of great size, and one of the most common in Egypt and Palestine. It strikes its large, diverging roots deep into the soil, and on this account is alluded to as the most difficult to be rooted up. *If ye had faith*. The Saviour does not deny that they had any faith, but only gives them to feel how far they are removed from faith in the highest ideal sense, which alone can make them capable of fulfilling His own so strict requirement. There is nothing which may tend to the glory of God, or to our own good and comfort, but may be obtained of God by a firm exercise of faith in Him. *All things are possible to him that believeth*.

7. But which of you, having a servant ploughing or feeding cattle, will say unto him, by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat?

The natural tendency of the human heart might lead the Apostles to go from one extreme to another, from the depressed feeling of being utterly unable to attain to such an amount of Christian grace as was required to enable them to give no cause of offense, and to forgive trespasses, to the notion that, with the help vouchsafed to them according to their request (verse 5), and with their Master's testimony to its power (verse 6), their graces and good works might become intrinsically valuable, and be so excellent in the sight of God as to deserve commendation from Him on their own account. It was to meet and obviate

this tendency that our Lord spake this parable.

A servant ploughing or feeding cattle. Two kinds of work are mentioned, in order definitely to designate the Apostolical labor awaiting them, and that on its more difficult as well as on its easier side. By the *servant* we are to understand a serf, who was entirely dependent on his lord, and strictly bound to obey him. *By and by*, "immediately," "forthwith." *When he is come from the field*. The work must be indefatigably accomplished. Rest follows afterward, and there is no need of hurrying for that. *Go and sit down to meat*. In one thing or another to have been obedient, and to have labored for the Lord, is not enough to warrant our expecting from Him an immediate refreshment and recompense.

8. And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink?—Luke xii. 37.

Here, what the servant has already done, is regarded as a matter of obligation, and his lord demands from him further obedience, additional labor. *Make ready* refers to the general preparation for the evening's repast, and *gird thyself* to the particular service of waiting on his lord at the table. (See John xiii. 4.) It was a common practice with servants, before making any bodily exertion, to tie their loose garments tightly round the waist. The custom is alluded to by Horace and Anacreon. *Till I have eaten and drunken*, and AFTERWARD *thou shalt eat and drink*. It will be observed that the fulfillment of duty, both in the field and in the house, while it is required fully, and no reserve of the one allowed because of the discharge of the other, nevertheless leads certainly to refreshment and rest at last. Jesus delights in the calm, spiritual enjoyment of His people. But He knows this is neither good nor safe, that in fact it cannot be attained by a half-hearted or a half-performed service, and so He never ceases to urge His commands that they may be fully and heartily complied with, because it is only "in the keeping of them that there is great reward."

9. Doth he thank that servant, because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. 10. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do. Job xxii. 3 and xxxv. 7; Psa. xvi. 2; Matt. xxv. 30; Rom. iii. 12 and xi. 35; 1 Cor. ix. 16; Phil. 11.

This is a question of holy irony, by which the Saviour does not precisely mean to approve the fact, that so many acts of service in daily life are performed without even a word of thanks, but simply reminds of what is continually wont to happen. The point of the inquiry is this: Does the servant, by the mere discharge of what is his incumbent duty, put his master under any obligation to him? *I trow not.* The Greek word so rendered is generally translated "think," or "suppose," in a sentence like that before us. The word which our translators have used here they have not used anywhere else in the Bible. We belong to God by absolute right. We do no more than what we ought, when we even spend ourselves in His service, since we have received everything only from and for Him.

So likewise ye. The Saviour will have His disciples, even after their work is faithfully accomplished, not esteem themselves higher than such servants. *When ye shall have done all,* by the powers both of nature and of grace, which have been conferred on you. This is spoken by way of concession, and must not be understood contrary to the doctrine of Scripture, as meaning that man actually can yield a perfect obedience to what the law requires in respect to God and Christ. *Say, we are unprofitable servants*—confess, in a spirit of deep, unpretending humility, that you can build nothing upon your own worth. The word rendered "unprofitable" is used in Matt. xxv. 30 in a positive sense, denoting worthless, punishable; here it is used rather negatively, of one who brings no gain, is useless, does only what is commanded, and hence can obtain blessings only through grace. The whole expression indicates and involves a consciousness of one's own want of desert and worth, in reference to God. *We have done that, &c.,* no more than our duty. Note, 1. That we are all God's servants. He owns us by creation and redemption. We must obey Him. 2. That salvation is entirely of grace. Supposing all kinds of work, in the field, and in the household, not only done, but well done—still we are not for a moment to presume that by all this we can make God our debtor. All we do is only from grace

given to us, not from natural strength. It gives us no merit. 3. The doctrine of works of supererogation, which the Church of Rome teaches, and according to which men may not only render unto God as much as they are bound to do, but may also do more for His sake than of bounden duty is required, and thus have surplus merit to appropriate to the salvation of other men, is utterly untrue. He who, after doing all that is commanded, must still acknowledge himself an useless servant, cannot possibly have any merit of which others can avail themselves to supply their own deficiency. 4. Though good works are not in themselves in any sense or degree meritorious, they are not by any means to be neglected, for they will receive a gracious reward. (Luke xii. 31; Matt. xxv. 34–36.) At His second coming, Jesus graciously promises to do, *of His own love and kindness,* what He here shows He is not bound to do *by the deserts of His servants.* "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching; verily I say unto you, *that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.*" (Luke xii. 37.)

11. † And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee:—^aLuke ix. 51, 52; John iv. 4.

We are, most probably, to understand the Evangelist as saying, that our Lord, with the band of His disciples, on this His last journey to the holy city, from the north of Palestine, passed *between* these two regions, having, that is, one on His right hand, the other on His left, and skirting them both. This explains the mention of Samaria first, which, from its geographical position, is, on any other explanation of the words, almost inexplicable.

12. And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off.—^bLev. xiii. 46.

The *village* referred to is to us unknown. *Ten men that were lepers.* (See notes on chap. v. 12–14.) Lepers were not excluded from villages. Neither was the law for their exclusion understood to exclude them even from any towns but such as were already walled in the time of Joshua. Their common misery had drawn these ten lepers together, and had even caused

them to forget the fierce national antipathy which reigned between Jew and Samaritan (verse 16; see 2 Kings vii. 3). Under common calamity, persons who are alienated, if not hostile, are often made to forget in judgment what they will not forego in love. *Which stood afar off.* They kept at a distance, because forbidden by law and custom to come near to those who were untainted. (See Lev. xiii. 46; Num. v. 2; 2 Kings xv. 5.) Sin, of which leprosy was a type, is the great separating, rending, splitting element. It is this that keeps us far from God, and far off from each other.

13. And they lifted up *their* voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. 14. And when he saw *them*, he said unto them, Go show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.

¹Lev. xiii. 2 and xiv. 2; Matt. viii. 4; Luke v. 14.

They had heard of Christ's approach, and now ranged themselves on the roadside, where they might catch His eye, and, by a display of their misery, move His heart to help them. *Jesus, Master.* Neither His honor, nor His name, nor His power is unknown to them. By the use of the word "Master," they intimate their readiness to acknowledge Him as their teacher, and virtually profess themselves already His disciples. *Have mercy on us.* They were now in earnest to receive the mercy, however at a later period they were slack in giving thanks for it. By praying, they showed that they felt their misery. No man prays for deliverance till he feels danger. The worse a bodily disease is, the more one feels it; but, alas! the worse the disease of sin is, the less one feels it. In spiritual disease insensibility is evidence of the greatest peril.

Go, show yourselves to the priests. (See on Luke v. 12-14.) This command was according to the direction. (Lev. xiii. 2, &c., xiv. 2, &c.) Our Lord intended that their cure should be received by *faith*. They depended on His goodness and power, and, though they had no promise, yet they went at His command to do that which those only were required to do who were *already* healed. The Roman Catholic inference from this verse, that our Lord intended there should be a Christian priesthood, and that sinners deriving spiritual relief were always meant to go to

a priest, is utterly baseless. There is nothing whatever in the verse to warrant it. So long as the ceremonial law lasted, and the Levitical priesthood continued, all its requirements were to be observed. The veil was not yet rent. The true sacrifice was not yet offered. The Old Testament dispensation had not yet passed away. In commanding lepers to go to the priests, our Lord simply declared his respect for the ceremonial law so long as it lasted. *As they went.* They started before they were healed. The highest reason that can be given for *believing* is, that *God has commanded it. They were cleansed.* Their disease was removed; they felt an unusual and delightful sensation in their bodies, which proved that they were restored to health. As they looked at each other, they mutually beheld, with surprise, the ghastly hue of their flesh, and the unsightly glare of their eyes, change for the bloom and freshness of health. Not one, or a part—all—share the happy deliverance. He who will not believe till he receives what *he* calls a *reason for it* is never likely to get his soul saved.

15. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, 16. And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks; and he was a Samaritan.—Isa. xxviii. 19.

All were healed, but only one was thankful, and this man was a *Samaritan* (see notes on chap. x. 33), one of that heretical nation from which one would have expected less of anything good than from the Jews, the professors of the true religion, and members of God's visible Church. If deliverance from a physical evil evoked such thankfulness, what gratitude is due to God from those whose sins He has so often pardoned! This is a thing of which we are by far too little sensible. We preserve the remembrance of a temporal blessing, of the healing of a bodily disease, but too frequently forget the exercise of God's forgiving love toward us. A recovered sinner should be always prostrate in mind and heart at the feet of his Deliverer.

17. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?

Where are the nine? How touching are these words! The Lord keeps an account of the number that He blesses, and He expects to see them at His feet, giving

Him thanks. How rare a thing is true gratitude! The lesson before us is humbling, heart-searching and deeply instructive. The best of us are far too like the nine lepers. We are more ready to pray than to praise, and more disposed to ask God for what we have not than to thank Him for what we have. Murmurings, complaints and discontent abound on every side of us. Few, indeed, are to be found, who are not continually hiding their mercies under a bushel, and setting their wants and trials on a hill. These things ought not so to be. Let us pray for a daily thankful spirit. It is the spirit which God loves and delights to honor.

18. There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. 19. *And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole. *Mat. ix. 22; Mark v. 34 and x. 52; Luke vii. 50, viii. 48 and xviii. 42.

The connection between "returning" to give thanks to Jesus, and "giving glory to God," is peculiarly to be observed. *Save this stranger.* The Greek word used here means, literally, "one of another nation," and only occurs here. It is a strong expression, and shows clearly that our Lord did not recognize the Samaritans as anything more than Gentiles. This man belonged to an ignorant nation; to a nation whom the Jews despised, and whose religion the Lord disapproved. This instance shows that among the most ignorant there are some whose hearts God has prepared to love Him. *Arise, go thy way, &c.* The man was dismissed with a new and better blessing; the first had reached but to the healing of the body, and that he had in common with the unthankful nine, but gratitude for a lower mercy led to his reception of a higher; one which reached not merely to the springs of bodily health, but to the very fountains of his spiritual being. These also are healed, that which the others missed, to which their bodily feeling should have led them up, he obtained. He had shown himself to his great High Priest, and from Him received the blessed assurance—*thy faith hath made thee whole.*

20. † And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh *not with observation; 21. †Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there! for, behold, †the kingdom of God is †within you.

*Or, with outward show. †Verse 23. †Rom. xiv. 17. †Or, among you; John i. 26.

It was common with our Lord, when the Pharisees asked Him questions, to disappoint them by His replies. They made inquiries in the hope of entangling Him, but they themselves were confounded by the answers they received. In the present instance He revealed a more important truth than that about which He had been interrogated. *The kingdom of God cometh not with observation.* By this some understand, "not with that royal splendor or worldly grandeur, which shall render it conspicuous in the eyes of the world;" others regard the expression as meaning, "it cometh not in such a way, that men shall be able to observe it, but quietly, noiselessly, unnoticed." Probably both views are correct. *Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there!* The truth intended to be presented is here brought out more fully. The coming and development of the kingdom are not to be of such a character as to be recognized by external tokens, so that *they, i. e.,* such as by their spiritual discernment are cognizant of its internal approach and presence, shall trumpet forth the event with a *Lo here! or, Lo there!* for, behold, *the kingdom of God is within you.* According to some, what our Lord here asserts is, that His kingdom is not *external*, but *internal*; that is, it is not a thing of *observation* and localities, but of *consciousness* and *within*. It is not an external and political kingdom, but an internal, spiritual one, erected in the hearts of men, consisting in the subjection of their will to the will of God, and in the conformity of their minds to His laws. Others hold that "within" means "among you," and that the Saviour intended to say, "My kingdom has already begun in the midst of your nation, my disciples have already joined it and become its first subjects; while you are waiting, my spiritual kingdom has already been set up." This view they support on the following grounds: 1, that in this way the antithesis between the external coming and the being already actually present is kept more sharply defined; 2, that the kingdom of God had not been truly set up in the hearts of these Pharisees; 3, that in John i. 26, xii. 35, Luke vii. 16, xi. 20, the same thought which is expressed in our trans-

lation is expressed in another way. The kingdom of our Lord, which began in a manger at Bethlehem, without the knowledge of the great, the rich and the wise, and was afterward gradually and silently developed, corresponded with the description given of it in these verses.

22. And he said unto the disciples, "The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it."
*Matt. ix. 15; John xvii. 12.

Having disposed of the Pharisees by the answer He gave them, our Lord here turns away from them and addresses His own disciples. His object was to prepare them for His approaching departure. He foresaw that under the pressure of manifold tribulations in their efforts to establish His kingdom, they would long even for the temporary revelation of the glorified One; but to prevent their disappointment, He told them that when He left the world it would be His final departure until the last day, when He should be "revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God." (Acts iii. 21; 2 Thess. i. 7-10.)

23. "And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them."
*Matt. xxiv. 23, on which see notes; Mark xiii. 21; Luke xxi. 8.

Our Lord now proceeds to give such warning as should protect His followers from being deluded by false Christs which should appear. This warning was the more important, inasmuch as the notion that the coming of Christ would be at the destruction of Jerusalem, was liable to lead them to credit false deliverers, by which the Jews were deluded in immense numbers to their own destruction. This warning is unquestionably meant to apply to the times immediately preceding the second advent. False Christs, false prophets, and pretenders to Divine commission, may be expected in the latter days, and believers must be on their guard against them. There are false churches as well as false Christs, and the true spouse is known by the same marks with the true Bridegroom.

24. "For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day."
*Matt. xxiv. 27, on which see notes.

The coming of false Christs would be on

earth, while the next coming of Jesus would be in the sky, like the lightnings flashing along the firmament. It is here distinctly declared that His second advent, when it does take place, will be so sudden, so clearly marked, and so unmistakable, that true believers shall at once recognize it as the coming of their King. Christians are thus assured that when the Saviour comes, they shall see Him, wherever they may be, or whatever they may be doing. The suddenness of Christ's second appearing is a solemn thought. It ought to make us study a continual preparedness of mind. Our heart's desire and endeavor should be to be always ready to meet the Lord. (Rev. xvi. 15.)

25. "But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation."
*Mark viii. 31, ix. 31 and x. 33; Luke ix. 22.

The reference is here to the moral necessity arising from the work of redemption which our Lord had taken upon Himself, and which required that He should suffer and die for the sins of the world. (See Matt. xvi. 21; Mark viii. 31, ix. 31, x. 33.) Jesus asserts the great truth which His disciples and all the Jews were so exceedingly slow to see—that He must first suffer and afterward reign.

26. "And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. 27. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all."
*Gen. vii; Matt. xxiv. 37, on which see notes. *Deut. vi. 10, 12 and viii. 12, 14; 1 Sam. xxv. 36, 38; Job xxi. 9, 13; Isa. xxi. 4 and xxii. 12, 14; chap. xii. 19, 20 and xvi. 19, 23; 1 Thes. v. 1, 3.

Although the coming of our Lord will be the perfect redemption of His disciples out of all tribulations (verse 22), it is here represented especially as a judgment upon the godless and unbelieving world, and this judgment is typified in the fate of the contemporaries of Noah. *As in the days of Noah.* The same illustration is used in 2 Peter iii. 5, 6, and the parallelism shows that it is the judgment day alone that is the present subject. *So shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.* The days preceding His second advent, just as the days of Noah were the days preceding the flood. (See Matt. xxiv. 37.) It should be noted that the universality of the flood is asserted in both passages, and thus valuable collateral evidence is furnished of the totality of that catastrophe, as recorded in Genesis.

It is here plainly taught that the coming of Jesus will be unlooked for by the mass of mankind. They will be engaged in the business and pleasures of the world, little expecting, little thinking of the universal ruin of the ungodly, till it come upon them, notwithstanding the express predictions and declarations of Christ and His Apostles. The hour of death and that of judgment are uncertain. This should lead us to live in constant preparation for these unspeakably solemn events. We should shun the sottishness and strange stupidity of worldly men, who are entirely taken up with this present life, and regard not in the least the threatenings of Divine wrath.

23. ¹Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; 29. But ²the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed *them* all. 30. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

¹Gen. xix. ²Gen. xix. 16, 24. ³2 Thes. i. 7.

It will be observed that the history of Lot and the destruction of Sodom and of Lot's wife, are here referred to as real, true historical facts. This second example of the coming desolation Luke alone relates. (See Jude v. 7.) *Eat . . . drank . . . bought . . . sold . . . planted . . . builded*—all these describe not any special course of sinfulness, but a regular train of careless daily life, expecting no sudden advent of destruction; they also show that the people were active and enterprising, as well as earthly-minded and corrupt. *It rained*. Instead of *it rained*, Genesis xix. 24 justifies the insertion of the pronoun *He*, designating Jehovah. *Fire and brimstone* denote sulphureous flames. There is here a terrible likeness of a *flaming fire*, described in 2 Thes. i. 8, as attending the *second coming* of the Son of man. The suddenness of the doom of Sodom is seen from the narrative in Gen. xix. 1-29. *Even thus, &c.* These are words of faith, which assure us that the wrath of God shall pour down upon sinners like a rain, and swallow them up like a deluge, and that multitudes shall fail to escape His justice. A false notion which men frame to themselves of a mercy without rule or means, encourages the greatest part of the world in the neglect of their salvation. It becomes us to escape for our lives like Lot. We must flee to the

ark like Noah. This alone is safety. Then, and then only, we shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger, and avoid destruction when the Son of man is revealed. (Zeph. ii. 3.)

31. In that day, he ¹which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away; and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back.

¹Matt. xxiv. 17; Mark xiii. 15.

It is well known that the houses of the Jews, as well as those of the ancient Greeks and Romans, were flat on the top, for them to walk upon, and had usually stairs on the outside by which they might ascend and descend without coming into the house. In the walled cities, these flat-roofed houses usually formed continued terraces from one end of the city to the other, which terraces terminated at the gates. The counsel here given is, that those who were on the house tops should not come down, neither should those who were in the field return to take with them their valuable goods, which they might feel greatly disinclined to leave behind. In either case, there must be an urgent flight. If this is to be regarded, as it may be, as having reference to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, through Vespasian and Titus, we are also to see its deeper and more direct significance, as well as that of the verses which immediately follow, in its application to the time when the Lord Jesus, by the trumpet of the archangel shall suddenly summon the world to judgment—the time when believers must give up all thought of worldly goods, beware of lingering and looking back to the world. Nothing but singleness of eye, wholeness of heart and unworldliness of spirit will be able to abide the fire of that day.

32. ¹Remember Lot's wife.—²Gen. xix. 26.

The manner in which our Lord introduces this short but emphatical warning to His followers against any vacillation of purpose in making their flight, in view of the swift destruction to come on the Jews, is suited to excite our deepest attention. The incident referred to is recorded in Gen. xix. 26. The more common opinion of interpreters is that this woman was suddenly petrified, and changed into a statue of rock salt, which either by its own nature or by miraculous power was

made capable of continuing undissolved by the action of the elements. In conformity with this is the testimony of Josephus, who says expressly that Lot's wife "was changed into a pillar of salt, for I have seen it, and it remains to this day." Clement, of Rome, also says that it was standing there to his time, which was about the time of Josephus, and Irenæus says that it was there a century still later. Ecclesiastical history informs us that though Jerusalem was "compassed with armies," no Christian perished in its siege. The example of Lot's wife is replete with solemn instruction. Though she was the wife of a "righteous man," and connected through him with Abraham, the father of the faithful, and though she fled with her husband from Sodom in the day when he escaped for his life by God's command, yet she had left her heart behind her. She willfully disobeyed the strict injunction which the angel had laid upon her, looked back toward Sodom, and probably turned back, and hence became a monument of the Divine displeasure, and of her own folly and sin. Her case is a most impressive warning against unbelief, disobedience, worldly-mindedness, contempt of God's threatenings and lingering desires for wicked company. It is possible to be *almost* saved—yet *lost*. We must, even with joy, relinquish our friends and relations, our wealth and temporal advantages, and dismiss them from our memory, whenever they become obstacles to our salvation. We love them with a criminal fondness when we leave them with grief and anxiety. Many such separations as Lot then endured will take place when Christ comes again.

33. *Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.
 *Matt. x. 39 and xvi. 25, on which see notes; Mark viii. 35; Luke ix. 24; John xii. 25.

The word translated "life" signifies both life and the soul. The person who *seeks to save his life* is the person who, from a fear of losing the wealth, or honors, or pleasures of this life, or life itself—from a fear of exposing himself to poverty, contempt, suffering and death—neglects duty or commits sin—refuses to become a follower of Christ, or having become one, abandons his profession, or acts a part unworthy of

it. That person *shall lose his life* in a far higher sense than he has retained it—he shall lose his soul. He shall not cease to exist, but his everlasting existence shall be but a capacity of feeling everlasting loss—of enduring everlasting misery. He who *shall lose his life* is he who acts as if he considered wealth, honor, pleasure, life itself, all things, of comparatively no value, brought into competition with the claims of truth and duty—who readily sacrifices the former to the latter—who, when these things claim to be regarded above those, rejects the claim, and readily parts with all rather than disobey God or deny Christ. That person *shall preserve his life* to eternal life; when he seems to be throwing away his life, he is securing it. He shall live eternally, and his eternal life shall be life indeed—the highest measure of the highest kind of life of which man is capable.

34. *I tell you, in that night that there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken and the other shall be left. 35. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken and the other left. 36. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

*Matt. xxiv. 40, 41, on which see notes; 1 Thes. iv. 17.

Two women shall be grinding, &c. Corn was then ground, as it still is in the East, by a hand-mill, and generally by women. The mill consisted of one stone turned upon another by a handle, a woman sitting on each side of it, one of them moving the stone, the other supplying the grain. (See Exod. xi. 5; also Isa. xlvii. 2.) The Saviour in these verses strengthens His admonition still more by allusion to the definitive terrible *division*, which will coincide with the great *decision*. At His coming, that will be torn asunder which outwardly, as well as inwardly, appeared to be as closely as possible joined together. The suddenness of separation at the judgment day is here most strikingly described. *Two*—one is a Christian, the other is a sinner. The holy angels come and snatch one, to bear him to the right hand of Christ. The other is left, to be borne by evil angels to his doom at the left hand. Sad, indeed, will be the separations which will then take place. Those who were most tenderly united and attached to each other, wives and husbands, parents and children, brothers and sisters, will part to meet no more.

37. And they answered and said unto him, ^bWhere, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.
^bJOB xxxix. 30; Matt. xxiv. 28, on which see notes.

Where, Lord? Not an expression of terror, but a definite inquiry after the locality in which all the things just mentioned should take place. *Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.* This reply of our Lord was somewhat enigmatical. He gave them neither an evasive nor an entirely definite answer, but only recited a proverb. This proverb, as used by Him, is generally understood as meaning that the Roman armies (which

had eagles upon their standards) should gather for the destruction of the guilty city of Jerusalem, whose moral condition is represented by a *carcass*, as ravenous birds collect upon their prey. As already suggested, this saying of our Lord is dark and mysterious, and probably was intentionally made so by Him to keep the disciples ignorant of His full meaning, inasmuch as they were not at the time able to bear it. It belongs to the "things hard to be understood," which shall only be fully explained at His second coming.

1. What is said about offenses? 2. What course is prescribed in relation to a brother trespassing against us? 3. What did the Apostles pray for? 4. Explain our Lord's answer. 5. Who met Jesus as He entered into a certain village? 6. What is said concerning them? 7. What did Christ say about the coming of the kingdom of God? 8. What did he say about His second coming? 9. Explain the reference to Lot and Noah. 10. How are we to understand verse 37?

CHAPTER XVIII.

3 *Of the importunate widow.* 9 *Of the Pharisee and the publican.* 15 *Children brought to Christ.* 18 *A ruler that would follow Christ, but is hindered by his riches.* 28 *The reward of them that leave all for his sake.* 31 *He foreseeth his death,* 35 *and restoreth a blind man to his sight.*

The parable with which this chapter opens is closely connected with the preceding chapter, in which there is a reference to the troubles and persecutions which should precede the coming of the Son of man. In view of these tribulations, prayer, patience, and perseverance, would be greatly needed, and hence these duties are here inculcated with the cheering assurance of the success with which they would be crowned.

AND he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought ^aalways to pray, and not to faint:
^aLuke xi. 5 and xxi. 36; Rom. xii. 12; Eph. vi. 18; Col. iv. 2; 1 Thes. v. 17.

Ought always to pray. We are not to understand that a man should be incessantly performing the act of prayer. The life of Jesus was a prayer, yet there were seasons in which He especially applied Himself to prayer with His heavenly Father. Men ought to pray constantly at stated times; to be habitually in that spirit of humble

dependence, desire and expectation, which give life to prayer; to be frequently offering ejaculatory petitions, and to be always ready for prayer, secret, social or public, when opportunity is afforded. *And not to faint, i. e., not to flag or be remiss.* Jesus, knowing how easily we become discouraged when our petitions are not immediately granted, and that the preservation of the higher life of prayer involves a contest, inasmuch as it has constantly to labor with the oppression of earthly things, here earnestly warns us against yielding to such discouragement and growing tired of such internal warfare.

2. Saying, There was *in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man:
^{*}Gr., *In a certain city.*

According to Deut. xvi. 18, Israel must have in all the gates of the city judges, to administer justice, without respect to persons. In the days of our Lord, also, such municipal tribunals existed. (Matt. v. 21, 22.) What is here said about the *judge*, it will be observed, is said, irrespective of the special case about to be detailed in the parable. It is the description of what this man was, always and under every circum-

stance, thoroughly, radically, lawless and unjust. *Which feared not God*—was altogether destitute of awe of God, and of that reverence which belongs to Him, as our infinite superior. As practically atheistical, he had no inducement from religion to do justice. (See Ex. xxiii. 6-9; Lev. xix. 15; Deut. i. 16, 17; 2 Chron. xix. 6, 7.) *Neither regarded man.* Occupying a position of power, in which men could not injure him, he did not feel any concern as to what they said or thought of him, and hence, in all his decisions, he was influenced merely by passion or interest. It is evidence of a sad decline in the morality of any community, when unprincipled and corrupt men occupy the sacred office of a judge. The difficulty which some have found in the fact that such a man as this judge should stand in the position of a type and emblem of God, vanishes at once when we rightly comprehend the design of the parable. The object of the Saviour is not *comparison* but *contrast*.

3. And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.

The helpless and friendless condition of a widow in Eastern countries and Bible times, should be carefully remembered. (See Ex. xxii. 22; Deut. x. 18, xiv. 17, xxvii. 19; Job. xix. 13; 1 Kings xvii. 9, 12; Mal. iii. 5.) The judge had doubtless seen this poor widow very frequently. She was no stranger to him. He could more easily put aside her claims than those of one who had a stranger's acknowledged right to receive a redress of wrongs. This widow, having no friends to assist her, could neither defend herself from injuries nor obtain satisfaction for them when committed; hence, in an instance where she was greatly oppressed, she found herself obliged to petition the judge for redress. *Avenge me of mine adversary*, or, rather, as the original means, *do me justice on mine adversary*. She desired to have *justice*, and that only. She felt deeply her oppressed situation, and wished the judge to make an end of her tedious snit, and to deliver her forever from the *adversary* who was wickedly and obstinately oppressing and persecuting her. The fact that the suppliant here is a widow conveys the idea of perfect helplessness, and gives a still more frightful

idea of the hard-heartedness of the judge, which continued unmoved by the circumstance of a desolate woman pleading, not for revenge, but only for her just and righteous claims against the wrongs of her oppressor.

4. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, *Though I fear not God, nor regard man*; 5. *Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.*—Luke xi. 8.

Though the strength of the parable lies in the unlikeness between the righteous Judge of the world and this ungodly earthly judge, it may not be denied, as is here indeed taught, that God often *seems to man* to be acting as this unjust judge, to be turning a deaf ear to the prayer of His people. Under this *apparent* indifference, Christians are tempted to say, with the storm-tossed disciples, "Carest thou not that we perish?" The parable, however, is intended, as we shall presently see, to meet this very difficulty and temptation, to which believers, suffering long under sore earthly trials, are exposed. *But afterward he said within himself*, or thought within himself. How many actions which appear *good* have neither the *love of God* nor that of our *neighbor*, but only *self-love* of the basest kind, for their principle and motive! *Though I fear not God, &c.* He negatively confesses what did not move him to fulfill the prayer of the widow: it was neither the fear of God, nor a sense of duty. This confession gives great emphasis to the point here to be illustrated: the force of *importunity*, which could prevail on *such* a judge to do a right action. *Yet because this widow troubleth me.* Here, in a special manner, the unrighteous character of the judge displays itself in the very act of granting the solicited relief. He has taken no pains to discover whether the woman's cause is right or not, yet he determines to yield to her request; and his sole reason for doing so is the fear of being constantly annoyed by her importunity. *I will avenge her.* I will do her justice. *Lest by her continual coming*, literally, *coming to the end, i. e., forever.* *She weary me.* This exaggerated language is like the common expression, "tire me to death." The word rendered *weary* properly signifies *to beat on the face*, and particularly under the eye; and hence, to

beat in general, as 1 Cor. ix. 27. In this passage it has a metaphorical meaning, and signifies *to give great pain*, such as arises from severe beating. The sense of the clause, therefore, is, that the uneasy feelings which this widow raised in the judge's breast, by the frequent and earnest presentation of her case, determined him, for his own comfort's sake, to dispose of it.

6. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.

Our Lord intimates that we should reason thus with ourselves: "If a person of such an infamous character as this judge was, could yield to the pressing and continual solicitations of a poor widow, for whom he felt nothing but contempt, how much more ready must God be, who is infinitely good and merciful, and who loves His creatures in the tenderest manner, to give His utmost salvation to all who diligently seek it."

7. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?—Rev. vi. 10.

How these words—*his own elect*—touch in the tenderest manner the great and eternal contrast between this unjust judge and God! The latter yields to the prayer of the suppliants, first, because it is *right* to do so, and then He does it with His whole heart—it is His joy and delight to do so. The suppliants are His own beloved people, whether regarded as the Church as a body, or as individual Christians—they are His chosen ones, very precious in His sight—so precious, indeed, that it is said of them, "he that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye." And so His gift comes to them distinguished by that "holiness which becometh God's house forever," as well as a "love which passeth knowledge." The very contrasts which the parable presents only tend to confirm the blessed assurance it conveys to God's people, that He will without fail grant their requests. *Shall not God*, must be to the suppliant as clear and certain as the sun shines at noon-day. *Avenge his own elect*, *i. e.*, maintain the right of those whom He has chosen to salvation—see that redress is obtained for them. *Cry, i. e.*, fervently beseech—*day and night, i. e.*, continually, for these two periods, in their alternate revolutions, make up the entire

term of our earthly pilgrimage. *Though he bear long with them?* or, delays to help them. To the inquiry, Why does God delay at all to answer the prayers of His people? it may be replied, that this is done with wisdom and love combined. It would be, so to speak, easier for a father who is at once rich and benevolent, to comply immediately and fully with all his child demands, but it requires and exercises a deeper, stronger love to leave the child crying and knocking for a time in vain, that the bounty given at the proper time may in the end be a greater boon.

8. I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh shall he find faith on the earth?—¹Heb. x. 37; ²Peter iii. 8, 9.

I tell you, &c. This is the last ground of confidence and continued prayer—the true and faithful promise of Divine help. God will interpose *speedily, i. e.*, suddenly, unexpectedly, before His people, with their weak faith, and under their formidable trials, looked for it. *Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh.* Every special interposition of the Lord in behalf of His own is a coming of Him, and He comes most unexpectedly when prayer and faith are well nigh extinguished. It is, however, undoubtedly, the last coming of the Son of man to which reference is here made. The Saviour transports Himself in spirit to the time of His second manifestation, which shall be preceded by the last conflict, and the deepest tribulation of His Church, and which His disciples on earth are to endure in faith, prayer, patient waiting. *Shall he find faith on the earth?* That is, when the Son of man at length shall come—arise to take vengeance—to bring in the year of His redeemed, will He find a faith among His people at all commensurate to the truth, love and fullness of what He has promised on His side? Or, like the disciples in the garden, will there be "sleeping for sorrow," or, the "love of many waxing cold," by reason of abounding iniquity? Solemn questions, indeed. Enough to make each child of God tremble for himself.

9. And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

¹Luke x. 29; xvi. 15. ²Or, as being righteous.

This parable, like the last, treats of prayer. Each presents a different aspect

of the same subject. *That* recommends generally the duty of prayer, *this* gives us to understand the property of a right prayer. *That* teaches that prayer must be earnest and persevering, *this* that it must also be humble. *That* dissuades from indolence, *this* from confidence in ourselves. The two extremes are remarkable. Indolence and improper confidence are opposed in verses 1, 9, as proper confidence and indolence are, also, in 2 Cor. iii. 4; iv. 1; Eph. iii. 12, 13. *Unto certain*—the multitude, among whom were doubtless persons belonging to both the classes here represented. *Who trusted in themselves that they were righteous*—who had confidence in themselves—the false ground of their confidence standing in the conviction, that they were righteous, in possession of the Divine favor; a vain imagination, a mere conceit. They who have the least righteousness always trust the most in such as they have, as if they were inwardly conscious that they had very little. *And despised others, disdained, made nothing of others, treated them with sovereign contempt.* Others, “the rest,” “all others, who did not comply with their rules.” The Pharisees were especially intended, who relied on exemption from gross immoralities, attendance on the externals of religion, and exact observance of the traditions of the elders.

10. Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

These two persons are introduced into the parable as representing two distinct classes of mankind in general. The Pharisee represents the moral, the respectable, the externally correct. The publican represents the wicked, the profligate, and the utterly irreligious. *Went up into the temple to pray.* It was usual with pious people to do this at that time, when the temple was not only the place, but the medium of worship, God having promised, in answer to Solomon’s request, that whatever prayer should be offered in a right manner in, or toward, that house, it should, therefore, the rather be accepted. Christ is our temple, and to Him we must have an eye in all our approaches to God. There were other points of resemblance between these two men, beside their

going up to the temple to pray, and thus indicating their reverence for God’s house. (Isa. lvi. 7; Matt. xxi. 13.) They were both sinners. Their sins as to outward form were diverse, but in essential character the sinfulness was in both the same. Both adopted the same attitude in prayer. Both alike looked into their own hearts and lives, and both permitted the judgment thus formed to determine the form and matter of their prayer.

11. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, *God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.* (Ps. cxxxv. 2; *Isa.* l. 15 and lviii. 2; *Rev.* iii. 17; *Isa.* lxxv. 5; *Matt.* iii. 7, 10 and *xix.* 18, 20; *Luke* xx. 47; *Gal.* iii. 10; *Phil.* iii. 6; *James* ii. 9, 12.

There was nothing to be blamed, as indicative of pride, in the Pharisee’s attitude. The publican, whose prayer was an humble one, stood also. Standing was the usual posture among the Jews. (1 Kings viii. 22; 2 Chron. vi. 12; Matt. vi. 5; Mark xi. 25.) Sometimes, however, in moments of more than ordinary humiliation or emotion of heart, they changed this attitude for one of kneeling or prostration. (Ex. xxxiv. 8; 2 Chron. vi. 13, xxix. 29; 1 Kings viii. 54; Ezra ix. 5; Dan. vi. 10, 40; Ps. xc. 6; Matt. xxvi. 39; Acts ix. 40, xx. 36, xxi. 5.) Each of these postures has its own peculiar appropriateness. Either is a seemly and Scriptural method of bringing the position of the body into significant harmony with the desire of the soul. Such being the case, all sorts of forms being recognized by the Old and New Testament Scriptures, how foolish, how useless, to say nothing else, is it to dispute about these forms! The all-important matter is to have the heart in a proper frame. “Standing and kneeling,” says *Burkitt*, “are praying postures, but sitting is a rude indecency, except in cases of necessity.” “In prayer,” says *Bishop Hall*, “I will either stand as a servant to my Master, or kneel as a subject to my Prince.” *Thus with himself.* The words *with himself* strictly and properly belong to the word “stood.” “*The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed.*” This man did not pray with himself in the sense of praying internally or secretly, that nobody might hear him, but it was one of his main designs that everybody should hear him. He spoke for himself, for his own satisfaction,

and with much complacency of heart. *God, I thank thee.* It was not wrong in the Pharisee to begin his prayer as he did. It is right to thank God. (See Ps. ciii.) It was the proud, boastful spirit of the Pharisee, that made his thank-offering vain. *That I am not as other men are.* Here, again, there would have been nothing wrong in what the Pharisee said, if it had sprung from a proper feeling, if he had been conscious of his unworthiness, and amazed at God's long-suffering. But this was not his spirit. He was proud, self-righteous. He presumed to give thanks not for what he had received, but for what he was and did. His thoughts of others excited in his heart the very opposite of that real gratitude which was expressed by one who, seeing a felon led to the gallows, exclaimed, speaking for himself, "But for the grace of God, there goes John Bradford!" *Extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.* Inasmuch as there is no reason to believe that this Pharisee was a hypocrite, the good things which here and in the next verse he affirms of himself may be supposed to be true. He was free from gross and scandalous sins. He was not an extortioner, not a usurer, nor an oppressor to his debtors or tenants, but equitable and kind to all dependent upon him. And not rapacious, seizing other men's property under false pretenses. He was not unjust in any of his dealings, did no wrong to any man, did not take advantage of any man's ignorance, want of experience or necessity, in buying or selling. He was not an adulterer, but avoided every species of uncleanness. How solemn the truth that all this may be true of a man who is yet far from the kingdom of God! *Or even as this publican.* He here drags into his prayer the poor publican, on whom his eye alighted, making him to supply the dark background on which the bright colors of his own virtues shall more gloriously appear, doubtless congratulating himself that he had no need to beat his heart, or cast his eyes in shame upon the floor, because he had done nothing to call for this.

12. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

According to Lev. xvi. 29-31 and Num. xxix. 7, a yearly fast only was enjoined;

but the Pharisees, and others who laid claim to peculiar sanctity, observed two fast days every week—the second and fifth days—for reflecting on the ascent of Moses to Mount Sinai, when he went to receive the law, and on his return thence. This observance they accounted meritorious. *I give tithes of all that I possess.* The law commanded only to tithe the fruit of the field and produce of the cattle (Num. xviii. 21; Deut. xiv. 22; Lev. xxvii. 20), but he tithed mint and cummin (Matt. xxiii. 23), all that came into his possession, probably not capital but income, down to the trifles on which there was question, even in the Jewish schools, whether it was needful to tithe them or not. (Hos. xii. 8.) To fast is right, and to give tithes is right, but this Pharisee spoiled all he had done by his proud and self-righteous pretensions. His prayer exhibits no sense of sin and need; contains no confession and no petition—no acknowledgment of guilt and emptiness—no supplication for mercy and grace. It is a mere boasting recital of fancied merits, accompanied by an uncharitable reflection on a brother sinner.

13. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

The publican. The difference between the men does not lie in that this was a good man, while the other was bad. This is a sinner too, but he has come to know it, and therein lies the distinction between him and the Pharisee. *Standing afar off.* If he was a Pagan, he stood in the court of the Gentiles; but if he was a Jew, such was his humility and sense of unworthiness, that he did not presume to approach the place where stood the Pharisee and other chief men. He wished to keep out of sight. *Afar off* is really the proper description of man by nature. Sin has borne him far off from God. *Would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven,* much less his hands, as was usual in prayer. He lifted up his heart, indeed, to God, in holy desires, but, through shame and humiliation, did not lift up his eyes in holy confidence and courage. (See Luke xv. 18; Ezra ix. 6.) *But smote upon his breast,* literally, kept smiting upon his breast. Smiting the breast was a token of excessive grief commonly practiced in all

nations. It seems to intimate a desire in the penitent to *punish that heart* through the evil propensities of which the sin deplored had been committed. *God be merciful to me a sinner.* This prayer of the publican was short; fear and shame hindered him from saying much; sighs and groans swallowed up his words, but what he said was to the purpose. Observe, 1. He owns himself to be a sinner, and guilty before God. The Greek words rendered *a sinner*, literally signify "*the sinner*," that is, "the great sinner." As the Pharisee had compared himself with all mankind, and concluded that he alone was good, so the publican, in the depth of his shame, seems to count himself the only sinner. He casts about for no palliation—thinks of no excuse. He has none to condemn but himself. 2. He has no dependence but upon the mercy of God. He does not present himself as a *reformed* sinner, nor yet as a *penitent* sinner, nor yet as a *praying* sinner, but simply as the *sinner*. He disclaims all thought of merit, and flees to mercy as his city of refuge, with nothing to promise, nothing to extenuate, nothing to pledge, nothing to pay. 3. He earnestly prays for the benefit of that mercy. Unreservedly, fully, and yet confidently, he leaves himself in the hands of God. The only thing he can plead with such a God is, "*Be merciful*," be propitious to me, forgive my sins, be reconciled to me, and receive me graciously. We are not to understand that the publican sought from God absolute and unconditional mercy. His prayer, as the original imports, was, "*Be propitious toward me, through sacrifice*, or, let an *atonement* be made." The Greek word, rendered "be merciful to," is only found in one other place, and is there applied to our Lord Jesus Christ, as a High Priest, "making reconciliation" for the sins of the people. (Heb. ii. 17.) The publican may have learned the great truth, that "without shedding of blood there can be no remission," from seeing the lamb slain morning and evening, as the daily sacrifice, and the lamb slain once a year as the Passover lamb. Hence the peculiarity of his prayer, as having reference to a Mediator, a Saviour.

14. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one that exalteth

himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.
Job xxii. 29; Matt. xxiii. 12; Luke xiv. 11; James iv. 6; 1 Peter v. 5, 6.

Justified, i. e., accepted and approved in the sight of God. Of course, it is not meant that the prayer of the publican justified him. That the man who pleaded merely for mercy should be justified merely by his prayer is absurd. He was justified, forgiven, his sin pardoned, his guilt remitted by that mercy which he had invoked; but it was mercy in answer to prayer. (See Rom. iii. 26.) Neither are we to suppose that the Pharisee was a little justified, and the publican very much, and that the difference between them was only one of degree. There are no degrees in justification. The Pharisee was not justified at all, except by and before himself. The idea designed to be conveyed by these words is, that there was such essential difference in the religious act of these two men, that one only could be acceptable with God; and that such was the deep self-abasement of the publican, that his was the prayer which was accepted, rather than the one so offensive to God as that of the Pharisee. *Went down to his house justified.* Not merely was he justified in the secret, unsearchable counsels of God, but he returned to his home with a sweet sense of a received forgiveness shed abroad in his heart. (Ps. l. 15, li. 3-5, 19; Isa. lvii. 15.) How great, sudden and happy a change!

For every one that exalteth himself, &c. (See Luke xiv. 11.) The repetition of such a maxim will cause us the less surprise, if we consider that it expresses the unalterable fundamental law of the kingdom of heaven, according to which all men are judged, and, at the same time, gives the deepest ground why the justification of the Pharisee and the rejection of the publican were each entirely impossible. These words also form a beautiful transition to the bringing of the children to Jesus, the incident next recorded by the Evangelist.

15. And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them.

Matt. xix. 13; Mark x. 13, on which see notes.

The connection between this passage and the parable preceding it, in which humility is inculcated, should not be overlooked

Here is an illustration of the truth there taught. *Also infants*, literally, *even the infants*. They were not only *little children*, but infants. *They brought unto him*. Reference is here doubtless had to the parents. Thus they, 1, testified their respect for Christ, and the value they set upon His favor and blessing; and, 2, manifested their love to their children. *That he would touch them*. (See Matt. xix. 13.) It was customary among the Jews, when one prayed for another who was present, to lay his hands upon the person's head. (Gen. xviii. 14; Matt. ix. 18; Acts vi. 6, viii. 17.) This imposition of hands was practiced especially in paternal blessing. (Gen. xlviii. 14-20.) *They rebuked them*. In administering this rebuke the disciples thought most probably that compliance with the request of these persons would be mere waste of their Master's time, and that infants could derive no benefit from being brought to Christ. It is our duty to consecrate our children to the Lord, in reliance upon His promise and power. The souls of young children are evidently precious in God's sight. They are capable of receiving grace. The imperfection of charity and knowledge in the present life, exposes the humble and the little ones to suffer frequent repulses even from good men.

16. But Jesus called them *unto him*, and said, *Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.*

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 2; 1 Peter ii. 2.

Called them, i. e., the children themselves. Mark says that when Jesus saw the disciples rebuking those that brought the children, Jesus *was much displeased*. (x. 14.) The opposition between the friendly countenance of the Master and the contracted brows of the disciples is indescribably beautiful. *Suffer little children to come unto me*, &c. (See on Matt. xix. 14.) This shows that some were children, while others were yet in their infancy. Our Lord does not merely say *suffer these children*, but *suffer all little children to come unto me*. He was not only not offended, but delighted with the presence of the little ones. *For of such is the kingdom of God*. Here is the reason why the children should be brought. That these words were not meant to teach that children are born sinless and innocent, is abundantly clear from other parts

of Scripture. (John iii. 6.) They teach, 1. That the Church of God on earth is largely composed of children. "Of such is the kingdom of God." We cannot approve of rendering the original words translated "of such," *such as resemble these*. This idea is presented in the next verse. 2. That the Church of God is to be perpetuated and prospered mainly by those who, in their childhood, are dedicated to His service, and receive a religious training. 3. That the kingdom of God in glory will be largely composed of little children. The salvation of all who die in infancy may confidently be expected. Though sin has abounded, grace has much more abounded. (Rom. v. 20.)

17. *Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein.*—Mark x. 15.

The kingdom of God here means the requisitions of the Gospel. We must stand affected to Christ as little children to their parents. Whilst we are not to be like children in their inconsiderateness or ignorance (1 Cor. xiv. 20), or inconstancy (Eph. iv. 14), we are to resemble them in exemption from prejudice (1 Cor. ii. 14); in sincerity, in simplicity or artlessness; in humility (Psa. cxxxi. 1; 1 Peter v. 2; James iv. 6, 10); in freedom from covetous desires (Psa. cxxxi. 2; Luke xviii. 24; Mark x. 17-22; 2 Tim. iv. 10); in a teachable spirit (1 Cor. i. 23); in a meek and loving spirit, without malice (1 Cor. xiv. 20; Psa. xxv. 9, cxlvii. 6, cxlix. 4); without dependence on our own works, as children have nothing whereon to depend (Rom. ix. 30-33, x. 33); in faith, as children readily believe their parents in whatever they say; in confidence and trust, as children rely on the power, love and faithfulness of their parents (Rom. iv. 18-21; Heb. xi. 13); in prayer, as children ask their parents, expecting to receive; in submission, as children are not without trials and discipline to which they are subjected. (Heb. xii. 6, 7.) This requisition of our Lord is not peculiar in its application to Christianity. *Lord Bacon* says, in the introduction to his book on the "Interpretation of Nature," "It is fit and necessary in the very front and beginning of this work, without hesitation or reservation, to be professed, that it is no less true in this

human kingdom of knowledge, than in God's kingdom of heaven, that no man shall enter it except he first become as a little child."

18. "And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"
 "Matt. xix. 16; Mark x. 17, on which see notes.

A man may miss heaven for want of a childlike indifference to worldly riches. *A certain ruler.* It is probable that this person was not a member of the Sanhedrim, but rather a magistrate in some other court, or a ruler of a synagogue. *Good Master.* The ruler was persuaded that Christ was a Divinely-commissioned Teacher, and thus manifested his affection and peculiar respect to Him as such. *What shall I do to inherit eternal life?* From this question it is evident, 1. That he believed in a future state. 2. That he was anxious to secure eternal life. 3. That he felt that in order to this end something must be done. 4. That he thought he was willing to do what was to be done. 5. That he was under the spirit of legality. How shall I be saved, is the most interesting and important question that any soul can ask of God. It is peculiarly gratifying to see an interest on this subject prevailing among the young. The first step toward being saved is to get instruction in the way to heaven.

19. And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God.

See on Matt. xix. 17.

Before replying to the young man's inquiry, the Saviour comments for a moment upon the singularly unusual epithet which he had applied to Him. There is nothing here to disprove our Lord's supreme Divinity. If, as Socinians allege, Jesus here denies that *He is God*, He also denies that *He is good*. Now as we know Christ to be good, if the passage proves anything on this point, it proves that *He is God*. It is evident from the title of *good*, which the ruler gave to Jesus, a title which the rabbies affected, that he supposed Him to be a mere man. The meaning of our Lord, then, was evidently this: "*None is good*, essentially and perfectly, but God; why, therefore, callest thou me good, since thou hast never yet been taught that truth, which flesh and blood cannot have revealed to thee, that I am indeed the Christ,

the Son of the living God?" If the ruler had professed a belief in this vital truth, our Lord would never have called in question the propriety of his epithet, but would have confirmed it, as He did the declaration of Pilate, by the strongest possible affirmative and acquiescence. Our Lord never refused any homage offered Him, however high.

20. Thou knowest the commandments, "Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother."
 "Ex. x. 12, 16; Deut. v. 16, 20; Rom. xiii. 9. "Eph. vi. 2; Col. iii. 20.

See on Matt. xix. 17.

This reply of our Lord differs widely and importantly from other answers given both by Himself and by His disciples to similar inquiries. (John vi. 28, 29; Acts xvi. 31.) The reason of this difference is probably to be found in the state of mind of him whom He addressed. He was, as his reference to *doing* shows, a man evidently living under the covenant of works, and Jesus simply met him on his own ground. As a wise physician, He administered to the sick patient the medicine most likely ultimately to conduce to his spiritual health. He addressed him in the way most likely to bring him to self-knowledge. The Jews were not accustomed, in ordinary discourse, or in the commonly published books, to recite the precepts of the decalogue in the *very words* in which they were expressed, but in *other words*, or in another order. The Saviour names the commandments of the second table, because, when the ruler had once seen his lack of love to his neighbor, the conclusion as to his lack of love to *God* could not be difficult.

21. And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up.

From the statement of Mark (x. 21), *Jesus beholding him, loved him*, it seems probable that the young man, in expressing himself as in this verse, did not mean to make a self-righteous boast, but to say that he knew the will of God as contained in the law, and that he had directed his life generally according to that law. Otherwise we should hardly be told that Jesus *loved him*, except as He loves all mankind. He would hardly have felt a special interest in him. It is evident, however, that like the generality of the

Jews of our Saviour's time, this young man had interpreted the decalogue by its letter, not according to its spirit.

22. Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.
p. Matt. vi. 19, 20 and xix. 21; 1 Tim. vi. 19.

Yet lackest thou one thing, namely, to love God more than mammon. Our Saviour knew his heart, and soon put him upon a trial which laid it open to the ruler himself. *Sell all that thou hast, &c.* This command was given to cure his love of the world, which could not, in him, be cured otherwise. What a touchstone for his sincerity! What a trial of the power of the law, to convict of disobedience all who profess to keep it! When God commanded Abraham to offer up his only son Isaac, he stood the test, and proved that he loved the Lord above *all*. This young man did *not* stand the test. He might have stood an *easier* test, but this one he could not endure. To sell not *half*, but *all* his possessions, all his *great* possessions, too, and then to distribute the precious wealth, with his own hand, piece by piece, among the poor, and thus see the source of his earthly joy, pride and hope, as it were, drop by drop, dry up—this was more than he could bear to do. Thus was he shown, that, instead of preferring God and His commandments to everything else, as he professed, he really loved mammon more than God. We are not to understand that all Christians are required to do what was enjoined on the rich ruler. Yet it is true that the Gospel requires such a consecration of all property to God, that, when the duty is made known, to give some, or much, or all to God, the offering can be made. *Treasure in heaven*—in place of thy *treasure* on earth. *And come, follow me.* Here was the Gospel hidden in this brief command. Jesus preached faith to this inquirer. His invitation to him was the very language in which He called almost every one of the disciples, who doubted not the meaning, knowing that in following Christ, they were to acknowledge Him as the Messiah of God.

23. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich.

Very sorrowful. Men undergo great agony of mind while they are in suspense

between the love of the world and the love of their souls. *For he was very rich.* What was his wealth—which he had found could not give him comfort—in comparison with peace of conscience and eternal life? Yet he chose to retain his earthly treasure, which he could only hold for a few years, and to refuse the offer of imperishable treasure in heaven!

24. And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God! 25. For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God.
q. Prov. xi. 28; Matt. xix. 23, on which see notes; Mark x. 23.

This may be considered as the moral of the story, the extreme increase of difficulty which worldly possessions cast in the way, to the attainment of the heavenly glory. In Mark x. 24, it is, "them that trust in riches." This somewhat modifies the declaration here; but how few are there to be found who really possess wealth, and never trust in it?

Some would read a *camel*, instead of a *camel*, but this is unauthorized. The camel being the largest animal they were acquainted with in Judea, its name became proverbial for denoting anything remarkably large, and a *camel's passing through a needle's eye* came, by consequence, as appears from some rabbinical writings, to express a thing extremely difficult, or apparently impossible. Our Lord here represents the salvation of a rich man as being next to an impossibility. Riches powerfully tend to increase pride, covetousness, self-indulgence; they purchase flatterers, exclude faithful reprovers, prejudice the mind against the humbling truths and self-denying precepts of the Gospel, and they increase the number and force of those obstacles which must be broken through, and the supposed value of those objects which must be renounced, if a man would be a disciple of Christ.

26. And they that heard it said, Who then can be saved? 27. And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.
r. Jer. xxxii. 17; Zech. viii. 6; Matt. xix. 26; Luke i. 37.

The scene with the ruler, as well as the last earnest utterance of Jesus, taught the disciples to cast a deeper look into their own hearts. In the living consciousness of the wide prevalence of earthly-mindedness, both among the rich who have, and the poor who are not able to acquire, they

express wonder or surprise, if not doubt, as to the salvation of any.

There was much tenderness and sweetness in this reply of our Lord to the question proposed. It will be observed that He does not retract what He had said, nor even soften it in the least degree, but rather strengthens it by representing the salvation of a rich man as the utmost effort of omnipotence. The energy of Divine grace is able to make a man despise the world, with all that it contains, when no efforts of man, no arguments, eloquence or persuasions are able to do it. Money will not keep us out of heaven if our hearts are right before God. *Grace*, and not *place*, is the hinge on which our salvation turns.

28. *Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee.—²Matt. xix. 27.

Peter speaks for himself and the rest of the Apostles. Had he spoken this in pride, he would have received *rebuke* instead of *encouragement*. The disciples had, indeed, but little to leave, yet it was their *all*. A poor man's "all" is as dear to him, in a certain sense, as the rich man's palace. There is no season in life upon which the believer looks back with so much joy as that in which he first determined to engage in his Redeemer's service. A man may leave all without having ever possessed anything. It is by the heart that we cleave to earthly possessions; it is by renouncing them in our heart, that we disengage ourselves from them.

29. And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake. 30. Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting. ¹Deut. xxxiii. 9. ²Job xlii. 10.

See on Matt. xix. 29.

There is no man that hath left, &c. Sacrifices like these were doubtless often necessary when the Gospel was first preached, and were bitterly opposed by prejudiced Jews and ignorant heathen. At the present day, a converted Jew is often obliged to separate from his nearest and dearest relatives, and a converted Hindoo is cast off by all his family. Our Lord spoke, with foresight, of cases like these, and His words are singularly full of comfort. *Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time.* The compensating retributions in this world and the next are definitely distinguished. Even with all their losses and

trials, the joys of Christians are much greater than their sorrows. *Rutherford* says, in his letters, that when he was imprisoned in Aberdeen, he discovered a sweetness in Christ that he had never conceived before. *Dr. Poyson*, when racked with pain, in his last illness, said: "God has used a strange method to make me happy. I could not have believed, a little while ago, that, in order to render me happy, He would deprive me of the use of my limbs, and fill my body with pain. But he has taken away everything else, that He might give me HIMSELF." And the Apostles bore the same testimony, when they said, "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." (2 Cor. i. 5.) *And in the world to come life everlasting.* To the earthly advantages of godliness, which make it profitable for the life that now is, life everlasting is to be superadded. What believers need, is more daily practical faith in Christ's words that He will make up for the sacrifices they submit to for His sake.

31. ¶ Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. ¹Matt. xvi. 21, xvii. 22 and xx. 17, on which see notes; Mark x. 32. ²Ps. xxii.; Isa. liii.

Took he unto him the twelve—took them apart. This was done because He did not choose to declare before His enemies the deeds which they would commit against Him, for such declaration would have emboldened them in wickedness, and thus, moreover, He might have seemed to purposely procure the fulfillment of the prediction concerning His sufferings. *We go up to Jerusalem.* There was the site of the Old Testament theocracy. There the sacrifices of the law, and the blood of the Old Testament atonements, had shown forth His death for ages. And from there, the royal city of David, must go forth an announcement of the kingdom of the Son of David to all the world. It will be observed with what calmness and submission He spoke of the painful trials that awaited Him. *And all things that are written by the prophets, &c.* The Messianic prophecies of suffering stand before the Saviour's eyes, as a great whole put in writing, and are referred to as though for every detail of His passion sketched in verses 32, 33, there

must also be at least an intimation to be found in the prophetic record. Such passages as the following were meant: Ps. xxii., Isa. liii.; Dan. ix. 26.

32. ^aFor he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on; 33. And they shall scourge him, and put him to death; and the third day he shall rise again.
^bMatt. xxvii. 2; Luke xxiii. 1; John xviii. 23; Acts iii. 13.

The Gentiles—this word is from a Latin one, signifying a *race*. The Jews, from their own standpoint, called other peoples the Gentiles, that is, *the nations*. Here the word specifically designates the Romans. For the *mocking* of Jesus by Herod and his Roman soldiers, see Luke xxiii. 11. *Spitefully entreated and spitted on*, to express their abhorrence of Him as a blasphemer. *Scourge him, and put him to death*. This was done by *Pilate*, the Roman governor. The punishment of the *cross* was *Roman*, not *Jewish*, but the *chief priests* condemned Him to it, and the *Romans* executed the sentence. How little did they know that they were, by this process, jointly offering up that sacrifice which was to make an atonement for Gentiles and for Jews; an atonement for the sin of the whole world! How often may it be literally said, *The wrath of man shall praise thee! And the third day he shall rise again*. Christ mentions His resurrection and glory, 1. To encourage Himself in His sufferings. 2. To comfort His disciples, who would be overwhelmed with sorrow and terrified by His death. 3. To direct us, under *all the sufferings of this present time*, to keep the eye of our faith fixed upon *the glory to be revealed*. Nothing is so capable of giving us comfort, and fortifying our weakness against the fear of painful trials and the dread of death, as the remembrance of the sufferings, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

31. ^aAnd they understood none of these things; and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.
^bMark ix. 32; Luke ii. 50 and ix. 45; John x. 6 and xii. 16.

The blindness of the disciples about our Lord's crucifixion and sufferings is, at first sight, very extraordinary. The words just spoken by Him seem so plain that we can scarcely conceive how any one could have failed to understand them. But, perhaps, as the Lord often used figurative language, the disciples supposed that His prophecies concerning Himself were figur-

ative. They saw, and heard, and imagined a great many things that seemed to contradict the natural import of these prophecies, and hence declined to accept their literal interpretation. In judging them, we must remember that they were all Jews, and trained from their infancy to expect a Messiah in glory and majesty. In their ignorance as to the import of Christ's words, we see the effect of prepossession in precluding the exercise of ordinary intelligence. As they had *wished* a different manifestation of Christ's Messiahship than that, though differing, they seem, thus far, to have been unable to understand or believe what He here, and at other times, so plainly foretold. The mind of man is naturally shut against the knowledge of the cross, of sufferings and of death.

35. ¹ ^bAnd it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side, begging:
^cMatt. xx. 29, on which see notes; Mark x. 46. ^d1 Sam. ii. 8; Luke xvi. 20, 21; John ix. 8; Acts iii. 2.

Jericho was a stronghold of the Canaanites, and was the first city subdued by Israel, after the crossing of Jordan and entering the Holy Land. (See Josh. vi. 26.) *As he was come nigh*, &c. Matthew and Mark, referring (as is generally supposed) to the same miracle, say that it was wrought when our Lord was "departing" from Jericho. (Matt. xx. 29-34; Mark x. 46-52.) There was more than one Jericho, namely, an *old* and a *new*, situated a little distance one from the other, so that, if the Saviour was really leaving one and approaching the other, the apparent discrepancy is easily reconciled. *A certain blind man*, &c. The sense of sight is the highest bodily privilege, the purest physical pleasure which man has derived from his Creator. When indigence and blindness are united, they present a truly sad instance of wretchedness. *Begging*. He had placed himself by the road-side in order that travelers might see him and give him help. Except in extraordinary cases, it is in all respects most advisable to relieve those who are known by us both as to their wants and conduct, and, provided less be not given in charity, and no *extreme* case neglected, the refusal of relief to vagrant beggars is rather a proof of *discretion* than an indication of defect in

beneficence. If this conduct were generally adopted, the indigent would, in ordinary cases, be compelled to abide where they are known; the sums expended in charity would be far more profitably applied, the interests of morality and religion better secured, and the poor themselves far more adequately relieved.

36. And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. 37. And they told him, Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. 38. And he cried, saying, Jesus, *thou Son of David, have mercy on me.*

The sound of numerous feet and the clamor of many voices, drew the attention of the blind man, and he was led to inquire what great person was on the road, attended by this great throng of people.

Jesus of Nazareth. The people name our Lord according to the customary style. The "Prophet of Galilee," the raiser of Lazarus from the dead, the Teacher and Miracle-worker of Peræa, is not unknown by fame to this poor man. To the sufferers throughout the land, that name would have a special interest. Its report would have a rapid circulation among the sons and daughters of affliction.

No sooner was our Lord's name mentioned than the blind beggar, deeply impressed with a sense of his own affliction, and not knowing whether he should ever again have so good an opportunity, earnestly appealed to Him. *He cried.* In the midst of judgments God remembers mercy. Though God had deprived this man, for wise reasons, of his *eyes*, He had left him the use of his *speech*. It is never so *ill* with us but it might be *much worse*. We should, therefore, be submissive and thankful. *Jesus, thou Son of David.* The blind man, by thus greeting Christ, shows that his faith has reached a higher grade than that of the people who had just told him who was passing by. There was, on his part, a double confession of faith: first, that Jesus could heal him; and, secondly, not merely as a prophet from God, but as the Prophet, as the one who should come, according to the words of Isaiah, to give sight to the blind. He recognized Him as the true descendant of the ancient King of Israel, the promised Messiah for whom Israel was looking. *Have mercy on me.* He asked for mercy, conscious that he *deserved* nothing.

39. And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace; but he cried so much the more, *Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.*

⁴Chap. viii. 49, xi. 52 and xix. 39.

Of the great multitude who accompanied Jesus on His way to Jerusalem, some preceded, others followed Him. *Rebuked him, that he should hold his peace*, rather, *charged him that he should be silent*. At this time the multitude were respectful to Jesus. Their rebuke resulted simply from the desire in those, for the most part spiritually undeveloped men, that the procession to Jerusalem, where they anticipated a public and open avowal by Jesus of His Messiahship, even, perhaps, the assumption of the regal dignity, might not be delayed by an affair of comparatively such trivial importance as the giving sight to a poor blind man. The beggar regarded not the rebuke that was given him. His case was urgent. The occasion was precious, and he called louder and more fervently than before, using the same form of address and appeal as at first.

40. And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him: and when he was come near, he asked him, 41. Saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight.

Above the respectful clamor of the multitude, the voice of earnest prayer reached the ear of Jesus. He would not yield to their haste to press forward. He *stood*. It was impossible for Him to pass on without turning an eye of compassion toward him who had uttered the cry of misery—the prayer of faith. *Commanded him to be brought unto him.* He would not perform the miracle till the blind man came to Him, that, by the manner of his walking, the spectators might be convinced that he was truly blind. *What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?* This question of our Lord was, in part, an expression of His readiness to aid; in part, also, for the calling out into yet livelier exercise the faith and expectation of the petitioner. (Matt. ix. 28.) *Lord, that I may receive my sight.* The man's cry had hitherto been a vague general cry for mercy, now he singles out the blessing which He craves, declares the channel in which He desired the solicited mercy to run. "My eyes are thirsty for the light. To me the wonderful realities of creation have long been a dark and dismal blank. Thine is the power that can

again reveal them like a new creation to my view."

42. And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee.—Luke xvii. 19.

See on Matt. xx. 29-34.

Receive thy sight. Here, and in the verse preceding, as well as in the one following, the Greek word so rendered means, literally, "look up," or "see again." It is worthy of observation, that giving sight to the blind was peculiar to our Saviour. No instance is recorded in Scripture of this miracle having been wrought, either by prophets before His coming, or by His Apostles afterward; nor is it mentioned among the miraculous powers which He conferred on them. *Thy faith hath saved thee.* This assurance must have been dearer to the poor beggar than even his bodily sight, for it implied a promise of eternal blessedness.

43. And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.
† Luke v. 26; Acts iv. 21 and xi. 18.

The cure, by the power of Christ's word, was instantaneously effected. How great and welcome the change! The man who had hitherto been tied by his infirmity to one place was now free to go where he listed; and he chose well, for he chose to follow Jesus, by the way glorifying God. *And all the people, &c.* All the multitude, deeply impressed with the miracle they had witnessed, united with the blind man in his doxology.

In viewing the case of Bartimeus, let us

not fail to see an emblem of the blindness, ignorance, misery and poverty, into which man is cast by sin, with respect to heavenly things. It is, alas! one property of spiritual blindness to keep the person from perceiving it. The conversion of a sinner is sometimes linked to, and depends upon a first motion, which seems natural, upon curiosity or mere chance, and yet it is really no other than a gift of God, who intends to save him. There are times when Jesus passes specially near to us. We should improve them, lest the opportunity may be lost forever. We should not sit lazily at home, and wait for relief to come to Christ. We are insensible of our spiritual diseases, when we do not find ourselves inclined and moved to pray. In prayer we must expect, not because we deserve, but because we need. When a man is first in earnest about his salvation, and begins to cry that his eyes may be opened, he will find strong hindrances, and these even sometimes from such as seem, like this multitude, to be with Jesus, and on His side. These hindrances, however, should only stimulate him to still greater earnestness. Nothing is so attractive to the Son of God as the cry of a believing penitent. If our wish is a good one, God will surely fulfil it. When Divine grace has changed our hearts, the praise of our salvation should be given to God. We should resolve to show our gratitude by becoming followers and disciples of Jesus.

1. What is the first parable in this chapter intended to teach? 2. How does it encourage importunity in prayer? 3. To whom was the parable of the Pharisee and the publican spoken? 4. Explain it. 5. With what solemn statement does it conclude? 6. What did Jesus say about little children? 7. Why did a certain ruler approach Jesus? 8. What did our Lord say to him? 9. What was the result of the interview? 10. What did Christ say to the Twelve? 11. What miracle was wrought by Him on a blind man? 12. What effect was produced by the restoration of his sight?

CHAPTER XIX.

¹ Of Zaccheus a publican. ¹¹ The ten pieces of money. ²³ Christ rideth into Jerusalem with triumph; ⁴¹ weepeth over it. ⁴⁵ driveth the buyers and sellers out of the temple; ⁴⁷ teaching duty in it. The rulers would have destroyed him, but for fear of the people.

Many, no doubt, were converted to the faith of Christ of whom no record is kept in the Gospels; but the conversion of some, whose case had something extraordinary in it, is recorded, as that of Zaccheus, with the record of which this chapter begins.

AND Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.

Jericho. An ancient city in the plain of Jordan, about six miles west of that river, and nineteen east of Jerusalem. This was our Lord's last journey toward the scene of His approaching betrayal and sufferings.

² And, behold, there was a man named Zaccheus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.—Ezra ii. 9.

Behold. This word serves to call attention to the incident which follows. *Zaccheus* is a Hebrew name, signifying "Pure." This Hebrew name, with Greek ending, of itself denotes him as a man of Jewish origin. (See also verse 9.) *Which was the chief among the publicans.* The employment of publicans in the collection of the revenue, was the only civil office in which native Jews were employed by the Romans. The office of chief of the publicans at so important a place as Jericho must have been one of great importance and responsibility, and, as we learn from the text, lucrative to him who held it. We may understand that Zaccheus was a sort of comptroller-general to whom the inferior publicans rendered their account, and was himself the responsible officer to whom the Romans looked. Or it may not be unlikely that he farmed the revenues of this district from the Romans. *And he was rich.* Yet he had not incurred the woe of those rich who are full. (Luke vi. 24.)

³ And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.—John xii. 21.

He felt a strong desire to see Jesus, of whose kindness to his despised order he had, doubtless, heard much from other publicans, and who had, in fact, a publican

among His chosen friends and followers. *Who he was.* Not "who He was" in the sense of "what manner of person," but "*which He was*" of that confused multitude, to distinguish Him from His company. It cannot be doubted that Zaccheus was influenced by curiosity to behold one of whom he had heard so much, but it may also be believed that he was also under the power of a vague longing for some spiritual good from the great Teacher, whose miracles and instructions were so widely talked of. His wealth did not yet satisfy him, and some degree of desire for higher treasures had been awakened in his heart. We may suppose his state of mind to have been like that of the Greeks. (John xii. 21.) *And he could not for the press, &c.* So earnest, however, is he in the matter that, rather than be defeated of his longing, he devises a way for the satisfying of it, which will involve, indeed, a certain compromise of his dignity, but from which he does not on this account shrink.

⁴ And he ran before, and climbed up into ^{4a} a sycamore tree to see him; for he was to pass that way.—Luke v. 19. ⁴¹ Kings x. 27; 1 Chron. xxvii. 28. Isa. ix. 10.

Ran before. (See on verse 3.) *Sycamore tree,* more frequently called the *sycamine tree.* Sycamore trees abounded in the neighborhood of Jericho. *For he was to pass that way.* It was publicly known that the Saviour's route lay toward Jerusalem. The running and climbing of so wealthy a man and so prominent an official as Zaccheus to see a religious teacher, would, of course, call forth mockery from all who saw him. But he cared not for man's opinion. He did not, like Nicodemus, come to Jesus by night, but in open day, surrounded by spectators, and he exposed himself to ridicule in his efforts to see Him. It is necessary, in order to true conversion, for a man to have a holy eagerness to raise himself above earthly things, that he may see and know Christ. Upon the little action of Zaccheus climbing the tree, so far as man's eyes can see, there hinged the salvation of his soul. We must never "despise the day of small things." (Zech. iv. 10.)

5. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house. ¹Ezek. vi. 6; John i. 48. ²Gen. xviii. 3, 5; John xiv. 23; Eph. iii. 17; Heb. xiii. 2; Rev. iii. 20.

Zaccheus came to look upon Christ and resolved to take particular notice of Him, but little thought of being noticed by Christ. That was an honor too great, and too far above his merit, for him to have anticipated. *Looked up, and saw him, and said.* Zaccheus did not cry for mercy as Bartimeus did. How much astonished must he have felt when Jesus, glancing upward to the overhanging branch on which he rested, addressed him as he did! He must have been ready to exclaim, as Nathanael once did, "Whence knowest thou me?" (John i. 48.) It was evident the Lord knew not only his *name* but his *circumstances*. He knew that he had a *house* in which he could receive guests. He knew *more* than this, He knew his *heart*. He was sure that Zaccheus was *willing* to entertain Him beneath his roof; He must have known it, for He himself had made him willing. *Make haste, and come down.* Hurry and have done with such expedients and concealments. *For to-day.* My call to suffer at Jerusalem brooks no delay. *I must abide at thy house.* Knowing already the more than readiness of the publican to extend a hospitable reception, and his ability to do so, Jesus did not ask him if it would be agreeable or convenient for him to receive Him and His disciples as guests, but assumed that his hospitality would be cordially extended. On no other occasion is it recorded that he entered without invitation the house of a stranger. Christ sometimes comes to those who seek Him not. (Isa. lxxv. 1.) Impenitent men must come down from their high opinion of themselves, if they would receive salvation from Him who is "meek and lowly in heart," and the urgency of their case requires that there should be no delay in doing so.

6. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.

He rendered a prompt and cheerful obedience to the command he had received to descend from the tree. "Zaccheus," says one, "was as ripe fruit, which dropped in the Saviour's lap at his first

and lightest touch." *And received him joyfully.* He had now *seen* who He was, and he wished to *hear* what He was, and therefore He rejoiced in the honor that God had now conferred upon Him, leading the Saviour's way to the courts of his home. No wonder he rejoiced in the prospect of an opportunity of conversation with Him who knew all things. The very condescension of such a famous Teacher of religion in offering to be a publican's guest, touched and softened his heart, which doubtless Jesus had already changed by heavenly influence conveyed with the invitation to come down from the tree. How often does Jesus make the proposal of lodging, not only in our house, but in our hearts, without its being accepted. (Rev. iii. 20.) When Jesus calls us, we should hasten to obey. (Ps. xxvii. 8.)

7. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he has gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.—Matt. ix. 11; Luke v. 30.

The self-righteous Pharisees were indignant that He who claimed to be the Messiah should compromise His dignity, and risk the reputation of His holiness by availing Himself of the hospitality of a *sinner*. *Publicans and sinners* were classed together, because many of the tax-gatherers were bad men and were despised by the Jews, and hence to be a publican came to be equivalent to being a sinner. This accusation against our Lord was indeed a truth, and one not confined to any person or to any time. As it was then, so is it now—the Saviour is the sinner's frequent guest. No heart so vile, so polluted, so sin-defiled, that Jesus refuses to enter there.

8. And Zaccheus stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him four-fold.

¹Chap. iii. 14. ²Ex. xxii. 1; 1 Sam. xii. 3; 2 Sam. xii. 6.

Zaccheus stood forth in the presence of the whole company, and professed his readiness to make all the restitution in his power for his ill-gotten gain. From the very hour the tree was planted it began to bear. *The half of my goods I give to the poor, not have given.* Here was no boasting of what had already been done in days of ignorance, but a simple declaration of what he was now ready, from this moment, unhesitatingly to perform. This he would do, not expecting to be justified by his

works, but merely by his good works, through the grace of God, to evince the sincerity of his faith and repentance. *And if I have taken anything from any man, &c.* It would seem that Zaccheus had hitherto been no extortioner. Had he been so, had he been conscious that his were in the main treasures of wickedness, gotten together by fraud and wrong, it would have been ridiculous to offer as a gift half of them to the poor, before it was seen whether the whole would satisfy the demands of justice. Without, however, having been this extortioner, he yet feels that according to that higher standard of right which he recognizes now, some of his gains may prove to have been unfairly acquired, and any such injustice he will make largely good. *I restore him four-fold.* In our days he would probably have expressed himself as meaning to restore principal and interest, but the law forbade the Jews to take interest of one another. The same law required a four-fold restitution, upon conviction, from a man who stole a sheep (Ex. xxii. 1), but he had only to add one-fifth of the value, when, without being detected or tried, he made a voluntary confession of his offense. (Num. v. 7.) Zaccheus, therefore, showed the unflinching character of his repentance, by voluntarily subjecting himself to the stringent penalties incurred only by a conviction in the courts of law. True conversion shows itself by the change of life. He who has wronged his fellow-man must make restitution, if he have it in his power.

9. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham.

*Rom. iv. 11, 12, 16; Gal. iii. 7. †Luke xiii. 16.

Salvation has here, as in chapter i. 77, its highest spiritual sense of deliverance from sin and its consequences, and the bestowment of eternal life and blessedness in the kingdom of Christ. An indirect allusion may also have been made in the use of the term, to the name of Jesus (*Saviour*), who had been the guest of Zaccheus. The publican had really shown himself to be another man from what he appeared to be in the eyes of the multitude. *Forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham.* Jesus pronounced this eulogy upon him whom the murmuring crowd had just before named

as "a man that is a sinner." "Notwithstanding all the sins he has committed, it is now manifest that even this man also is a true son of Abraham, and that, not only in respect of his lineal descent, but of his faith and holiness."

10. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

*Matt. xviii. 11: see Matt. x. 6 and xv. 24.

Though our Lord was continually healing the lame and the blind, it was *not* to heal *them* He came into the world. *It was to seek and to save that which was lost*, lost in sin, as we all are by nature. This was His blessed and glorious errand. He came to suffer and die that we might be saved. And the greater the depth of sin and misery into which we have fallen, the more urgent should be the demand we make upon the love of Him who "died for our offenses, and rose again for our justification," and who is able to save to the uttermost—in point of number, as well as of the heinousness of sin—all who come unto God through Him. (See on Matt. xviii. 11.)

11. And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.—*Acts i. 6.

Our Lord had just spoken of Himself as one who had come into the world for a great end, to seek and to save that which was lost. (Verse 10.) Through a misunderstanding of these words, the disciples may have been confirmed in the error which they held in common with the mass of the people, that Jesus was to establish, and probably during this very visit to Jerusalem, which He was now making in so open and public a manner, an earthly kingdom, from which they, as His friends, would receive honor, power and great glory. Before reaching Jerusalem, which was about twenty miles distant from Jericho, our Lord undertook to correct these erroneous views and expectations concerning the Messiah's kingdom, by declaring its true nature, and showing how men would stand related to it.

Some have regarded this parable and that of the talents, in Matt. xxv. 14–30, as one and the same. But they are not so. Although in many of their features there is a strong resemblance, in others there is a decisive difference. *This* parable was

spoken before Christ's entrance into Jerusalem, and at the house of Zaccheus, *that* while He was seated on the Mount of Olives, the third day after His entry into the city; *this* was addressed to a mixed multitude, *that* to Christ's own immediate disciples; in *this* there are ten servants, in *that* there are three; *this* shows that Christians differ in the diligence they display, *that* shows that they differ in the amount of gifts they receive.

12. *He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

*Matt. xxv. 14, on which see notes; Mark xlii. 34.

A certain nobleman—a man of noble birth, through his birth, family, ancestry, distinguished from the rest of the people. (Verse 14.) The reference is to our Lord Himself, who being descended from Abraham and David, after the flesh, was of kingly origin, and, besides, was the Son of God. (See 1 Tim. i. 17.) *Went into a far country.* Heaven is here meant, which Isaiah calls "the land that is afar off." *To receive for himself a kingdom.* Those in Judea who, by hereditary succession or by interest, had pretensions to the Jewish throne, traveled to Rome, in order to have it confirmed to them. Jesus ascended into heaven to take possession of the kingdom, the right to which, as Messiah, He had acquired, and the foundation of which He had laid by His obedience and sufferings. (Dan. iv. 3; Isa. ix. 7; Luke i. 33; Phil. ii. 8, 9; Heb. i. 3, 8, 9.) All power was given to Him in heaven and on earth. He was invested with the kingdom by God, His Father. In virtue of that investiture, He has right to rule supreme over that world, on which before He had not where to lay His head. He has His kingdom in heaven, and from thence He exercises His power (Matt. xxviii. 18; Phil. ii. 9–11; Eph. i. 17, 20–22), until He comes at the last day to the judgment. (Matt. xxv. 31.)

13. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten *pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

*Gr., *mina*.

The word *ten* is here used of an indefinite number. By *servants*, are represented all who profess and call themselves Christians. Only two classes of persons are mentioned as having remained in the country while the nobleman was absent—servants and adversaries. (Verse 14.) In

a spiritual point of view, only two classes exist: those who serve Christ as the Lord that bought them, and those who, being at enmity with God, refuse to obey the Gospel of His Son. *Ten pounds*—in Greek, *ten mina*. A pound was the sixtieth part of a talent, or about \$15. The Greek word translated "occupy" is only found here. It means, literally, "employ in business, or trading." *Till I come, i. e.*, all the time of my absence. The place and age in which our lot has been cast, our early education, our bodily members and mental powers, our station in society, and the circle of our homes, money, time, health, wealth and influence, and, in addition, the graces of the Spirit, in whatever measure they may have been conferred, all that we are and have belongs to God, and must be used for His glory, and the good of our fellow-creatures. For the use we make of all our gifts, graces and opportunities, we are to give account. Our belief of the return of Christ, and the uncertainty under which He has left us as to the time of His coming, ought to make us ever active and diligent in improving the sacred trust which He has committed to us, in whatever way and sphere this can best be done.

14. *But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.—John i. 11.

His citizens. By these are doubtless meant in the first instance the Jews. They are here thus named, as by John they are called Christ's "own," for, according to the oldest predictions, He was the King of Zion. They sent messages after Him to show that they would not acknowledge Him as their king, when they incited the heathen to persecute the followers of Him whom they crucified. They still send after Him such messages, because they pronounce the curse over all their members who venture to receive the Christian faith. All persons, however, are included in the number of these "citizens," who will only recognize Jesus as an enlightened Teacher, but not as their Lord and Saviour. *Hated him.* The original imports a permanent, settled hatred, entertained toward the nobleman, even before he set out on his journey. *Sent a message after him,* would be better translated, *sent an embassy, &c.* *We will not have this man to reign over us.*

This very declaration twice found formal utterance from the lips of the Jews—once when they cried to Pilate, “We have no king but Cæsar,” and again, when they said, “Write not, The King of the Jews.” *We will not.* The verb *will* here, as in several places of the New Testament, loses much of its force by being mistaken for the auxiliary verb *will*. Let it here be rendered, “we *will* that this man shall not reign over us!” It is a wicked, insulting *will* that originates and continues the foul rebellion. This is no more than a mere shadow of the rebellion of a sinner against his God. None who refuse to have Jesus Christ to reign over them can possibly avoid being slaves to sin under the dominion of the devil.

15. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given ^{the} the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

**Silver*—and so verse 23.

He commanded, &c. These words refer to the general judgment. *That he might know.* As the Omniscient, Christ knows all things, but the conduct of one and all must be made known before the whole world, as also the righteousness of the Lord be acknowledged in rewarding and punishing. *How much every man had gained by trading.* The inquiry was two-fold. 1. As to who had been diligent. 2. As to the gain that had been made. The nobleman had not given them weapons for fight. On the day of judgment all shall reckon with the Judge. The dead shall be raised from their graves. The living shall all be summoned to the bar. The books shall be opened. High and low, rich and poor shall stand “before the judgment seat of Christ,” to account for the powers, privileges and opportunities with which they were favored in the time of their probation. How solemn will that reckoning be!

16. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.

With a sweet and cheerful boldness does the faithful servant come before his Lord. The investigation is carried on with each one separately. Each must stand or fall on his own merits. *Thy pound hath gained ten pounds.* In deep humility he acknowledges that the gain is not his own, but the Lord's; therefore, he says, with em-

phasis, *THY POUND.* So Peter speaks: “I, yet not I, but the grace of God that was in me.” (See 1 Peter iv. 10.) He is not said to have *doubled* his pound; but, instead of this, to have gained *ten* pounds by his *one*. By this we are given to understand the unbounded power of expansion in the gift of God's grace in Christ, when really and faithfully received by His servants. It is not said *how* the gain was accomplished by this servant. Such a result may be reached by a minister in the Church of God who faithfully discharges his office, or by the faithful Sabbath-school teacher or tract distributor, or by the wealthy man who liberally distributes his means for the good of man and the glory of God, or by the magistrate who, in the fear of God, well discharges the duty of guarding the morals and peace of society. How great will be the consolation of the Christian, whose conscience shall give testimony of his fidelity at the hour of death!

17. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

⁹Matt. xxv. 21; Luke xvi. 10.

Well. A word of approval; brief, but comprehensive and final. *Because thou hast been faithful in a very little.* The sum intrusted to him was comparatively small, but it served to test his industry and fidelity, and therefore was not permitted to limit his reward. However small a man's gifts and opportunities, he is as much accountable for using them rightly as if they were very great. And the poorest and the humblest Christian, if he uses his one pound well, shall be as carefully noticed and rewarded as the mightiest king. *Have thou authority over ten cities.* An allusion to the custom formerly (as it seems) prevalent in the East, of assigning the government and revenues of a certain number of cities or towns, as a reward to favorites and faithful officers. The favor which Christ will show at last to His faithful servants will be, first of all, this; He will show greater *confidence* in them now than ever. They have had a certain charge committed to them; they have been faithful in *that*; He will now enlarge His trust exceedingly, which He will place in their hands, on the principle He Himself enun-

ciated: "He that is faithful in that which is least, will be faithful also in much." All the faithful are made great; but the greatest worker is the greatest winner when the accounts are closed. He who has made the best use of grace on earth is, on that very account, fitted for the highest place in heaven.

18. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds.

The second. We hear nothing of the other seven servants, but we need not, for this reason, conclude that they had wholly lost or wasted the money entrusted to them. Rather may we believe that the three who come forward are adduced as specimens of classes, and that the rest, while all we are to learn is learned from the three, are, for brevity's sake, omitted. *THY pound.* Here, as in the former case, humility is shown by the servant in acknowledging that the gain is not his own, but the Lord's. It will be noticed that this servant had received an equal amount with the first. *Hath gained five pounds.* The limitation as regards the productiveness of God's grace, in this case, does not spring from anything in that gift itself, but from the less degree of faithfulness and unceasing diligence on the part of him who has it.

19. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.

The commendation bestowed on the first servant is here withheld from the second, who, with the same pound, had only gained the half of what the first had gained, in order thereby to intimate that the reward should be different in just that proportion in which the profit of the labor is greater or less. The gain, indeed, creates the capacity for the reward. *Over five cities.* The honor, riches, power and authority of a temporal government are but a faint shadow and resemblance of that which he shall receive at the hands of God, who has faithfully managed and improved the wealth of his sovereign Master. (Rev. iii. 21, iv. 6; Matt. xix. 28; 1 Cor. viii. 2, 5.) The doctrine of reward according to works is here plainly taught, as it is also in other places of Scripture. "Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor." There are degrees of glory

in heaven. Every vessel will be alike full, but not alike large. And the degree of glory there will be according to the degrees of usefulness here. (1 Cor. iii. 8.)

20. And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin.
*Prov. xxvi. 13, 16; Matt. xxv. 24; verse 13, iii. 9 and vi. 46; James iv. 17.

Two are represented to have been diligent and only one indolent; but no information is thereby given regarding the proportions of mankind in general, or within the Church, who shall be found faithful in the great day. We can well understand why this servant should have lingered to the last, being reluctant to appear in the presence of his Lord. *Here is thy pound.* Our Lord does not mean by this that men of inferior responsibilities are less likely to discharge them than those of higher. The words *here is* are not in the original, so that the expression literally rendered, is, "Lord, behold thy pound." *Which I have laid up in a napkin.* The word rendered "napkin" literally signifies a handkerchief, or "sweat-cloth," "which," says one, "not exerting himself, his idle servant does not need for its proper use ('in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread'—Gen. iii. 19), hence uses it for the wrapping up of his pound. That he had it disengaged and so free to be turned to this purpose, was itself a witness against him." This servant did not waste the money committed to him. Let it be noted that his laying up his pound in the handkerchief was not because the sum he had received was less than that of the others, or different from it, and therefore incapable of increase. Neither was it because he had no opportunity of turning it to account, or no inherent energy of action able to do so. Neither was it because he had no intelligible instructions, for this is not pleaded. He said in effect, "I give you back all you gave me. I have done no harm." He was mistaken in supposing that he could return the pound as he had received it, because not to use is to waste.

21. For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layest not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.
*Matt. xxv. 24; Rom. viii. 15.

Feared thee. He justifies the caution and timidity he had shown, and how it was

that he would attempt nothing and venture upon nothing; he feared to trade on that pound, lest in the necessary risks of business, seeking to gain other, he might lose that one, and so enrage his master against him, even as men might profess to fear to lay themselves out for the winning of other souls, lest, so doing, they might endanger their own. The man who feels deeply the value of his own soul feels most for the situation of others. *Austere*. Harsh, stern, unforgiving. *Thou takest up*, &c. This is a proverbial description of an unjust, rigorous character. The slothful servant, by impudently applying it to his lord, and assigning it as the true reason why he had not increased his pound, as the others had done theirs, aggravated his crime not a little. Many will doubtless finally perish from moral cowardice. The fearful, as well as the unbelieving, shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. (Rev. xxi. 8.) Obviously, the conception which this man had formed of his Master's character was the direct, efficient cause of his unprofitable idleness. The picture, at this point, represents a human heart secretly conscious of guilt, and reconciled through the Gospel, and dreading the wrath of the righteous Judge. When one is at peace with God in the Redeemer, perfect love casteth out fear; but here, in the absence of this reconciliation, perfect fear casteth out love. Many a man fears to make a profession of religion, because he thinks a hard Master demands more than he can render.

22. And he saith unto him, "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, *thou* wicked servant. "Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: 23. Wherefore, then, gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?"

2 Sam. i. 16; Job xv. 6; Matt. xii. 37. "Matt. xxv. 26. "Exod. xxii. 25, 27; Deut. xxiii. 19, 20.

From your own acknowledgment, you are condemned. That which the servant had contrived for his justification the Lord applies to his confusion. *Thou wicked servant*. Sloth does not appear so much in the condemnation of this man, as doing wickedly. He had not listened to the entreaty, "We beseech you that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." A man is wicked who does not improve the

gifts which God has bestowed upon him. The tree which brought forth no fruit was hewn down and cast into the fire. *Thou knewest*, &c. The master echoes the culprit, in order to condemn him on his own grounds. This is not an acknowledgment of the vile and detestable charge of God's demanding of men more difficult services than He has furnished them for, and would assist them in, which would be a most unrighteous thought of God, but the servant's lord only argues with him on his own base principles, and shows that, even on them, he would be justly condemned for his negligence.

The lord draws from the accusation brought against him a conclusion just the opposite of that which the servant had drawn. "If thou didst really believe me to be the rigorous person thou sayest I am, why didst not thou lend out my money on proper security, that I might have received mine own with interest?—a method of improvement of thy pound which would have occasioned thee no trouble at all. Thy excuse, therefore, is a mere pretense."

24. And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds.

Them that stood by. The angels are here meant, who never fail to appear and take an active part in all scenes descriptive of the final judgment. *Take from him the pound*. Take what was intrusted to him, from that idle, suspicious, unfaithful servant, who otherwise might have had that and much more allotted him for his own property. All opportunity of serving Christ is now forever withdrawn. *And give it to him that hath ten pounds*. The lord ordered this pound thus to be disposed of, because it was agreeable to the rules of all wise administrations to bestow the most and the greatest trusts on them who, by their fidelity in offices already enjoyed by them, had shown that they best deserved them. By having another pound given to him, it was intimated that this man's "ability" had become greater than before. (Matt. xxv. 15.) It will be observed that in this parable no other punishment is inflicted on the indolent servant than the deprivation of his capital. This may possibly be intended to intimate that cul-

pable unfaithfulness in a true believer may sometimes descend so far as to be undistinguishable by human eyes from the entire neglect of the unbelieving. There is, however, in all cases, a dividing line, although we may not be able to trace it—"the Lord knoweth them that are His."

25. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.)

They—the angels. *He hath*, &c. They speak this in surprise at his assigning the pound taken from the wicked servant to one who had received so ample a reward, thinking there was no occasion to give an additional pound to one who had so many already. Perhaps they thought it more proper to give it to him who only had five pounds.

26. For I say unto you, *That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him.

See *Matt. xiii. 12 and xxv. 29; Mark iv. 25; Luke viii. 18.

Here the Lord unfolds the deep ground of His procedure, which, so far from being arbitrary, consists in the highest righteousness. (Matt. xxv. 29.) *Which hath*. Obviously from the whole circumstances of the case this means "which possesseth and useth aright." The wicked servant was distinguished from the others, not by not having, but by not using. The law announced here is, that they who employ well what they have shall retain it all, and receive more in addition; whereas, they who do not rightly employ what they have, will be deprived of that which they possess and do not use. "The earth which bringeth forth herbs, meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing," that is, a further blessing—the gift of a continued fruitfulness "from God." (Heb. vi. 7.) Nor is it merely that the one receives more, and the other loses what he had, but *that very gift* which the one loses the other receives; he is enriched with a pound taken *from* the other. We see this continually; one, by the providence of God, steps into the place and the opportunities which another left unused, and so has forfeited. (1 Sam. xv. 28.) *From him that hath not*, &c., *i. e.*, from him that does not use. This is a natural as well as a penal effect, of not using what we were bound to turn to proper account. If we cease to use a limb,

its muscles die away, and its strength utterly departs. Corn hoarded up in the granary is soon destroyed. Intellect not drawn on, soon flags. This taking away is a process. It is steadily going forward in this world. It will be completed in the next, where all further probation and chance for doing service will utterly and eternally cease.

27. But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.

It can hardly be questioned that the destruction of Jerusalem is here primarily intended, but it would deprive the passage of its principal force to limit it to the temporal punishment of Christ's enemies. The language has a more extensive signification, and includes the final overthrow and punishment of all the enemies of truth in the world to come. (1 Cor. xv. 24-58.) *Those mine enemies*. They are here named contemptuously, as they previously had named their lawful king. (Verse 14.) *Bring hither*. The command is given to those who were addressed in verse 24. *Slay them*, expresses strongly the severity and hopelessness of the coming retribution. The sudden breaking off of the parable heightens not a little its beauty. They who will not submit to Christ the Crucified will be crushed by Christ the King. Every eye shall see Him, they also who pierced Him. Meekly, now, he stands at the door and knocks; then He comes as the lightning comes. Those who surrender to Him *now* will be His friends *then*.

28. † And when he had thus spoken, *he went before, ascending up to Jerusalem. 29. † And it came to pass, when he was come nigh to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount called the mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples,

† Mark x. 32. † Matt. xxi. 1 and Mark xi. 1, &c., on which see notes.

Ascending up to Jerusalem—being determined to appear there at the approaching Passover, though He knew that persecution and death awaited him there. This city was geographically several thousand feet above the Jordan, on which was the Plain of Jericho. It is our duty to follow Jesus toward the cross, ready to make any sacrifice that fidelity to Him may require.

Bethphage, *i. e.*, "the house of figs," a village between Bethany and Jerusalem, near the summit of the Mount of Olives. No trace of it now exists. *Bethany*, *i. e.*,

"the place of dates," stood near the foot of the eastern side of the Mount of Olives, nearly two miles from the limits of Jerusalem. *The Mount of Olives.* The well-known eminence on the east of Jerusalem, separated from that city by the Valley of Jehoshaphat. It is, however, not so much a "mount" as a ridge, of rather more than a mile in length, running in general direction north and south, covering the whole eastern side of the city. *The two disciples* were probably Peter and John. (Compare xxii. 8.)

30. Saying, "Go ye into the village over against you; in the which at your entering ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring him hither.—1 Sam. x. 2, 9; John xiv. 23.

Village over against you—Bethphage. *A colt tied.* This was an ass's colt. (Matt. xxi. 2.) The Messiah was predicted as coming on an ass. (Zech. ix. 9.) Asses and mules were in common use in Palestine; horses were seldom to be met with. The horse was an animal of pride and war; the ass, of humility and peace. (Hos. i. 7; Micah v. 10, 11.) Even Solomon rode on a mule in state. (1 Kings i. 38; see Gen. xxii. 3; Ex. iv. 20; Judges x. 4.) *Whereon yet never man sat.* Animals that had never been used were put to sacred purposes. (Num. xix. 2; Deut. xxi. 3; 1 Sam. vi. 7.) Jesus was born of a pure virgin, and laid in a new sepulchre. Thus his birth, triumph and tomb were alike. We have here a wonderful instance of Christ's prescience in very minute matters. He says, 1. You shall find a colt. 2. On which no man ever sat. 3. Bound with his mother (Matt. xxi. 2). 4. In a place where two ways meet (Mark xi. 4). 5. As you enter into the village. 6. The owners shall at first seem unwilling to have him loosed. 7. When they hear the Lord has need of him, they will let him go.

31. And if any man ask you, Why do ye loose him? thus shall ye say unto him, "Because the Lord hath need of him."
*Ps. xxiv. 1; Luke x. 12; Matt. xxi. 2, 3, Mark xi. 3, 6; Acts x. 36.

Without doubt, the owners of the beast belonged to the many concealed friends of Christ, and He knew that a command addressed in His name to these men would not be in vain. *The Lord.* The Proprietor of all things. There is not, we think, one instance, in which this word, with the article, and without either noun

or pronoun, is used in speaking of any other person than Jesus, except when used of the glorious God absolutely. In His humility Christ is ever giving proofs of His Divinity. He has a right to everything, and He can so control men's hearts as to make them willing to obey Him.

32. And they that were sent went their way, and found even as He had said unto them. 33. And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them, Why loose ye the colt? 34. And they said, The Lord hath need of him.

Christ intended, by sending the disciples, to exercise them in unconditional obedience, even where something remained inexplicable to them; also to establish their confidence in His superhuman foreknowledge. God's promises shall all at last prove to be true.

The owners, i. e., persons belonging to the family of the owner. What the Saviour foresaw actually occurred. Objections were raised, but at the appointed watchword they were withdrawn. We must not hesitate to obey when God commands.

35. And they brought him to Jesus; and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon.

*2 Kings ix. 13; Matt. xxi. 7; Mark xi. 7; John xii. 14.

The owner allowed the beast to be taken, assured that it would be safely and speedily restored, and satisfied that it was now to be appropriated to the Master's use. *Cast their garments.* The disciples spread their mantles, instead of a saddle, upon the colt, which, though never used before for riding, was now perfectly tractable. This was done as a token of honor. It was the custom of the people, as an acknowledgment of an appointed king. (See 2 Kings ix. 13.) *And they set Jesus thereon,* more literally, *they assisted Jesus to mount thereon.* We are to be workers together with the Lord.

36. *And as he went, they spread their clothes in the way.—cMatt. xxi. 8, on which see notes.

Spread their clothes in the way. This was in conformity with the very ancient and still existing custom on state occasions, of honoring royal and illustrious persons, by covering the ground over which they are to pass. Clothes and rich tapestries were regularly employed for the purpose, but when the occasion was extemporaneous, and no other provision was made, the robes and mantles of the persons in at-

tendance supplied the deficiency. It is generosity well becoming a Christian to make everything subservient to the triumph and reign of Christ in the Church. We must, if necessary, strip ourselves of all, that He may rule in our hearts.

37. And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen;

At the descent of the mount of Olives, i. e., where the road over the summit begins to descend toward the valley of Kedron. *Multitude of the disciples.* Most probably many of the disciples here mentioned were not really disciples in heart, but had followed our Lord in much ignorance, and under very mistaken expectations. The enthusiasm which broke forth when the point was reached from which the city could be seen, spreading itself like a grand panorama, increased in intensity while the way began to descend. *Began to rejoice and praise God,* more literally, *begin rejoicing, to praise God.* *With a loud voice*—all speaking at once, and very earnestly. This is added as a heightening circumstance. *For all the mighty works, &c.* Matter for praise and jubilant joy was not wanting. Doubtless some of Christ's wondrous works were recounted to them by one another. The sight of the capital city awakened the remembrance of many miracles, and the name of Lazarus was upon the lips of all. (John xii. 17.)

38. Saying, "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.

³Ps. cxviii. 26; Luke xiii. 35. ⁴Luke ii. 14; Eph. ii. 14.

Blessed be the King. Christ was, indeed, a king, but His kingdom was not, as they supposed, of this world. (John xviii. 36.) They expected the kingdom of "our father, David," to be restored, enlarged and glorified by this His more glorious Son. (See Mark xi. 10.) As David was the conqueror of surrounding nations, so, they supposed, this his illustrious descendant would emancipate Israel, subdue Rome, make Jerusalem mistress of the world, and thus be, in accordance with their desires, a temporal Messiah. *Cometh in the name of the Lord, i. e.,* in the name and authority of Jehovah, the ancient God of Israel, as His messenger and representative. "The Coming One" was an appel-

lation of the Messiah. *Peace in heaven.* This may refer to the blessing of peace to be dispensed upon earth as the gift of heaven, or it may have been a Scriptural phrase used at any period of great religious rejoicing. *Glory in the highest.* Glory and salvation be ascribed to Him in the highest heavens, and in the uttermost degree.

39. And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples.

The Pharisees, who were present to watch Christ's movements, evidently considered the multitude to be treating Jesus as the Messiah, and Jesus to be claiming the Messiahship by His not checking the language His attendants used. Their spirit was just that of modern Socinianism; the prophetic expressions used, the lofty epithets applied to Him, who was simply, in their view, a *Teacher*, offended them.

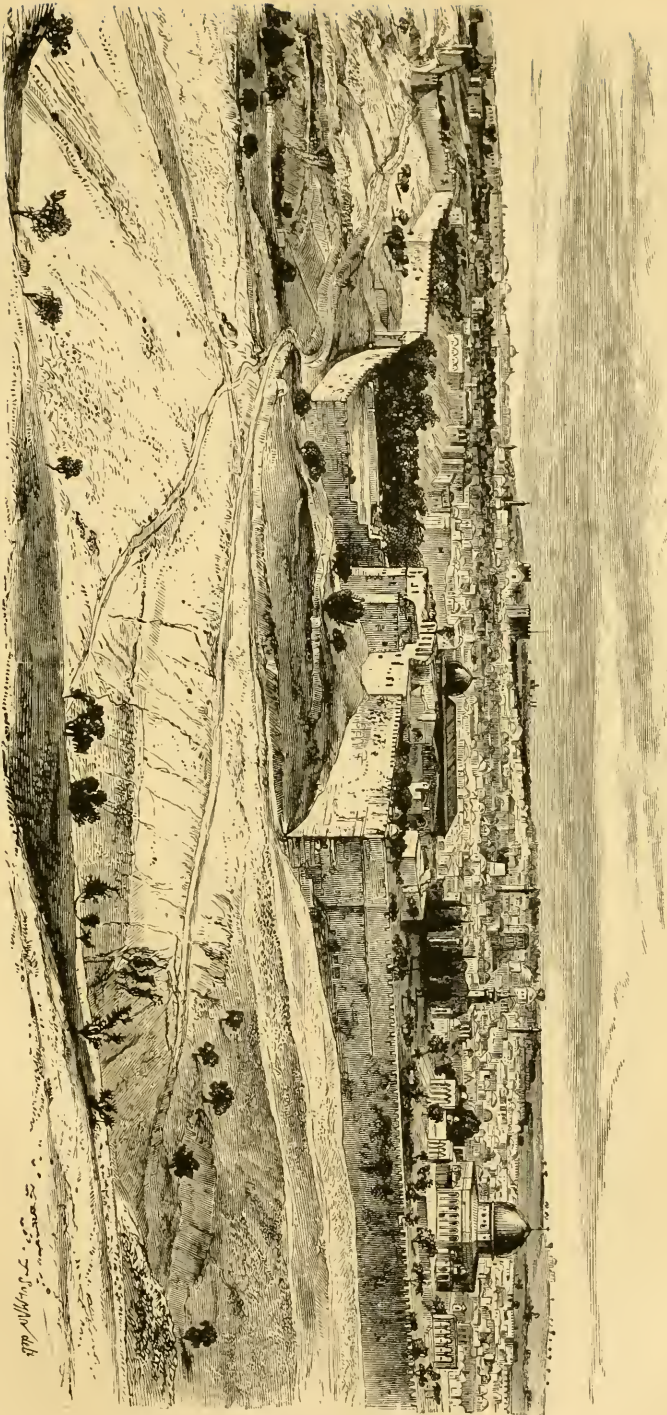
40. And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.—Hab. ii. 11.

If these should hold their peace, &c. This is a proverbial expression, denoting the impossibility of repressing or concealing an important fact. "If, at a crisis so intense, so awful, even *these* should hush, and no human voice should welcome the Messiah, we might expect that God would literally rebuke the criminal indifference and stupidity of men by making the very stones upon which they trod utter voices and cry out." It is possible that the words also contain a covert intimation of the destruction of Jerusalem, in which the stones of the city and the temple should proclaim the majesty of our Lord.

41. ¶ And when he was come near, he beheld the city and swept over it.—John xi. 35.

Come near—descending the slope of the hill toward Jerusalem. *Beheld the city*—gazed upon the metropolis which was spread out before Him in all its beauty and magnificence, and which He was now about to enter in a more public manner than ever before. *Wept over it.* Men, generally, are glad when approaching a city, but Jesus now was sad. Here is evidence of Christ's true humanity. Whilst the multitude were in triumph, Jesus was shedding tears. This He did, notwithstanding He had already received much ill usage from the inhabitants of the city, and was at this very juncture to be put to

VIEW OF JERUSALEM, FROM THE SPOT WHERE JESUS WENT OVER THE CITY.



death by them. A sense of the guilt and future ruin of the city overwhelmed the Saviour's spirit. The cause of the destruction of impenitent sinners is in themselves. Christ loves and pities all, even those who are His open enemies. None are hated, though none but believers are finally saved. The true Christian feels a deep concern about the souls of unconverted people. (Ps. cxix. 136; Rom. ix. 2.) The existence of a union between awful, inflexible justice, denouncing sentence against the criminal, and benevolent sympathizing in his misery, even to tears, is most affectingly shown in this verse and the two verses immediately succeeding. (Ez. xviii. 23; Rom. ix. 1, 2, 3; Jer. ix. 1, 2, 10, 11.) It is affecting to see a great man like Newton or Bacon weep. How tremendous the significance of the tears of the Son of God! They are awfully foreboding in regard to the incorrigible, and yet full of encouragement to penitent sinners.

42. Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which bring unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

If thou hadst known, or in the optative form which the phrase admits, "O that thou hadst known." It implies a wish. It is like Isa. xlvi. 18. *Even thou*, rather, *thou also*, thus placing the unbelieving inhabitants of Jerusalem in opposition to the disciples of our Lord. *At least in this thy day*. The language of the original is abrupt and interrupted, and peculiarly expressive of the deep interest felt by the Saviour for those of whom He was speaking. These words refer to the *time of thy visitation*, spoken of in verse 44. The whole time of Christ's public activity in Jerusalem was a respite of two years, which had been prepared for more than twenty centuries, and now, as it were, concentrated itself in the one day on which He entered as King into Jerusalem. There is a time when the offer of mercy may be withdrawn from the obstinately impenitent. *The things which belong unto thy peace*. Just as our Lord's words to the people, "would have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings" (Matt. xxiii. 37), do not mean that He would have been a temporal prince, which He so often and earnestly declined and disclaimed; so here, the things over

their ignorance of which He lamented, were not mainly the things pertaining to their continued amity with the Roman state, but to their peace with heaven. It was over the alienation of men's minds from God, their disaffection to the only means of recovery, their indifference to the time of their visitation, and their consequent subjection to Divine wrath, that Jesus wept. *But now they are hid from thine eyes*. They were hidden by a voluntary rejection of the evidence which our Saviour gave of His Divine mission. God's keeping silence is not approbation. His long suffering is not even connivance. He can be merciful, without allowing us to trifle, and insult Him, for even His patience has its rules and bounds.

43. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side.

¹Isa. xxxix. 3, 4; Jer. vi. 3, 6; Luke xxi. 20.

This, with the next verse, is one of the most striking predictions ever uttered. It was literally fulfilled at the siege of Jerusalem under Titus. Josephus gives a very particular account of the building of this *trench*, by which we are to understand a mound set with palisades, or *abattis*. He says it was effected in three days, though it measured thirty-nine furlongs, or almost five miles, and the towers were thirteen in number, every one of them being ten furlongs in compass. By this means the inhabitants were kept in on every side, cut off from all hope of safety by flight, and reduced to the most terrible distress by the famine which ensued.

44. And I shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another: because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

¹1 Kings ix. 7, 8; Micah iii. 12. ²Matt. xxiv. 2, on which see notes; Mark xlii. 2; Luke xxi. 6. ³Dan. ix. 24; Luke i. 68, 78; 1 Peter ii. 12.

Lay thee even with the ground. Josephus says that the Roman emperor commanded the whole city and temple to be demolished, which command was so executed, that strangers coming thither would not believe that the place had ever been inhabited. (Comp. Ps. cxxxvii. 9.) *Thy children within thee*. Thy children and thyself shall be laid in one common ruin. By *children* is meant, not minors, but native-born inhabitants of any age. *One stone upon another*, literally, *they shall not leave in thee stone upon stone*. This was a

proverbial and figurative expression, to denote an utter destruction, and need not be interpreted that not a single stone would be left lying upon another. The city was burnt and destroyed. The Romans burned the extremest parts of it, and demolished the walls. Three towers only and some part of the wall were left standing, for the better encampment of the soldiers, and to show to posterity what a city, and how fortified, the valor of the Romans had taken. As for the temple, after it was burned the Roman general ordered the very foundations of it to be dug up; and, later still, Terentius Rufus ordered its site to be furrowed with the plowshare. *Because thou knowest not the time of thy visitation.* God's visitations are either of wrath (Ex. xxxii. 34), or of mercy (Jer. xxix. 10). The term is here used by our Saviour in the latter sense, and refers to His visiting them by the prophets, John the Baptist and Himself. Churches, nations and even individuals, are sometimes visited with special manifestations of God's presence, and the neglect of these manifestations is the turning point in their spiritual ruin.

45. ¹And he went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought: ²Matt. xxi. 12, on which see notes; Mark xi. 15; John ii. 14, 15.

He went into the temple. He did not go up to the court, or to the palace, though He came in as a King, but to the temple; for His kingdom is spiritual, and not of this world. *And began to cast out, &c.* A similar transaction occurred about three years before. (John ii. 13-15.) Thus Christ purified the temple from profane uses at the beginning and at the end of His ministry. A large place, furnished with shops, was appropriated in the southern part of the spacious outer court of the temple, called the Court of the Gentiles, for the sale of animals and birds for sacrifices, and whatever else might be required for offerings and sacrifices, such as salt, wine, oil, &c. This arrangement, made at first for convenience, afterward became a mere matter of gain and exaction—a sad profanation of the sacred place. The house of God should not be devoted to secular purposes. Christ's zeal for the holiness of the Church and the sanctification of souls is here indicated.

46. Saying unto them, ¹It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves. ²Isa. lvi. 7. ³Jer. vii. 11.

Even in purifying the temple from profane uses, our Lord supports His conduct by a text of Scripture. All reformations in Churches should be built upon God's Word. It is more than probable that the Court of the Gentiles had become a harbor of wicked men who cheated in their traffic, and lived by decit and extortion. *Den of thieves* is a terrible antithesis to the house of God. The word *den*, probably, is an allusion to the caves and recesses of rocks in Judea in which the robbers and bandits found shelter. The offenders, when cast out from the place of their traffic, do not appear to have made the least resistance; doubtless, they were struck with a panic by the secret energy of Christ's omnipotence. (See Mark xi. 1-3.) Perhaps the casting out may be regarded as a miracle. Prayer is good in all places; but there is a particular blessing attends it when offered to God in the house of prayer. He who passes through religious exercises carelessly and negligently, robs God of that glory which he does not pay Him.

47. And he taught daily in the temple. But ¹the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy him. 48. And could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear him.—²Mark xi. 18; John vii. 19 and viii. 37.

Having just called the temple "the house of prayer," our Lord proceeds to show, by His own example, that it is to be the house of "teaching," as well as praying. His crucifixion being near at hand, He employed Himself without intermission in instructing as many people as possible, and in the most public place. He exhibited courage, composure and energy of spirit. Christ's example furnishes the strongest motive for not being weary in well doing. *But the chief priests, &c.* All this time irreconcilable hatred and thoughts of murder were rankling in the breasts of the worldly aristocracy, which counted itself mortally endangered by Him. Jesus endured the contradiction of sinners, and was exposed to their wicked designs in accomplishing His mission.

Were very attentive; literally, they hung upon him, hearing. They listened with so great attention and pleasure, that they hung, as it were, on His lips while He

spake. Doubtless our Lord's words, in these His last days, were of peculiar depth, tenderness and solemnity. Meanwhile His enemies were visibly perplexed. They *could not find what they might do*, or rather, *could not find the (way) in which they might do it*. The Passover had brought numbers of Christ's friends from Galilee, His preaching had won many followers in the region

beyond Jordan, the raising of Lazarus in Bethany had made His name wonderful in and around Jerusalem, and thus the Saviour and the people alike were for the moment an obstacle to the accomplishment of the malicious purposes of His foes. A true Christian should think nothing troublesome and grievous when he finds himself useful in advancing the work of God.

1. Through what city did Jesus pass? 2. What is said of Zaccheus? 3. What parable did Jesus speak? 4. Explain it. 5. How are we to understand verse 26? 6. When Christ had thus spoken, where did He go? 7. Where did He send two of His disciples? 8. For what purpose? 9. What took place at the Mount of Olives? 10. What did Christ do in the temple? 11. What did He say there? 12. What was the result?

CHAPTER XX.

1 *Christ avoucheth his authority by a question of John's baptism.* 9 *The parable of the vineyard.* 19 *Of giving tribute to Cæsar.* 27 *He convinceth the Sadducees that deny the resurrection.* 41 *How Christ is the son of David.* 45. *He warneth his disciples to beware of the scribes.*

This chapter is remarkable, because of the variety of attacks on our Lord which it describes. Whether the whole of the events here narrated took place on one day, is a question on which commentators do not agree. If they did not all happen on one day, they must, at any rate, have happened on two successive days.

AND it came to pass, that on one of those days, as he taught the people in the temple, and preached the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes came upon him with the elders.

^aOn verses 1-8; see on Matt. xxi. 23-27.

One of those days. Supposed to have been one of the four last days of our Lord's life, mentioned in chap. xix. 47; probably the last Tuesday. *As he taught, literally, was teaching. In the temple.* Our Lord persisted calmly in the work of teaching, while He knew that danger beset Him, and that death was close at hand. *Came upon him.* This conveys at once the idea of suddenness and deliberateness.

2. And spake unto him, saying, Tell us, by what authority doest thou these things? or who is he that gave thee this authority? 3. And he answered and said unto them, I will also ask you one thing; and answer me: 4. The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?—^bActs iv. 7 and vii. 27.

Previous efforts had been made to ensnare our Lord in His own words, but

now this is attempted in a more refined way, and with united force. After three years' exhibition of proof, they ask Jesus again to tell them! *By what authority doest thou these things?* They could not deny that He had approved Himself by miracles, hence they felt justified only in asking Him for His authority. They asked this question, not because they did not know, but because they would not acknowledge. The *things* referred to were His entering the city with such a numerous train of attendants; His taking upon Him to reform the economy of the temple, and His receiving from the people the title of the Messiah. *Or who is he that gave thee this authority?* The first question related to the nature of the authority by which He acted, whether it was as a prophet, a priest or a king, no other person having a right to make any reformation in Church or State. This second question was, that if He claimed the authority of any or all of these characters, He should state from whom He derived it—what proof He had that it had a Divine source.

To an honest inquiry on the point mentioned, Jesus, notwithstanding He had already furnished such overwhelming proofs of His Divine mission, would, no doubt, have given a *direct* answer, but

He knew that their purpose was malicious, and hence adopted the method which He did.

The baptism of John, i. e., the religion of which the baptism was a profession. Baptism is mentioned as representing John's ministerial work. *From heaven, or of men.* A Divine or human institution? Our Lord's question, it will be perceived, was in reality an answer to the question of His inquirers. His meaning evidently was that John the Baptist had expressly testified that He was the Messiah. They knew this. They could not deny it. Now, if they really believed that John was a prophet, they would see by "what authority He did what He did"—it was as the Messiah, whom John had proclaimed Him to be.

5. And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then believed ye him no? 6. But and if we say, Of men; all the people will stone us; for they be persuaded that John was a prophet. 7. And they answered, that they could not tell whence it was. 8. And Jesus said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things. †Matt. xiv. 5 and xxi. 26; Luke vii. 29.

They retired an instant, and made the matter an object of common deliberation. They saw and felt the dilemma in which they were placed. *If we shall say, From heaven.* They knew that in acknowledging John's mission to be from God, which they believed it to be, their sagacious opponent would confound them with the inquiry, *Why then believed ye him not? i. e.*, Why did ye not believe the testimony which he, as my forerunner, bore to me as the Messiah? (John i. 29-34, iii. 28-36.) Here was the other horn of the dilemma. *Of men.* If they denied John's Divine mission, they feared violence from the people. Every way Christ's reply was calculated to silence His enemies. It subjected them to the charge of gross inconsistency on the one hand, or to personal peril on the other. *Stone us.* (See Acts vii. 54-60, xxi. 27-36.) *John was a prophet.* The rulers, from political motives, had deserted John; but with all the ranks of the common people, even to the publicans and harlots, there was a deep feeling that John was a messenger from God. These chief priests and scribes feared the people, as Herod did before them.

They did not like to confess. They feigned an ignorance which they did not

possess, for the two possible cases lay open to their discernment; but, in their depravity, they could not bring themselves to give honor to the generally admitted truth. Their internal thoughts and outward conduct were in discord and opposition to each other, which is the essence of hypocrisy.

If they had really not known and inquired in order to know, our Lord would readily have answered them. But it was useless to proffer any further proof of His Messiahship to men who, if they would not believe John's testimony in His favor, would not, of course, believe that which He should offer for Himself. He, therefore, simply exposed their obstinacy to themselves, leaving them to reflect upon it. Both were now silent—He, because on good grounds He would not speak; they, because through their own fault they could not speak. The people present could easily decide which had been victorious.

Practical Reflections. 1. Every true-hearted Christian who tries to do good in the world, must expect that the self-righteous and worldly-minded will dislike his ways. 2. It is a great sin for any one to be willing to acknowledge and proclaim the truth only so far as will subserve his selfish designs. 3. He who forbears speaking against the truth only through fear of men, has betrayed and dishonored it already in his heart. 4. Pharisaic pride, according to its different interests, either pretends to know everything, or affects to know nothing. 5. Many will say anything rather than acknowledge themselves to be in the wrong. 6. Lying is one of the commonest sins in the world. Gehazi, Ananias and Sapphira have more followers and imitators than Peter and Paul.

9. Then began he to speak to the people this parable. †A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time.—†Matt. xxi. 33 on which see notes; Mark xii. 1.

Planted a vineyard. This represents God's attention to Israel, His covenant people, "to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God and the promises." (Rom. ix. 4.) These eminent privileges were conferred upon them as a sacred trust to be cultivated and

improved. A vineyard was customarily used in both the Old Testament and the New as a figure for the Israelitish people. (See Deut. xxii. 32; Isa. v. 1-7; Ps. lxxx. and Matt. xx. 1.) This "*certain man*" was more than possessor of this vineyard. He had himself "*planted*" it. (Ex. xv. 17.) The planting of this spiritual vineyard found place under Moses and Joshua, in the establishing of the Jewish polity in the land of Canaan. It is described in Deut. xxxii. 12-14. (See Ezek. xvi. 9-14; Neh. ix. 23-25.) *Let it forth*—leased or rented it, with rent to be paid from the produce. *To husbandmen*—The Jewish people, especially their rulers and priests, who were the chief instigators in all those things which were bringing wrath upon the nation unto the uttermost. *And went into a far country for a long time*. This means either that after the open manifestation of Himself, which God made to Israel at the giving of the law from Sinai, and in the miracles which accompanied their deliverance from Egypt, and their introduction to Canaan, He did not, in so open and extraordinary a manner manifest Himself to the people again (Deut. xxxiv. 10-12), or it indicates the feeling of the vine-dressers, who think that God has no regard to their conduct. (Ez. viii. 12, ix. 9; Ps. x. 4, 5; Luke xii. 45.)

10. And at the season he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard: but the husbandmen beat him, and sent him away empty.

At the season. An intimation of the period in which the proper prophetic activity began in Israel, which, as is known, was a considerable time after the founding of the theocratic state, so that the fruits had had abundant time to come to maturity. *Sent a servant*. By the servants mentioned are meant extraordinary ambassadors who were sent from time to time in the owner's name, to demand the stipulated tribute—prophets, such as Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, men not of the number or in the confidence of the ordinary rulers, but specially commissioned by the Supreme, to approach them with reproof and instruction. *That they should give him of the fruit, &c.* He had reason to expect fruit, because all the arrangements and agreements were to

this effect. So with the Jews, whom God had taken into solemn covenant, and otherwise highly favored. *Beat him, &c.* The established authorities of the nation, exercising their office for their own pleasure or profit, rejected the counsel, and assaulted the person of the messenger, dismissing him without any fruit. (See on Matt. xxi. 56.)

11. And again he sent another servant: and they beat him also, and entreated him shamefully, and sent him away empty. 12. And again he sent a third: and they wounded him also, and cast him out.

The repeated messages sent by the prophets, generation after generation, indicate not only the continued patience, long-suffering and wonderful compassion of God, but also the growing wantonness and wickedness of the people, by whom His servants, although sometimes effecting temporary reforms, were almost uniformly rejected and maltreated.

13. Then said the lord of the vineyard, "What shall I do? I will send my beloved Son: it may be they will reverence him when they see him."
Isa. v. 4; Hos. vi. 4, xl. 8. Matt. iii. 17, xvii. 5; John i. 34.

What shall I do? The Lord of the vineyard is brought before us in soliloquy, that the act of love may be exhibited in the most striking and affecting manner. When men's hands were stained with the blood of the prophets, it might have been expected that the judgments of God would descend upon them and crush them, but He whose "ways are not as our ways," determined on another and far more earnest effort to win the wicked and rebellious people to love and obedience. *I will send my beloved Son*. The Lord Jesus here speaks of Himself. He is God's "beloved Son in whom He is well-pleased." God will send even *Him*, as the last trial of Divine mercy with His covenant people, *as such*. *It may be that they will reverence him, &c.* This expression is natural and appropriate in the lips of a human proprietor, but obviously, when applied to God, it means only that such reverence was claimed, was due, and might justly be expected. The Omniscient knew beforehand that the Jewish rulers would not yield even to this last and tenderest appeal.

14. But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.

This is the heir—the owner of the property.

They confess his being *the heir, among themselves*, but they offer no such confession to him. *Come, let us kill him.* The owner being absent, they imagined that if the son was dead they could find none to interfere with them in holding the vineyard without paying the rent. *That the inheritance may be ours.* These rulers were determined to retain the power over Israel. Their meaning here was, "If we let this man alone, all men will believe on him. Then the Romans will come and take away *our* place and nation. Thus *our* position will be irretrievably ruined. *He* will get the heritage, if we do not take instant measures to prevent it. It is expedient *for us* that one man die for the people. Let us therefore put him to death. This is our only hope for continued authority and power."

15. So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What, therefore, shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them? 16. He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others. And when they heard it, they said, God forbid.

See on Matt. xxi. 39-41.

Out of the vineyard. A striking prophecy of the crucifixion outside of the city. (Heb. xiii. 12, 13; John xix. 17.) *What therefore, &c.* Christ makes an appeal to His hearers as if willing that they shall judge of the righteousness of the punishment so richly deserved by the vine-dressers. *Unto them.* It is observable how the successive generations, who for so many centuries had been filling up the measure of the iniquity of Israel, are considered, throughout the entire parable, but as one body of husbandmen. God will deal with nations as indeed *being*, as having a living unity in themselves, as in fact *bodies*. They are something more than mere aggregations of individuals.

The judgment pronounced is two-fold. *Destroy*, bring all sorts of evil upon *these husbandmen, i. e.*, the Jewish state and nation. *And give the vineyard, &c.* He was about to take their privileges from them and give them to the Gentiles, who should cultivate the ground on which they were placed, and render Him the fruits. *God forbid.* This sudden ejaculation by the people showed that they fully understood the awful application of the parable. The exclamation was either an expression of fear, desiring that such evil

might be averted, or of unbelief: "That shall never be, it is impossible that our privileges can ever be so forfeited."

17. And he beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, *¶*The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? [¶]Isa. xxviii. 16; Acts iv. 11; Eph. ii. 20; 1 Peter ii. 6, 7; Ps. cxviii. 22; Matt. xxi. 42, on which see notes.

What is this then, &c. He thus gives them to understand that if they were right in their deprecation, the prophecy of the Scripture would not be fulfilled, which yet is an absolute impossibility. *The stone which the builders rejected.* This refers to Christ and His rejection by those who called themselves leaders and builders in the Jewish Church. He was cast off by them as a stone which the architect or workmen, thinking too unshapely to work into the structure, throws aside as unfit and of no value. *The same is become the head of the corner?* The very man Christ Jesus whom the official but false builders refused, dishonored and slew, God raised up and made King upon His holy hill of Zion. It is a dreadful discovery for those husbandmen to make, that the Son whom they murdered lives, and has become their Lord. *The head-stone of the corner* is the large stone placed in the corner of a stone edifice, for the purpose of binding the two walls firmly together. Jesus Christ is the strong and firm corner-stone of the new building of the Christian Church, in which those who were hitherto divided, Jews and Gentiles, have been united into one glorious body. (Eph. ii. 13, 20.)

18. Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

[¶]Dan. ii. 34, 35; Matt. xxi. 41, on which see notes.

Two kinds of punishment are here referred to, not two different degrees of the same punishment. In the one, the person offending is active (he stumbles and is broken); in the other, passive (he is fallen upon and crushed). In the first case, whatever evil is experienced is self-inflicted by the person who endures it; in the second, that which is experienced rushes upon the sufferer with irresistible force, from the offended and now avenging Saviour. The one is a punishment only of this life, where alone sinners have the opportunity of stumbling on the rock of salvation, and consists in all the loss of

peace, consolation and blessing, together with all that judicial blindness, bitterness of spirit, hardness of heart, and manifold disquietudes of mind, which inevitably blight and desolate the moral condition of those who resist the claims of Messiah. The other punishment belongs to eternity, and consists in the fearful and everlasting retribution which Christ will inflict upon all His adversaries when He takes to Himself His power and great glory—consigning them to final perdition in utter darkness.

Practical Reflections. 1. Civil and religious liberty, the Bible and the Sabbath, the Church and its ministry, have been provided and preserved for us by our Father's care. We are permitted to enjoy all for our own benefit, under deduction of a tribute to the Giver. Our offerings cannot directly reach Him, but He has made them payable to the poor. 2. Men not only refuse to obey God, but are angry with those who *reprove* their disobedience. 3. Unconverted men become more and more hardened in sin, as they resist calls to duty. Every sin they commit, and do not repent of, prepares for the commission of a greater. 4. Abuse of God's ministers because of their character or faithfulness is a gross insult to Him who sent them. 5. God has done all to secure the salvation of men which, consistently with the highest wisdom and goodness, it was possible for Him to do. 6. God overrules the wrath of man so as to make it contribute to His glory. 7. The nation that will not render to God the fruits of His vineyard, may have their privileges in judgment taken away, and given to another nation. 8. The blessed Saviour, who might, like a stone, be a support and defense, will become, if we refuse to believe in Him, the instrument of our destruction.

19. ¶ And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people: for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them. 20. ¶ And they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor.—¹Matt. xxiii. 15.

A guilty conscience needs no accuser. These enemies of our Lord, instead of yielding to conviction, were exasperated at Jesus as they saw the application to themselves of the truth He had just uttered. Only fear of the people prevented them

from at once putting Him to death. *Watched him*; better and more literally, *having watched* their opportunity. *Spies*. The Greek word so rendered means persons who crouch in some secret place to *spy, listen, catch or hurt*. *Which should feign, &c., i. e.*, pretend to be scrupulously conscientious in every point. *Take hold of his words, &c.*, if He answered as it was hoped He would. *Might deliver him, &c.* The Roman power is meant.

21. And they asked him, saying, ¹Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God ²truly; 22. Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Cesar, or no? ³Matt. xxiii. 16, on which see notes; Mark xii. 14. ⁴Or, of a truth.

Acceptest, showest no partiality to any man, not even Herod himself. *Truly*, teachest the true path of duty. There was something peculiarly artful in this flattering address. "Their words were smoother than butter," yet there was "war in their hearts." (Ps. lv. 21; Prov. xxvi. 23; Rom. xvi. 18.) Persons of this description will be met with as long as the world stands. The *language* of Christianity is precisely that part of religion which a false Christian finds it most easy to attain. The walk of a man's daily life, and not the talk of his lips, is the only safe test of his character. We ought always to suspect the praise which is given by men devoted to the world.

Tribute, the annual poll-tax of a denarius upon every person, levied by the Roman emperor. This was a matter of fierce dispute at this time, the Herodians holding the affirmative, and the fanatical Pharisees, on the ground of Deut. xvii. 15, the negative. *Cesar*. This was the general title given to the Roman emperors, as Pharaoh was for the Egyptian kings. Tiberius *Cesar* was at this time emperor. This question involved one of the most cunningly-devised snares which was ever laid for Christ. If He had answered in the affirmative, they calculated rightly that He would alienate and offend His disciples and all the people, for there was never a people by whom the yoke of bondage was felt more heavily than by the Jews. On the other hand, had Christ declared the tribute unlawful, or let fall one word which might have been tortured to that mean-

ing, they would doubtless have denounced Him to the Romans as a promoter of sedition, and, under the reign of Tiberius, His death would have been the inevitable consequence of such an accusation.

23. But he perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye me?

Tempt ye me?—try me by such an ensnaring question, and endeavor to draw me into danger by it. Jesus saw at once the trap laid for Him by His enemies, and avoided it with the same admirable address which had confounded them the day before.

24. Show me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said, Cæsar's.

¹Matt. xviii. 28, and xxii. 19, 20, on which see notes.

A penny. This was the *denarius*, a Roman silver coin, the principal money at the time. It became the current coin of Judea after its subjection. It was the price of a day's labor in Palestine (Matt. xx. 2); a soldier's pay was less. *Denarius*, like our word *dime*, signifies *ten*; that is, ten ases, to which it was originally equivalent, hence its name. It does not follow that a single piece of this coin formed the entire amount of the tribute to be paid, but the amount, whatever it was, was paid in this coin. As the Jews were averse to this and other coins of idolaters, the Romans probably required the tax to be paid in this coin, in order to render it current, as an evidence of their dominion over the country. *Whose image and superscription hath it?* Our Lord, of course, knew whose effigy and inscription it bore, but He made the inquirers answer to their own confusion. *Cæsar's.* Thus they acknowledged that Cæsar's superiority is peacefully submitted to in the quiet of society and the commercial exchanges.

25. And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar's, and unto God the things which be God's.—See on Matt. xxii. 21.

Said unto them. "The meekness of wisdom" was never more beautifully manifested than in this answer of our Lord to so insidious a question, and nothing can be more worthy of imitation than this: that He always took occasion, even from the most captious and frivolous questions, which would have excited contempt or indignation in others, calmly to call the attention of the hearers to some very important instruction. *The things*

which be Cæsar's. What is Cæsar's? 1. *Honor.* The civil government under which a man lives, and by which he is protected, demands his honor and reverence. 2. *Obedience.* The laws which are made for the suppression of evil-doers, and the maintenance of good order, which are calculated to promote the benefit of the whole, and the comfort of the individual, should be religiously obeyed. 3. *Tribute.* The government that charges itself with the support and defense of the whole, should have its necessary expenses repaid by the people in whose behalf they are incurred, hence tax should be paid. Cæsar, however, has no right to infringe the rights of God. Human laws are limited by the Divine law. The Christian must, as far as possible, comply with both. Where the human law conflicts with the Divine, he must obey the latter and suffer the consequences. It is not an easy matter to determine precisely in all cases what are "the things of Cæsar," and what are "the things of God"—where the claims of Cæsar end, and where the claims of God begin. It would, perhaps, be safe to say that the former include things political, secular and temporal, and the latter include things sacred, moral and spiritual. Sometimes a question of a mixed character arises, involving both political and moral elements; in this case duty in relation to the question is to be performed by the individual under a sense of double responsibility, regard for the moral aspect always being supreme. Such a question is also to be treated by the Church and by the State according to the view of it which it brings under their control respectively. *And unto God the things which be God's.* We are not to recognize antagonism here, but unity. Their civil duties did not release them from religious obligations (1 Peter ii. 17), nor did their duties to God absolve them from duties to the State. (Rom. xiii. 1.) Instead of one class of duties being set at variance with the other, our Lord harmonizes and confirms them both. (1 Peter ii. 13, 14.) He has not divorced them, but united them. We must never do anything contrary to the rights of God in obeying the government, and never violate the rights of

government under pretense of doing service to God. Honor, love, obedience, faith, fear, prayer, spiritual worship, were payments to God which these "spies" might daily make, and payments with which the Roman government did not interfere. Such payments Jesus directed them to make.

26. And they could not take hold of his words before the people: and they marvelled at his answer, and held their peace.

By Christ's answer, *Cæsar* is satisfied; he got *his own* to the uttermost farthing. *God* is glorified; His honor is, in every respect, secured. The *Pharisees* cannot complain; for His decision is but their own confession put in shape. The *people* are edified. One of the most difficult questions that could possibly come before them is answered in such a way as to relieve their consciences, and direct their conduct. The very *Gaulonites* cannot complain, for He does not decide that there are no just grounds for revolutionizing the government and asserting independence. All He decides is that government is right; and that while *Cæsar's* government is the *acknowledged* government, it must receive its dues. This answer, moreover, contained a principle for all following centuries, by which, on the one hand, the independence, on the other hand, the practically social direction, of the religious life, is sufficiently secured. Well, therefore, might His listening enemies be vexed and ashamed, being clearly and unexpectedly confuted on their own principles.

27. ¶ Then came to him certain of the Sadducees, which deny that there is any resurrection, and they asked him. 28. Saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If any man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. 29. There were therefore seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and died without children. 30. And the second took her to wife, and he died childless. 31. And the third took her; and in like manner the seven also; and they left no children, and died. 32. Last of all the woman died also. 33. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife.

¶ Matt. xxii. 23. on which see notes; Mark xii. 18. Acts xiii. 6, 8. Deut. xxv. 5; Ruth i. 11, 12.

The attempt to entice the Saviour within the sphere of the controversy between politics and religion having entirely miscarried, they now seek to allure Him upon another not less dangerous territory, to entangle Him in the strife between the purely sensual and the strictly religious view of the world. Malice is ever active;

let it be defeated ever so often, it returns to the charge. Jesus and His Gospel give no quarter to vice; the vicious will give no quarter to Him or it. *Sadducees* which deny, &c. A Jewish sect often mentioned in the New Testament. Its founder was Sadoc, a disciple of Antigonus, who was president of the Jewish Sanhedrim, and lived about two hundred and sixty years before Christ. They taught, among other things, that God was not to be served from mercenary motives, that there were no future rewards or punishments appointed unto men, and, consequently, no world of retribution, and no angels or spirits.

As their object was to show that Moses could not possibly have presupposed a resurrection, they proposed to Jesus a difficulty that would grow out of their law, if the relations which it prescribed were to be extended beyond the grave, viz., if several brethren had come by the law to have successively the same woman to wife, who should claim her, of those seven, in the future world? The law referred to (Deut. xxv. 5, 6), which required a man to marry the widow of a deceased elder brother, and raise up children, as being his, was intended to prevent the loss of the memory of a son of Abraham. It was a part of the system by which the memory of the institutes of the old and true religion was to be preserved. *Seven brethren*. It is very likely that the Sadducees increased the number, merely to make the question the more difficult.

34. And Jesus answering, said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage:

Children of this world, &c. By this is simply meant those who live in this world, not such as are wholly given to the world, as before. (xvi. 8.) There is no reflection on matrimony. It is merely a declaration that the condition of men and women in a world to come is utterly unlike their condition in this world.

35. But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage:

As the question of the Sadducees (briefly feigning to be orthodox), which Christ here answers, regarded solely the children of Abraham, who were assumed to be of course heirs of the *blessed* resurrection,

it is of the blessed resurrection, or the blessed side of the resurrection, only, that Jesus now speaks, to which the *worthy* alone do in fact attain. Nothing is said of the resurrection of the wicked, because it is only a resurrection to unmitigated suffering. (Acts xxiv. 15; John v. 29.) It will be an existence, but not the *life* which is promised to them that believe. (Matt. xxv. 46; Phil. iii. 11.) *That world.* The place where Christ reigns in glory. Those who "shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world" are not such as have personal merit (which no one can have), but such as are interested by faith in Christ's merit, who *purchased it for us*, and have a holy meetness for it wrought in them by the Spirit, who *prepares us for it.* *Neither marry.* Spoken of males. *Given in marriage.* Spoken of females. In the resurrection, the relations that are beautiful on earth shall be utterly unknown. Not that one shall fail to recognize another, but that the relationship that they have sustained the one to the other as man and wife shall have ceased, when all shall be perfectly holy and perfectly happy.

36. Neither can they die any more, for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.

1 Cor. xv. 42, 49, 52; 1 John iii. 2. 1 Rom. viii. 23.

Neither can they die any more. Hence the necessity of marriage to perpetuate the race no longer exists. Soul and body are made incapable of separation, and both incapable of disintegration or extinction. *Equal unto the angels.* Our Lord here vindicates against the Sadducees the belief in the existence of angels as personal beings. (Acts xxiii. 8.) The meaning appears to be, that the saints shall be *angel-like*, in freedom from death and disease, in not being subject to the appetites and propensities of the body, and in complete deliverance from a condition of being in which marriage and birth are needful to supply the continual waste occasioned by death. From this comparison, it does not follow that the saints in heaven will not have bodies. Our Lord did not use the similitude at all to show this. The nature of the future bodies of the saints is described in 1 Cor. xv. 42, *seq.* *And are the children of God.* Not here in the sense of adoption through faith in Christ, but as partakers

of the Divine nature, so that they cannot die. This means, evidently, that the saints are introduced into a state of peculiar privilege, as members of God's family, and residents in God's house, after a fashion that they know nothing of here on earth. *Being the children of the resurrection*, literally, *sons, or sharers of the resurrection*, because they have attained everlasting life and blessedness with Christ. (Compare John xiv. 19; 2 Tim. i. 10.)

37. Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

1 Exod. iii. 6.

Are raised. The present in a general and universal sense for the future. *Even Moses.* To whom ye appeal for the proof of the direct opposite. *Showed at the bush.* See Exod. iii. 6, 16, which was probably quoted because the Sadducees only acknowledged the Pentateuch. *When he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, &c.* Abraham was dead upward of three hundred years before these words were spoken by Moses, yet still Moses called Him *the God of Abraham, &c.* Now, the Saviour argues, as God is not "a God of the dead" (that word being equal, in the sense of the Sadducees, to an eternal annihilation), but of the "living;" it therefore follows, that, if He be the *God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*, these are not *dead*, but *alive—alive with God*, though they have ceased, for some hundreds of years, to exist among mortals. A being who is elevated enough to have a true, immortal God to be *his God*, must himself be neither the creature of time nor annihilation. The same thing is true of all believers, for the promise is to them also, as Abraham's seed.

38. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto him.—1 Rom. vi. 10, 11.

Not a God of the dead, of those who, being (according to the Sadducean sense of the word "dead") destitute of life, and consequently of sensibility, can neither know nor honor Him. *But of the living.* He is the God only of those who love and adore Him, and are, by consequence, alive. Hence the patriarchs named must all be believed to be alive, in respect of God, whom they still worship and serve. *For all live unto him.* All those living on the earth, or who have long been dead,

buried and removed from the world, are, in the sight of Him who inhabiteth eternity, living. As Christians, the thought of the resurrection should cheer us in every sorrow. (Job xix. 26.)

39. ¶ Then certain of the scribes answering said, Master, thou hast well said. 40. And after that they durst not ask him any question at all. 41. And he said unto them, "How say they that Christ is David's son? 42. And David himself saith in the book of Psalms, 'The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand.' 43. Till I make thine enemies thy footstool." 41. David therefore calleth him Lord, how is he then his son?

*Matt. xxii. 46, on which see notes; Mark xii. 31. *Matt. xxii. 42; Mark xii. 35. *Ps. cx. 1; Acts ii. 34.

Thou hast well said. This was extorted praise. It was probably uttered by the Pharisees who had not yet left the field, and who could never be more inclined to forget their own recent defeat, and frankly and openly to praise our Lord, than just now, after He had thus publicly humbled their deadly enemies.

They durst not ask, or, did not venture to ask any other question, for fear of being again confounded, as they had already been.

How say they. This expression implies that it was a common expression among Jewish theologians—an acknowledged and received opinion. *That Christ.* Christ is the Greek word for the Hebrew Messiah. The question was not asked by our Lord concerning Himself, whom most of His hearers were far from allowing to be "the Christ," but concerning the Messiah whom they expected. *Is David's son.* This was a thing well known among the Jews, and universally acknowledged (John vii. 42), and is a most powerful proof against them that the Messiah is come.

The Psalm referred to is the 110th. Our Lord decides that David was the author of it, and that he wrote under *Divine inspiration.* (See Matt. xxii. 43.) This Psalm was pressed by Peter on the Jews, in the first public sermon he addressed to them on the day of Pentecost. (Acts ii. 34.) *The Lord said unto my Lord,* that is, God the Father said to God the Son, who was to be incarnate, whom David called his Lord, both as God and as Mediator, his Lord by right of creation and redemption. *Sit thou on my right hand.* Take the place of the greatest eminence and authority. *Till I make thine enemies thy footstool,* until I subdue both Jews and Gentiles under thee,

and cause them both to acknowledge thee as their Sovereign and Lord. It is not implied that the Messiah's royal state will cease when this result has been reached. *How is he then his son?* Here was the point to be explained. The question concerning the Messiah's person could only be answered by admitting that He must be God as well as man, and man as well as God—David's son, as man; David's Lord, as God-man. As the Jews did not attempt to deny the conclusion of our Lord's question, it is evident they could not. Indeed, there was no other way of invalidating the argument, but by denying that the prophecy in question related to Christ; but it seems the prophecy was so fully and generally understood to belong to the Messiah, that they did not attempt to do this.

43. ¶ *Then in the audience of all the people he said unto his disciples, 46. *Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts: 47. *Which devour widows' houses, and for a show make long prayers: the same shall receive greater damnation.

*Matt. xxiii. 1; Mark xii. 38. *Matt. xxiii. 5. *Luke ix. 43. *Matt. xxiii. 14.

Beware of the scribes. Take heed that ye be not deceived by those who should show you the way of salvation. It is a great misfortune to be obliged to beware of those who ought to be our rule and pattern. *Long robes.* The Jews were required to wear a blue border, or fringe, on their outside garments, to remind them that they were God's people. (Num. xv. 38; Deut. vi. 8, xxii. 12.) These fringes the scribes made excessively large, in order to impress on the minds of the common people an opinion of their own holiness and their great reverence for the law. *Greetings in the markets.* They were fond of resorting to the markets and other places of public concourse, to receive the marks of deference and respect, which were generally given to men of rank and reputation by the great body of the people. There was nothing wrong in receiving such tokens of respect; but to "love" them, to court them, to put themselves in the way of receiving them, to be mortified if they were withheld, and elated if they were bestowed—all this was not only indicative of a weak, ill-judging mind, but it was also utterly inconsistent with the very elementary principle of a truly good

character—supreme regard to what is true and right, whether it pleases men or not. (John v. 24.) *Highest seats in the synagogues.* The synagogues were fashioned in imitation of the temple, with a central erection, supported by pillars, and a space surrounding it. In the center of this a place was prepared for reading the law and the prophets—an elevated platform, next to which were the seats for the rulers, which were raised above the other seats. The “highest seats” here probably refers to the highest of the seats appropriated to the rulers—the highest of the uppermost seats. It was not wrong for the scribes to occupy the seats set apart for them, but to be eager to get the most honorable of these showed a vain-glorious mind. This is self-idolatry; bad anywhere, but especially in places of worship. There to seek honor to ourselves, where we come to give glory to God, is to mock God, instead of to serve Him. It savors much of pride and hypocrisy, when people do not care to go to church unless they can present a fine appearance and make a figure there. *The chief rooms at feasts,* literally, the uppermost reclining-places round a table at a feast. Here the same radical defect of character shows itself. *Discour*

widows' houses. This was done sometimes by plotting with the children to deprive their widowed mother of her estate, and sometimes by inducing the widow to give up her estate to them for superstitious purposes. *Make long prayers.* A religious rabbi would pray nine hours a day. It was not the length of the prayers which was their crime, but the fact that they were a mere pretense—“for a show.” *Greater damnation.* For this hypocrisy, doing the most despicable deeds under the show of piety, they should be the more severely punished in the future world. Whatever else we are in religion, let us be true. However feeble our faith, hope, love and obedience may be, let us see to it that they are real, genuine and sincere. Let us abhor the very idea of part-acting and mask-wearing in our Christianity. God requires “truth in the inward parts.” The very first piece of Christian armor recommended by Paul is “truth.” (Eph. vi. 10.) As the Bible teaches distinctly that there will be degrees of glory in heaven, so it teaches, with no less distinctness, both here and elsewhere, that there will be degrees of condemnation and misery in hell.

1. What did the chief priests, scribes and elders ask Jesus in the temple? 2. How did He reply to them? 3. What effect was produced? 4. Explain the parable of the vineyard. 5. For what purpose were “spies” sent forth? 6. What question was asked of Jesus in regard to giving tribute? 7. How did He dispose of it? 8. Explain His answer. 9. How did Jesus reply to the question of the Sadducees? 10. How are we to understand the reasoning in verses 41-44? 11. Why were the disciples warned to beware of the scribes?

CHAPTER XXI.

1 *Christ commendeth the poor widow.* 5 *He foretelleth the destruction of the temple, and of the city Jerusalem:* 25 *The signs also which shall be before the last day.* 31 *He exhorteth them to be watchful.*

The time was near when Jesus would leave the temple, never to return. Before He left it, He sat for a while (Mark xii. 41) in the court called the *women's court*. The inner court was called the court of Israel, and there no one was permitted to

sit down, but in the women's court sitting was allowed.

AND he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury.

^aMark xii. 41, on which see notes.

And he looked up. This expression conveys the idea of watching attentively for some time. Seating Himself in self-possessed repose, He watched the doings at the temple treasury. *Saw the rich men casting,* more literally, *the rich who were*

casting. Their gifts into the treasury—the chests which were placed in the court of the women, under the pillars that adorned the court, to receive offerings and contributions.

2. And he saw also a certain poor widow, casting in thither two *mites.

*Mark xii. 42. on which see notes.

A certain poor widow. She is singled out from the whole crowd of donors. She may have been one of those whose houses the proud had devoured. (xx. 47.) She had to earn her own livelihood. She must have been a believer in the promises of God, or she could not have presented an acceptable offering. (Heb. xi. 6.) *Two mites.* A mite was the smallest copper coin in use among the Jews in our Saviour's time. It seems to have been a native coin. Two made one Roman *quadrans*, which was equal to the fourth of an *as*. Ten or sixteen *ases* were equal to a *denarius*. (See on xx. 24.) It was equal to the fifth part of our cent. We call it *mite*, from the French, *miète*, which signifies a crumb, or very small morsel.

3. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: 4. For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.—^{b2} Cor. viii. 2; see Mark xii. 43, 44.

Cast in more than they all. More in proportion to her means; more in the faith and love which prompted the gift; more in God's sight, who looks at the motives and the circumstances of givers. Our Lord does not at all censure or lightly esteem the gifts of the rich, only He extols far above their beneficence the gift of the poor widow, whose offering was brought, not like that of most of the Pharisees, from ignoble impulses. *Of their abundance.* This means that what the rich gave, they gave, as the original literally signifies, *of their overflow*, and thus hardly felt what they contributed, because much was left behind. *Unto the offerings* is equivalent to *into the treasury* (verse 1), implying the additional idea that these were offerings made to God. *Of her penury.* Both representations are substantially the same, and mean that what the widow gave, she gave out of a store so small that, after giving, nothing seemed to be left. *All the living that she had.* Her offering was the whole of her income for that day, or, perhaps, the whole of the money in her possession

at that time. A person so poor as she would necessarily live from hand to mouth, and possess no capital or property, except what was received from one source or another, day after day.

Note, 1. Christ is omniscient. He knows and observes all men and all things—all we do in public and in private. (Jer. xvii. 10; Prov. xv. 3; Heb. iv. 13.) 2. He observes our state and situation. He knew the abundance of the rich men, and the poverty of the widow; how much they had given, and what they had left. 3. He sees the motives which lead men to perform their actions, and the *different* motives from which they perform the *same* action, whether we act from vanity and hypocrisy, or from love and zeal for His glory. 4. We are to judge *impartially* in cases of this kind, not permitting ourselves to be carried away to decide for a person by the largeness of the gift on the one hand, or *against* him, by the smallness of the bounty on the other. 5. The Saviour estimates liberality according to the ability of the giver. Men judge the heart according to the deeds; the Lord judges the deed according to the heart. It is not said that He loveth a *liberal* giver but a *cheerful* giver. *He accepteth the gift according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not.* 6. Jesus measures littleness and greatness by a very different measure from the measure of man. Those actions only are great in His sight which are done with a true Christian heart. He looks with gracious favor upon the least offering which is only presented in the right spirit. He is now the same as when He marked the gift of one "poor widow" as attentively as the gifts of many "rich men." 7. There is great power in little things. Penny clubs have done much for the cause of Christianity. 8. The poor are expected to give to God what they can, trusting in His Providence, and looking for His blessing. 9. If people would "give their mite" really and literally as the widow gave hers, many would have to give far more money than they ever give now. 10. "O, our God!" says one, "the poorest of us, Thy servants, have our two mites also, a soul and a body. Persuade and enable us

to offer them both unto Thee. Though they are Thine already, yet Thou wilt graciously accept them, and O, happy shall we be in Thy acceptance!"

5. ¹ And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones, and gifts, he said, ² Matt. xxiv. 1, &c., on which see notes, Mark xiii. 1.

The feeling with which all Jews, in our Lord's time, regarded the temple, was something far beyond what we can imagine in the present day. *Goodly stones.* As the whole temple was built with the greatest cost and magnificence, so nothing was more stupendous than the uncommon measure of the stones, some of which, particularly those employed in the foundations, were in magnitude forty cubits, and the superstructure was worthy of such foundations. A cubit was about twenty-two inches of our measure. Some of the stones were of the whitest marble, forty-five cubits long, five cubits high and six broad. "The appearance of the temple," says *Josephus*, "was such as to strike the mind, and astonish the sight. For it was on every side covered with solid plates of gold, which reflected, when the sun rose upon it, such a strong and dazzling effulgence, that the eye could not sustain its radiance. At a distance, it appeared a huge mountain covered with snow. For where the plates of gold were not, it was extremely white and glistening." *Tacitus* describes it as "of immense opulence." *Gifts*, which persons had, in gratitude for deliverance from imminent dangers or from respect to the building, hung on the walls and pillars. The hanging up of *consecrated gifts* in their temples was common among the ancients.

6. *As for these things which ye behold, the days will come in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.* ⁷ Luke xix. 44; ⁸ 1 Kings ix. 7, 9; ⁹ Isa. lxiv. 10, 11; ¹⁰ Jer. vii. 11, 14. See on Matt. xxiv. 2, &c.

This prediction will strike us the more, if we bear in mind that these huge stones were bound together with lead, and fastened with strong iron cramps. *Josephus* says, "Cæsar gave orders that they should now demolish the whole city and temple, except the three towers, Phaselus, Hippicus and Miriamne, and a part of the western wall, and these were spared, but, for all the rest of the wall, it was laid so completely even with the ground, by those who dug it up from the foundation, that

there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited." (See on xix. 44.)

It is a very common practice in the prophetic writings, to carry on two subjects together, a principal and a subordinate one. In Isaiah, there are no less than three subjects, the restoration of the Jews from Babylonish captivity, the call of the Gentiles to the Christian covenant, and the redemption of man by the Messiah, which are frequently adumbrated under the same figures and images, and are so blended and interwoven together, that it is extremely difficult to separate them from each other. In the same manner, our Saviour seems to hold out the destruction of Jerusalem, which is His principal subject, as a type of the dissolution of the world, which is the under-part of the representation. By thus judiciously mingling these two important catastrophes, He gives at the same time a most interesting admonition to His immediate hearers, the Jews, and a most awful lesson to all His future disciples, and the benefit of His predictions, instead of being confined to one occasion, or to one people, is by this admirable management extended to every subsequent period of time, and to the whole Christian world. Learn hence, 1. That sin has laid the foundation of ruin in the most flourishing cities and kingdoms; Jerusalem, the glory of the world, is here by sin threatened to be made a desolation. 2. That the threatenings of God are to be feared, and shall be fulfilled, whatever apparent improbabilities there may be to the contrary. 'Tis neither the temple's strength nor beauty that can oppose or withstand God's power.

7. And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?

See on Matt. xxiv. 3.

The disciples inquired concerning two things: 1. The precise time of the approaching catastrophe. 2. The sign of it. Our Lord answered only the last question, while He in reference to the first gave to them only general intimations. (Comp. Matt. xxiv. 34-36.) The signs which He gives are at the same time of such a nature that they, in fact, are only to be seen precursorily at the destruction of Jerusalem,

but will appear decisively and in their full force only at the end of the world. Happy were it if we were as anxious to obey the declaration of God's revealed will, as we are to pry into the counsels of His secret will.

8. And he said, "Take heed that ye be not deceived; for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them."

*Matt. xxiv. 4; Mark xiii. 5; Eph. v. 6; 2 Thes. ii. 3.
*Or, and, *The time.* Matt. iii. 2 and iv. 17.

Take heed, &c. The disciples, it is probable, believed that the time when Jerusalem would be destroyed would be the end of the world. Our Lord, therefore, wishing first of all to set them right upon that point, warned them that no future false Christ should tempt them to believe that His second advent had arrived. This caution is very significant. The mistakes that have been made about the fulfillment of prophecy, in every age of the Church, have been many and great. In our own day we see some persons putting a literal meaning on figurative prophecy, and others putting a figurative meaning on literal prophecy. Amidst this tangled maze of discordant opinions we need greatly the solemn warning of our Lord, "Take heed that ye be not deceived." *For many shall come in my name, &c.* This part of the prophecy began soon to be fulfilled. *The time draweth near, i. e.,* the time of the Messianic kingdom. These are the words of the false Christs. How much were they like the enthusiasts and fanatics who have in our day, at different times, filled the whole land with their predictions of an immediate end of the world! *Go ye not therefore after them*—become not their followers, countenance not their schemes.

9. But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not yet and by.

*Ps. xxvii. 1, 3; Prov. iii. 25, 26; Isa. ii. 12, 13.

That there were wars and great disturbances during the interval of forty years, appears from all the historians of that period, especially Josephus. To relate the particulars would be to transcribe a great part of the history of the Jewish wars. *But the end*—the end of the Jewish State. *By and by.* This phrase, which by a singular reverse of meaning now signifies *after a while*, meant, in the old English of our translators, *immediately*.

10. Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.

*Matt. xxiv. 7, on which see notes.

Nation against nation. This portended the dissensions, insurrections and mutual slaughter of the Jews, and those of other nations who dwelt in the same cities together, as particularly at Cesarea, where the Jews and Syrians contended about the right of the city, which contention proceeded so far that about twenty thousand Jews were slain, and the city was cleared of the Jewish inhabitants. *Kingdom against kingdom.* This portended the open wars of different tetrarchies and provinces against one another, as that of the Jews who dwelt in Peræa against the people of Philadelphia, concerning their bounds, while Cuspius Fadus was procurator, and that of the Jews and Galileans against the Samaritans, for the murder of some Galileans going up to the feast at Jerusalem, while Cumanus was procurator, and that of the whole nation of the Jews against the Romans and Agrippa, and other allies of the Roman empire.

11. And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.

*See on Matt. xxiv. 7.

In the time of Claudius and Nero there were great earthquakes at Smyrna, Miletus, Chios, Samos, Laodicea, Hierapolis and Colosse, in Crete also, and Campania, and one at Rome in the reign of Galba. In Judea, likewise, there were judgments of the same kind. *Famines.* It is evident from Josephus, as well as Eusebius, Suetonius and several other profane historians, that, in addition to earthquakes, there were famines and pestilences in divers places. *And fearful sights, &c.* Josephus enumerates a great variety of astonishing signs and prodigies, which he says preceded the calamities that impended over the Jews, and which he expressly affirms, in perfect conformity to our Saviour's prediction, were signs manifestly intended to forebode their approaching destruction. This account is confirmed by the Roman historian Tacitus, who says that many prodigies happened at that time; armies appeared to be engaged in the sky, arms were seen glittering in the air, the temple was illuminated with flames issuing from the clouds, the doors of the temple sud-

denly burst open, and a voice more than human was heard, "that the gods were departing," and soon after a great motion as if they were departing. War, pestilence and famine are judgments and calamities inflicted by God upon a sinful people for their contempt of Christ and Gospel grace.

12. ^bBut before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. ^cMark xiii. 9: Rev. ii. 10. ^dActs iv. 3, v. 18 and xvi. 24. ^eActs xxv. 23. ^f1 Peter ii. 13.

Before all these—before all these events and ominous sights. Our Lord here appears to have a special reference to the persecutions undergone by the early Christians between the time of His ascension and the destruction of Jerusalem. There is a noticeable climax in the indicated persecutions. Every circumstance here mentioned was minutely and exactly verified in the sufferings of the Apostles and disciples. We learn from the Acts of the Apostles, that the lives of the Apostles were one continued scene of affliction and distress of every kind. They were imprisoned, beaten, brought before councils, and sanhedrims, and kings, such as Herod, Agrippa and the Roman emperor, for the sake of Christ, that is, for being called by His name. Most, if not all of them, except John, suffered violent deaths from the hands of their enemies before the Romans beleaguered Jerusalem.

13. And if shall turn to you for a testimony. 14. ^aSettle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: 15. For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. 16. ^bAnd ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolk, and friends: and ^csome of you shall they cause to be put to death. 17. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. ^dPhil. i. 28; 2 Thes. i. 5. ^eMatt. x. 19: Mark xlii. 11: Luke xii. 11. ^fActs vi. 10. ^gMi. vii. 6; Mark xlii. 12. ^hActs vii. 59 and xii. 2. ⁱMatt. x. 22.

To you for a testimony. This means either that their persecutions would prove an evidence of the truth of Christianity, or that they would be, in the judgment day, a testimony to their faithfulness in behalf of Christ.

The Apostles being, in general, persons of ordinary education, and wholly unacquainted with the laws of the different countries whither they were to go, and with the forms of their courts, might have been painfully anxious at the thought of appearing before kings and rulers, and other persons of distinction, and might

have feared lest, in their agitation, they should be betrayed into some impropriety of language or behavior by which the cause of the Gospel might be injured. Our Lord, therefore, bade them renounce all earthly tempers and human ingenuity, and cast themselves in simple dependence on His aid. He would give them a mouth to utter, and wisdom in the matter of utterance. None but One who was very God could have made such a promise as this.

Ye shall be betrayed, &c. We learn from Tacitus, that Christians were delivered up by their parents, brethren, kinsfolk, friends; from Josephus, that contention sprang up in their very houses, and that the Idumeans slew many of their own kindred, and from the Scripture, that the Jews persecuted those of their own country. (1 Thes. ii. 15.)

Of all men, that is, of all men out of the Christian community. Tacitus, the Roman historian, says, like a true pagan, that "the Christians were convicted of enmity to the human race"—Jews hated them as revolters from their own religion. Pagans could tolerate each other, and respect and worship each other's gods. But the Christians abhorred all paganism, and so all pagans abhorred them; thus Christians were hated of all men, whether Jews or Gentiles. *For my name's sake.* For your attachment to me and my cause. (See Rom. viii. 35-37; 1 Cor. iv. 9, 10; 2 Cor. xi. 23-29; Heb. x. 32-34.)

13. ^aBut there shall not a hair of your head perish. 19. In your patience possess ye your souls. 20. ^bAnd when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. 21. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. 22. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. ^cMatt. x. 30. ^dMatt. xxiv. 15; Mark xlii. 14. ^eDan. ix. 26, 27. ^fZech. xi. 1.

But, literally, and (notwithstanding this universal and deadly opposition), a hair from your head shall not be lost. A strong proverbial expression, indicating that they should be inviolable upon earth so long as they were necessary for the service of the Lord; and that life and happiness, in the higher, truer sense, would not be affected in the least by these temporal persecutions.

In your patience, &c. Be calm and serene,

masters of yourselves, and superior to all unreasonable and disquieting passions, trusting in God, and waiting the performance of His promises. By keeping the government of your spirits, you will both avoid much misery, and guard the better against all dangers. There are three degrees of Christian patience: 1. Silent submission to God's will. 2. A thankful acceptance of God's fatherly rod. 3. Serious cheerfulness under sorrowful dispensations. This patience gives us the possession of ourselves.

When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies. Luke here explains the language of the prophet Daniel, and that of the other Evangelists. (Matt. xxiv. 15; Mark xiii. 14.) The same general idea of an array of the idolatrous ensigns of Rome against the devoted city is referred to in both forms of expression. *The desolation thereof, i. e.,* the process of its desolation.

In Judea. In the heart of the population. *Flee to the mountains.* Lonesome and inaccessible retreats, to which an army could not follow them. There is a commendation of a hasty flight as the only means of deliverance. *In the midst of it, i. e.,* Jerusalem. *Countries, i. e.,* the open country, or fields round about the city. These kind admonitions were not lost upon the disciples. Ecclesiastical history informs us that no Christians perished in the siege of Jerusalem.

Days of vengeance. Not days in which the one people takes vengeance on the disobedience and refractoriness of the other people, but in which God accomplishes His judgment upon His enemies. *May be fulfilled.* Our Lord thus declares that the fall of the city and the temple was already prophesied in the Old Testament. (See Lev. xxvi. 14-40; Deut. iv. 25-28, xxviii. 49-67; Ps. lxxix. 22-28; Dan. ix. 25-27; Zech. xi. 1-3; Mal. i. 1.)

²³ But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. ²⁴ And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

²⁵ Matt. xxiv. 19. ²⁶ Dan. ix. 27 and xii. 7; Rom. ii. 25.

This is not an imprecation, but a bitter lamentation, in which the compassion and sympathy of the Saviour expresses itself. Sad would it be for those who, in such a

time of terror and distress, had any natural impediments to obstruct their flight. *In the land, i. e.,* Judea. *Great distress.* The anguish and suffering brought upon the people by the siege was terrible. Although the seat of war was eventually and finally transferred to the city of Jerusalem, yet the whole land had previously been overrun by the Roman soldiery, and suffered the most dreadful calamities.

Fall by the edge of the sword. Josephus computes the number of those who perished in the siege at *eleven hundred thousand*, besides those who were slain in other places. *Shall be led away captive into all nations.* The number of the Jews taken by the Romans during the war amounted to about ninety-seven thousand, besides eleven thousand who were either starved through neglect, or starved themselves through sullessness and despair. Some of the youngest and handsomest were sent to Rome to adorn the triumph of Titus; many were distributed to the several cities of Syria, where they perished in the theaters, being compelled to fight with wild beasts, and to engage in mortal combats with each other. The remainder of those above seventeen years of age were sent to labor in the Egyptian mines, and those under that age were sold for slaves. *And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles.* Their city has remained for the most part in a state of ruin and desertion, from its destruction by the Romans to the present time, and never has been under the government of the Jews themselves, but oppressed and broken down by a succession of foreign masters, the Romans, the Saracens, the Franks, the Mamalukes, and the Turks. *Until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.* The times of the Gentiles will be fulfilled when Israel is gathered into the Christian Church. (Rom. xi. 26.) *Until that time Jerusalem shall continue to be subjugated and debased, but then God will look again with favor upon His long-rejected people, and restore them to the spiritual rights and immunities of which they had so long been deprived.* Jerusalem will cease to be trodden down, and recover her ancient glory. Then shall there be one Shepherd and one fold, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that

day. It cannot but seem probable to every reflecting mind that the Jewish race is preserved for some great and providential reason.

25. ⁵ And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; and the sea and the waves roaring;

⁷ Matt. xxiv. 29, on which see notes; Mark xiii. 24; 2 Peter iii. 10, 12.

The prophecy, from this verse down to the end, describes the last days of the world, the coming of Jesus Christ for the judgment, the circumstances which will attend that coming, and the duties which the prospect of it entails on all Christians. *Signs in the sun . . . moon . . . stars.* By some, these are regarded as figurative expressions. There is, however, no good reason for doubting that they will receive a literal fulfillment. The frame of nature was convulsed when the law of God was given at Sinai, and when Christ died on the cross. It was known, even from the Old Testament, that fearful signs in the realm of nature would herald the day of the Lord. (See Jer. iv. 23; Joel ii. 30, &c.) It may well, therefore, be expected that Christ's return to judge the world will be accompanied with cosmic revolutions. *And upon the earth distress of nations, &c.* As in the animal world important alterations in the atmosphere are instinctively perceived, as often an inexplicable presentiment of a terrible calamity, whose breaking in is feared, makes even the most courageous pale with terror, so does our Lord give us to expect that an obscure presentiment of a great event, shortly before His coming, will produce in many a heart "oppressive anguish." The "roaring of the sea and waves," as it seems excited from its lowest depths, and surges with tempestuous violence, will remind even those who do not live in expectation of the judgment, of terrible things, nevertheless, which are about to come upon the earth, while the evil conscience testifies to them that they have the worst to expect therefrom, and they feel at a loss what to do in order to avert impending ruin.

26. Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.—² Matt. xxiv. 29.

Failing them. The original signifies "to faint from fear, to become, not dead, but

as if dead." *For looking after, i. e.,* through fearful apprehension of still greater calamities. *On the earth.* The Greek word so translated, in all the other fourteen places in the New Testament where it is used, is rendered, "the world." *For the powers of heaven shall be shaken.* This indicates, probably, a disturbance for the time of the fixedness of the planetary system.

27. And then shall they see the Son of man ^a coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

^a Matt. xxiv. 30, on which see notes; Rev. i. 7 and xiv. 14.

The signs above referred to are the effects of Christ's coming, and hence there is no contradiction here of the repeated declaration that the coming will be without warning, and sudden. *See the Son of man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory.* The appearance of Jesus will be visible to all. "Every eye shall see Him."

28. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.—¹ Rom. viii. 19-23.

We have in this verse a parallel between the events predicted as preceding the destruction of Jerusalem, and those to go before the world's judgment. When the former events, however ominous of evil, and however depressing and distressing, began to occur, Christ's disciples were to be no longer dejected and alarmed, but to be cheerful and joyfully expectant, for under His protection their deliverance from the horrors and carnage which accompanied the siege of the city was at hand. When the latter events occur, which are to precede the judgment, and on which the world shall gaze with helpless terror, believers are to rouse themselves to joyful expectation, for their complete deliverance from the power and consequences of sin is just about to take place. The heads which hitherto had often been bowed under all manner of misery and persecution, must then be lifted up. (Comp. Rom. viii. 19; James v. 8.)

29. ^e And he spake to them a parable, Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; 30. When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves, that summer is now nigh at hand. 31. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.—^e Matt. xxiv. 32; Mark xiii. 28.

This comparison was designed by our Lord to show that the signs of which He had spoken were as indubitable precursors of the appearance of the Son of man, as

the sprouting of the fig tree, and other trees, was an indication of the approach of summer. Whoever sees the one, knows then of himself that the other is at hand. As in the kingdom of nature, so in the kingdom of Providence, there is a sequence of one event on another.

Come to pass, literally, *coming to pass*. *Know ye*, &c. Our Lord here teaches that His kingdom will not be nigh at hand until after a period of fearful wars and tribulation.

32. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. 33. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.

^aMatt. xxiv. 35.

Commentators widely differ as to the meaning of this difficult verse. It would only be perplexing to state the numerous and various interpretations it has received. Its true signification appears to be, "This generation shall not pass away without the beginning of the end of the world, here foretold you, having come to pass, in the actual destruction of Jerusalem." The justness of this interpretation is rendered the more probable if we connect the verse with the first question in verse 7, which referred to the destruction of the temple. Jerusalem was taken A. D. 70, or forty years after this prediction. It was, therefore, within the lifetime of many then living.

Heaven and earth, &c. This was a peculiarly strong and solemn mode of declaring the certainty of the whole prophecy being fulfilled. The words evidently reach far beyond the destruction of the Jewish State. The heavens were to pass away like a scroll at our Lord's coming. But His word was to stand forever. Nothing could prevent its being accomplished. Possibly there is an allusion to the new heavens and new earth which are to succeed the destruction of the earthly economy.

34. ¶ And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.

^aRom. xiii. 13: 1 Thes. v. 6: 1 Peter iv. 7.

Having disclosed as much as He thought fit with respect to His departure and return, our Lord now teaches how His disciples ought to act during His absence. *Hearts*. The heart is the part which the Christian must guard, if he would live ready to meet Christ. *Overcharged*, literally

made heavy, which is generally one of the hateful consequences of intemperance in eating or drinking. *And cares of this life*, anxious cares about visible and temporal things, and the inordinate pursuit of them. The former constitute the temptation of those given to their pleasures; *these*, the temptation of men of business in acquiring or possessing riches. *Unawares*—sudden, unexpected, unforeseen. Do not make an improper use even of lawful things; do not make this earth your portion; expect its dissolution and prepare to meet your God.

35. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.

¹ Thes. v. 2; 2 Peter iii. 10; Rev. iii. 3 and xvi. 15.

Here is an announcement of the suddenness and unexpectedness of our Lord's coming. A snare has a three-fold property, to catch suddenly, to hold surely, to destroy certainly. The destruction of Jerusalem was not a sudden but a very slow, long-foreseen, well-forewarned event. But Christ's coming to judgment shall be as the falling of a trap upon a thoughtless bird or animal, in which it finds itself inextricably taken. *On all them that dwell*, &c., literally, *that are sitting*, but the additional idea of carnal ease and security is also conveyed. They are to be taken at once, as soon as the snare is sprung upon them. (See Amos vi. 1-16; Jer. xxv. 29; Rev. xviii. 7, 8.)

36. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

^aMatt. xxiv. 42 and xxv. 13, on which see notes; Mark xlii. 33. ^bLuke xviii. 1. ^cPs. l. 5; Eph. vi. 13.

This is the general conclusion of all that precedes. *Watch ye therefore*, guard against every temptation to negligence and sin. The uncertainty of the event requires an unremitting vigilance. *And pray always*, i. e., continually, or, be always in a prayerful frame of mind. *That ye may be accounted worthy*, not "become worthy," but regarded as worthy, through the mercy and grace of God. *To escape all these things*, &c. Here, as in verse 32, the premonitions of Christ's coming are considered exclusively on their terrifying side. To escape, is not to be carried away by persecutions, brought to apostasy by misleaders, or robbed of courage by trial. *And to stand before the Son of man*, i. e., before His throne, with courage

and acceptance, acquitted and approved, in order to view Him, to serve Him, and to glorify Him. This "standing" is not only the beginning, but also the substance, of the highest happiness, the opposite of which is described, Ps. i. 5; Nahum. i. 6; Rev. vi. 16, 17.

37. ¹And in the day time he was teaching in the temple; and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives.
²John viii. 1, 2. ³Luke xxii. 39.

This appears to relate to the four last days of Christ's life already mentioned. *In the temple*, where the people would naturally assemble for religious instruction. *At night he went out*, &c. He taught all day in the temple, and in the evening withdrew, and lodged with hospitable friends in Bethany, a village on the south-east side of the Mount of Olives, about two miles from Jerusalem. This was done that He might not, at night, fall into the hands of His enemies, who had now fully resolved to effect His death, and who were afraid to attack Him in the midst of His followers by day.

38. And all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple, for to hear him.

Early in the morning. According to East-

ern custom, as thus described in *Dr. Hackett's Biblical Illustrations*: "During the greater part of the year, in Palestine, the heat becomes so great, a few hours after sunrise, as to render any strenuous labor inconvenient. The early morning, therefore, is the proper time for work, midday is given up, as far as possible, to rest, or employments which do not require exposure to the sun. The arrangements of life adjust themselves to this character of the climate. It happened to me often to observe how universal was the habit of early rising. Men and women may be seen going forth to their labors in the field, or starting on journeys, at the earliest break of day." (See Luke xxii. 66; Mark xv. 1; Gen. xxii. 3, xxviii. 18; Ex. xxxiv. 41.)

Our Lord, having exhorted His disciples, in the foregoing verses, to diligence and prayer, here set an example of both before them. Busy in God's service all day in the temple, He spent much time at night in prayer on the Mount of Olives. What an example of indefatigable zeal and diligence has He set before His ministers and members!

1. Whom did Jesus see casting their gifts into the treasury? 2. What did He say of the poor widow? 3. Why did He say this? 4. What did He say of the stones of the temple? 5. What reply did He make to the question, "When shall these things be?" 6. What is meant by verses 14 and 15? 7. What were the disciples to do when they saw Jerusalem compassed with armies? 8. What parable did our Lord speak? 9. Where did He retire after teaching in the day time in the temple? 10. Who assembled early in the morning to hear Him preach in the temple?

CHAPTER XXII.

1 *The Jews conspire against Christ.* 3. *Satan prepareth Judas to betray him.* 7 *The apostles prepare the passover.* 19 *Christ instituteth his holy supper.* 21 *covetly foretelleth of the traitor.* 24 *dehorteth the rest of his apostles from ambition.* 31 *assureth Peter that his faith should not fail:* 34 *and yet he should deny him thrice.* 39 *He prayeth in the mount, and sweateth blood.* 47 *is betrayed with a kiss:* 50 *He healeth Malchus' ear.* 54 *He is thrice denied of Peter.* 63 *shamefully abused,* 66 *and confesseth himself to be the Son of God.*

NOW the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover. 2. And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him; for they feared the people.
¹Matt. xxvi. 2; Mark xiv. 1, on which see notes. ²Ps. ii. 2; John xi. 47; Acts iv. 27.

The Passover was the great festival

among the Jews, in celebration of their deliverance from Egypt, when the destroying angel that slew the Egyptian first-born had *passed over* the houses of the Israelites marked with blood, and they escaped from Pharaoh. (Exod. xii.) This was associated in the type, and to be associated in the fact, with a greater deliverance of God's people by the blood of Christ. This joyous festival lasted seven days. Here, and elsewhere, it is called *the feast of unleavened bread*, because the people

were forbidden to allow any *leaven*, or fermented food or yeast, in their houses during this time. (Exod. xii. 18.) *Drew nigh*. This feast was to be celebrated within two days after our Lord had delivered the prophecies and admonitions above recorded.

Sought how, &c. This consultation was held in the palace of the high priest. (Matt. xxvi. 3.) They were determined to remove Jesus out of the way at any cost, but they felt it important to be yet further agreed upon the manner in which to carry out their purpose. *For they feared the people*, because it remained at least doubtful which side the people would take, and the attempt was certain to breed some kind of tumult, which would hardly fail to bring down upon them the Roman garrison (always present during the Passover), who would probably, after their manner, smite right and left, and defile the sacred courts with blood, without regard to the cause or circumstances. It was therefore desirable to obtain possession of His person privately by some craft or contrivance.

3. ¶ Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. 4. And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains how he might betray him unto them. 5. And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money. 6. And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them *in the absence of the multitude.
*Matt. xxvi. 11, &c., on which see notes; Mark xiv. 10; John xiii. 2, 27. †Zech. xi. 12. ‡Zech. xi. 12. §Or, without tumult.

Iscariot is the Greek form for Isch Kerioth, or man of Kerioth, which was a small town of Judea, mentioned in Joshua xv. 25. *Dr. Hackett* identifies it with Khureitun, "a few miles south of Bethlehem." "A dark spirit would find its own element in the gloomy scenery of Khureitun." (See chap. vi. 16.) *Entered Satan into*, &c. This is not to be interpreted as an actual possession of Judas, but as an infusion into his soul, by Satan, of his devilish spirit and purpose. His heart was filled with *avarice*. *Being of the number of the twelve*. This circumstance, which was so high an aggravation of the baseness of treachery, is mentioned with emphasis by all the Evangelists.

He went his way. He went from Christ and His company, who were at Bethany, in the house of Simon (Matt. xxvi. 6, 14), to the house of Caiaphas, the high priest, whom he knew to be a most bitter enemy

of Jesus. *Communed*—conversed—with the chief priests and captains. The captains were not Roman officers, but commanders of the Jewish guard of the temple. *How he might*, &c. The experience and judgment of these captains would be of great use to determine the question whether the proposal of Judas was worthy of acceptance. It is no uncommon thing for the vilest sins to be committed by such persons as make the most eminent profession of holiness.

And they were glad. Not only because there was now a prospect of the fulfillment of their murderous purpose, but also because in the band of the Apostles a spirit of unfaithfulness and hatred began to reveal itself. *Covenanted*—bargained and agreed at once. *To give him*. This shows that the money was not to be paid until Jesus had been actually delivered into their hands. *Money*, literally, *silver*. Matthew says (xxvi. 15), "thirty pieces of silver"—or shekels. (Zech. xi. 12.) The sum which the traitor received seems trifling, if we estimate it by the immense consequences. But, after all, the whole service Judas did was to inform the foes of Jesus where He might be found and taken without tumult, and guide them to the place. Besides, why may we not assume that the sum received was only intended as a preliminary payment, to be followed by a more considerable one if the plan should be carried out successfully? Covetousness is the root of sin, and eager and insatiable thirst after the world is the parent of the most monstrous and unnatural sins. Hence our Saviour doubles His caution. (Chap. xii. 15.)

He promised. The original conveys the idea that he promised with professions of thankfulness. *Sought opportunity to betray him*, kept on the watch for a convenient occasion to put Him into their hands in as private a manner as possible. *In the absence of the multitude*—that, knowing nothing of what was done, they might not raise a tumult and rescue Him out of the hands of those that seized Him.

7. ¶ Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed. 8. And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat. 9. And they said unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare? 10. And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man

meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in. 11. And ye shall say unto the good man of the house, The Master saith unto thee, where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? 12. And he shall show you a large upper room furnished; there make ready. 13. And they went, and found as he had said unto them; and they made ready the passover.

5Matt. xxvi. 17, on which see notes; Mark xiv. 12.

They called the day on which the *passover* or paschal lamb was *killed*, one of the days of unleavened bread, and the "first day thereof" (Matt. xxvi. 17), because it was preparatory to that feast, and on that day the Jews began to eat unleavened bread (Exod. xii. 18), though properly speaking, the feast of unleavened bread did not begin till the day after the passover, the *fifteenth* day of the month Nisan, (Lev. xxiii. 5, 6; Num. xxviii. 16, 17.)

He sent Peter and John—from the place where He had spent the night before in retirement with them, *saying, Go and prepare us the passover.* They were to buy a lamb, have it inspected by the priests, get it killed, have the blood sprinkled at the foot of the altar, obtain bread, and wine, and bitter herbs, and make other necessary preparations, as to a room, &c. The inhabitants of Jerusalem prepared rooms, with the necessary furniture, in their houses, where strangers might celebrate the passover. These apartments were not let out for the occasion, nor was any compensation taken, but were of common right for any persons by whom they were wanted, and were freely allowed to any one who came to claim them. *That we may, once more, eat it together.*

Where wilt thou, &c. They meant at what house. As in Matthew and Mark, the question would seem to have been put first by the disciples, whereas here we see that it arose from the previous command of our Lord, it is probable that at a preliminary inquiry of the disciples, as to the *where*, our Lord gave Peter and John a definite command to go away to prepare the passover, and that now they repeated with more definiteness the natural inquiry as to the place.

Into the city—the city of Jerusalem, for a paschal lamb could be eaten at no other place. *There shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water*—doubtless a servant who was a water-carrier. *Follow him, &c.* The man came with water from the western

part of the city, as the Apostles entered the eastern part. They were directed to follow him, without saying anything to him, because, as he was carrying the water home, he would lead them straight to his master's house, with which, it seems, the Apostles were not acquainted. This direction, in connection with the others given by Jesus to His Apostles, as well as the predictions He uttered, were intended to show them how completely He foreknew everything that should befall Him, and to convince them that His sufferings were all predetermined of God, and that, on His part, they were all submitted to voluntarily.

Ye shall say. Not a prophetic, but an imperative future. *The good man of the house*—the master of the family. *The master saith unto thee.* The word *Master* is correlative to the word *disciple*, and thus it is clearly implied that the householder is a *follower* of Jesus. Indeed, when we recollect that the rulers were afraid of the multitude, as being adherents of Jesus, we may reasonably infer that the number of those who would call Him "*Master*" was not a few. *Where is the guest chamber, &c.* (See on verse 8.)

Large upper room. Such as those which the Jews used for the same purposes as those to which our dining-rooms, parlors and closets are applied. *Furnished, i. e.,* with beds, couches or sofas, carpets, pillows, stools, &c., such as among Oriental nations supply the place of chairs, tables, and, indeed, almost all the other furniture of a room. *There make ready.* (See on verse 8.) Our Lord did not direct one or both of these disciples to return and inform Him and the others where they had made this preparation, and to direct them to the house. This was unnecessary, for as Jesus could predict these circumstances, of course He could at once find the house. *A large room,* is the emblem of a heart enlarged with love, joy and thankfulness; *an upper room,* is an heart exalted, not puffed up with pride, but lifted up by heavenly meditations; and a *room furnished,* is a soul adorned with all the graces of the Holy Spirit.

And they went, &c. The disciples, at Christ's bidding, went into the city, and

found everything to happen exactly as Jesus had foretold. This would tend no little to confirm their faith in Him, and prepare them for the trial they would so soon have to pass through in His death, as well as to proclaim the everlasting Gospel to the guilty world. The foretelling and fulfilling of all these circumstances furnishes the strongest evidence of our Lord's knowledge of every event, and of His influence over every heart. *And they made ready, &c.* (See on verse 8.)

14. ^aAnd when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve Apostles with him.

^bMatt. xxvi. 20, &c., on which see notes; Mark xiv. 17.

When the hour was come—the hour of partaking of the paschal feast. Between three o'clock and nine was the time for killing the lamb, called, also, *between the evenings* (Ex. xii. 6), in the Hebrew. *They sat down.* At the ancient meals there was no sitting in chairs, but reclining on *couches*, at the table. *And the twelve apostles with him.* All the Apostles were present, Judas not excepted.

15. ^aAnd he said unto them, *With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer:

*Or, *I have heartily desired.*

The present passage (15-18) narrates that part of the supper which belonged to the Passover. That which belonged to the institution of the Lord's Supper is verses 19, 20. *With desire I have desired.* The Hebrew mode of saying I have had a most intense desire. Some refer the reason of our Lord's great desire to the whole work of redemption, which He was about to accomplish that week, and the strong desire which He felt to accomplish it. Others, and with much greater plausibility, refer it to the institution of the Lord's Supper, and the affectionate desire which our Lord felt, not only to manifest Himself further to His own disciples, but, also, to establish and celebrate for the first and only time during His brief sojourn on earth this sacramental festival, which has ever since bound together and cemented the hearts of His followers, and served more than any ordinance to keep in vivid remembrance His dying love for men. *With you, my beloved disciples. Before I suffer.* This is the only place in the Gospels in which this absolute use of the word is found. It is like the expression in the Apostles' creed, "He suffered."

16. ^aFor I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, ^buntil it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.

^cLuke xiv. 15; Acts x. 41; Rev. xix. 9.

Eat thereof. Whether as Passover or Lord's Supper, both being the same thing in successive stages of development. *Until it be fulfilled, &c.* That is, until that of which the Passover is a type is fulfilled in my death, through which the kingdom of God, or of heaven (see Matt. iii. 2), shall be established among men. The particle "until" does not imply that after the accomplishment of the salvation of men our Lord was to eat the Passover. It is a Hebrew form of expression, signifying that the thing mentioned was no more to be done forever. (See I Sam. xv. 35.)

17. ^aAnd he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves.

Jesus took into His hands the cup of wine which it was customary to bring at the beginning of the paschal solemnity. *And gave thanks,* to Almighty God for His great goodness to His people, mentioning, no doubt, some of the principal instances of it, especially their redemption from Egypt, and then from Babylon. *Take this, and divide, &c.* Pass the cup from one to another, until all have partaken of it. Some maintain that Christ did not drink it Himself, but there seems little reason to doubt that He did, as He had just spoken of His desire to eat of the Passover, of which this cup was a part.

18. ^aFor I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.

^bMatt. xxvi. 29, on which see notes; Mark xiv. 22.

I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, i. e., wine. This may have been an intimation that this was the last paschal supper Christ would partake of with His disciples, and though He ate and drank with the disciples, after His resurrection, as we know He did, in order that they might know that He was really alive (Acts x. 41); yet He would not make use of any wine, and we do not find that He was ever present at any feast; at least we are sure He never celebrated another Passover with them. Nor does it appear that He partook of the Eucharist with them, or ever administered it, but at this time of its institution. *Until the kingdom of God shall come.* (See verse 16.)

19. ^aAnd he took bread and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.

^bMatt. xxvi. 26, on which see notes; Mark xiv. 22. ^c1 Cor. x. 16.

And he took bread, unleavened bread. It was in the form of cakes. As we are not under the ritual law, and as nothing in this respect is spoken in the New Testament, it does not appear that unfermented bread is essential to the Lord's Supper. *And brake it.* The breaking, under the old dispensation, represented the breaking which Israel suffered in Egypt, but in the new, it symbolizes the violence by which our Lord's body was put to death. (1 Cor. xi. 24.) *And gave unto them.* Not only the breaking, but also the distribution of the bread are necessary parts of the rite. Saying, *This is my body which is given for you, i. e.,* this bread signifies or represents my body, &c. This statement is made in accordance with the style of the sacred writers. Thus it is said, "The three branches are three days." (Gen. xl. 12.) God says of the paschal lamb, our Lord's grand type, "This is the Lord's passover." (Ex. xii. 11.) Paul, speaking of Sarah and Hagar, says, "These are the two covenants." (Gal. iv. 24.) He also says, "They drank of the spiritual rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ." (1 Cor. x. 4.) Our Lord could not have meant that the bread was His real body, because His body was present at the table breaking the bread, and He was speaking and acting in person among them. Observe too, He broke it *after* it was blessed, when Papists think it was transubstantiated. *Which is given for you,* as a sacrifice for your sins, to purchase your redemption. *This do, break, take, eat this bread—keep up the ordinance I have just appointed; in remembrance of me,* no longer in remembrance of the deliverance from Egypt, under which your fathers groaned, but in remembrance of me, who, by dying for you, will bring you out of spiritual bondage, a bondage far worse than the Egyptian, and establish you in the glorious liberty of God's children. We thus learn that the celebration is to be a permanent memorial institution. The word rendered *remembrance* is, literally, the *recalling to mind*, and refers here to the vivid sense of Christ's sufferings and death, which this Supper is designed and adapted to produce in such as partake of it in penitence, humility and faith.

20. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, *This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.*—1 Cor. x. 16.

Likewise also the cup, i. e., having offered thanks to God, and holding it in His hand to give to His disciples. *Saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood.* The Greek word for testament should be rendered *covenant*. The same word is employed here as in Heb. viii. 8. It signifies a covenant or promise on the part of God to His people, sanctioned with the blood of victims, and depending upon certain stipulated conditions. The old covenant made by God through Moses is found in Ex. xxiv. 3-8. *The fruit of the vine* is the symbol of the ratification of the new covenant; that is, the covenant of the new dispensation, so called in contradistinction rather from the Mosaic than from the Abrahamic covenant. (Gen. xv. 1-18, xvii. 1-19; Gal. iii. 17.) The old covenant was ratified by the blood of bulls, goats and calves; the new covenant was ratified by the blood of Christ. (See Heb. ix. 11-28.) Here is an undeniable figure, whereby the cup is put for the wine in the cup. And this is called the *new covenant* in Christ's blood, which could not possibly mean that it was the new covenant itself, but only the seal of it, and the sign of that blood which was shed to confirm it. In other words, as the expression, *this is my body*, signifies, This is the representation of my body, so, *this is my blood of the new testament*, must signify, This is the representation of my blood. *Which is shed for you.* The emblem of the death of the Lord's body substituted in the place of the death of your soul. The meaning of Christ, in the passage, is: "All of you, and all my disciples in all ages, must drink this cup, because it represents my blood, shed for the remission of sins—my blood, in which the new covenant between God and man is ratified."

21. † "But behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table."
 † Ps. xli. 9; Matt. xxvi. 21, 23, on which see notes; Mark xiv. 18; John xiii. 21, 25.

As Matthew and Mark both represent the incident referred to here by Luke, as taking place while they were eating the Passover, and before the institution of the Lord's Supper, no one who compares the order of those two Evangelists with John xiii. 21-35, can well avoid the conclusion

that Judas left the table on his dark and traitorous errand before the Lord's Supper was established. It is certain that it was our Lord's purpose to get rid of the presence of the traitor before the ordinance of the Supper was administered to His true-hearted disciples. Hence His warning, John xiii. 10, 18. *The hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table.* Our Lord had said to the twelve, "One of you shall betray me." (Matt. xxvi. 21.) Here He narrows the circle and makes the exposure still more direct. The expression was an Oriental one to denote that a person was reclining at the same table with another.

22. ^aAnd truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!

^bMatt. xxvi. 21, on which see notes. ^cActs ii. 23 and iv. 28.

The Son of man. By this appellation we are to understand that Christ was a real man—a perfect man—the representative man, the predicted man. *Goeth.* This denotes His marching with unflinching step to the scene of His crucifixion, His return to His Father through death and the resurrection, His going down to the lowest point He could reach in this world—the depths of the grave—and His going up to the highest point He could reach in the world to come—the throne of God; and by the words, *as it was determined*, is meant that He did both in the character, for the purpose, with the dispositions and in the circumstances, in which it was determined that He should go. The Divine foreknowledge and prediction of events does not affect their moral character. Judas was not the less guilty because, by his perfidy, a Divine purpose was fulfilled, a Divine prediction accomplished. It was "by wicked hands" that Jesus, being "delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," was "crucified and slain." (Acts ii. 23.) If God determined to leave Judas to himself, and foreknew how he would act, this did not interfere with his free agency and accountability—it did not necessitate his treachery. *Augustine* remarks that "God is said to will things, in the way of permission, which He does not will in the way of approbation." *Bishop Hall* says, "It is the greatest praise of God's wisdom

that He can turn the sins of man to His own glory."

23. ^aAnd they began to inquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing.

^bMatt. xxvi. 22; John xiii. 22, 25.

It is not wonderful that the disciples should have been amazed and shocked at our Lord's announcement. To think that their beloved Master was to be exposed to shame, and torture, and death, was most painful. Peter expressed the mind of all the rest, when, on His Lord speaking of His approaching sufferings, he said with eagerness, "Lord, this be far from thee." But how much more painful to think that the treason of a professed friend, and that professed friend one of themselves, was to be the means of bringing on their Master sufferings which they so deeply deprecated. Then the question comes up, "*which of them* it was that should do this thing?" All but one felt as if they could sooner die than betray their Lord to death, and none of them seems to have thought his brother capable of doing what he knew he himself was incapable of doing.

24. ^aAnd there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.

^bMatt. ix. 34; Luke ix. 46.

This was when they first took seats at the table, as above remarked. (Verse 14.) The competition seems to have been as to who should have the chief reclining place at the table. The immediate introduction of "the kingdom of God" was doubtless considered by them as implied in what our Lord had before spoken; and they overlooked all He had said of His sufferings, as what they could not understand. The couch of honor was the more earnestly desired, because it was supposed that it would indicate its occupant's claim to the highest office or post of honor in the Messiah's kingdom, of the temporal character of which their minds were far from being wholly dispossessed. It is wonderful that when this strife arose, Christ did not at once state that Peter was he to whom all the rest must be subject, as a prince or head, if, indeed, Peter, according to the Roman Catholic theory, was the recognized head of the Apostles. A desire to be great, and to be *greater* than others, is deeply rooted in our sinful nature. Even after we have turned to God we are troubled by this evil propensity. We

often indulge *feelings* of self-complacency, and are elated when others notice and commend us. It would not be thus with us if we were engrossed with the glory of Christ. Then we should desire only to speak of His wondrous works, and to talk of His power, and of the glory of His kingdom.

23. *And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.

†Matt. xx. 25; †Mark x. 42.

Kings of the Gentiles—especially of the Romans. *Exercise lordship*. Both the original words here used imply arbitrary, domineering authority; authority for authority's sake. They exercise dominion to gratify their love of rule. Jesus here does not condemn the exercise of a just governmental authority, in which the ruler, acting for the public good, is, in fact, the public servant. *Benefactors*. The Greek word so translated was a title often assumed by heathen monarchs, who prided themselves on being special benefactors of their subjects. One of the Ptolemies, king of Egypt, was so called.

26. *But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.

†Matt. xx. 26; †1 Peter v. 3. †Luke ix. 48.

Let ye *shall not be so*—your greatness shall not be like that of them who dwell in earthly courts—shall not consist in temporal power over your fellow-creatures, or in honor or dignity among them, though it should be joined with an affectation of titles which denote qualities truly honorable. Our Lord here condemns, not a true ecclesiastical government, but all ecclesiastical ambition, and all aspiration after selfish power. *Greatest* may here, perhaps, mean “greatest in age,” the oldest. It is opposed to *younger*. The sentiment is, that the eldest, to whom the pre-eminence and respect due to age would naturally and properly belong, should be as condescending and humble as the youngest of the number. The same idea is enforced and expanded in the corresponding clause—*he that is chief, &c.*, where there is a strong antithesis between *chief* and *he that doth serve, i. e.*, is servant of the company.

27. *For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.

†Luke xii. 37. †Matt. xx. 28; †John xiii. 13, 14; †Phil. ii. 7.

Our Lord, by proposing the question so easy of answer, as to the relative superiority of the guests over those who serve at the feasts, illustrates His own humility and condescension. *And he that serveth*. There is an evident reference here to the act of washing the disciples' feet, recorded by John xiii. 14, and which had taken place a very short time before the conversation we are now considering. At the same time the expression describes the whole tenor of our Lord's course on earth. “He took on Him the form of a servant.” “He came not to be ministered to, but to minister.” Usefulness in the world and Church—an humble readiness to do anything, and put our hands to any good work—a cheerful willingness to fill any post, however lowly, and discharge any office, however unpleasant, if it can only promote happiness and holiness on earth—these are the true tests of Christian greatness.

28. Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations.—†Heb. iv. 15.

Temptations, literally, *trials* and afflictions. Christ's whole life was little else than one continued series of them, particularly during the whole period of His earthly ministry. We know the weakness and infirmity of our Lord's disciples during the whole period of His earthly ministry. But here we find Him graciously dwelling on one good point in their conduct, and holding it up to the perpetual notice of His Church. They had been faithful to their Master, notwithstanding all their faults. Their hearts had been right whatever had been their mistakes. They had clung to Him in the day of His humiliation. If we are true believers, let us remember for our comfort that Jesus looks at our graces more than at our faults, that He pities our infirmities, and that He will not deal with us according to our sins.

29. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; 30. That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

†Matt. xxiv. 47; †Luke xii. 32; †2 Cor. i. 7; †2 Tim. ii. 12. †Matt. viii. 11; †Luke xiv. 13; †Rev. xix. 9. †Ps. xlix. 14; †Matt. xix. 28; †1 Cor. vi. 2; †Rev. iii. 21.

Our Lord having mentioned what His disciples had done for Him (verse 28), now adds an intimation of what He has proposed for them. *I appoint*. The Greek word so rendered might be translated, “I

appoint unto you by covenant." *A kingdom.* The meaning of this phrase must probably not be pressed too closely. It signifies honor, dignity, reward, majesty, of which a king's position in this world furnishes the only emblem. *That ye may eat and drink, &c.* This language is derived from the custom of ancient and Oriental kings, to invite to their own table their chief ministers and confidential servants, as a mark of royal favor and esteem. *And sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* (See Matt. xix. 28.) In ancient times kings performed all the functions of judges. (See 2 Sam. xv. 4; 1 Kings iii. 9; 2 Chron. i. 11; Ps. lxxvii. 2.) When Christ shall come to judgment, then, as great kings have officers around them, dignitaries of the kingdom, ye Apostles shall be exalted to special honor, and shall sit on thrones of majesty, judging the people of God—the twelve tribes of Israel. The primary design of our Lord in this verse seems to have been, to say to the Apostles: "As the honors which I shall hereafter confer on you are incomparably beyond those about which you seem so solicitous, let a consideration of this awaken a nobler ambition in your minds than that which now seems to influence them, and, instead of contending for superiority over each other in my Church militant, in which you must expect to meet with continual reproach and suffering, aspire after higher degrees of that celestial glory which you are to share with me in my Church triumphant."

31. ¶ And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may ^{sit} *sit you as wheat*:—1 Peter v. 8. ^{Amos ix. 9.}

Simon, Simon. Peter had probably had his full share; would seem, indeed, to have been one of those most forward in the contention for pre-eminence, in the preceding verses. Our Lord addressed him in particular, and in a very emphatic manner, although the other disciples who also had that day been in a most fearful danger, were likewise concerned, and the pronoun is plural, *you*, not *thee*. The repetition of Simon's name implies solemnity and importance in the statement about to be made, his insensibleness to the danger impending, and deep concern by Christ on behalf of Simon's soul, than whom none was more imperilled. *Hath desired to have*

you, ardently entreated for you, or demanded you, as Satan demanded Job to be put in his power, to test his integrity, *that he may sift you as wheat.* The word *you* is here again plural, and, therefore, includes all the disciples, except Judas, who had now left them to consummate his deed of treachery. The sifting Satan desired was to agitate their minds by his inward suggestions, concurring with their outward perils and difficulties, as the wheat is tossed about in the sieve, to be separated from the chaff. Probably the sifting process spoken of includes the idea of an endeavor of Satan to effect the separation of some of the disciples, and Peter in particular, from fidelity to Jesus. He would gladly have had the men who were to spread abroad the name of Jesus. Satan is continually making efforts to test and ruin all Christians. (1 Peter v. 8.)

32. But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and wilt thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. ^{John xvii. 9, 11, 15.} ^{Ps. li. 13;} ^{John xxi. 15, 16, 17.}

I—in this discourse of our Lord, also, His person forms the immovable center. The pronoun *I* emphasises the idea that Jesus had opposed Himself in person to the adversary. *For thee*, concentrates the danger and final deliverance again upon Peter, as the special and repeated address, *Simon, Simon*, had done in the first instance, but which had been made by the plural, *you*, to include the whole. *I have prayed for thee.* For thee as a believing Christian, and for thee as a tempted Christian. It is not said, *I will pray for thee*, but, *I have prayed for thee.* Christ prayed for Peter before Peter understood that he had need of His prayer. Christ prayed for Peter as soon as ever Satan desired to sift him. Our Intercessor is as prompt in His prayer for us, as Satan is in his accusations against us. Christ by no means prayed that Peter might entirely escape the sifting. (Comp. John xvii. 15.) *That thy faith fail not.* Not that thy faith be not assaulted, not that thy faith be not shaken and become very feeble, but that thy faith may not fail by an absolute and total extinction. "Faith" is the root of the whole Christian character, and the part which Satan specially labors to overthrow. (2 Tim. iv. 7.) Peter's faith did not fail as *life fails in death.* His faith was grievously

interrupted in its *exercise* and *effects*, when he denied His Lord, but the *principle* did not fail in His heart. (Rom. v. 7-10, viii. 32-34; 1 Peter i. 2-5.) *And when thou art converted*, that is, recovered from thy fall, when restored, upon thy repentance, to the Divine favor. *Strengthen thy brethren*, that is, establish others in the faith in which thou didst grievously decline. Our Lord does not here say "*my*" brethren, as in John xx. 17, nor yet "*our*," but *thy* brethren, *i. e.*, those who will have been shaken and enfeebled by thy fall, and who are afflicted with the same weakness which shall have brought thee to so deep a fall. After his fall and recovery, Peter was peculiarly earnest in encouraging the disciples to hope for a happy issue of their trials, and in animating them boldly to profess and preach the Gospel, while the humiliating lessons which he learned by those events, had a very salutary effect on his own spirit, and tended to qualify him especially for encouraging and warning the tempted, the fearful, the desponding or the fallen, even to the end of his days.

33. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death.

These words indicate how little Peter was *yet* fitted for the strengthening of others. He places himself first to designate the source from which his exultant feeling of strength proceeds. He doubtless felt all that he said, and his resolution to accompany Christ both to prison and to death was holy and good; but his too confident opinion of his own strength and ability so to do, without Divine aid and assistance, shows that he had not yet found out the weakness of his faith and the deceitfulness of his heart. There would seem to be an intimation that the Lord's intercession for him had not been so especially necessary. Self-confidence is a sin too incident to the holiest and best of men. Men little know what they will do till the time of temptation actually comes. (2 Kings viii. 13.) 'Tis an humble fear of falling that must enable us to stand.

34. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.

³Matt. xxvi. 34; Mark xiv. 30; John xiii. 38.

I tell thee, Peter. Now not *Simon*, though he might have doubly deserved it, but *Peter*, inasmuch as our Lord places Him-

self in the position of the man who, in his own eyes, stands there so rock-fast. It has been remarked that this is the only place in which our Lord addresses Peter by this name, the name which signified "stone." It was surely meant to remind him how weak even the strongest disciples are. What had been previously hinted at by Jesus in regard to Peter's defection, is now openly and emphatically asserted. *The cock shall not crow this day*, &c. Our Lord is forced by Peter's boasts to bring out the clear, precise, sorrowful truth. This prediction of what seemed at the time to be most improbable events, is a striking evidence of Christ's foreknowledge. The fall of Peter, thus foretold unto him, admonishes us to renounce our own light and knowledge, especially as to what regards the disposition of our heart. God and Christ, who is true God, know better than ourselves the use which we shall make of the freedom of our will, and yet this foreknowledge imposes no manner of necessity upon it.

35. And he said unto him, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing. 36. Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip; and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. 37. For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, (And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end.

³Matt. x. 9; Luke ix. 3 and x. ¹Isa. liii. 12; Mark xv. 23.

When Christ first sent out the Apostles to preach, He desired them to make no provision by the way. They were to take neither *purse* nor *scrip*; the means, figuratively, of conducting their ministry. (Matt. x. 9, 10.) They obeyed this command, and, according to their own testimony, wanted *nothing* during their journey. The disciples of Jesus can always testify that their Lord has kept His promises—not one of them has ever failed, or ever will. The providence of God is always watchful over such as forsake all to follow Christ, and continually mindful of their wants.

But now, &c. Childhood is past, and the Divine order is, that your powers be developed into the efficiency of manhood. They were not to expect such a constant miraculous interposition of God in their behalf as would make them independent of the use of means. *He that hath*. Whatever of means or instrumentalities you

have got, cultivate and put them to strenuous use. We are not to neglect human instrumentality in doing Christ's work. *He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one.* The most satisfactory interpretation of this is, that according to which these words are understood in a parabolical sense, indicating that a time was drawing near when all human means, of which the "purse," the "scrip," and the "sword" are emblems, must be diligently used by the Apostles. "Our Lord will simply, in a concrete, pictorial form, represent to His disciples the right and duty of necessary defense, in order that they may, by the very opposition to the former command (verse 35), finally come to the consciousness that an entirely peculiar danger shall break in upon them." Here is a warrant from our Lord for the standing up of His followers in their own defense. Christianity, however, has no license from this passage to draw the sword for its own propagation.

This that is written, &c. This is not the time for the true disciples of Christ to depend upon the good-will of men, when Christ Himself is to be reckoned and treated as a transgressor and a malefactor. Who would favor the followers of a crucified Master? He reminded them of the words of Isaiah (Isa. liii.): "He was numbered with the transgressors." One of the trials the Saviour endured was *disgrace*. He was put to death *as a wicked man, with wicked men, and in the manner in which wicked men were put to death.* The *disciples* of such a Master ought to expect disgrace. They should not be surprised when they are insulted, reviled and falsely accused. Let it be observed that our Lord, in speaking of His approaching crucifixion, does not speak of it as His "death" merely. He especially describes it as His being "reckoned among the transgressors." The expression was evidently meant to remind us that the chief end of His death was not to be an example of self-denial, but to be a substitute for us—a sacrifice for us—to become sin for us, and be made a curse for us. *For the things concerning me have an end.* This does not refer simply to the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies, but there was to be a complete and final close

to these predictions, and to that end all things were now rapidly tending. His sufferings and death were a part of the Messianic prophecy, and these also were to be fully accomplished.

38. And they said, Lord, behold, here *are* two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough.

Here are two swords. From these words it is evident that the disciples took what Christ said about the swords literally. They had these two swords evidently concealed from our Lord. They may have provided them for defense against assailants, as even the priests did in the passage (Luke x. 31) from Jericho to Jerusalem. But they may have been knives for slaying the Passover lamb. *It is enough*—to illustrate my metaphor, quite *enough*, and *too much*, if it is real bloodshed you contemplate. If Jesus had intended that His servants should fight, He would not have said that two swords were enough. The words gently rebuke the Apostles' mistake. These two swords were enough, and even too much, for Him who designed to defend Himself only by delivering Himself up, to fight only by suffering, and to conquer only by dying. These were enough to give occasion to Christ to instruct the Church, in one of the chief of the Apostles, concerning the use she was to make of the sword, concerning the mildness we ought to show toward our enemies, and the submission we ought to have for authority, and to give Christ an opportunity of doing good to His persecutors, of making known His power to them, and of showing them plainly that His being seized by them, and His death, were altogether voluntary on His part. When temptations come upon us, let us use the sword of the Spirit. Satan cannot resist it.

39. ¶ And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives, and his disciples also followed him.
1. Luke xxi. 37.

Our Lord now changes the scene from the supper table to the garden. *As he was wont* on the preceding days of this week of His passion. *To the mount of Olives, and his disciples also followed him.* This mount overlooks Jerusalem on the east, so that every street and almost every house may be distinguished from its summit. It is about a mile in length, and about seven

hundred feet in height. To a spectator, on the west it has a gently waving outline, and appears to have three summits of nearly equal height. That our Lord went straight thither is a new proof that He no longer sought to go out of the way of His enemies; for, according to John xviii. 2, the place was known also to Judas, who would, therefore, undoubtedly seek Him there with the band, if he no longer found Him in the paschal hall. It is also a proof of the heavenly composure and clearness of mind which our Lord continually maintained, that He would surrender Himself over to the hands of His enemies, not in the city, in the midst of the joyful acclamations of the paschal night, but without it, in the bosom of open nature, after He had previously strengthened Himself in solitary prayer to His Father.

^{40.} "And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation."

^{41.} Matt. vi. 13 and xxvi. 41; Mark xiv. 38; verse 46.

Pray that ye enter not into temptation. We are not to understand our Lord as having said this to all the eleven disciples, for from Matthew and Mark we know that He took three of them—Peter, James and John—to attend Him, at a little distance from the rest, in the moments of His agonizing prayer. Christ's exhortation to them was intended to keep them, when they were in the greatest alarm and danger, from having any inclination to desert Him. Prayers are a sure succor against the most perilous assaults of our enemies. We must not wait until the time of temptation before we pray, but we must pray before it comes. To be assaulted by temptation is one thing, but to enter into it quite another. To be tempted is a painful thing and a heavy trial, but to "enter into temptation" is a sin.

^{41.} "And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast and kneeled down, and prayed, 42. Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done."

^{42.} Matt. xxvi. 39; Mark xiv. 35. *Gr., *willing to remove.* *John v. 30; vi. 38.

The ancients very frequently noted short distances by such expressions as a *stone's cast* or *arrow's flight*, and, indeed, we have the same usage in our expressions, *within gunshot*, *within a stone's throw*, &c. *Kneeled down.* This denotes the posture of prayer which He first assumed. Afterward, as

His mental agony increased, we see from Matthew and Mark, He prostrated Himself with His face upon the ground. *And prayed.* The disciples were entreated to watch with our Lord (Matt. xxvi. 38), but not to pray with or for Him. That work He does alone, and asks no participation. They cannot pray His prayer. He may intercede for them, not they for Him. The example of the great Head of the Church shows believers what they ought to do in time of trouble. Both the Old and New Testaments give one and the same receipt for bearing trouble. (Ps. l. 15; James v. 13.) *Father.* However near the paternity of God, it still leaves Him the right and the reason to inflict upon us terrible sorrows. Yet true faith looks up, even to His frowning face, with a filial claim. *If thou be willing, remove this cup from me.* "If it can consist with thy counsel." This was the language of that innocent dread of suffering which Jesus, being really and truly man, could not but have in His nature. The sentence is incomplete in the original, which is, literally, *if thou be willing to remove this cup from me.* This is, however, the natural expression of intense sorrow, the words, "I pray thee to do thus," being left to be supplied. The "cup" to which Jesus referred was the extreme inward anguish of spirit which He was suffering, the fear with which He was oppressed, the anxiety with which He was tortured, the sorrow with which He was overwhelmed, and the intense agony, mental and physical, which yet awaited Him. *Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done.* The prayer of Christ was, as it were, taken back, before it was entirely uttered. It must be remembered that He who spake these words, having two distinct natures in one person, had a human will as well as a Divine. *Nevertheless, inasmuch as I have entered into covenant engagements, and have become surety for sinners, inasmuch as "for this cause came I unto this hour," and to offer up atoning sacrifice in my death is the great design of all the Divine decrees and operations which have brought me to this point; inasmuch as without this sacrifice the oracles of ancient prophecy will be falsified, and the redemption of men's souls, which is*

precious, cease forever. *Not my will*—not the will of my human nature, but *thine*—the will of God (as it is written concerning me), *which I delight to do*, let that *be done* (Ps. xl. 7, 8), at whatever expense of agony. If we would imitate Christ in His prayer, we must, 1. Pray when alone; 2. Humble ourselves, internally, at least, and, if we are able, externally also, 3. Be fervent; 4. Lay our condition before God with plainness and simplicity; 5. Be full of trust and confidence; 6. Resign ourselves to the will of God, and choose rather to have that done than our own; 7. Persevere in praying. The sacrifice of our own will is that which God loves the most, and which ought ever to accompany all others.

43. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.—Matt. iv. 11.

The appearance of a holy angel to our Lord, in this conflict, and when thus weighed down with the feeling of the wrath of God against our sins, was intimation of approaching victory, and calculated to strengthen Him by the brightening prospect of future joy which was thus symbolized to Him. The angel could not *efficaciously* communicate strength even to His human soul, but he might suggest encouraging topics; and it was doubtless a part of our Saviour's humiliation, and an instance of His condescension, that He was pleased to be thus "strengthened" by "a ministering spirit," though "all the angels of God worship Him." This verse supplies additional proof that our Lord was really and truly man. As man, He was for a little time "lower than the angels." (Heb. ii. 9.) As very God of very God, and Lord of angels and men, Jesus of course needed no angel to strengthen Him. But as very man, in the hour of his greatest weakness, He allowed an angel to minister to Him. We must, after the example of Christ, not reject those external consolations which God sends us in our troubles.

44. And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.—John xii. 27; Heb. v. 7.

Being in an agony. There can be little doubt, that at this mysterious moment, our Lord's distress of body and mind was most intense and bitter. He was assaulted by the prince of darkness with peculiar

and special temptations. Hell came to meet Him in the garden of Gethsemane. Satan, who had been defeated in the wilderness, returned with his legions to make a last and fierce attack. But Christ's intense agony can only be satisfactorily explained by the fact that His death was a vicarious death. The sin of the world began to be laid upon Him in a special manner in the garden. He was being "made a curse" for us, by bearing our sins. *He prayed more earnestly.* Jesus summoned up all His energies to an unremitting struggle of prayer. (Comp. Hos. xii. 4, 5.) The most striking commentary on this expression is found Heb. v. 7-9, where strong crying and tears are spoken of with which our Lord offered up His prayers and supplications to Him who was able to save Him from death. The Divine nature, without separating itself from the human, leaves it to the weakness common to other men, to the end that the Head may be the consolation of the weakest of his members, and the instruction of the strongest. *And his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.* The physical frame of Jesus was now in full sympathy with His mental distress. Instances of what has been called bloody sweat are on record numerous and authentic. *Galen* says: "Cases sometimes happen in which, through mental pressure, the pores may be so dilated that the blood may issue from them, so that there may be a bloody sweat." The Latin poet, *Lucan*, in his poem, the *Pharsalia*, vividly describes a case in which *the sweat is ruddy*. Yet Luke, the only one of the four Evangelists who mentions the circumstance now before us, affirms not that the sweat was blood, but "*as it were* great drops of blood." If we do not understand actual drops of blood, we must, at all events, conceive them as heavy, thick drops, which, mingled and colored for the most part with portions of blood, looked altogether like drops of blood.

45. And when he rose from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow, 46. And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.—Verse 40.

Luke is the only Evangelist who mentions the cause of the disciples being asleep. Sorrow, it is true, makes men

sleepless sometimes, but when it is very great it may so weary down the whole outer and inner man that one, as it were, sinks into a condition of stupor. The same three who slept at the Transfiguration were the three who slept in Gethsemane. It seems as if the air of that night were dense with fearful, supernatural influences, weighing them down with stupor. In those circumstances of trouble and affliction which oblige us to pray, we must not forget even the wants of those who are intrusted to our care.

Why sleep ye? How gentle His reproof! "Is this a time to sleep, when your Master is in such danger, when He is going to lay down His life, and when all the powers of hell are seeking to thwart the work of human redemption?" *Rise* from your sleepy, recumbent posture. Some say of this, that a standing posture of the body is best suited for overcoming drowsiness in prayer. *And pray, lest ye enter into temptation.* Christ said this, because He knew what sharp trials were coming upon them. Prayer was their only safeguard at this awful crisis. How often shall we find, when we look back upon our past lives, that we received *warnings* before we fell into sin! While we exert our own energies against the evil powers, let us also supplicate Divine aid. As a fragile boat would avoid the rocks and the rifts, so should the feeble Christian avoid the dangers of trials that threaten him.

47. † And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto to Jesus to kiss him. *Matt. xxvi. 47; Mark xiv. 43; John xviii. 3.

Behold a multitude. They came in force, probably apprehensive of resistance from the disciples, or of some attempt of rescue by the way. (Mark xiv. 47; John xviii. 10; Matt. xxvi. 47.) The multitude who apprehended Jesus were of the following four classes: 1. *The band* (John xviii. 3), being a detachment from the garrison of five hundred Roman soldiers who, in the fortress of Antonia, overlooking the temple, kept the Jews in awe. A detachment was ever ready to be sent when the commander was informed that a disturber needed to be taken in custody. So that thus much Jesus was apprehended by the loan of a Roman body. 2. *The captains of*

the temple (Luke xxii. 52), who came, doubtless, attended by their guard or police—men who kept order at the temple. 3. Several of the Jewish dignitaries attended to see the work carefully done, namely: chief priests, zealous Pharisees and elders. 4. Servants of these dignitaries (John xviii. 18), both private and official, like Malchus. Our Lord was thus arrested by the Jewish authority, partly using Roman instrumentality. *One of the twelve.* With this name, as with a branding iron, Judas is designated even unto the end. *Went before them,* in order to point out to the multitude the one whom they were to apprehend, by the preconcerted sign. (See Matt. xxvi. 48.)

48. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?

With a kiss—the hallowed token of friendship. "Must the Son of man be betrayed by one of His own disciples, as if He had been a hard Master, or deserved ill at their hands? Must the badge of friendship be the instrument of treachery?" To *betray*, is bad enough; to *betray the Son of man*, is worse; to *betray Him with a kiss*, is worst of all. There are some who behave to Jesus now that He is in heaven, as Judas did when He was upon earth. When it seems to be their interest to appear to love Him, they put on the mask of piety; but when they can gain worldly advantages by betraying His servants, they will do it, and yet all the time continue to observe the forms of religion. They do not consider how much their guilt is increased by their acts of apparent devotion. Satan employs such persons to do his darkest deeds. To bear the deceitful caresses of a false friend requires more virtue than to endure the most violent attacks of an avowed enemy.

49. When they which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword?

Lord, shall we smite with the sword? By the approach of the band, and the insult of Judas, they are at once persuaded that they themselves are no longer a step distant from the dreaded hour. They believed themselves hitherto to have dreamed, and appear now all at once to awake. Looking upon the weapons brought with them out of the paschal hall,

they addressed this question to the Master, as if they would not have drawn the sword without permission from Him; but they were in too much haste and heat to wait for an answer; for already one of them has followed the ill-considered question with a hasty act. Christ and His cause are not to be defended by force of arms. He is very far from desiring to save His own life by exposing that of others, since He came to shed His blood, and to die for all mankind. There are many persons in the world who, like Peter, consult God, and yet suffer themselves to be hurried away by their passion or their false zeal before they know His will.

50. † And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear.
 †Matt. xxvi. 51; Mark xiv. 47; John xviii. 10.

John tells us, this servant's name was Malchus, the Greek and Latin form of *Malck*, signifying *king*. We might have conjectured that it was Peter who committed this rash deed, but we are not left to uncertainty on this point. (John xviii. 10.) Perhaps, as the other Evangelists wrote their Gospels during the lifetime of that Apostle, they were afraid of exposing him to danger by revealing his name, whereas John, who (it is supposed) wrote his account after Peter's death, had no inducement to conceal it. *Cut off his right ear*. He meant, doubtless, to cut off his head; but, perhaps, the same power that healed prevented the true aim of the blow. It is much easier to fight a little for Christ than to endure hardness and go to prison and death for His sake. The zeal of Peter was very short-lived. His courage soon died away. The fear of man overcame him. By-and-by when our Lord was led away prisoner, He was led away alone. The disciple who was so ready to fight and smite with the sword had actually forsaken his Master and fled!

51. And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him.

Suffer ye thus far. Our Lord sees how the band are just addressing themselves to take Him prisoner, with the greater bitterness, perchance, because blood had already flowed, and He Himself is not minded to counterwork their designs. He only desires that they would leave His hands yet a moment free, that He might

bestow yet one more benefit. "Leave me still free for the moment, that with my hand I may touch the ear of the wounded man." (See Matt. xxvi. 50; Mark xiv. 46.) *And he touched his ear, and healed him*. Although all the four Evangelists mention the cutting off of the servant's ear, yet Luke alone relates how it was healed. It seems this miracle was the *last* the Saviour performed. In one respect it was the *greatest*. No doubt the Lord's *power* was more fully displayed when the dead were raised, but His *grace* was most gloriously manifested when His *enemy* was healed. Multitudes had often surrounded Him, entreating Him with piteous cries to restore their blind parents to sight, and their sick children to health. But *this* multitude came, *not to entreat*, but to *assault*. Yet the gracious Saviour healed even one of this wicked company. Jesus permits evil, in order only to bring out of it a greater good. He teaches us to return good for evil. The sight of this miracle converted none. O, how insufficient are all outward means of conversion without the Spirit's inward operation!

52. "Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders which were come to him, Be ye come out as against a thief, with swords and staves?"—Matt. xxvi. 55; Mark xiv. 48.

The chief priests. Some of these were in Gethsemane, in order to convince themselves of the fact of the arrest of Jesus, and, in case of need, to encourage their servants by their presence. *Captains of the temple*. These are supposed to have been the leaders of the priests and Levites, who alternately kept guard at the avenues of the temple. *Be ye come out*, voluntarily, not sent out by authority, like the poor soldiery. These dignitaries were the principal and guilty movers. *As against a thief, with swords and staves?* Rather, *as against a robber*. *Staves*, literally, *wood*, *i. e.*, all kinds of sticks and cudgels. This was the *manner* in which they would have sought to take a highwayman of desperate character, and armed to defend his life. They knew His purity, His holiness, His mysterious power of rebuke. Yet they would slay Him as a malefactor. He expresses His indignation at this. It adds not a little to the depth of our Lord's humiliation, that He consented to be *hunted*

down thus by wicked men, and to be treated as if He had been the worst of mankind. The best of persons are more sensibly affected by the ill usage which wounds their reputation and honor, than they are by any other kind of injustice. It is in order to secure us from that excess to which this sense of human honor is apt to carry us, that Christ was willing to be treated as a thief—even He who had divested Himself of all, and who was now just going to lay down His life.

53. When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me; *but this is your hour, and the power of darkness.—John xii. 27.

Daily with you in the temple—for many days before the Passover. *Ye stretched forth no hands against me.* They refrained from violence, not through want of an eager desire to take Jesus, but because it was not permitted them of God. This utterance must have reminded them of many a fruitless plot which they had meditated, and many a word of rebuke which they had heard, although our Lord, who was not minded to eulogize Himself, was entirely silent as to the miracles which He had performed before their eyes, and as to the triumphs which He by word or deed had won over their perplexity and weakness. *But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.* (See John xii. 27.) “How hard soever it may seem that I should be thus exposed, I submit, for so it is determined. This is the hour *allowed you* to have your will against me; there is an hour *appointed me* to reckon for it.” Two parties are brought in here—the wicked Jews, who were about to deliver our Lord to Pilate, and the devil, under whose instigation they were acting. It was the brief “hour” of triumph which the unbelieving Jews, by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, were to enjoy. It was the little season, during which the prince of the darkness of this world was to have “power,” and to all appearance to prevail over the second Adam, as he had prevailed over the first. And yet neither wicked men nor a malicious devil could go a hair’s breadth beyond the limit appointed by God, or triumph over the Son of God a minute beyond the time decreed by the eternal counsels. They knew it not, but so it was. Even now, our Lord would

have them know that they were only able to take Him prisoner, because He submitted, and because God permitted them a little season of “power.” Christ determines the hour of His death, as a voluntary victim, who offered Himself, not out of necessity, but out of choice and love. Such is the blindness of sinners, who think they reign and triumph when they accomplish their wicked desires, whereas they are only the instruments of the devil, who makes them serve His design, as the devil is himself an instrument whom God makes subservient to His.

54. ¶ Then they took him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest’s house. *And Peter followed afar off. 55. *And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them.
 †Matt. xxvi. 57. †Matt. xxvi. 58, on which see notes; John xviii. 15. †Matt. xxvi. 69; Mark xiv. 66; John xviii. 17, 18.

Into the high priest’s house. We are here to understand Caiaphas. (Matt. xxvi. 57.) *And Peter followed afar off.* By this he evinced two things: 1. Real attachment to His Master—a desire to be near Him, and to witness His trial. 2. Fear respecting His personal safety. He therefore kept so far off as to be out of danger, and yet so near as that he might witness the transactions respecting his Master. Perhaps he expected to be lost and unobserved in the crowd. Many, in this, imitate Peter. They are afraid to follow the Saviour closely. They fear danger, ridicule, or persecution. They *follow Him*, but it is at a great distance, *so far* that it is difficult to discern that they are in the train, and are His friends at all. Religion requires us to be near Christ. We may measure our piety by our desire to be near Him, to be like Him, and by our willingness to follow Him always, through trials, contempt, persecution and death.

Kindled a fire. It is well known that the nights in Palestine, especially in the early year, are often very cold, particularly at Jerusalem, from its great elevation above the sea. *The hall.* The Greek word so rendered is more frequently translated “palace.” Some suppose that here it means “an open court enclosed by buildings—a court-yard exposed to the open air.” In Rev. ii. 2, it is translated “court,” and can there bear no other sense. *Peter sat down among them.* While the servants

were warming themselves in the open court, Peter, assuming as well as he could the appearance of an indifferent observer, took his place in the midst of them, in order to be able to be eye and ear-witness, in the immediate vicinity. He who loves danger, and takes no care to avoid the occasions of sin, runs the hazard of perishing. It is infinitely better for a man humbly to retire, acknowledging his weakness, and having recourse to Him who is the strength of the weak, till He vouchsafes to show him mercy, than willfully to persist in performing a presumptuous promise, by endeavors which are still more presumptuous.

56. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him. 57. And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not.

As he sat by the fire. The Greek word here rendered "fire" means, literally, "the light." It is evident that the word was used intentionally by Luke, in order to show us that it was "by the light of the fire" that Peter was recognized and charged with being a disciple. Had he kept in the background, and been content with a darker position, he might have escaped notice. *A certain maid earnestly looked upon him, &c.* She did this because he was a stranger, one whom she had not seen before, and concluding that, at this time of night, there were no neutrals there, and knowing him not to be any of the retinue of the high priest, she judged him to be one of the retinue of this Jesus, or, perhaps, she had some time or other looked about in the temple, and seen Jesus there, and Peter with Him, and remembered him, hence she said, *this man was also with him.* Every enemy is formidable to a person not supported by God. An occasion which we entirely disregard is sometimes very fatal to our virtue.

And he denied, &c. The very unexpectedness of the assault demands an instantaneous repulse, and already Peter rejoices that he can preserve the guise of an external composure, and his answer is quick, cold, indefinite: *Woman, I know him not.* The love of life and the fear of death make men forget the best resolutions, when they have not been formed by God, and are not supported by our humble prayer.

58. ^bAnd after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not.—^bMatt. xxvi. 71; Mark xiv. 69; John xviii. 25.

The first cock-crowing, which Mark, xiv. 68, alone mentions, immediately after the first denial, is not even noticed by Peter. He appears, meanwhile, to have succeeded in assuming so indifferent a demeanor that he at first is not further disturbed. The disquiet of his conscience, however, now impels him toward the door (Matt. xxvi. 71); unluckily he finds this shut. He does not venture to seek to have it opened, that he may not elicit any unfavorable conjectures, and is therefore obliged to return to his former place. This very disquiet again excites suspicion. *Another* is masculine, referring probably to some male attendant to whom the maid had communicated her suspicions, and who charged Peter directly with having belonged to the company of Jesus. *Man, I am not.* One sin hardens the heart, and disposes it for the commission of another. God permits Peter to fall more than once, that he may have no room to excuse his sin as proceeding from surprise, and that he may seek the cause thereof in his own presumption.

59. ^cAnd about the space of one hour after, another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him, for he is a Galilean.

^cMatt. xxvi. 73; Mark xiv. 70; John xviii. 26.

Another confidently affirmed, &c. Peter had now returned into the hall, and as he was discovered, by his peculiar manner of speaking, to have come from that part of Israel called Galilee, and as it was well known that most of Christ's disciples were Galileans, it was immediately supposed that he was one of them. We know from Jewish authorities that the rough provincial accent of the Galileans was very distinguishable from that of the metropolis. The space of one hour was allowed Peter to recover himself; and he made no use of it: in vain God gives men time for repentance, if He do not give them likewise a penitent heart.

60. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew.

On this occasion Peter not only denied his Lord, but he began to curse and to swear. (Matt. xxvi. 74.) He was now irritated beyond endurance. He could no longer resist the evidence that he was

known. It had been repeatedly charged on him. His language had betrayed him, and there was a positive witness who had seen him. He felt it necessary, therefore, to be still more decided, and he accordingly added to the sin of denying his Lord, the deep aggravation of profane cursing and swearing, affirming what he must have known was false, that he knew not the man. Immediately, then, the cock crew, that is, the second crowing, or not far from three in the morning. Let us not be weary of considering the deplorable depravity of the heart of man when left to himself. These three falls are, as it were, three witnesses of human weakness, and show plainly that none but God knows perfectly how great it is.

The steps by which Peter fell, or the things which successively contributed to his fall, were the following: 1. Self-confidence, arising from too high an opinion of himself. 2. His worldly views and expectations, and his aversion to the cross of Christ. 3. His unbelief, as to the warnings Christ had given of his weakness and danger. 4. As a consequence of his unbelief, he fell into unwatchfulness, and neglected also to pray. 5. Venturing upon forbidden ground, by going in among the wicked servants of the high priests. 6. Yielding to distrust, dejection and cowardice. The aggravating circumstances of Peter's sin were these: 1. The character of his person, a disciple, an Apostle, and one who had been specially honored by his Master. 2. The person whom he denied—His Master, Saviour and Redeemer. 3. The repetition of the sin—denying Christ first with a lie, then with an oath and next with a curse. 4. The persons before whom the denial took place—the chief priest's servants. 5. The time of the denial—a few hours after he had received the holy sacrament from Christ's own hands. 6. The smallness of the temptation to deny his Lord—a damsel only at first spaké to him.

61. ^dAnd the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, ^eBefore the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. 62. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.

^dMatt. xxvi. 75; Mark xiv. 72. ^eMatt. xxvi. 74, 75, on which see notes; John xiii. 38.

Looked upon Peter. Probably our Lord cast this glance as He was led from Annas

to Caiaphas. Or, at this third denial, the door of the apartment where Jesus and Annas were, may have been opened upon the court, and Peter may have painfully found himself denying and swearing under his Lord's glance. That glance, doubtless, was turned full upon him with a significance that called Peter to his recollections. It does not appear that Peter came into the examination-room, or was present with his Lord. *And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, . . . and went out, and wept bitterly.* By a tender and compassionate look—a single glance of His eye—the injured Saviour brought to remembrance all Peter's promises, His own predictions and the great guilt of the disciple. He overwhelmed him with the remembrance of his sin, and pierced his heart through with many sorrows. The consciousness of deep and awful guilt rushed over Peter's soul, he flew from the palace, he went alone in the darkness of the night, and *wept bitterly.*

63. ^fAnd the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him. 64. And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote thee? 65. And many other things blasphemously spake they against him.

^fMatt. xxvi. 67, 68; Mark xiv. 65.

The most remarkable night that has been known since the beginning of the world, was the night before the crucifixion of the Lord. There was an ingenuity in the torments inflicted on Jesus, worthy of Satan, their author. (See Matt. xxvi. 67, 68; Mark xiv. 65.) Perhaps there was a burst of applause when it was first proposed to blindfold those meek and sorrowful eyes, and no doubt a profane laugh was heard, as each blow was struck, and the question asked, *who is it that smote thee?* How much astonished those men would have been had Jesus told them who had smitten Him! They little thought how well He knew their names, but they will find hereafter that He *did* know who struck Him that night. *Many other things blasphemously spake they against Him,* though only a few of their blasphemies are recorded as a specimen of the rest. But insults could not degrade the Son of God. He bore all their taunts with Divine patience. (1 Peter iii. 23.) He regarded every injury as a drop in the cup His Father had given Him to drink. He knew

the prophecies that had been made concerning His sufferings. (Mi. v. 1; Isa. l. 6.) Could we receive all that happened to us as the appointment of God, we should not be so easily provoked as we often are. Yet the malice of our enemies could never be vented against us, except by the permission of God.

^{66.} ¶ And as soon as it was day, ^bthe elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led him into their council, saying, ^cMatt. xxvii. 1. ^bActs iv. 26; xxii. 5.

As soon as it was day. There were three stages or processes of proceedings against Jesus: 1. The preliminary examination, which probably took place while the full Sanhedrim was assembling. (Matt. xxvi. 57; Mark xiv. 63; Luke xxii. 54; John xviii. 13, 19-24.) 2. The trial before the Sanhedrim. (Matt. xxvi. 59-68; Mark xiv. 55-65.) 3. The subsequent consultation as to the best method of effecting the death of Jesus. (Matt. xxvii. 1; Mark xv. 1.) After the council had condemned Jesus the first time, they seem to have separated, and met again early in the morning. It is to this second meeting of the council the words, "as soon as it was day," most probably refer. The sun rose at that season of the year, in Judea, not far from five o'clock. According to the Talmud, capital cases were prohibited from being heard in the night, as was also the institution of an examination, pronouncing a sentence and carrying it into execution, on one and the same day. These rules were flagrantly violated in this case. *The elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes*—the classes of which the Sanhedrim was composed, which consisted of seventy persons, of whom the high priest was the chief. There were other members of this great council, such as Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea.

^{67.} ^aArt thou the Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe. ^{68.} And if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go. ^bMatt. xxvi. 63; Mark xiv. 61.

Art thou the Christ? As Jesus had already acknowledged Himself to be the Son of God, there was no necessity for repeating this question. The resource which the Sanhedrim adopted was one which our own rules of evidence would declare most infamous, and which was also wholly adverse to the first principles of Mosaic jurisprudence, and the like of

which occurs in no circumstance of Hebrew history. It was that of putting the prisoner upon His oath to answer questions framed for His own crimination. (See Matt. xxvi. 63.) When Jesus was asked, *Art thou the Christ?* he showed by His answer that He would have proved His claim had His judges been willing to listen. *If I also ask you,* &c. They would not reply fairly to any questions which He might propose, and by which His innocence might be proved, and His true character and mission vindicated. On former occasions He had *asked* them various questions by which He had shown He was the Christ, and that the Christ was the Son of God. This is the great truth that Jesus sealed with His own blood. By *confessing* it, men are *saved*. "Whosoever shall confess," &c. (John iv. 15.) By *denying* this truth, men are *lost*. "Who is a liar," &c. (John iv. 22.)

^{69.} ¶ Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God. ^bMatt. xxvi. 64, on which see notes; Mark xiv. 62; Heb. i. 3 and viii. 1.

Hereafter . . . Son of man . . . right hand . . . God. There is a plain reference in these words to the prophecy of Daniel. (Dan. vii. 9-14.) Our Lord evidently implies that He was the person to whom that prophecy pointed; and that, although condemned by the Jews, He would shortly be exalted to the highest position of dignity in heaven. The Jews saw this at once, and proceeded to put the question of the next verse.

^{70.} Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am. ^bMatt. xxvi. 64, on which see notes; Mark xiv. 62.

Art thou then the Son of God? Our Lord in the preceding verse had called Himself the "Son of man." His enemies in this question, ask Him if He is the "Son of God." They did so because His solemn saying about sitting at God's right hand showed them that He claimed to be the Messiah, and very God. *Ye say that I am,* which is a form of assenting or affirming, and equivalent to saying, "Ye say rightly that I am." The same in sense is given by Mark xiv. 62, "I am." Seldom in the course of His ministry did our Lord announce Himself as the Messiah. But here, in the great and trying moment, when questioned by the repre-

sentatives of the Jewish nation, "Art thou the Son of God?" He returned the solemn reply, "Ye say that I am"—a Hebraistic form of affirmation. The incarnation and resurrection of the Son of God being the fundamental mysteries of the Christian religion, which were to make so many martyrs, it was necessary that Jesus Christ, as the head of them, should be Himself a martyr for those truths. He knew very well that they would cost Him His life, but He knew likewise that life is a debt which all men owe to the truth, and that to sacrifice it to God is not to lose it.

71. ^aAnd they said, What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth. ^bMatt. xxvi. 65; Mark xiv. 63.

How different is the joy of these men, upon hearing the truth out of the mouth of Christ, from that of His true disciples! These find therein the words of eternal life, but those convert it into words of death, both for Christ and themselves, by the abuse they make of it.

The bold confession of our Master upon this occasion is intended to be an example to all His believing people. Like Him, we must not shrink from speaking out when occasion requires our testimony. The fear of man and the presence of a multitude must not make us hold our peace. (Job xxxi. 34.) A confessing Master loves bold, uncompromising and confessing disciples.

1. What feast drew nigh? 2. Who sought how they might kill Jesus? 3. Who entered into Judas? 4. What did Judas do? 5. Where did Christ send Peter and John? 6. For what purpose? 7. What directions did He give them? 8. What did our Lord say to His Apostles in eating the passover with them? 9. How was the Lord's Supper instituted? 10. What strife arose among the Apostles? 11. What did Jesus say to them? 12. What did He say to Simon? 13. What took place at the mount of Olives? 14. How did Peter deny Christ? 15. How and why did he repent? 16. How did the men that held Jesus treat Him?

CHAPTER XXIII.

1 *Jesus is accused before Pilate, and sent to Herod.* 8 *Herod mocketh him.* 12 *Herod and Pilate are made friends.* 13 *Barabbas is desired of the people, and is loosed by Pilate, and Jesus is given to be crucified.* 27 *He telleth the women, that lament him, the destruction of Jerusalem: 34 prayeth for his enemies.* 39 *Two evil doers are crucified with him.* 46 *His death.* 50 *His burial.*

AND the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate. ^aMatt. xxvii. 2, on which see notes; Mark xv. 1; John xviii. 23.

The whole multitude. Not of the people, who were not as yet turned against Jesus, but of the parties mentioned in verse 66 of the last chapter, namely, the ruling classes. *Unto Pilate.* Pilate was at this time the governor or procurator appointed by the Romans over Judea. He was placed in this office by Tiberius, then emperor of Rome. The governor commonly resided at *Cæsarea*, but he came up to Jerusalem usually at the great feasts, when most of the Jews were assembled, to administer justice, and to suppress tumults if any should arise.

2. And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this *fellow* perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that he himself is Christ a king.

^bActs xvii. 7. ^cSee Matt. xvii. 27 and xxii. 21, on which see notes; Mark xii. 17. ^dJohn xix. 12.

We found—a judicial expression, intimating that they had brought Christ, as one *convicted* of guilt after diligent examination. *Fellow*, is not expressed in the original; but it is rightly inserted, being understood in what is expressed. *Perverting the nation*, &c., &c. They charged him with the political offense of forbidding the people to pay tribute to Cæsar (the very trap into which they had vainly tried to draw Him) and making Himself a king, a claim which they alone had desired Him to make in a form hostile to the emperor. This charge, if proved, would have exposed Him to inevitable death, for never were *persecutions* for *treason* more severe than under the reign of Tiberius.

3. ^eAnd Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him and said, Thou sayest it. 4. Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man. 5. And they

were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place. 6. When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilean. 7. And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time.

^cMatt. xxvii. 11; 1 Tim. vi. 13. ^f1 Peter ii. 22. ^eActs x. 37. ^bLuke iii. 1.

Pilate, not unacquainted with the prevailing Messianic hope, formulated his question very precisely, and sought to find out whether Jesus was really the promised and long-sighed-for King of Israel. To this question our Lord could not possibly answer otherwise than, without delay and without the least equivocalness, with yes. *Thou sayest it.* (See note on xxii. 70.) Christ is still willing to be called the King of this people, though they are so disloyal and ungrateful to Him as to clamor for His death.

How Pilate came to the conclusion that a claim to be a king is *no fault* in this man, we learn from John xviii. 36, 37, where it is shown that Jesus satisfied Pilate that His kingdom was no way dangerous to the imperial power. He was king in the realm of truth, where Caesar was no rival. It is something, indeed, for a judge not to suppress and stifle the knowledge which he has of innocence, but he becomes the more guilty upon this account, if he abandons the defense of it, and delivers it up to its enemies.

Were the more fierce—grew more desperate, more violent, more urgent. Since now they see that their last charge of the assumption of royal dignity finds no acceptance with the judge, they come with so much the stronger emphasis back to the first—namely, that He is perverting the people; and told Pilate that this man had set the whole country in an uproar from Judea even unto Galilee.

Heard of Galilee, &c. As they expected, Pilate caught at the name of Galilee, which had lately supplied more than one dangerous demagogue; and having ascertained that Jesus belonged to the territory of Herod (see chap. iii. 1), he concluded to get rid of this troublesome affair by sending the accused to the tetrarch, whose immediate subject He was, and whom he might suppose better qualified than himself to judge in this case; nor did it escape him that he would be thus enabled to show a gratifying mark of attention to

Herod, with whom he had lately been on ill terms. How many Christians are there who, like Pilate, make Christ subservient to their temporal affairs and designs!

8. ^fAnd when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad, for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him, and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him.

¹Luke ix. 9. ²Matt. xiv. 1; Mark vi. 14.

The expressions in this verse are very remarkable. They bring before us the fearful history of Herod's sins, and throw light on the power of conscience. Herod had not forgotten John the Baptist and his testimony. Moreover, he had probably heard much about our Lord from his steward Chuza, whose wife Joanna was one of our Lord's disciples. (Luke viii. 3.) He had long desired to see Him, in the hope of witnessing the performance of some wonder by one so renowned for His miracles. Many people of the world learn the truths of Christianity with a joy arising only from curiosity, and not from any desire of being instructed in them and of putting them in practice.

9. Then he questioned with him in many words, but he answered him nothing. 10. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him. 11. And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate.

³Psa. xxxviii. 13, 14; Isa. liii. 7; 1 Peter ii. 23. ⁴Isa. liii. 3.

In many words. It was an extended examination, conducted probably before the tetrarch's courtiers, with many a cross-question and device to draw out the wonder-worker. *Answered him nothing.* It was no part of our Lord's calling to gratify an idle curiosity, nor could any object be gained by declaring His doctrine to one so utterly worldly. He therefore performed no miracle, and was silent to all the questions put to Him. A respectful silence is an instruction for some, and a refuge against others. That person says a great deal who speaks by his modesty, humility and patience.

Vehemently accused him. They saw very well that their interest required them to paint Him to Herod in colors as black as was any way possible, and accuse Him; therefore, they did so, with visible emphasis (comp. Acts xviii. 28), as if they feared that even Herod himself, perchance, might be too equitable with the victim, seizing, as it would seem, the favorable moment when the chagrin of Herod disposed him

to listen. An affected moderation would have rendered those accusers less suspected, their accusations more probable and their envy less visible, than this vehemence; but envy seldom or never consults prudence.

Set him at nought, &c. Herod was acute enough to see that Jesus was not really open to any capital charge, and after the odium he had incurred on account of John the Baptist, he was not willing to add the death of Jesus to the number of his crimes. Yet, being exasperated at the dignified passiveness of Jesus, he, with his guards, treated Him as though He was nobody, a nothing, then scoffed at Him, then caused Him to be arrayed in a gorgeous purple robe (doubtless one of his own, and probably the same robe which was afterward used by the soldiers of Pilate), in derision of His Messianic dignity; then, not wishing to be outdone in a complimentary act by Pilate, he waived his claim of jurisdiction over Jesus, and sent Him back to the Roman governor, at whose tribunal He had first been arraigned.

12. [¶] And the same day [¶] Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves, — [¶] Acts iv. 27.

The cause of the enmity between these two men is unknown. Some think it may have been the massacre of the Galileans. (Luke xiii. 1.) It probably grew out of a conflict in regard to their respective jurisdictions. The method of the reconciliation seems to indicate the nature of the previous alienation. The courteous act of Pilate in sending Jesus to be tried before Herod, and the equally courteous return made by the Galilean prince in remanding Jesus to Pilate's judgment seat, it would appear, furnished the occasion for the renewal of friendship. Both these men agreed in despising Jesus, and insulting Him, and were utterly unbelieving as to His claim to faith and respect. The circumstance of their reconciliation struck the Apostles very much. They regarded it as a fulfillment of part of the second Psalm. They mentioned in prayer to God the union of Pilate and Herod and the Jews against their Master. (Acts iv. 23-30.)

13. [¶] And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, 14. [¶] Said unto them, [¶] Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and behold, [¶] 11, having ex-

amined *him* before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him: 15. No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him, and lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him.

[¶] Matt. xxvii. 23, on which see notes: Mark xv. 14; John xviii. 38 and xix. 4. [¶] Verses 1, 2. [¶] Verse 4.

Pilate was doubtless embarrassed to find the case turned back upon his hands. *Called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people.* It was not enough for Pilate to communicate his peculiar views merely to the sanhedrists. He therefore convened the people, the number of whom had considerably increased during the sending of our Lord back and forth, and who took a lively interest in the matter, in order that the declaration of our Lord's innocence might be as public and unmistakable as possible. *Have found no fault.* We ought to notice how many and what various persons bear testimony to the innocence of Jesus—Pilate, Herod, Pilate's wife, Judas Iscariot, the thief on the cross, and the centurion who superintended the crucifixion. We cannot doubt that this was specially overruled and ordered by the providence of God. *Nothing worthy of death.* As a representative man, this Gentile stands before the Jew, and pronounces Jesus innocent. But while He thus confessed Him innocent, he did not make himself so. He shed innocent blood. So the Gentile nations pronounce Jesus innocent, yet it is their sin that ever crucifies Him afresh.

16. [¶] I will therefore chastise him, and release *him*. 17. [¶] For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.

[¶] Mt. ii. xxvii. 26; John xix. 1. [¶] Matt. xxvii. 15; Mark xv. 6; John xviii. 39.

Chastise. It was the Roman custom to scourge those who were about to be crucified, especially *slaves*, making this the most ignominious punishment. The scourge was composed of ox nerves, extremely sharp, interwoven with sheep bones, so as to lacerate the flesh. The victim was bound to a low pillar, in order that, stooping forward, he might curve his bare back to receive the full, fair stroke.

Of necessity. This habit of releasing a criminal unto the people at the feast of the Passover was one of such invariable practice and long continuance, that it became a fixed and necessary custom. From what the custom arose, or by whom it was introduced, is not known. It was probably adopted to secure popularity among the

Jews, and to render the government of the Romans less odious. Any little indulgence granted to the Jews during the heavy oppression of the Romans would serve to conciliate their favor, and to keep the nation from sedition. It might happen often, that when persons were arraigned before the Romans on charge of sedition, some peculiar favorite of the people, or some leader, might be among the number. It is evident that if they had the privilege of recovering such a person, it would serve much to allay their feelings, and make tolerable the yoke under which they groaned.

18. And they cried out all at once saying, 'Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas: 19. Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.—Acts iii. 14. Acts xxi. 36.

All at once, literally, *the whole multitude together*. *Away with this man*, literally, *away with this (fellow)*. *Barabbas* is called (Matt. xxvii. 16) "a notable prisoner." He was distinguished for great crimes. He was, perhaps, a leader of a band who had been guilty of sedition, and had committed murder in an insurrection. As he and his adherents probably lived by plunder, he is called a "robber." As a fierce and brave Jewish patriot, he had become famous among the populace. He was, perhaps, like Robin Hood among the old English, hateful to the government, but popular with the masses.

What guilt there was in the few short words of the people, "Release unto us Barabbas!" They preferred a robber and a murderer to Him who came to give life unto the world! It was not one man only who made this wicked choice, but a whole multitude! Shame! The world prefers the vilest of the vile before Christ! And yet rejoice. Christ's death is the only hope for the vilest of men! Christ dies, and thus only is any Barabbas set free. (1 Tim. i. 15; Acts iii. 13.) Jesus and the guilty sinner exchange places. The sinner, condemned and awaiting his dreadful death, is now freely released by this wonderful *substitution* of Christ. Not that the sinner has been found innocent, but that Christ has taken his place, and he is set free. Yet Barabbas will, after all, die eternally if he believe not in Jesus. Christ's interposition will do us no saving

good, if we see not in Him our glorious and Divine substitute—on whom our sins were laid, and who freely died for us.

20. Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them.

See on Matt. xxv. 11.

The word rendered *willing* expresses the idea of will combined with choice or purpose, and not simply one of mere inclination. *Spake again to them*. His address probably consisted of a few words, and those not essentially different from the ones which are communicated to us a little before and a little later. Pilate's desire to acquit our Lord and set Him free, coupled with his great desire to please the Jews and get the praise of man, is a striking picture of the slavery to which a great man, without principle, may be reduced.

21. But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him.

For the first time the terrible cry is here heard, which, as the secret wish and thought of the chief priests, is now by these placed upon the people's lips, and with fanatical rage raised by these. *Crucify him*. The cross was a Roman mode of execution, reserved for slaves and the vilest of the race, and was expressive of the strongest contempt. The halter, among us, is scarce so ignominious a term of shameful suffering. What sad evidence have we here of the inconsistency of the friendship of the world! The very same persons but six days ago cried out, "Hosannah to the Son of David," who now cry out, "Crucify Him, crucify Him."

22. And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: 'I will therefore chastise him, and let him go.

"Verse 16.

What evil hath he done? Luke alone states that the governor, at this point of the trial, raised, for the third time, his voice in favor of our Lord. *I have found no cause of death in him*. Miserable temporizer! If he had found no fault in Him, why permit Him to be thus wantonly insulted, thus cruelly tormented? The fact is, for we see it through every feature and lineament of Pilate's character, that he would have been the friend of Christ if he could have been at no sacrifice of popularity or self-interest; he would have liberated Him, for His conscience told him that he ought to do so, but he feared

the people, and therefore hoped, by taking a middle course, to satisfy his conscience, to please the people, and to save Jesus. It should be remembered that it was not open animosity, not undisguised and reckless hostility, but this middle course, this temporizing policy, which placed the crown of thorns upon the Saviour's head. *Chastise him, &c.* (See notes on verse 16.)

23. And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. 24. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required. 25. And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired, but he delivered Jesus to their will. *Matt. xxvii. 26; Mark xv. 15; John xix. 16. *Or assented.

Instant—urgent. The rabble, and the chief priests, by whom they were excited, joined in the infuriated cry.

Pilate at length yielded to their importunity. The clamor of the people and chief priests overruled him to act contrary to his reason and conscience. He had not courage to stem so strong a stream, but gave sentence as they required. Here was judgment turned away backward, and justice standing afar off, for fear of popular fury. Barabbas would thus be hardened in wickedness, and do the more mischief, yet him he released, but he delivered Jesus to their will, i. e., to the will of the Jews. He who loves anything more than truth, will abandon it sooner or later. Christ is delivered up to the will of man, that man may deliver himself up to the will of Christ through His grace.

26. *And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus. *Matt. xxvii. 32, on which see notes; Mark xv. 21; see John xix. 17.

Led him away to the cross. The places of execution were always outside the walls of towns. At Jerusalem it was upon a swell of ground called Golgotha—the place of a skull—some say on account of the skulls of dead criminals that lay there, forgetting that the Jews never suffered either the bodies or bones even of criminals to remain unburied. *They laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country.* Cyrene was a city of Libya, in Africa, lying west of Egypt, in which, though consisting mostly of Greeks, a Jewish colony was located. Having much intercourse with Jerusalem, they maintained a regular synagogue at that

city. Simon appears at this time to have been a resident, at any rate, temporarily, either of Jerusalem or its adjacent country, inasmuch as it is from the country he is coming when he is so sadly met by the procession of our Lord's executioners. *And on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.* It was a part of the usual punishment of those who were crucified, that they should bear their own cross to the place of execution. It was accordingly laid first on Jesus. Weak, however, and exhausted by suffering and watchfulness, He probably sank under the heavy burden, *and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus*, either entirely in Christ's room, or sharing a part of its weight.

It is a great favor to be chosen of God to accompany an afflicted soul, and to keep it from sinking under the burden of its cross. Jesus, though now in heaven, can never forget that hour on earth in which He bore His cross, and never does He see a weak and fainting sufferer, upon whom fresh trials are accumulating, without calling to mind that heavy cross, the toilsome journey up Mount Calvary, or without stretching forth a hand to help and succor him. To bear the cross of Jesus, and to share His reproach, is reckoned in heaven more honorable than to govern kingdoms, or to discover worlds.

"We tread the path our Master trod,
We bear the cross He bore;
And every thorn that wounds our feet,
His temples pierced before.

"O, patient, spotless Lamb!
My heart in patience keep
To bear the cross so easy made,
By wounding Thee so deep."

27. † And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him.

A great company of people—a great crowd, as might be expected, followed the sad procession, many of them the same persons who, a few days before, had made themselves hoarse in shouting hosannas as Jesus entered, in Messianic triumph, the gate of the city opposite to that which He was now leaving as a prisoner condemned to die. Doubtless there were in the company also disciples and friends of Christ, and persons who were moved to pity by the sight of an innocent person suffering. *And of women.* The most of these were probably drawn together from

motives of curiosity, but among them we know to have been those noble women who followed Him from Galilee, and who were first to visit His sepulchre on the morning of His resurrection. *Which also bewailed and lamented him.* They wept deeply for the sorrowful fate of the Just One. It has been remarked that no woman is mentioned as speaking against our Lord in His life, or having a share in His death. On the contrary, He was anointed by a woman for His burial—women were the last at His grave and the first at His resurrection—to a woman He first appeared when He rose again—women ministered to His wants—women bewailed and lamented Him—a heathen woman interceded for His life with her husband, Pilate—and, above all, of a woman He was born.

28. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.

As He had now been relieved, at least in part, from the weight of the cross by Simon, He was enabled to turn partially around as He walked along, so as to address these women. *Daughters of Jerusalem*—a Hebraism for persons born and living in Jerusalem, or who resorted to it as the capital of their country. *Weep not for me.* Our Lord does not overlook the fact that the compassion of these women had not the three condemned, in equal measure, but Himself personally, as its object, therefore He does not say, “weep not for us.” A mere natural sympathy, awakened even over the narrative of the Saviour’s crucifixion, though serving to attract attention to the solemn subject, and to be the entrance to deeper views, has in itself no saving power. *But weep for yourselves, and for your children.* The Saviour does not condemn their tears for Him, but warns them that they have not more than enough for their own fate and that of their children, alluding, in the latter, to the imprecation of the Jews. (Matt. xxvii. 25.) Many of the women to whom our Lord here spoke might easily have been living forty years after, when Titus took Jerusalem, to see and experience the indescribable horrors of the siege, but it must have been mostly the generation of their *children* who suffered the destruction itself.

29. For, behold the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck.

*Matt. xxiv. 19; Luke xxi. 23.

These *days* mean primarily the period of the last wars between the Jews and the Romans, and in particular the siege of Jerusalem, but in all such predictions of judgments to come a more fearful doom lies far in the future, when all God’s enemies and those of His Son shall be arraigned at His bar, and receive the award of their impenitence and unbelief in the righteous retributions of eternity. *They shall say.* Here is a significant change from the *second* person to the *third*, from *ye* to *they*. Perhaps the *they* refers to *children*, perhaps impersonally to the wicked in the day of Jerusalem’s destruction. *Blessed are the barren, &c.* In those “days,” viz.: when, at the destruction of Jerusalem, all hope of deliverance would be cut off, those would be regarded fortunate who had never borne children. Although we have not any reason to fear the very evils which were to happen at the siege of Jerusalem, yet those calamities prefigure those of the lost, who shall seek death without being able to find it, and shall suffer an eternal confusion. Nothing but repentance and faith can prevent these miseries.

30. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us, and to the hills, Cover us.

*Isa. li. 19; Hos. x. 8; Rev. vi. 16 and ix. 6.

At the time referred to, a sudden, even though a terrible death, would be regarded as a benefit. (Comp. Hos. ix. 14, x. 8; Rev. vi. 16.) Here again, while immediate reference is had to the destruction of Jerusalem, yet, in a higher sense, the great day of God’s wrath at the final judgment is referred to, and the expressions, though figurative, signify the intense misery and distress, and the desperate helplessness of all on whom that wrath shall fall. If now we will say to Jesus, “Pardon us,” we shall never say to the mountains, “Fall on us.”

31. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?

*Prov. xi. 31; Jer. xxv. 29; Ezek. xx. 47 and xxi. 3, 4; 1 Peter iv. 17.

What is the meaning of these words? In the prophecy of Ezekiel, xx. 47, there is a little parable, in which the Jewish nation is compared to a *forest*, and the

anger of God to a fire. A fire quickly destroys *dry* trees, but *green* trees less easily. *Dry* trees represent the *wicked*, who are prepared for destruction, *green* trees the *righteous*. God gives this explanation of Ezekiel's parable: "Say to the land of Israel, Behold, I am against thee, and will draw forth my sword out of his sheath, and will cut off from thee the *righteous* and the *wicked*." (Ezek. xxi. 3.) When Jesus, therefore, spoke of a *green* tree, he meant *Himself*; and when He spoke of a *dry* tree, His enemies. This seems to be the explanation of His words. "If *they* (that is, the Romans) treat me who am *innocent* so cruelly, what will be done to the *GUILTY*?"

32. *And there were also two others, malefactors, led with him to be put to death.

¹Isa. liii. 12; Matt. xxvii. 38, on which see notes.

Pilate did not reside in Jerusalem. When he came there on the great feasts, or at other times, it was, in part, to hold courts for the trial of criminals. These robbers had probably been condemned at that time, and to show greater contempt for Jesus, He was crucified with men of that abandoned character, and on a cross which should have been occupied by their companion and leader, Barabbas. Their names were joined with that of Jesus in the history of the executions of that day. Thus the prophecy spoken by Isaiah was fulfilled, "He was numbered with the transgressors." (Isa. liii. 12.) Shame was one of the ingredients in His bitter cup. Shame is the consequence of sin, and He who bare *our sins* bare also *our shame*.

33. And ^bwhen they were come to the place which is called ^aCalvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

¹Matt. xxvii. 33, on which see notes; Mark xv. 22; John xix. 17. *Or, *the place of a skull*.

The place which is called Calvary. All the four Gospel writers speak of it as "a place." Not one of them calls it a "mount." It is usually supposed to have been on the north-west of Jerusalem, without the walls of the city, but at a short distance. Jesus was put to death *out* of the city, because capital punishments were not allowed within the walls. (See Num. xv. 35; 1 Kings xxi. 13.) *There they crucified him.* The cross was composed of two pieces of wood, one of which was placed upright in the earth, and the other crossed it. The upright part was commonly so high that

the feet of the person crucified were two or three feet from the ground. On the middle of that upright part there was a projection, or seat, on which the person crucified sat, or, as it were, *rode*. This was necessary, as the *hands* were not alone strong enough to bear the weight of the body, as the body was left exposed often many days, and not unfrequently suffered to remain till the flesh had been devoured by vultures, or putrified in the sun. The feet were fastened to this upright piece, either by nailing them with large spikes, driven through the tender part, or by being lashed by cords. To the cross-piece at the top, the hands, being extended, were also fastened, either by spikes or by cords, or perhaps in some cases by both. Our Lord was nailed both by the hands and feet, as the prophets had foretold (Ps. xxxii. 16; Zech. xii. 10; John xx. 25, 27, &c.; Rev. i. 7), a method more exquisitely painful at first, though tending to shorten the torture. He was fastened to the cross as it lay upon the ground, and the shock, when it was dropped with a sudden jerk into the hole or socket prepared to receive it, must have been terrible. Death did not ensue, usually, for many hours after the criminal was affixed to the cross. *And the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.* (See notes on verse 32.) Christ, in submitting to the punishment of slaves, joins the greatest of ignominies with the most violent of all pains, that nothing may be wanting to the example of patience and humility which He intends to give us in His death, and to the remedy which He prepares thereby for the cure of all our wounds.

34. ¶ Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

¹Matt. v. 44; Acts vii. 60; 1 Cor. iv. 12. ²Acts iii. 17. ³Matt. xxvii. 35; Mark xv. 24; John xix. 23.

Christ had often preached the doctrine of forgiving enemies, and praying for them. He practices it here Himself in a most exemplary manner. Observe, 1. The time—*then*, this prayer was probably uttered directly after His suspension on the cross. As soon as the blood of the Great Sacrifice began to flow, the Great High Priest began to intercede. 2. The character in which He prayed—*Father*—it was as Son He both

atoned and interceded with the Father. 3. The mercy prayed for, forgiveness. *Forgive*—for the sacrifice which makes forgiveness possible is now being made. 4. The persons for whom this prayer was offered. *Forgive them, for they know not what they do.* The persons for whom the prayer was offered were those who were ignorant of the real nature of the act they were performing. This was undoubtedly true of the Roman soldiers. How far the rulers and priests, the real murderers of our Lord, were included in the terms of this prayer, we cannot say. Our Lord does not mention the ignorance of those He prays for, as a plea for pardon, but as a description of their state. On the one hand, we must beware of supposing that ignorance is not blameworthy, and that ignorant persons *deserve* to be forgiven their sins. At this rate ignorance would be a desirable thing. All spiritual ignorance is more or less culpable. It is part of man's sin that he does not know better than he does. His not knowing God is only part of his guilt. Ignorance, to be an excuse, or to diminish the intensity of a crime, must be sincere and unavoidable, and it must be the ignorance of a will that would have done right had it known the truth. That those who aided in bringing our Lord to the cross were guilty, is evident, not only from the fact that Peter, in his sermon (Acts ii. 23), declared, "Him ye have taken, and by *wicked hands* have crucified and slain;" but also from the fact that three thousand were "pricked in their hearts," and said: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" In this prayer of Jesus, He "made intercession for the transgressors," as had been foretold of Him, and afforded a grand example of magnanimity to all His followers who might suffer for righteousness sake. Not that the Gospel requires of us an insensibility of wrongs and injuries, or that we deliver up our rights and properties to the lusts of every one that will invade them; but it forbids us to revenge injuries, and requires us meekly to receive evil, and readily to return good. *And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.* The literal fulfilment of the twenty-second Psalm, in this verse and the following one, ought to be care-

fully observed. (Ps. xxii. 17, 18.) Jesus gave up to His executioners these garments, made by the hands of men; but He left us garments far more precious than these—even His righteousness and grace to cover the nakedness of our hearts.

35. And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also, with them, derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God. (Ps. xxii. 17; Zech. xii. 10. Matt. xxvii. 39, on which see notes; Mark xv. 29.)

The impious throng mocked the dying Saviour. It would appear that the *people* joined in this with the *rulers*. *He saved others, let him save himself.* Instead of addressing the Son of God Himself, they spoke to each other. It is more trying to hear our enemies speak against us to *others*, than to hear them address the same reproaches to *ourselves*. There is more contempt shown in such a way of attack than in a direct assault. It does not seem probable that they meant to admit that He had actually saved others, but only that He *pretended* to save them from death by miracles, or that He claimed to be the Messiah, and thus affirmed that He *could* save them. This is, therefore, cutting irony.

36. And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, 37. And saying, If thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself.

Luke is the only one who communicates to us the fact that the soldiers also took part in the mocking, which the example of the chief priests had excited. The soldiers, rather from the natural inclination of persons of their profession to join in any popular excitement and clamor, than from deep feelings of hatred, like that which rankled in the bosom of the priests and rulers, left their previous composed demeanor, and approached Jesus, pretending to share with Him their stimulating drink. *Vinegar.* This was *posca*, a mixture of vinegar and water, a common drink for the Roman soldiers, not the medicated drink of wine and myrrh which was given to intoxicate and benumb, and which Jesus refused, because He would die undisturbed and unclouded in His mind. The soldiers also appropriated to themselves the words of the chief priests quite as eagerly and willingly as they had previously done the garments of the condemned, exclaiming, not without bitter-

ness toward despised Judaism, *If thou be the King of the Jews, &c.*

^{38.} And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

¹Matt. xxvii. 37; Mark xv. 26; John xix. 19.

It was usual for the Romans to put a "title" or inscription at the top of the cross, to denote the offense of the crucified person; a custom observed also by the Turks, in their analagous punishment of impalement. In the provinces, these inscriptions were in different languages, so that all might be able to understand for what offense the criminal was executed. The title set upon our Lord's cross was in Greek, the language most generally spoken in the eastern parts of the Roman empire; in Latin, the language of the Romans, and in the vernacular "Hebrew," or rather Chaldo-Syriac, the language of Judea. John says (xix. 19) that Pilate wrote the title and put it upon the cross. Probably Pilate wrote it, or caused it to be written, and directed the soldiers to set it up. The difference in the accounts the Evangelists give of this title (Matt. xxvii. 37; Mark xv. 26; John xix. 19) may be easily removed. It is not at all improbable that the inscription varied in the languages in which it was written. One Evangelist may have translated it from the Hebrew, another from the Greek, a third from the Latin and a fourth have translated one of the inscriptions a little differently from another. Besides, the Evangelists all agree in the main point of the inscription, viz.: That He was the King of the Jews.

^{39.} ¶ And one of the malefactors which were hanged, railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself, and us.—Matt. xxvii. 44; Mark xv. 32.

Malefactors. Thieves, robbers, or highwaymen. *Railed on him.* Matthew and Mark say both the thieves railed. It seems probable that if the penitent thief had railed at Jesus, he would have confessed that sin when he rebuked his companion for the same. It is probable that they use the plural number in the general way that people sometimes use it, when describing a transaction. For example, it is said (Heb. xi. 33), "*they* stopped the mouths of lions," when, in fact, it was but one, namely, Daniel, who did so, and "*they* were sawn asunder," when, in all likeli-

hood, the allusion is but to one, namely, Isaiah. (See on Matt. xxvii. 41, 42, 43.) *If thou be Christ.* This was not a prayer, it was a reproach.

^{40.} But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? 41. And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss.

¹Lev. xxvi. 40; Josh. vii. 9, 20; Ezra ix. 13.

The other answering rebuked him. Who this malefactor was, and what first struck his conscience and moved him to repent, we are not told. Perhaps it was witnessing the patient sufferings of Christ. *Dost not thou fear God?* The pronoun is emphatic in the original, and gives this shade of sense: *dost not even thou, i. e.*, have you no fear of Divine justice, that at this awful moment, when, as a justly-condemned criminal, you are about to be ushered into God's presence, you can afford to unite with this mob in taunting one whom we both know to be innocent? *In the same condemnation, i. e.*, condemned alike with Him at whom you are railing. Community of suffering might well have inspired forbearance and pity. *We indeed justly*, so that the criminals are truly railing at the innocent. *We receive the due reward of our deeds.* He acknowledged that they had been so great sinners, that even crucifixion was not too severe a punishment. *Nothing amiss*—nothing censurable, evil. The mild expression denotes innocence the more strongly. This testimony of the malefactor presupposes a knowledge of the past history of Jesus. The rebuke with which the penitent malefactor rebukes his fellow, sounds not at all like the remonstrance of one—would have fitted ill, in that shape at least, to the lips of one—who had just before been joining in the blasphemies, which all of a sudden he condemns.

^{42.} And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom.

There is abundant proof that this thief's repentance was genuine. (See on verse 41.) He used for the honor of Christ his heart and tongue, the only faculties at liberty. His prayer was that of a believer. *Lord.* He acknowledges Jesus to be the King Messiah. He was concerned about eternal salvation. *Remember me.* Here was humility. He did not say, "Let me

sit on thy right hand, or on thy left, in thy kingdom." *When thou comest into thy kingdom—the sentiment is, when thou comest to abide in thy kingdom.* What a wondrous faith proclaimed itself in these words. To believe that He, whose only token of royalty was the crown of thorns, that still clings to His bleeding brows, was a king and had a kingdom—that He, on whose eyes the mists of death were already hanging, was indeed the Prince of life, wielding in those pierced hands, nailed so helplessly to the cross, the keys of death and of hell, that He could shut and none could open, could open and none could shut, that it could profit something in that mysterious world whither they were both hastening—to be remembered by this crucified man—that was a faith indeed. It was itself one of the miracles of the crucifixion.

43. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

Jesus said unto him. Over against all the voices of blasphemy Jesus had thus far observed steadfast silence, but such a petitioner He permits not to wait a moment for an answer. He does not upbraid Him with his past thefts and other vices. He accepts his repentance and faith, though at the eleventh hour. *To-day*—this day. Perhaps the thief had feared that he should have to languish slowly away, hanging one or several days on the cross, as was not unusual before death ensued. *Shalt thou*, guilty as thou art, vile and debased as thou hast been, being renewed by grace and made meet, *be with me*; instead of being merely remembered, thou shalt be *with me*—perfect fellowship and communion is promised. *In paradise*—a word whose whole sweetness in such a mouth, for such ears, could only be experienced if one had himself hung there with the Saviour upon the cross. The word *paradise* is a strictly Oriental one, signifying a *park*, or *pleasure-ground*. The word here denotes the state of faithful souls between death and the resurrection, when, like Adam in Eden, they are admitted to immediate communion with God in Christ and to a participation of the true tree of life. Not that we should reject the idea of some locality where the bless-

ed union of the thief with his Lord would take place. But this is not the main element in the promise of our Lord to him; it is simply, to-day shalt thou be with me (which expression, of course, implies some place in the world of spirits) *in paradise, i. e.*, in a state of ineffable bliss.

From this answer of our Lord we learn, 1. That the soul does not die with the body, and may and does live when separate from it. 2. That no purification of any kind after death is needed for the person that dies a penitent believer. 3. That as soon as believers die they are "with Christ." (See Phil. i. 23.) 4. That whilst there is life there is hope. It was like the Son of God to close His life upon earth by an act of *especial mercy*—the salvation of a notorious sinner. It has been well observed that *one* such instance is recorded, that none may *despair*, and *but one*, that none may *presume*. Certainly the *impenitent* thief is a striking proof that pain, suffering and the approach of death, are not sufficient, without grace, to convert a soul. Let no one abuse God's goodness, which is intended to lead to repentance.

44. *And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the *earth until the ninth hour. 45. And the sun was darkened, and the vail of the temple was rent in the midst.
*Matt. xxvii. 45; Mark xv. 33. *Or, land, †Matt. xxvii. 51; Mark xv. 38.

About the sixth hour, that is, our twelve o'clock. The Jews divided their days into twelve hours, beginning to count at sunrise. *There was a darkness over all the earth*—over all the land, as it is translated in Matt. xxvii. 45. Not the globe (for it was night at the antipodes), nor, perhaps, was even all Palestine covered, but the vicinity and adjacent country. Nor was it an eclipse, since the Passover was at full moon. As the darkness was not universal but local, so it was not astronomical but atmospheric. *Until the ninth hour, i. e.*, three o'clock. *The sun was darkened.* It left the world in darkness while He who was the Light of the world was about to expire. The darkness here, and in the preceding verse, was not what is sometimes called the sympathy of nature over the scene, for that is too poetical for the plain reality of the facts before us. But it was a token of Divine displeasure, calcu-

lated to dismay the hearts of those wicked men, and awaken in them some misgiving as to the being they were crucifying. How much thicker was the darkness which covered the hearts of the Jews! *And the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.* This was doubtless the veil, curiously wrought, which separated the holy from the most holy place, in which the Divine presence was supposed to dwell, thus dividing the temple into two apartments. (Ex. xxvi. 31-33.) This veil or curtain was some sixty feet long, and it was impossible for it to be thus rent, as some have imagined, by the force of the earthquake. This miracle must have been as striking and terrible to the priests who ministered in the temple as the darkness was to the inhabitants of Palestine. It signified the opening of the way into the holiest by Christ's death—the passing away of the Jewish dispensation—and the revelation of the Gospel way of salvation to all mankind. God speaks even yet by inanimate creatures to the obdurate people who refuse to hear His Son. He makes use of everything to awaken the sinner, but the sinner, by his obduracy, renders everything ineffectual when God works not an internal and invisible miracle upon his heart. How is it that they do not now at least know that it is the Sun of their souls, whose light and life they have extinguished and put out, and that His death rends the veil of types and shadows, discovers the truth, and opens heaven? But the time is not yet come.

46. † And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost."
 *Ps. xxxi. 5; † 1 Peter ii. 23. *Matt. xxvii. 50; Mark xv. 37; John xix. 30.

Cried with a loud voice. This shows that there was something peculiar and uncommon about our Lord's death. A dying man's voice is generally not "loud," but feeble. This was the expiring cry of nature. Inasmuch as the agony of the cross extorted from Jesus no cry of pain, and His only complaint had been His apparent desertion of God, may we not attribute, in part, at least, this last cry to His anguish of spirit, which was so great as to hasten His death much beyond what was usual? There are seven sentences recorded as spoken by Him while

on the cross. *Three* were uttered *before* the darkness overspread the land, and *four* near its conclusion. The first three concerned others, not Himself. (See verses 34, 43; John xix. 26, 27; Mark xxvii. 46; John xix. 28, 30.) The *last* sentence spoken *by* Christ while on the cross was, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.* These are the words of David, in the thirty-first Psalm. (Ps. xxxi. 5.) *Father.* As soon as Christ was nailed to the cross He called upon His Father, and now, when He was just expiring, He again said "Father." (See Ps. lxxxix. 26.) *Commend.* The original word thus rendered would be better translated "commit." *My spirit.* Our Lord possessed a true body and reasonable soul, united in close and mysterious union with His Divine nature, yet each so distinct that acts and emotions could be predicated of the one which belonged not to the other. This soul He committed into the hands of His Father. These words of Jesus are full of faith and comfort, fit to be the last breathings of every gracious soul in this world. Dying believers are both warranted and encouraged by Christ's example believingly to commit their precious souls into the hands of God as a gracious Father. (See Gal. iii. 26; John i. 12; Acts vii. 59; Rom. viii. 15; 2 Tim. i. 12.) Jesus trusted in God. Even His enemies said, when they scoffed at Him, "He trusted in God." Worldly people cannot trust Him, for they do not *know* Him. They cannot trust Him to guide them one step which they do not *see*, nor to give them one blessing which they do not already *hold in their hands.* This is *not* to trust Him. But the children of God can trust Him while they live with their *earthly concerns*, and, when they come to die, with their *immortal spirits.* *Martin Luther*, the great Reformer, was remarkable for his trust in God. Three hours a day he set apart for calling upon his Father, and he received the most wonderful answers to his prayers. When he was dying, he was often heard to say, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." These were *almost* his last words. He added, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish."

And having said this, he gave up the ghost. The proper meaning is, resigned His spirit, or expired. It is evident that the Lord Jesus did not die because He was obliged, but because He chose voluntarily and of His own free will to submit to death. Finding Himself in deepest dependence, He yet exhibited and used His true freedom. (John x. 18.) His death was "His own act." He "offered Himself without spot to God." None of the Evangelists say that Jesus died, although that expression is ever after used of His death, when stated as one great fact.

47. *Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man.

*Matt. xxvii. 54, on which see notes; Mark xv. 39.

The centurion—a captain of a hundred men. He was doubtless the commander of the quaternion of soldiers who watched Jesus' death. *Saw what was done*—saw the supernatural darkness, the trembling of the earth, the rending of the rocks, and the opening of the tombs, and heard the Saviour's dying words. *He glorified God.* He had never seen such amazing instances of Divine power, and, therefore, took occasion to adore God as the Almighty. *Certainly this was a righteous man.* The centurion knew that Christ was executed for claiming to be the Son of God. Christ was righteous, in that His claim, for which He was executed, was sustained by God, by the supernatural phenomena. The utterance of the centurion is less the expression of an exactly defined conception of the understanding, than the outgush of a deeply-moved sensibility, and it is as unreasonable to deny the echo of superstition as the voice of sincere faith in his manly words. Christ had a testimony of His innocence and righteousness given by all sorts of persons. Pilate and Herod pronounced Him innocent; Pilate's wife proclaimed Him a righteous person; Judas, the traitor, declared it was innocent blood; the thief on the cross affirmed He had done nothing censurable; and the centurion owned Him to be a righteous man, yea, the Son of God.

48. And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned.

At the time of the Passover, there were

*12

from two to three millions of Jews, gathered from all lands of the earth, in the capital, a multitude almost as great as that which had come out of Egypt, and of these it may be supposed that there was no stranger among them that had not heard of Jesus of Nazareth. (See Luke xxiv. 18.) So far as the hills and plains around Calvary gave room for it, all were covered with beholders, who now, however, were found in a wholly different mood from that which is described, verse 35. As the centurion glorified God by his confession, so did these beholders accuse themselves as sharers in the guilt of the death of Jesus, and as objects of the holy displeasure of God.

49. †And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.

†Ps. xxxviii. 11; Matt. xxvii. 55; Mark xv. 40; see John xix. 25.

These women (as we are informed, Mark xv. 41; Luke viii. 2, 3) ministered unto Jesus of their substance while He was in Galilee. They had now come to Jerusalem for the same purpose. *Stood afar off.* They were, probably, not suffered to come near the cross, because it was surrounded by soldiers. *Beholding these things, i. e.,* the convulsions of nature and other wonders which attended the crucifixion of Jesus. These women stood the ground more firmly than the disciples of Christ. They witnessed, with intense feelings, His sufferings, from some convenient place, as near as they could approach. Christ has often curious and inquisitive spectators of His mysteries, who are only present in body, but love and fidelity were the things which kept these pious women there, as they were those which caused them at first to follow Jesus. His grace drew them to Him; His grace detained them.

50. † And behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counselor, and he was a good man, and a just: 51. The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them: he was of Arimathea, a city of the Jews: who also himself waited for the Kingdom of God.

†Matt. xxvii. 57, on which see notes; Mark xv. 42; John xix. 38. †Mark xv. 43; Luke ii. 25, 38.

Joseph, a counselor, probably, a member of the Sanhedrim. *Good man, and a just.* Good is here used of one who is kind, benevolent, compassionate, *just,* of one who is a strict observer of the law. *Had not consented,* &c. He had not agreed with his colleagues in conspiring to bring about

the death of Jesus, but he seems to have lacked the courage to protest against their judgment. *Of Arimathæa.* This was probably Ramathaim Tophim, lying a few miles west of Jerusalem. *Waited for the kingdom of God.* Waited for, or expected the coming of the Messiah. But this expression means more than an indefinite expectation that the Messiah would come, for all the Jews expected that. It implies that he believed Jesus to be the Messiah, and that he had waited for Him to build up the kingdom of God, that he was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews. He was a believer in Christ, but a timid one, not willing at first to acknowledge his faith. But God called him to a public profession of attachment, and gave him grace to evince it. So men often delay a profession of attachment to Christ. They cherish a secret love, they indulge a hope in the mercy of God, but they conceal it for fear of man. Whereas God requires that the attachment should be made known. Those who love the Saviour have no right to hide their light under a bushel. They are bound to profess Him before men. This is the command of God, and this is the way of peace.

52. This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. 53. And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid.
*Matt. xxvii. 59, on which see notes; Mark xv. 46.

No one had a right to remove the body but the magistrate. God had raised up this distinguished counselor, and secret disciple for a special and most important vocation. The disciples of Jesus had fled, and if they had not, they had no influence with Pilate. Unless there had been a special application to Pilate in behalf of Jesus, His body would have been buried that night in the common grave with the malefactors, for it was a law of the Jews that the body of an executed man should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath. It needed no small measure of courage to do this. Jesus had just been condemned, mocked, spit on, crucified—the death of a slave, or the most guilty wretch. To show attachment for Him now was proof of sincere affection. *Begged the body of Jesus.* This shows that Joseph believed our Lord to be dead. As Joseph was a “rich man,” he could afford an honorable tomb. It is

a hopeful sign when men's faith grows in time of danger. Who shall despise the bruised reed, or the smoking flax, or the day of small things? Many a timid follower of Jesus, if he be sincere, is in time strengthened by God's grace for the front rank of the battle, and the most fearful onset of the enemy. *And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen*—a large square shroud or sheet. The head was wrapped separately in a napkin of this material. *Laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone.* We must figure to ourselves a large room cut horizontally into the solid rock for a vault. In this room we enter, from the open air, by a large door. On entering you would see small, long cells, or niches, cut into the solid, adamantine sides, as depositories of the corpses; or from this first main room you may enter one or several smaller apartments, in whose walls the niches for corpses are cut. A person could enter into the first main vault, and then into either of the smaller apartments. *Wherein never man before was laid.* Probably Joseph had the new vault made for his own family. It was so ordered, in the providence of God, that Jesus was laid in a tomb where never man before was laid, that there might be no suspicion about His identity when He rose, that it might not be alleged that another person had risen. Besides, by being buried here an important prophecy was remarkably fulfilled. (Isa. liii. 9.)

54. And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on.—*Matt. xxvii. 62.

As Saturday was the Jewish Sabbath, so Friday, the day of the crucifixion, was the *day of preparation*. The preparation of the Jews began strictly at three o'clock in the afternoon, but the name *preparation* was properly applied to the whole day. *The sabbath drew on, i. e.,* the evening was approaching, at which time the Jewish Sabbath commenced.

55. And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid. 56. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments, and rested the sabbath day, according to the commandment.
*Luke viii. 2. *Mark xv. 47. *Mark xvi. 1. *Exod. xx. 10; see on Matt. xxvii. 61; xxviii. 1.

Which came with him from Galilee. (See chap. viii. 2.) *Beheld the sepulchre, &c.* The affection of these pious females never forsook them in all the trials and suffer-

ings of their Lord. With true love they followed Him to the cross; they came as near to Him as they were permitted to come, in His last moments; they followed Him when taken down and laid in the tomb. The strong, the mighty, the youthful had fled, but female love never forsook Him, even in His deepest humiliation. This is the nature of true love. In scenes of poverty, want, affliction and death, it shows its genuineness. That which lives there is genuine. That which turns away from such scenes is spurious. Let it be noted that these friends of our Lord, who could not possibly be mistaken as to His identity, were witnesses to the fact of His burial, and actually saw His body laid in the grave. They saw the linen in which He was wrapped, and could therefore testify two days after, that the very same linen was found wrapped together in the empty tomb. *And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments.* As but a short time remained until sunset, they must have hastened home with great diligence to the purchase and preparation of those ointments and spices. What they lacked, however, they procured when the Jewish

Sabbath had ended, which was at sunset preceding the morning of the resurrection. *Spices and ointments.* The former refers to myrrh, aloes and other preventives of putrefaction, and odorous perfumes, the latter to the ointments and oils with which bodies were anointed. *And rested on the sabbath day according to the commandment.* (See Exod. xx. 10.) Eager as they were to perform the last offices of love to their Lord, yet these pious women would not transgress the commandment. How blessed was the result! How unblest would have been the impatient yielding to their own inclination! Had they presented themselves sooner at the grave, they would have been grieved by the presence or molested by the rudeness of the Roman soldiers, while their purpose could not possibly have been effected. By waiting till the Sabbath was past, they found the guard dispersed, and their Lord already risen. They unbound those limbs alive which they had come to weep over and anoint in death. Let us bury and serve Jesus in the poor, since He has left them in His place, and has in them continual wants and necessities to be supplied.

1. By whom was Jesus led unto Pilate? 2. What was their accusation? 3. Why were they "the more fierce?" 4. To whom did Pilate send Jesus? 5. How did Herod receive Him? 6. Did he send Him back again to Pilate? 7. What course did Pilate pursue? 8. Who was made to carry the Saviour's cross? 9. What did Jesus say to the women that followed Him? 10. Who were led with Jesus to be put to death? 11. What prayer did Christ offer on the cross? 12. How did His enemies treat Him? 13. What supernatural events occurred. 14. What is said of the centurion? 15. What of Joseph of Arimathea? 16. What is said of the women approaching the sepulchre with a view to embalming our Lord's body?

CHAPTER XXIV.

1 *Christ's resurrection is declared by two angels to the women that came to the sepulchre.* 9 *These report it to others.* 13 *Christ himself appeareth to the two disciples that went to Emmaus: 36 afterwards he appeareth to the apostles, and reproveth their unbelief: 47 giveth them a charge: 49 promises the Holy Ghost: 51 and so ascendeth into heaven.*

In the histories of the resurrection, as given by the Evangelists, we may discern a Divine, overruling plan, giving a unity to the whole. This symmetry of plan could not have been fabricated by them; for

each, with evident unconsciousness, furnishes his share without knowing what the other contributes, so that the whole is made up of unintentional parts. Luke is less detailed and exact than the other historians, so that he must rather be complemented from them, than they from him. But, on the other hand, he furnishes us new contributions to the knowledge of the risen and glorified Lord, the contents and

tendency of which are in the most beautiful agreement with the broad humanistic character of his Gospel, as will appear from an examination of the individual accounts. (See note at close of John xx.)

NOW upon the first *day* of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them.
†Matt. xxviii. 1, on which see notes; Mark xvi. 1; John xx. 1. †Luke xxiii. 56.

Upon the first day of the week. This grammatically answers to the word *sabbath day* in verse 56 of the preceding chapter. The Jewish Sabbath was our Saturday. The first day of the week was our Sunday. Hence, this day of the week was called the Lord's day. (Rev. i. 9.) It is therefore recognized by inspiration as the sacred day in the Christian week. The day of the Saviour's sepulchral repose was the last of Jewish Sabbaths. The first day of the week has from that time to this succeeded to the honors of the fourth commandment. *Very early in the morning.* The visit of the women to the sepulchre may have covered hours, extending from the first start from home until they left the sepulchre. *They came unto the sepulchre.* The account is immediately connected with chap. xxiii. 56; and the women of whom Luke here makes mention can be no others than those of whom he said (verse 55), that they had come with Jesus from Galilee. This early visit of those holy women to the sepulchre is a strong proof of their love and affection. It has been said of woman:

"Not she with trait'rous kiss her Master stung,
 Not she denied Him with unfaithful tongue:
 She, when Apostles fled, could danger brave,
 Lest at His cross, and earliest at His grave!"

A woman was the first to eat the forbidden fruit. It was merciful in God to permit her to be the first to visit the sacred tomb. *Bringing the spices which they had prepared.* (See verse 56 of preceding chapter.) The spices brought were aromatics, substances used in embalming. The process of embalming and applying spices to dead bodies was usually repeated for several days together, in order that the aromatic and antiseptic compounds might have their full effect. (See Gen. i. 3.) *And certain others with them.* (See verse 10.) The diligence and earnestness of a soul which seeks God is represented in these holy

women. The good works which we would offer God ought to be preceded by two conditions: we must prepare ourselves to perform them with holy dispositions, and we must set about them without delay. (See on Acts xvi. 13.)

2. [†]And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre.

†Matt. xxviii. 2, on which see notes; Mark xvi. 4.

Rolled away. The stone was lying in the hollow, cut deep into the rock, so as to form the door; and must accordingly be rolled forth from this recess outward. How often there seems to be a great stone in the way of pious undertakings! How apt are Christians to be discouraged, and to say, "Who shall roll it away?" Let their answer be, "God." When he designs that a work should be performed, He removes every obstacle.

3. [†]And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.

†Mark xvi. 5; verse 23; see on Matt. xxvii. 2-6.

The Lord Jesus. This is the first time in the New Testament that our Saviour is so termed. The Lord—Christ—Jesus—are names He frequently has had. Here, after His resurrection as a conqueror, Luke calls Him "the Lord Jesus." God sometimes tries those who seek Him, when they think to find Him, in the exercises of piety. By whose hands had the body of Christ been taken away? Not surely by the priests and scribes and other enemies of our Lord! If they had had His body to show in disproof of His resurrection, they would gladly have shown it. Not by the Apostles and other disciples of our Lord. They were far too much frightened and spirited to attempt such an action, and the more so when they had nothing to gain by it. One explanation, and only one, can meet the circumstances of the case, and that explanation is the one supplied by the angels in verse 6: "He is risen."

4. [†]And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments:—John xx. 12; Acts i. 10.

They could not tell what to make of the facts before them—the stone being rolled away—the empty sepulchre—the linen clothes lying by themselves—the body gone. *Two men.* The angels are designated according to that form of manifestation which they had in the view of the women. *Stood by them.* We learn from Mark (xvi.

9), that on their first entrance the women saw but one angel, and he sitting, at which they were terrified. Luke adds, that, a moment after, two angels stood before them (the one being joined by a second, to confirm the truth by two witnesses), so that the words (verse 5) were uttered standing, the first angel, doubtless, having risen and being speaker for both. Thus, all these Evangelists are reconciled in regard to the number and positions of the angels. *In shining garments, i. e.*, in garments of dazzling brightness. Celestial beings are usually represented as clothed in white. (Acts i. 10; Dan. vii. 9; Rev. iii. 4, 5, iv. 4, vii. 13, 14.) It is asked sometimes, Whence did Jesus obtain His resurrection clothes? We might, with the same wisdom, ask, Whence did these angels obtain their robes of white? Who manufactures the angels' harps, or Gabriel's trumpet? The absence of Jesus Christ ought always to give us some perplexity, and to make us fear lest this has happened through our own fault. God never leaves those souls in trouble long whom He exercises by withdrawing Himself from them.

5. And as they were afraid, and bowed down *their faces to the earth*, they said unto them, *Why seek ye the living among the dead?*

The cause of their fear was, doubtless, the appearance of the angels; or the word *afraid* may be taken in a wider sense and means *agitated* or *troubled*. *Bowed down their faces to the earth*. These words express a respectful and reverential *declining their heads* and looking downward, that they may not appear to gaze, which is well known to have been forbidden to the Jews upon the sight of a celestial vision. (Ex. xix. 21; Judg. xiii. 20.) *They said*. One of these was speaker, although the act is naturally and properly referred to both. *Why seek ye the living*, or Him that liveth, *among the dead?* It appeared to them an act of folly to look for the Lord of *Life* in the abode of *Death*. They felt that His followers ought to have known that He was risen. We never seek Jesus Christ without benefit and comfort, when we seek Him sincerely and with our whole heart.

6. He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee. 7. Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise

again. 8. And they remembered his words, 9. And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest.

^cMatt. xvi. 21 and xvii. 23; Mark viii. 31 and ix. 31; Luke ix. 22. ^eJohn ii. 22. ^bMatt. xxviii. 8; Mark xvi. 10.

He is not here—in the sepulchre—but is risen, and has come forth from the tomb. While the angels must be astonished at the dullness and forgetfulness of human creatures, they do not exult over them with pride, or upbraid them with harshness. They instruct in a gentle and condescending manner. Let us try to teach like them when we meet with those who are more ignorant than ourselves. *Remember how he spake unto you*. (Comp. ix. 22, xviii. 32; Matt. xvi. 21, xvii. 22, 23.) The angels referred them to Christ's own words. Had they duly observed and believed the prediction of the resurrection, they would easily have believed it when it came to pass, and therefore they would not have been so surprised and agitated as they seemed to be. The belief of mysteries is founded chiefly upon the word of Christ. *When he was yet in Galilee*. This expression shows, no less than many other similar ones, that the greater part of our Lord's discourses and sermons were delivered in Galilee.

Saying, &c. From this passage it would seem that our Lord had, even before leaving Galilee, assured these women that He was to be crucified and rise again. Perhaps they had assigned it a symbolic meaning and forgotten it; and now it is brought fresh by the angelic words to their memories and they realize its fulfillment. The dullness of memory is a common spiritual disease among believers, and is one among many proofs of our fallen and corrupt condition. Even after men have been renewed by the Holy Ghost, their readiness to forget the promises and precepts of the Gospel is continually bringing them into trouble. *Must be delivered*. The Greek words here mean, "It is necessary that He should be delivered," necessary for the fulfillment of prophecies and types, necessary for the redemption of sinners. Strange necessity of the humiliations and sufferings of Christ! How can sinners then pretend to be exempted from suffering! *Sinful men*. Unless reference is here made to the Gentiles (xviii. 32), it is probable

that the angel added this epithet *sinful* as his own expression of the character of all who had any agency in the crucifixion of Jesus. (See Acts ii. 23.) *The third day rise again.* (See notes on verse 3.)

Remembered, &c. (See notes on verse 7.) They had heard Christ's words, but made no use of them. Now after many days they call them to mind. We need recollection much more than information. A reasonable remembrance of the words of Jesus will help us to a right understanding of His providence.

Told all these things. Obediently to the express command of the angel, which Matthew and Mark state. *And to all the rest of the disciples who were with the Apostles.* These women were the first preachers of the resurrection of Christ.

10. It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles. 11. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.

¹Luke viii. 3. ²Mark xvi. 11; verse 25.

Respecting the women here named, see notes on chap. viii. 2, 3. Some think it was from Joanna Luke derived his information of those circumstances, which he alone records. She is not mentioned except by Luke here, and in chap. viii. 3, whence we may conjecture she was known to him. *Other women.* These were probably the same spoken of in a former place, who ministered to our Lord. (Chap. viii. 3.)

Idle tales, i. e., words of no value. They had not forgotten, nor did they truly disbelieve their Lord's predictions. But in their dejection of mind they had lost the realizing power and could not grasp the fact. Besides, if our Lord is to rise again, He ought to come in the glory of His kingdom, appearing perhaps in the skies. (Mark ix. 10-31.) Hence they afterward ask Jesus, "Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts i. 6.) It is quite unexpected, therefore, that His resurrection shall steal upon them, and be first announced to them by women. There must, they think, be some mistake, some hallucination of mind, some imposition practiced upon these simple, confiding women, and it will not do to suffer our hopes to be prematurely raised, and then dashed to the ground, leaving us in deeper

despondency than before. Their distrust in the report that Jesus had risen is to be attributed to its incredible nature, and not to any doubt on their part of the veracity of these women. How can we wonder at the unbelief of these disciples, when we see, after eighteen centuries of additional proof that Christ has risen from the dead, a general want of faith in that great event! Had the resurrection been a fable invented by those Apostles, would they have made themselves so little the heroes of the history?

12. Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre, and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.—John xx. 3, 6.

This was in consequence of the strange tidings of Mary of Magdala, who was the first to bring the report of the absence of the body from the sepulchre. (John xx. 2.) *And stooping down;* so as to look in the sepulchre. *Beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves.* That the clothes and napkin were carefully folded and deposited, indicated that there had been no violence or pillage, in which case everything would have been in confusion. The whole was as if a sleeper had risen from his couch, arranged the clothes, and departed. *Wondering in himself, &c.* It is the opinion of those who are best judges, that these words would be better rendered "departed to his own house wondering." The unbelief of the Apostles is one of the strongest evidences that Jesus rose from the dead. If the disciples and Apostles who were at first so backward to believe in Christ's resurrection, were at last so thoroughly persuaded of its truth that they preached it everywhere, and with every risk and loss, Christ must have risen indeed. The wonder of that great event infinitely surpasses the hopes and understandings of men.

13. ¶ And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs.—Mark xvi. 12.

The resurrection had taken place already, but the disciples had refused to credit it. The Sun of Righteousness, which seemed to have set forever, had again risen, with healing on his wings, but the disciples, not without grave fault of their own, are walking on in darkness still, in a darkness which in some sort they have made for themselves. Toward the close

of the joyful day which saw the Lord arise, two of them were walking together, oppressed with *sorrow*. Cleopas was one of them. (Verse 18.) He is not the same with Clopas (John xix. 25), but—Cleopatrus. The name of the other disciple is not given. Some have supposed he was Nathanael; others, Simon; others, Luke himself; others, Peter. Perfect certainty in the case is not only impossible, but unnecessary. That it could not have been one of the Apostles is evident from the fact that we are told that when these two disciples returned to Jerusalem, "they found the eleven gathered together." He was one of the wider circle of disciples who were now together at Jerusalem. *Went that same day.* They had heard before they left some reports of what had taken place in the morning; that the tomb had been found open and empty, and that the women had seen "a vision of angels," who said that Jesus was alive; but they seem to have attached no special importance to these reports. They were sorrowful for their Lord's death and perplexed by the disappearance of His body, while they more than all deplored the frustration of their hopes that He would "have delivered Israel" from the Romans. *To a village, &c.* The village of Emmaus, north of Jerusalem, and mentioned by Josephus, to which they were journeying, ought not to be confounded, as it often has been, with another Emmaus in the plain of Judea, and not "*threescore furlongs*," or something more than seven miles from Jerusalem, but not less than twenty from the capital city. All modern attempts to discover the site of this village have been unsuccessful.

14. And they talked together of all these things which had happened.

Their great theme of conversation was the death of Jesus and the circumstances which attended and followed that event. If the faith of these two disciples was somewhat weakened, yet they were at least filled with the remembrance of Christ's mysteries; and for persons to love to talk of holy things is one means to raise and revive their hope.

15. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together, and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.—Matt. xviii. 29; verse 36.

Communed together is the same word in the original translated in verse 14, *talked together*. *Reasoned*—compared opposite views (as the Greek word implies) in regard to the late events. *Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.* As He appears to have been going the same way, He must have overtaken them and proceeded in company with them. The way to have Christ's presence and company with us, is to be conversing of Christ and the things of Christ. Conference on spiritual subjects is a most important means of grace. (See Mal. iii. 16, 17; Heb. x. 24; 1 Thes. v. 11; Matt. xii. 34.)

16. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.—John xx. 14 and xxi. 4.

By the power which He had of appearing at will under various forms to human senses, our Lord at first concealed Himself from their knowledge, but finally resumed His well-known appearance to their vision. (See 2 Kings vi. 17–20.) We are dependent upon God for the use and exercise of our faculties and members. He has His secret and wise designs when He sometimes hides Himself from those whom He loves most. We may have Jesus Christ with us, and not know Him. We may walk along with Him in His ways and yet not see clearly into His conduct.

17. And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?

The two disciples were evidently in earnest debate, not unduly striving nor contending, but still regarding from different points of view and, each urging upon the other his own interpretation of that stupendous event, of which they had just been the witnesses. What Jesus already knew He wished to hear from their own mouth, and began, therefore, with a question of the kind with which shortly before He had introduced His revelation of Himself to Mary. In interrupting their conversation He wished to induce them to grant Him a participation in their sadness. When we are conversing together, if the Lord were to draw near and inquire about the topics of our conversation, should we be always willing to reply? (Matt. xii. 34.) Worldly people *never* take pleasure in conversing about their souls, or Christ, or heaven. They delight in talking of the trifling vanities of time.

18. And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering, said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?—John xix. 25.

Cleopas. (See notes on verse 13.) Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem? The Greek words so rendered are somewhat peculiar. On the whole, it will be best to render them thus: "Dost thou lodge alone at Jerusalem?" "Dwellest thou in solitude there, apart from the busy concourse of men, and thus so withdraw from acquaintance with all which is passing in the city, that no tidings have reached thee of the mighty and marvelous events which within the last few days have occurred?" The whole verse is an important evidence of the publicity and notoriety of our Lord Jesus Christ's crucifixion. How many Christians are such strangers in the Church that Christ and His mysteries are almost unknown to them, after so many ages of predictions, miracles and instructions!

19. And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: 20. And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him.

¹Matt. xxi. 11; Luke vii. 16; John iii. 2, iv. 19 and vi. 14; Acts ii. 22. ²Acts vii. 22. ³Luke xxiii. 1; Acts xiii. 27, 28.

What things? He who asks a question does not affirm that He does not know the answer. Our Lord here, as well as at a later part of His history, draws out from the disciples their opinions, feelings and wishes. *Concerning Jesus of Nazareth.* The official name CHRIST they do not now take upon their lips, but respecting the name Jesus of Nazareth, they presuppose that it is sufficiently familiar to every one, in and out of Jerusalem. *Which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people.* Grieved though the disciples were that they had lost their Lord, yet they had not renounced Him. They looked upon Him still, not as a deceiver, but a prophet mighty in deed and word. *Before God and all the people* must mean, "By the testimony both of God and the Jewish nation." (See Acts ii. 22; John xii. 17.) This was a brief confession of unbroken faith in the genuine character of the Crucified One. *And how the chief priests, &c.* The disciples were not afraid to declare that in respect to Jesus, an irreconcilable difference of opinion existed between them and the chiefs of the people.

21. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and besides all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done. Luke i. 68 and ii. 38; Acts i. 6.

Trusted that it had been he, &c. As if Cleopas, speaking also for his companion, had said, "We were full of hope, that this had been the Messiah so long expected by us, but this being the third day since He died, we fear we shall find ourselves mistaken." By the word *redeemed* is not meant merely spiritual deliverance, or redemption from all the moral evils, which mar the happiness of men, and turn away the soul from the true worship of God, but also deliverance from the Roman yoke. *And besides all this,* in addition to that cruel death inflicted on Him by our rulers, and sufficiently explaining the sadness which Thou hast noted in us, *to-day is the third day, &c.* "We might have had some glimpse of hope up to this present time, seeing that while He was alive He more than once uttered mysterious words not merely about His own death, words which we have found only too true, but also about a triumphant reversal of that doom of death, mysterious words about what should happen on the third day after His death, but this day has arrived, and is unmarked by any change." Alas! what is the spirit of man without the Spirit of God! It hopes for everything when there is the least foundation imaginable; and it despairs of everything in the time of the greatest hope. True faith waits for God's proper time, without any concern or anxiety. Christian hope is such only by patience and perseverance.

22. Yea, and certain women also of our company, made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre: 23. And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. 24. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not. ¹Matt. xxviii. 8; Mark xvi. 10; verses 9, 10; John xx. 18. ²Verse 12.

Yea, and certain women, &c., literally and better, *but moreover certain women, &c.* The hesitating, doubting disciples will not speak confidently of this that it was a mere subjective imagination of these women, as little pledge themselves to its objective reality. They speak of it therefore as a *vision of angels*, leaving this matter undecided. *And certain of them, &c.* They go on to tell of the visit of Peter and John to the sepulchre. But, having thus stated all

which gave them warrant for hope, they yet leave off with the mournful, desponding words—but *him they saw not*. (John xx. 3-10.) This incredulity of the disciples is mysterious; it makes a part of the economy of the Divine dispensations, and is instrumental in promoting the faith of all people. This they regarded as a sufficient excuse for their believing themselves obliged to bid farewell to all hope. God frequently permits faults in others for our instruction, and the falls of the most perfect are useful in supporting the most weak.

25. Then he said unto them, ²⁰fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26. ²¹Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?

²²Mark vii. 18 and viii. 17, 18; Heb. v. 11, 12. ²³Verse 46; Acts xvii. 3; 1 Peter i. 11.

Fools. The Greek word so rendered, means "wanting in thought, understanding and consideration," and does not imply any contempt. *And slow of heart to believe, &c.* Not hard of heart, but *slow, i. e.,* sluggishly disposed. The disciples believed *many* things which the prophets had spoken, but they did not believe *all*; they had believed as much as fell in with their preconceived notions, prejudices and opinions, which is so often the way with us all. Man's word, and woman's word, and angels' words, they had paid more or less heed to all these, but God's Word, that word which liveth and abideth forever, they had not built and established themselves on it. *Ought not Christ to have suffered, &c.* "Do you not find that the person described by the prophets in the Old Testament to be the Messiah, was to pass to His glory through blood? Why, then, is your hope so feeble in the person who suffered three days ago, when His death so well agrees with the predictions of the prophets, who foretold that the Messiah should be cut off, but not for Himself, and be smitten for the iniquities of His people?" *And to enter into his glory*—by ascension. Sometimes the great wisdom and grace of God make the diffidence of His people an occasion of further clearing up of the choicest truths to them. Let it be noted, 1. That with respect to God's purpose, and with relation to man's guilt, the death of Christ was necessary and indispensable. 2. That His resurrection and exaltation were as

necessary as His suffering. 3. That there was a meritorious connection between Christ's sufferings and His glory; His exaltation was merited by His suffering. *He was to drink of the brook in the way, and then He was to lift up His head.* Christians must expect suffering in their way to heaven. This was the way of the Head, and it must be that of the members.

27. ²⁴And beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

²⁵Verse 45. ²⁶Gen. iii. 15, xxii. 18, xxvi. 4 and xlix. 10; Num. xxi. 9; Deut. xviii. 15. ²⁷Ps. xvi. 10, xxii. and cxxxii. 11; Isa. vii. 14, ix. 6, xl. 10, 11, l. 6 and liii.; Jer. xxiii. 5 and xxxiii. 14, 15; Ezek. xxxiv. 23 and xxxvii. 23; Dan. ix. 24; Mi. vii. 20; Mal. iii. 1 and iv. 2; See John i. 45.

This verse gives testimony to the Divine authority and Christian interpretation of the Old Testament Scriptures. The denial of reference to Christ's death and glory in the Old Testament is a denial of Christ's own teaching. How delightful it must have been to hear the Lord explain in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself! But has He not promised His Holy Spirit to enlighten us when we search His holy Word? There are things concerning Himself in *all* the Scriptures. In the beginning of the Bible we find Him revealed as the Seed of the woman, and in the last chapter of the Old Testament we behold Him as the Sun of Righteousness, and in every intervening page we may discover Him as a suffering Lamb, or as a conquering Lion, as a tender shoot, or a strong branch, as a servant, or a king, as a child, or the Ancient of Days, now made low as a worm and now declared to be the mighty God, the great Creator, the glorious Jehovah.

28. And they drew nigh unto the village whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further.

²⁹Gen. xxxii. 26 and xlii. 7; Mark vi. 48, on which see notes.

He made as though he would have gone further, literally, he was making as though, &c. There was no dissimulation here. He simply passed on as though He was intending to go farther. This He would have done if they had not detained Him with loving violence. In the nature of the thing it is proper and natural by an offer to give an occasion to another to do good actions, and in case it succeeds not, then to do what was intended not. And so the offer was conditional.

20. But ⁴they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them.
⁴Gen. xix. 3; Acts xvi. 15.

Entreating with the utmost urgency, they invited Him in, and pointed Him to the sun hurrying to its setting, in the living feeling that their spiritual light also would set if He should leave their company. They wished to remind Him that He could not possibly continue His journey in the night (comp. Gen. xix. 2, 3; Judg. xix. 9), and desired that He should therefore turn in with them, since probably one of them possessed a dwelling at Emmaus, where a simple supper was awaiting them. The love of truth and the influence of charitable instructions, cause charity to grow and increase in the heart. We must use holy violence toward Christ in prayer, that our imperfections may not constrain Him to forsake us. (Gen. xxxii. 26.) We have great reason to redouble our importunities, when we see the Sun of Righteousness begin to decline and the light of faith to grow dim in ourselves, in our brethren, or in the Church, and more especially when the day of life is likewise far spent.

30. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.—Matt. xiv. 19.

The Lord, on the ground of a tacitly acknowledged superiority, acted as master of the house at the table of His host. *Blessed it.* The words *to bless*, mean only to give thanks, sometimes to pray for a blessing, that is, to pray for the Divine favor and friendship, to pray that what we do may meet God's approbation. In seeking a blessing on our food it means to pray that it may be made nourishing to our bodies, that we may have proper gratitude to God, the Giver, for providing for our wants, and that we may remember the Creator while we partake the bounties of His providence. Our Saviour *always* sought a blessing on His food. From *His* observing this practice, we may be sure that it is wise, and useful, and necessary. *And brake.* The loaves of bread among the Jews were made *thin* and *brittle*, and were therefore broken and not cut. As Christ was known to the disciples "in breaking of bread" (verse 35), this seems to imply that there was something in the act of

breaking bread by which they recognized at last with whom they had to do.

31. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.

Their eyes were opened. These words, going before *they knew him*, and put evidently as the condition of their knowing, imply that it was not a mere natural conclusion which they drew from something which they saw Him do, but a supernatural enlightenment, a ceasing of the condition indicated at verse 16. *He vanished out of their sight.* There was a sudden vanishing of the Lord, a becoming invisible in an extraordinary way. This and other expressions concerning our Lord's risen body show plainly that it was a body in some wonderful way different from the common body of man. It was a real material body, and true flesh and blood. But it was a body capable of moving, appearing and disappearing after a manner that we cannot explain. We may fairly suppose that it was a pattern of what our own bodies will be after they are raised again. They will be true bodies, material and real, but bodies endowed with capacities of which now we know nothing. What must the mourners have felt when they discovered that the wonderful stranger was their own beloved Saviour! In the next world God can open our eyes, and enable us to know saints we have never seen, and to recognize friends we have long lost.

32. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?

They felt the power of His words. Christ not only put light into their heads, but heat also into their hearts, which burned all the while He communed with them. Oh, what an efficacious power is there in the words of Jesus, when set home upon the hearts of men by His Spirit. (See Ps. xxxix. 3; Jer. xx. 9.) We do not always perceive immediately the good effects produced in us by the word of God and by sermons, but we find them afterward. Jesus now converses with us by the way, and He opens to us the Scriptures. This He does in three ways: 1. By His dispensations. As the Word explains Providence, so Providence illustrates the Word. 2. By the labors of His servants. He replenishes His ministers, that they may dispense to

others; He gives them the tongue of the learned that they should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. 3. By the agency of His Holy Spirit. "He shall lead you into all truth." Means do not render His influence needless, revelation itself does not. The dial tells us the time, but the sun must shine upon it. The compass enables the mariner to steer, but not if it be placed in the dark.

33. And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them. 34. Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. 35. And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread. 1 John xx. 19, 26. 1 Cor. xv. 5.

These two disciples could not remain at home after the joyful event that had happened. Convinced of the truth of Christ's resurrection, notwithstanding their fatigue, and the darkness of the night, and the roughness of the road, they started to Jerusalem, a distance of seven or eight miles, leaving all their private affairs, in order to comfort their brethren with the glad tidings of a Saviour risen, thus teaching us that all secular affairs, all private and particular business, must give place to the glory of God, and the comfort and salvation of souls. *Found the eleven gathered together.* If Thomas was there, he must have gone out immediately after the two disciples came in. Only by supposing this, can we reconcile this account with that which John gives of Christ's appearing when Thomas was not present. Probably Thomas was absent, hence only ten were present. As Paul calls the company of the Apostles *the twelve* (1 Cor. xv. 5), though Judas, the twelfth person, was dead, so Luke here calls them *the eleven*, though Thomas, the eleventh person, was absent, as appears from John xx. 24. *Saying*, to the two disciples who had just returned from Emmaus, *The Lord is risen indeed*, in very deed, really, truly. Thus the eleven, and they that were with them, were able to answer good tidings with good. The great flood-tide of joy was every moment rising higher and higher. *Told what things were done in the way*, narrated at length all that Jesus said and did after He joined Himself to their company by the way. *Was known of them in breaking of bread.* (See on verse 35.)

36. ¶ And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.—Mark xvi. 14; John xx. 19; 1 Cor. xv. 5.

Jesus himself stood in the midst of them. This, as appears from John xx. 19, "when the doors were shut . . . for fear of the Jews." Whether our Lord passed through the doors miraculously, without opening them, or whether He opened them miraculously, as the angel did when he brought Peter out of prison, we cannot tell. (Acts xii. 10). In either case, there was a miracle. In any case, the appearance was sudden and instantaneous. *And saith unto them.* It is His voice—can they doubt their own hearing? *Peace be unto you.* Though this was the wonted salutation of peace, it had from those lips and in this moment an infinitely higher significance, which involuntarily reminded the disciples of the farewell benediction. (John xiv. 27). *The fact* of Christ's resurrection was to be the basis of their peace. Jesus, as the good Shepherd, seeks His sheep in all places, to comfort them, to strengthen their faith, and to show them, by His visible presence, that He knows the means to render Himself present to them in their wants, and whenever they are assembled together in His name, and according to His word.

37. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.—Mark vi. 49.

Terrified and affrighted. Even the manner of Christ's entrance must have contributed to this, and however much they had begun to be prepared by all the events of the day for this meeting, yet this surprise must have come upon them the more strongly as the message of the angels had directed them to Galilee, and they, therefore, could by no means reckon on an appearance of the Master in the midst of them this very evening, at Jerusalem. In their hearts now prevails a mixture of light and darkness. *And supposed that they had seen a spirit.* Having in some degree discredited most of the previous reports, so now they distrusted the evidence of their own sight, and supposed, to their alarm, that what they saw was a *ghost* or *specter*. Terror at the appearance of any supernatural being, or any inhabitant of another world, seems an instinct of human nature, and is a strong indirect proof of

man's utter inability to meet God in peace without a Mediator.

38. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts?

Jesus hastened to dispel their illusion. *Why are ye troubled?* Here is the beginning of the rebuke of their unbelief. The question itself implies the groundlessness of their alarm and trepidation. *Why do thoughts, i. e.,* scruples of a discouraging nature, doubting and gainsaying thoughts, *arise—spring up and grow in your hearts.* Here, as elsewhere, our Lord shows His knowledge of the inward man. The mind of man is strangely fruitful in such thoughts as are contrary to faith. In all extraordinary visits from God, it is good to be somewhat fearful and diffident, but not to such a degree as to be troubled, and to suffer all sorts of thoughts to rise in our hearts.

39. Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.—John xx. 20, 27.

In order to convince them not only of the reality, but also of the identity of His appearance, as well as of His triumph over death, Jesus would have them feel His hands and feet; nay, Himself, His body, and, moreover, especially the exposed places which bore the traces of the wounds of the cross. There was a direct appeal to two senses, touch and sight. How touching it must have been to see the Lord showing His own wounded hands and feet to His disciples, and inviting them to touch His sacred person! The Apostles enjoyed some privileges which we have never known. But the gracious Saviour, who condescended to eat with His disciples after He rose from the dead, has promised to admit *all* His people to intimate communion with Himself. Not one being who loved Him on earth will be refused admittance to His presence *in glory*. There they shall see Him as He is. There is a *spiritual* exhibition of Himself, in which Jesus says, "Behold my hands and my feet." They are to be seen: 1. In the Scripture of Truth, in its types, prophecies, history, doctrine. 2. In the ministry of the Gospel, which is called "the preaching of the cross." 3. In the teachings of the Holy Ghost, who takes of the things of Christ, and shows them to us, so that we see the Son, and believe on Him; and, 4. In the ordinance of the Lord's

Supper, where, by emblems and memorials the most simple and significant, before our eyes, Jesus Christ is evidently set forth crucified among us. And what should the sight remind us of? Beholding His hands and feet, we should think of the evil of sin, that required His suffering and death to put it away—and of the justice of God, that spared not His own Son when He became a surety for us—and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His kindness toward us.

A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. Our Lord here speaks of "a spirit," and the qualities of "a spirit," in such a manner that it is impossible to deny the existence of incorporeal beings. It is an interesting and by no means unprofitable question with what body our Lord came forth from the tomb, and appeared during the forty days He passed on earth after the resurrection, whether with the glorified one with which He ascended to heaven, or with the body unchanged from what it was previous to His death, the change to its glorified condition taking place at His ascension from Mount Olivet. We incline to the belief that the latter of these suppositions is the true one. But whilst we thus express a conviction that our Lord's body had not yet been changed to its full glorified condition, we will not deny that His general appearance must have been much altered from what it was before His passion. He was no longer the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. His work of toil and suffering had ended. His mien was now that of a king and conqueror. There was doubtless in His whole appearance and movements a calm dignity and majesty which awed His disciples, repressed undue familiarity, and checked vain curiosity, while, at the same time, His aspect of tenderness and love filled their hearts with peace, joy, and praise. Inasmuch, moreover, as our Lord's body, in its risen nature, possessed the power of invisibility at will, also a superiority to the control of gravitation, to the need of food, clothing, and other bodily necessities, as well as the power of resuming traces, constituent parts, or substantive properties of its former self, such as *wounds, limbs, flesh and bones*, must it not have been, that

His body, though the same in substance, was endowed with some new properties and powers?

40. And when he had thus spoken, he showed them his hands and his feet.

Christ retains the scars of His wounds, 1. To encourage us to suffer for Him, by showing us how much he loves sufferings. 2. For the comfort and consolation of His people. 3. For the confusion of the lost. 4. To afford us a sanctuary or refuge in our temptations and troubles. 5. To show us fountains of grace continually open to us in our wants. As Jesus showed His wounds here to His disciples, to enforce His instructions to them, so He showed them to His Father to enforce His intercessions with Him. He appears in heaven as a lamb that had been slain. (Rev. v. 6.) His blood speaks. (Heb. xii. 24; Zech. xiii. 6, 7.)

41. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, 'Have ye here any meat?' Gen. xiv. 25. John xxi. 5.

Believed not for joy. First they believed not from the strangeness of the matter, next they believed not because the fact in their eyes was too terrible for them to be willing to believe, and now they believe not from joy. Perhaps Jacob was in a similar frame of mind. (Gen. xlv. 26.) *Have ye any meat?* "Anything eatable, any food." Now that matters have come so far, our Lord rests not until He has completely accomplished His work on His disciples. The slowness and backwardness of the disciples show that they did not believe lightly and rashly. Everything here seems to oppose the belief of the resurrection—amazement, fear, a prepossessed imagination, joy and admiration; the evidence alone of the proofs here given bears down all before it, and establishes the belief of this truth.

42. And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. 43. And he took it, and did eat before them.—Acts x. 41.

Broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. Some think, a kind of cake, or bread, in use among them. Eating might consist with, though it were not needful to, that kind of life to which Christ was risen. It is evident from the appeal of our Lord to the senses of the Apostles, that no greater certainty can in this world be had of anything than the testimony of our eyes, ears, and other senses, and that it is unreason-

able in the highest degree to require men to believe in direct opposition to them. The honeycomb was a frequent food with the ancients, nearly akin to that of John the Baptist. The honey of bees is frequently found in Palestine, in clefts of the rock, and in hollow trees. The viands here named constituted, perhaps, the remains of the already ended supper of the disciples. Peter lays great stress on the fact that the disciples had eaten with Jesus. (Acts x. 41.)

44. And he said unto them, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.

^aMatt. xvi. 21, xvii. 22 and xx. 18; Mark viii. 31; Luke ix. 22 and xviii. 31; verse 6.

Our Lord holds here, before He parts from His disciples, a grand retrospective review of His now almost accomplished earthly career. He refers them to the words He had so often spoken to them, saying that the predictions about Him must be accomplished. *All things* must be fulfilled, whether concerning His sufferings, or His kingdom—the *hardest*, and the *heaviest*, even the *vinegar*—He could not die till He had that, because He could not till then say, *It is finished*. *Must be fulfilled*. God had *joined together* the things in the prediction, and they could not be *put asunder* in the event. The three chief portions of the Old Testament were named by Christ, to indicate that He pointed to the Scripture in its unity. *The law of Moses*, that is, the Pentateuch, or the *five* books written by Moses; the *prophets*, embracing not only the books which are purely prophetic, but those historical books that were written by prophetic men; the *Psalms*, embracing the other writings, which they called the *Hagiographa*. In these various ways did God, of old, reveal His will, but all proceeded from one and the self-same Spirit, who, by them, gave notice of the coming and kingdom of the Messiah, *for to Him bare all the prophets witness*. Let us be careful to seek Jesus Christ in the Old Testament, as well as in the New. He is in all parts thereof, and in all He frames the heart of a Christian. The Prophets exercise our faith, the Psalms nourish our hopes, and the Law tries and makes known our love.

45. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures,—Acts xvi. 14.

It is one thing to open the Scriptures themselves, and another to open the disciples' understandings to perceive them. Christ did the latter, imparting to them a direct, Divine illumination, by which they obtained a clear insight of the spirituality of the Messianic kingdom, as revealed in the Old Testament; probably, also, by giving them now the first-fruits of the spirit of prophecy, which fell more plentifully on them at the day of Pentecost. The understanding of the true sense of the Scriptures comes only from Jesus Christ. It is the fruit of humility, prayer, true spiritual poverty, and of fidelity in bringing the mind into subjection to the yoke of faith.

46. And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: 47. And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.
v. Verse 29; Ps. xxii. 1; Isa. l. 6 and liii. 2, &c.; Acts xvii. 3. Dan. ix. 24; Acts xiii. 38, 46; 1 John ii. 12. Gen. xii. 3; Ps. xxii. 27; Isa. xlix. 6, 22; Jer. xxxi. 34; Hos. ii. 23; Mi. iv. 2; Mal. i. 11.

Thus refers to the death and resurrection of Christ. *It behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day.* This was done to fulfill the prophecies concerning Himself. (Isa. liii. 1-3; Ps. ii. 2; lxix. 21; Isa. i. 5-7; lii. 14; Dan. ix. 26; Isa. liii. 4-6, 10; Ps. xvi. 10, 11; Isa. lii. 13, liii. 8, 10, 12; Matt. xii. 40.) It behooved Him "to suffer and rise from the dead." 1. In the execution of His *Prophetic office*, as a Teacher come from God, that He might confirm and show the certain truth and the deep importance of His doctrine, and manifest Himself to be the "faithful and true witness." 2. In the execution of His *Sacerdotal office*, as the High Priest of our profession. He suffered, to learn to sympathize with us in our sufferings (Heb. v. 2, iv. 15, 16, ii. 17, 18); to atone for our sins by offering Himself a sacrifice. (Heb. v. 1; comp. vi. 20, ii. 17, vii. 27, ix. 11, 12, 24, 27, 28, x. 5-14; Isa. liii. 5, 6, 10; 2 Cor. v. 21; Rom. iii. 24; iv. 25.) He rose, that He might be able to succor us in our temptations; that He might give us full proof that the sacrifice He had offered for our sins was accepted, and lay a foundation for our confidence in Him, that He might ascend, and "appear in the presence of God" as our Advocate and Inter-

cessor. (John xvi. 7; Heb. i. 3; iv. 14; ix. 12; Acts ii. 32, 33.) 3. Of His *Regal office*, as the King and Governor of His people. (Rom. xiv. 9; Phil. ii. 5-9; John x. 10-18; Acts xx. 28; 1 Cor. vi. 20; 1 Peter i. 18, 19; Heb. xiii. 20; 1 Peter ii. 25; x. 12, 13; John x. 27, 28.) 4. Christ suffered and rose as our *Pattern and Fore-runner*. (Rom. viii. 17; 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12; 1 Peter ii. 21, iii. 14-18, iv. 12-16; 1 Cor. xv. 20; John xiv. 1-3; Rom. vi. 3, 4; Col. ii. 13, iii. 1; Eph. ii. 1.)

That repentance and remission of sins should be preached. Repentance which the disciples preached during Christ's life (Mark vi. 12), was preached by them in all their sermons after His death, resurrection and ascension. (Acts ii. 38; iii. 19; xvii. 30.) The original word rendered *repentance* means *after-consideration or reflection*. Repentance begins in looking back, or reflecting, with attention and care upon our past conduct, as our actions, sins of omission and commission, our words, tempers, desires, motives, ends, thoughts; comparing them with the will of God as signified in His Word in general, and His law in particular, and considering the obligation laid on us to obey Him from duty, gratitude and interest. *A change of mind*, arising from the former. This change takes place in the *understanding*, the eyes of which are opened to see ourselves as we are (Titus iii. 2); in the *conscience* (Acts ii. 37; xvi. 30; Matt. xi. 28; Heb. ix. 14); in the *affections*, including shame and sorrow for past sin, hatred to and fear of sin, and desire for and delight in holiness (2 Cor. vii. 10, 11); in the *will*, as to its choice, leading us to prefer holiness to sin, God to the world, the soul to the body; as to its intention, inducing us now to propose God's glory as our end in everything; as to its determination, being resolved and fixed for God and eternal life; in the *life*. (Luke iii. 8.) *Remission of sins* was preached continually to all the penitent by Christ. (Luke vii. 47, 48, xv., xviii. 13, 14, xix. 9), and by the Apostles (Acts ii. 38, iii. 19, v. 31, x. 43, xiii. 38.) It implies and is followed by acquittance from guilt, condemnation and wrath, acceptance with God, His favor, adoption into His family, regeneration, sanctification, a title to and fitness for

His kingdom. (See 1 John i. 9, Prov. xxviii. 13; Isa. i. 16-18.) *His name.* In Christ's name as a *prophet.* (Deut. xviii. 15; Acts iii. 22; Ezek. xviii. 21, 31, 32; Rom. i. 16; Acts x. 43, xiii. 38; Rom. iii. 24, 25.) *On His authority and in imitation of His example*—in His name as a *king* (John viii. 21)—in His name as a *suffering man* (Isa. liii. 5, 6; John xii. 32); in His name as the *incarnate God*, and as the *final judge.* (Acts xvii. 31; 2 Thes. i. 7-10.) *Among all nations*—all have sinned, need repentance (Rom. iii. 23; Acts xvii. 30), and all being guilty, need remission of sins. (See 2 Cor. v. 15.) *Beginning at Jerusalem.* The Gospel was to be *begun* to be preached at Jerusalem, 1. Because Christ was first promised to the Jews, and therefore must first be offered to them. (Rom. ix. 4, 5.) 2. The foundation of the Gospel must be laid at that place where it was first attacked. 3. Their day of grace was likely to be the shortest. 4. It was foretold that the Gospel should go forth from thence. (Isa. ii. 3, 4; Mi. iv. 2; Ps. cx. 2; Isa. xxviii. 16; xl. 5-9.) The Apostles were to begin at Jerusalem, to furnish a striking example of the riches and freeness of the grace of Christ, in the offer of it to the vilest of sinners. "Let them that struck the rock drink first of its refreshing streams, and let them that drew my blood be first welcome to its healing virtue." If the murderers of Christ were not excepted from the offers of mercy, who need despair?

^{48.} And ye are witnesses of these things.
⁵⁰ John xv. 27; Acts i. 8, 22, ii. 32 and iii. 15.

To be "witnesses chosen before of God" of the doings and sayings of Jesus was the very essence and object of the Apostolic office. (Acts x. 41, i. 8, 22, xxvi. 16.) Peter, at a later date, said: "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, . . . but were *eye witnesses.*" To the same effect is the testimony of John, near the close of the first century. (1 John i. 1.)

^{49.} ¶ And, behold, I send the promise of the Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.
⁵¹ Isa. xlv. 3; Joel ii. 28; John xiv. 16; 26, xv. 26, xvi. 7; Acts i. 4 and ii. 1, &c.

And, behold. A new point is here presented parallel with Acts i. 4, 5; John xiv. 16, 26, xv. 26. *I send.* Christ represents

Himself as acting conjointly with the Father in sending the Spirit. *The promise of the Father.* The Holy Spirit is here referred to, whom Christ had repeatedly before His death promised. He calls the Spirit *the promise of the Father*, not because the Spirit was promised to Him, nor merely inasmuch as God has promised the bestowment of the gifts of the Spirit by prophetic oracles, but with retrospective reference to utterances like John xiv. 16, &c., and to the symbolical act, John xx. 22. *Upon you.* The language implies effusion. *Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem.* This must have been uttered after the return to Jerusalem from the visit to Galilee. (Matt. xxviii. 16-20; John xxi. 1-24.) This command was repeated just before His ascension. (Acts i. 4.) *Ye be endued, clothed with power* as with a garment; *from on high*, from heaven, from the abode of the Father, who had promised through His Son the gift of the Spirit. Comfortable promise this, for who could believe that a God died and rose again, who could hope for the remission of his sins, who could love repentance and the cross, without the Holy Spirit! Retirement and repose were by Christ judged necessary for the Apostles and disciples, in order to their receiving the Holy Ghost who is the strength of the weak; and can we judge otherwise of ourselves?

^{50.} ¶ And he led them out as far as to Bethany: and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them.—Acts i. 12.

Either during or after this conversation, Jesus led them out—over the very ground He had traversed with them six weeks before, when He entered the city to suffer, as far as Bethany, or rather over the brow of the Mount of Olives, where it descends to Bethany, which village was about two miles from Jerusalem. When Jesus thus went forth at their head, as leader and chief, toward the village which was so much endeared to Him, it was for the *last* time, and all His troubles were over. *He lifted up his hands, and blessed them.* This circumstance is full of meaning. The blessing was significant. It showed the spirit in which our Lord parted from His Church on earth, and was an earnest of what He would do for them in heaven. It typifies His full assumption of His priestly office,

and gives assurance of what He will yet do when He comes again.

51. *And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.
 †2 Tim. ii. 11; Mark xvi. 19; John xx. 17; Acts i. 9; Eph. iv. 8.

There are other accounts of the ascension of Jesus in Mark xvi. 19, 20; Acts i. 9-12, on which see notes.

He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. As He blessed them He began to ascend. And as He ascended, the cloud gathering beneath His feet at once bore Him upward, and closed Him from their sight. The Apostles beheld Him as He ascended, and continued to watch till they could see Him no more. Two angels, clothed in white apparel, remained below to comfort them. They did this with the promise: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." See Zech. xiv. 4; Rev. i. 7, in which we see that the words of the Prophet and Apostle agree with those of the angels. Whither did the person of Jesus ascend? Into heaven. But where is heaven? We know not its locality in the immensity of the universe. Astronomers, indeed, tell us that there is a center of our solar system, and that is the sun. But the sun is a member of a larger system, which has its center or sun. And this is a member of a still grander system revolving around its center. At last there is a center of the whole universe. At that center resides the great MOVER of the whole. There, doubtless, is the central residence of God. To that center, perhaps, Jesus departed. At any rate, heaven is *away* from this earth, and away from this earth is up. Wherever heaven is, therefore, it is up. The language of Scripture, the language of humanity, the language of our childhood, herein is true, and strictly in accordance with the highest science. Let us think of Jesus where He now is, and let us inquire what is our duty with regard to Him. "Seeing, then, that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." We need not be afraid to own Him, for He is able to take care of us, however we may be exposed. We need not be ashamed to avow Him, for He has

everything to induce us to glory in Him. Let us follow Christ in our thoughts and affections. Why seek we the living among the dead? He is not *here*. He is in heaven; and where our treasure is, there should our hearts be also. Let us as Christians rejoice in the expectation of being forever with our Lord. "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil, whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus." The anchor that holds the ship is cast out of it, and our hope must go out of ourselves. The anchor lays hold of something invisible, and our hope enters heaven. Yet it would find nothing as the ground of its grasp *there* if He was not there—but He *is* there, and there for *us*, and *His* being there insures our arrival. He is the forerunner of the whole company.

52. †And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: 53. And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.
 †Matt. xxviii. 9, 17. †Acts ii. 46 and v. 42.

How did the Apostles feel now that they had lost their Lord? *They worshipped him.* Religious worship is here intended. It was not merely reverence to a present superior, but the adoration of an absent Supreme. (See Acts i. 24, vii. 59, 60, ix. 10-17.) They worshiped Him as God, the eternal Son of God, being so declared by the resurrection from the dead, and by His ascension into heaven before their eyes, from whence He will come to judge both the quick and the dead. *And returned to Jerusalem with great joy.* Though still in the midst of their enemies they *rejoiced*; though deprived of the personal presence of their Lord, they *rejoiced*; though they knew that in the world they would have much tribulation, they *rejoiced*. And why? Because they believed the promises. They knew that Jesus was gone to the Father to make intercession for them, and that He would return again to make them blessed forever. (See 1 Peter iii. 22.) The Apostle John, in the last page of the Bible, and almost the last verse, has recorded this prayer: "Even so, come Lord Jesus." Do we partake in the joy of these holy Apostles? Jesus loves all who love Him, whether they be the greatest of His Apostles, or the weakest

of His lambs. "He ever liveth to make intercession (not for *Apostles* only, but) for *all* who come unto God by Him." When He comes again He will say to all such, "Come, ye blessed of my Father." *And were continually in the temple, &c.* They repaired to the temple continually (*i. e.*, at all fit times), in preference to any other place, since there the Jews were accustomed to pray and return thanks to God, especially on momentous occasions. Christ, who obliged His disciples to prepare themselves for the coming of the Holy Ghost by the exercise of praise, thanksgiving and prayer, thus teaches us how we ought to prepare ourselves for the same. Churches are the House of God. There He loves to receive our homage, to shed forth His Spirit, and to communicate Him-

self to His creatures. "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." (Ps. lxxxvii. 2.) *Amen* is a Hebrew word which, when prefixed to an assertion, signifies *assuredly, certainly*, or, emphatically, *so it is*; but when it concludes a prayer, *so be it*, or *so let it be*, is its manifest import. In the former case it is *assertive*, or assures of a truth, or a fact, and is an asseveration, and is properly translated *indeed*. (John iii. 3.) In the latter case it is *petitionary*, and, as it were, epitomizes all the requests with which it stands connected. (Num. v. 22; Rev. xxii. 20.) The promises of God are *Amen*, because they are made sure and certain in Christ. (2 Cor. i. 20.) *Amen* is one of the titles of our blessed Saviour (Rev. iii. 14) as He is the faithful and true witness.

1. What took place on the first day of the week? 2. What did the two men in shining garments say to the women in the sepulchre? 3. To whom did the women tell what they had heard and seen? 4. What did Peter do? 5. What occurred as two of the disciples went to Emmaus? 6. What did Christ reply to Cleopas? 7. What took place as Christ and the disciples sat at meat? 8. What did the disciples then do? 9. How did Jesus appear to the disciples? 10. What did He say to them after He had opened their understanding? 11. To what place did He lead them? 12. How did He ascend to heaven? 13. What did the disciples then do?